



ILO Staff Union Bargaining Survey Toward an Improved Collective Bargaining Agreement on a Procedure for Recruitment and Selection

September 2010

Introduction

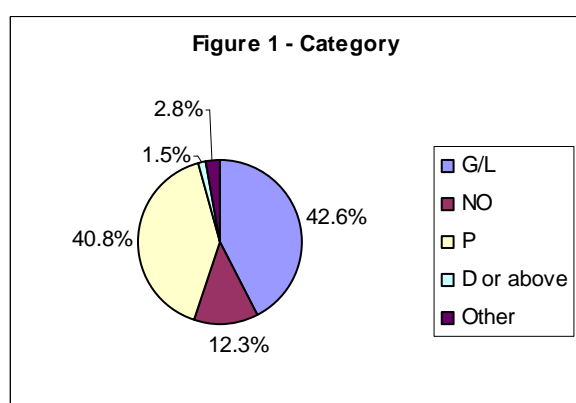
1,132 staff participated in the survey, with 870 completing the entire questionnaire. The Survey targeted specific sections of the survey to particular groups, including candidates, responsible chiefs, technical panel members, selection board members, and assessors. The results from each section are presented throughout this report.

The Staff Union Committee wishes to thank all those who took the time to participate in the survey. The important information provided by each of you will go a long way toward negotiating an improved recruitment and selection policy!

The Union would like to thank our colleagues from STATISTICS and EMP/TRENDS for their inputs, which helped ensure the quality of the survey results!

General

This section is intended to provide some brief information on the responses received. While the numbers participating were impressive, resulting in some very useful and significant results, there were few surprises in the breakdown of *who* participated, *from where* or *under which circumstances* they were working in the ILO. In other words, *everyone* took part.

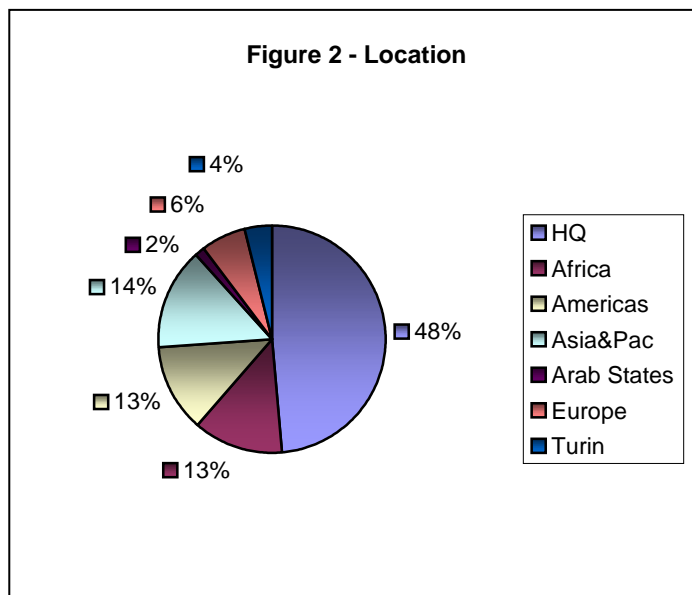


The survey was completed by more women (62.2%) than men (37.8%), however, as evidenced in Figure 1, the split between General Services and Professional Staff was almost equal (42.6% GS vs. 40.8% P).

As a percentage of staff serving in the ILO, 45% of Professional staff, 35% of General Services staff, and 37% of National Professional Officers participated in the survey. These are representative of a considerable proportion of ILO staff. While responses from the D category and above were somewhat lower, responses from this category still represented nearly 20% of these staff, and the responses received from this category were extremely interesting.

The breakdown in responses by gender and category of staff provide some useful information, with females outnumbering males in the General Services 72.5% (346) vs. 27.5% (131), Professional 54.6% (249) vs. 45.4% (207) and National Professional Officer 52.9% (73) vs. 47.1% (65) categories.

Figure 2 shows that nearly half of the responses came from Headquarters. However, each of the regions, and the Turin Centre participated actively in the survey as well, with the larger regions (Africa, Americas and Asia and the Pacific) predictably producing more responses than others. However, while some locations made comparatively smaller contributions to the overall response rate, it must be noted that the total number of responses received from these regions – Europe and Turin, in particular - remained relevant for the purposes of the analysis.



