

Human resources: annual report

Report of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board to the Sixty-sixth World Health Assembly

1. The eighteenth meeting of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee was held in Geneva on 16 and 17 May 2013 under the chairmanship of Dr Jamal Thabet Nasher (Yemen).¹ The Committee adopted its agenda.²
2. The Committee welcomed the report,³ highlighting its critical importance. However, the Committee expressed concern at the late production of the report. The Committee noted the improved quality of the data and information now provided in the three sections: current status of the workforce; an analysis of the evolution of the workforce over the past 10 years; and a look at how WHO's reform agenda will be incorporated into the human resources strategy and activities.
3. Nevertheless, the Committee looked forward to further improvements and the inclusion of additional financial information and an analysis of financial consequences by region and country, a link to the Organization's strategic objectives, and references to any support systems in order to permit a better understanding of blockages in implementation or lack of relevant support to specific areas.
4. The Committee supported the increased use of non-staff contracts; however, it underscored the need to monitor the use of such contracts to ensure that the individuals concerned were not asked to carry out regular work carried out by staff.
5. There was concern about the long-term liabilities associated with the high levels of staffing in the polio programme, a time-limited project. The Committee asked that a specific section in future reports be devoted to providing an update on this situation, and looked forward to learning of the results of the study currently under way and the Secretariat's proposals on how these risks may be mitigated.

¹ The list of participants is available in document EBPBAC18/DIV./1.

² Document EBPBAC18/1.

³ Document A66/36.

6. The Committee observed that the many different human resources-related decisions and recommendations that appear across a number of official documents would benefit from being summarized in one section of the report, and from being presented with timelines for implementation and a short review on progress made to date.

7. The Committee stressed the importance of a high-performance culture and looked forward to receiving further information in future reports on how work in this area will be taken forward and how the Secretariat will ensure that appropriate measures are put in place.

8. The Committee expressed concern that there has been no significant improvement in reaching gender parity, particularly in the more senior grades. However, it noted with pleasure the work being undertaken with the United Nations System-wide Action Plan to close the gender gap. Concern was also expressed on the imbalance in geographical representation, especially for developing countries. It was agreed that a more coordinated Organization-wide approach with respect to diversity should be put in place, particularly in relation to the wider context.

9. The Committee remained concerned that the human resources department was not appropriately structured or resourced to respond to the heavy demands placed on it by the many initiatives now under way in the Organization. Committee members also remained concerned that the necessary systems and tools might not yet be in place to facilitate the work of the department. The Secretariat acknowledged that a review of the department was needed and that there would also be a need for additional resources. It was acknowledged that the demands on this area of the Organization were enormous.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY

10. The Committee, on behalf of the Executive Board, recommended that the Sixty-sixth World Health Assembly note the human resources annual report.

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