

WHO and Informal conflict resolution procedures

The Seventh Conference of Staff Associations
of International Organisations (CSAIO7)

Council of Europe, Strasbourg

21–22 September 2006

David Rivett

WHO/EURO

Staff Association

WHO and Informal conflict resolution procedures

Global Structure of WHO

- 6 Regional Offices (RO) HQ and IARC
- There is no consistency in informal conflict resolution procedures
- Each RO has a Staff Association
- Statutory responsibility for each RO to appoint a Board of Appeal
- There is provision for each RO to appoint an Ombudsperson
- Some ROs have set up Harassment/Grievance panels.

WHO and Informal conflict resolution procedures

Structures in place in the WHO European
Regional Office

Staff Association

Ombudsperson

Harassment Grievance Panel

Board of Appeal



EUROPE

WHO and Informal conflict resolution procedures

Structures in place in the WHO European Regional Office

Staff Association

Key arrangements and consultative procedures

- All staff eligible to be members through subscription
- Staff Association Committee elected by membership for 2-year terms. Experience handed on from one committee to another.
- Staff represented on all major committees, all staff selections, and ad hoc task groups
- Regular monthly meetings with administration
- Bi-monthly meetings with Regional Director
- The programme of the SA President is given 25% reimbursement
- Work to represent all staff in aspects of staff terms and conditions of service through a consultative process, reflecting the views of staff to the administration
- When necessary, will provide support in individual cases.

WHO and Informal conflict resolution procedures

Structures in place in the WHO European Regional Office

Ombudsperson

- Elected position and may be held by a serving staff member, local former staff member, or locally qualified independent person. 2-year appointment with possibility of 1-year extension
- All staff employed on staff contracts of five months or more are eligible to vote.
- Voluntary role, and if a serving staff member, provided with up to 50% release from their contractual obligations. No reimbursement. Mediation and conflict prevention role.
- Consulting the Ombudsperson does not prejudice further appeals available to staff in the UN system
- Ombudsperson is linked to the UN Ombudsperson network for training and support

WHO and Informal conflict resolution procedures

Structures in place in the WHO European Regional Office

Harassment Grievance Panel

- 3 member panel. Two (including Chair) appointed by the RD one by the SA. Each member has 2 alternates in order to avoid conflict of interest situations
- Set procedure for filing grievances agreed through staff/management consultation
- Works in line with the WHO global policy on harassment
- It is hoped that invoking the Panel occurs when all other avenues have been exhausted
- No training is provided for the Panel members

WHO and Informal conflict resolution procedures

Structures in place in the WHO European Regional Office

Regional Board of Appeal

- Made up of three staff members and alternates. One designated by the RD, one elected by staff and one designated by the RD as Chair in consultation with the SA
- Rules of procedure set out at global level and should be consistent throughout the Organization.
- Regional staff may put cases to HQ Board of Appeal
- 60 day rule applies for cases to be presented following disputed administrative procedure or other reason as set out in staff rules.
- As pointed out in the recent review of UN appeals procedures, the system lacks transparency and appears biased against the appellant.

The WHO informal conflict resolution procedures

- The internal justice system does not inspire confidence in staff. Administered by non specialists without specialist training
- The uncertain staff contractual situation is often given as a reason for staff not filing grievances
- Lack of management skills and experience often exacerbate conflict situations
- Cultural differences and differences in management styles also play a part in conflict



EUROPE

The WHO informal conflict resolution procedures

Working in partnership

- Seems to be a commitment in the WHO/EURO office to working with staff
- BUT, taken many years and much effort to achieve what is taken for granted outside the UN system
- Still many problems to solve, such as
 - contractual conditions
 - inconsistent management styles
 - performance management
 - HR planning
- All of which are potential sources of conflict

The WHO informal conflict resolution procedures

Looking to the future and improvements to the system

- A reform of the internal justice system which excludes conflicts of interests and ensuring it being independent and professional
- Full time funded Ombudpersons post
- Education and training on conflict resolution
- Management training
- Fully implemented performance management process