Exactly half of the responses came from staff members on fixed-term contracts, 36% on contracts without limit of time, and the remainder mainly on short-term (SST, ST, or so-called ST 3.5¹ – approximately 9%) and external collaboration (2.2%) contracts. More than twice as many respondents reported being funded through the regular budget than through extrabudgetary resources.

Finally, responses were received from twice as many Staff Union members (66.3%) compared with non-members (33.3%), reflecting the current rate of Union membership overall.

Responses from Candidates

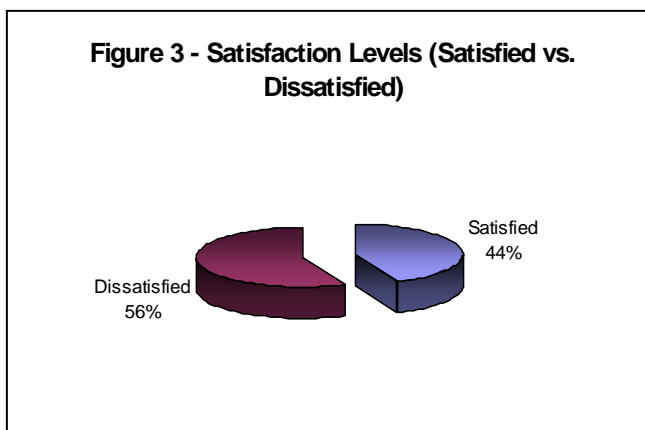
630 staff responded to this section, the vast majority (84%) of whom participated in between 1-3 competitions. More than half (53%) did so as internal candidates, nearly 35% as external candidates, and surprisingly, only 12% participated as candidates in competitions open to internal as well as short-term and technical cooperation officials.

With respect to satisfaction levels, more respondents reported being “somewhat dissatisfied” compared with the other choices. When the superlatives were collapsed into “satisfied” or “dissatisfied”, a considerable majority (nearly 60%) of respondents reported dissatisfaction with the system, as indicated in Figure 3.

¹ The sheer number of short-term 3.5 contracts was surprising, particularly in light of the fact that such arrangements have been deemed by the ILO Administrative Tribunal as illegal, in accordance with Circular 630.

However, a deeper analysis of the responses points to a very interesting – and important – trend. Comparing responses received *according to region*, the survey demonstrates clearly that in those regions / locations that make consistent use of a Selection Board, staff were *up to five times* more likely to report high levels of satisfaction when compared with locations making no use of such a mechanism.

The Selection Board is a joint body, with representatives appointed by the Union, representatives appointed by management, and neutral members selected through agreement by both sides. Where they exist, these Boards meet regularly as an integral part of the recruitment and selection procedures. The Selection Board was suspended – under a considerable amount of controversy – in Headquarters (for all Professional, and Geneva-based General Service positions) in 1997. While the Administration took such measures with the accompanying promise that the revised procedures would be reviewed following a two-year trial period, with a view to determining how well they functioned post-Selection Board, such a review never took place. The new rules were concretized in the 2001 Collective Agreement on a Procedure for Recruitment and Selection.



*“...in regions that make consistent use of a Selection Board, staff were **up to five times more likely** to report high levels of satisfaction when compared with locations making no use of such a mechanism.”*

Fortunately, that Collective Agreement allowed for separate policies to exist within field offices. This allowed for several regions to maintain the Selection Boards, with a considerable degree of success and satisfaction among the staff. However, this was not the case consistently throughout the regions. Some locations (Americas, Turin) make consistent use of the Selection Board, its responsibilities and functioning subject to rules agreed by the parties. Other regions (Asia and the Pacific, Africa) have Selection Boards, or at a minimum staff representation in interview panels, to a greater or lesser extent in some offices, while in others, it is non-existent. In those offices and regions where staff do not have the protection of a Selection Board, the staff representatives are rightly asking why.

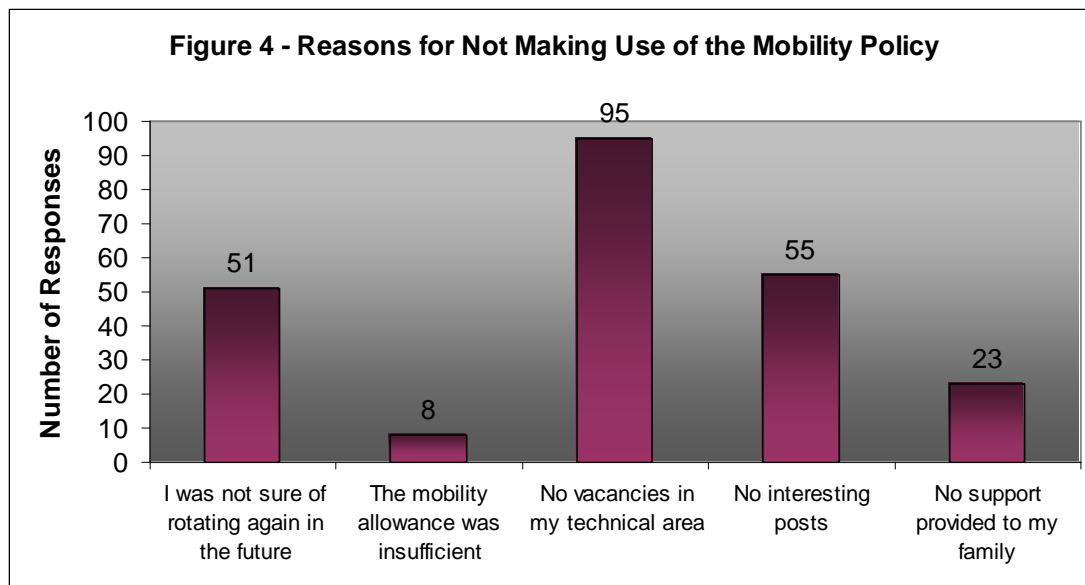
More importantly, in those offices where no such joint mechanism exists, the data show – clearly and convincingly – that confidence in the system is lower.

On the whole, comparing Americas and Turin to all other regions (some of whom maintain selection boards and others do not), the staff are *twice* as likely to be “very satisfied” in the recruitment and selection system where a Selection Board is

consistently used. These same two locations were also *two times less likely* to express deep dissatisfaction than the other regions combined.

Looking at the issue from another angle, *twice as many respondents* in the Americas and Turin expressed satisfaction compared to dissatisfaction (49% vs. 24%). Contrast this to the remaining regions where only 11% expressed satisfaction compared to 47% who showed dissatisfaction. More analysis of the use of Selection Boards follows in a later section.

The survey pointed to the serious problem with mobility in the ILO. This is clearly due to both a lack of awareness (46%) of the policy, and a lack of adequate protections and measures to encourage voluntary mobility. Taking into account the locally-recruited staff, for whom the mobility policy does not currently apply, 27% of eligible females made use of the mobility policy compared to 22% of eligible males. Of those eligible, but who have not made use of the mobility policy, the major reasons given were of a purely practical nature. Figure 4 demonstrates that the vast majority (150 of a total 232 responses, or 65%) of respondents pointed to either a lack of interesting positions or a lack of vacancies in their technical area. Another reason which cannot be overlooked is the fact that some (22%) were concerned that they *would not be able to rotate again in the future*, despite promises by the Office.



These are critical issues which need to be addressed in a holistic manner, and which the form letter sent by HRD inviting targeted staff to rotate, does little to solve. The Staff Union has requested information regarding the policies and approaches adopted in those members of our Federation, CCISUA, which make effective use of mobility and rotation policies. Responses were received from UNICEF, the Professional Staff Association of the World Food Programme, and UNHCR.

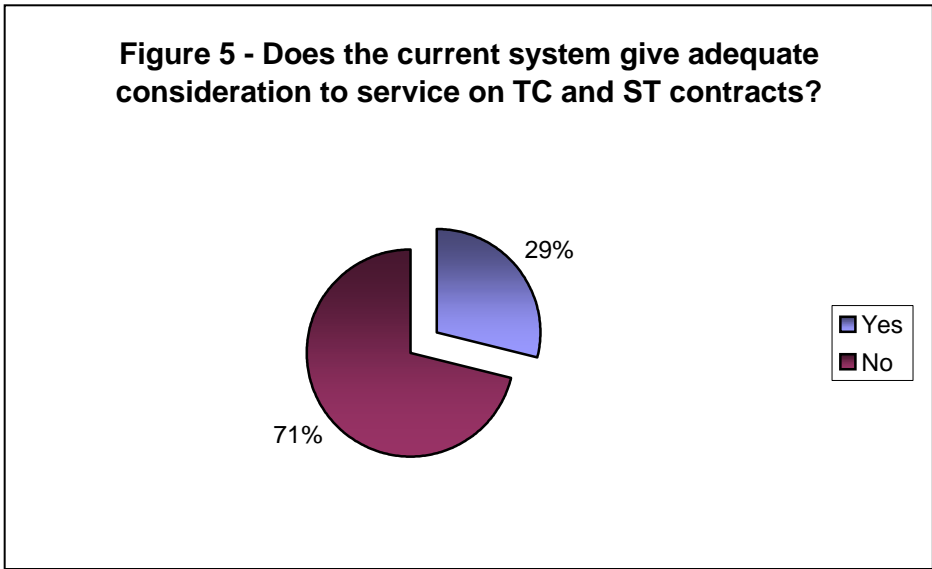
While none of these policies were perfect, they each had common threads, including the presence of independent participants nominated by the staff representative body. In the case of UNHCR, they manage mobility through a mandatory rotation system, in which “[g]enerally, internal candidates are given first priority on posts advertised, but when there are no suitable candidates a post is advertised externally.” Should the

Office wish to promote greater mobility among staff, it is clear that an effective policy must be put in place, taking into account the trade-offs between a more mandatory policy and giving appropriate consideration to internal candidates.

This issue becomes even more complicated when considering mobility between the Regular Budget and Technical Cooperation Programme, or between the Office and the Turin Centre. The Office has recently made a complete reversal of years of past practice, now denying the right to return to staff who leave the Regular Budget for a TC project, or who leave the ILO to work at the Turin Centre. Staff holding contracts without limit of time are told that their WLT status will be “frozen” and that in order to move back to the Regular Budget, they will need to win a competition. Fixed-term staff are in some cases forced to resign from the Office altogether, to accept a position on TC. In contrast, the Turin Centre encourages its staff to move to the ILO, guaranteeing their right to return.

This approach is presumably intended to limit the liability of the Office, by placing an inordinate amount of risk on the individual worker. It has the clear consequence of discouraging mobility, to the detriment of the staff members, to the ILO’s technical cooperation programme, and to the Organization itself. When asked whether the current system provided adequate consideration to service on short-term and Technical Cooperation contracts, the staff responded unequivocally “no”, by an almost three-to-one margin (See Figure 5).

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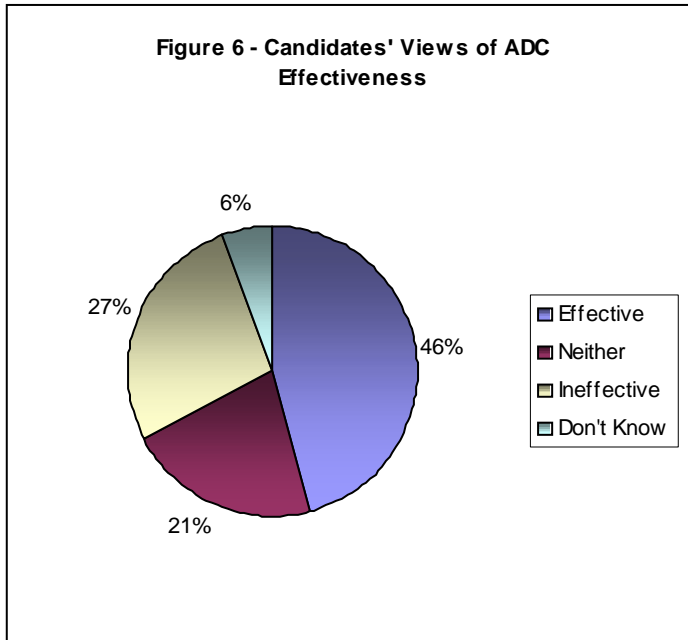


Assessment and Development Centres (ADCs)

Attitudes about ADCs were collected from multiple sources, including candidates, responsible chiefs and panel members, and assessors themselves. These will be addressed together in this section.

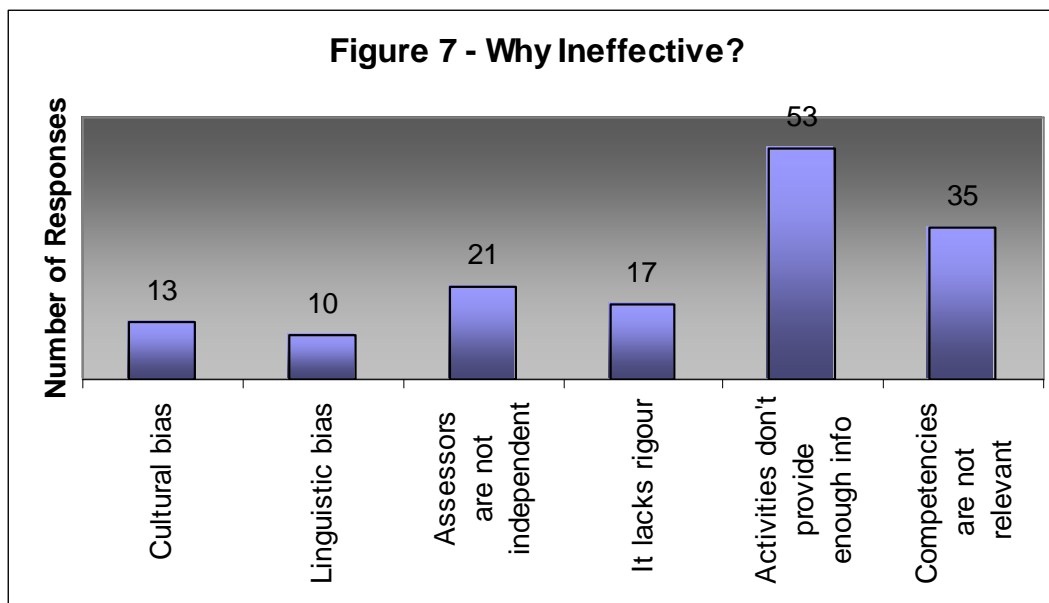
The Union received 209 responses from candidates who had participated in the Assessment Centre. Of these, the vast majority (68%) came from Professional Staff, with the remainder coming from General Services / National Professional Officers.

Despite the fact that ADCs were never rolled-out to the field as originally intended, and that in headquarters they are being used very differently than it was negotiated in 2001, a considerable percentage of staff express satisfaction with the ADC. Figure 6 shows that nearly twice as many respondents found the ADC effective than those



finding it ineffective. Controlling for those who responded “neither” or “don’t know”, those finding the ADC effective outnumber those who found it “ineffective” by nearly three to one. Responsible Chiefs and members of Technical Panels were asked the same question, and responded positively by a measure of two to one (32% to 16%). Asked a similar question, the Assessors responded even more positively, with 71% responding positively, and 29% responding negatively.

Those replying “somewhat ineffective” or “very ineffective” were then asked to indicate the reason for which they felt the ADC was ineffective. Figure 7 provides some insight into their reasons. By far the highest response rate was due to the fact that “*The activities used cannot produce enough information on core ILO competencies*”. Far from being a surprise, this response is clearly linked to the fact that the Office, unilaterally and in violation of the Staff Regulations and the 2001 Collective Agreement, changed the competencies, cut the ADC in half and effectively “gutted” it of its content. It can be no surprise that those activities which survived the cull may not be most suited to the core competencies as had been originally intended. The Union is pleased to note that the most recent proposed change to the core competencies – a competency on social justice – was discussed with the Union in advance of its inclusion into the ADC.



Many candidates questioned whether the competencies were relevant, while others questioned the independence of assessors. This latter point should be of considerable concern, as the Office has made continued use of external consultants to undertake the ADC. The use of external consultants raises questions of independence and objectivity, as they could potentially be subject to pressure to amend their evaluations, under threat of seeing their contract terminated. In addition, the Union has received numerous complaints of the consultants demonstrating a complete lack of understanding of the ILO, its mission and values, or its unique tripartite structure. Jointly nominated *internal* assessors have the confidence of the parties to act independently, not to submit to pressures from managers, and to possess a good understanding of the organizational culture of the ILO.

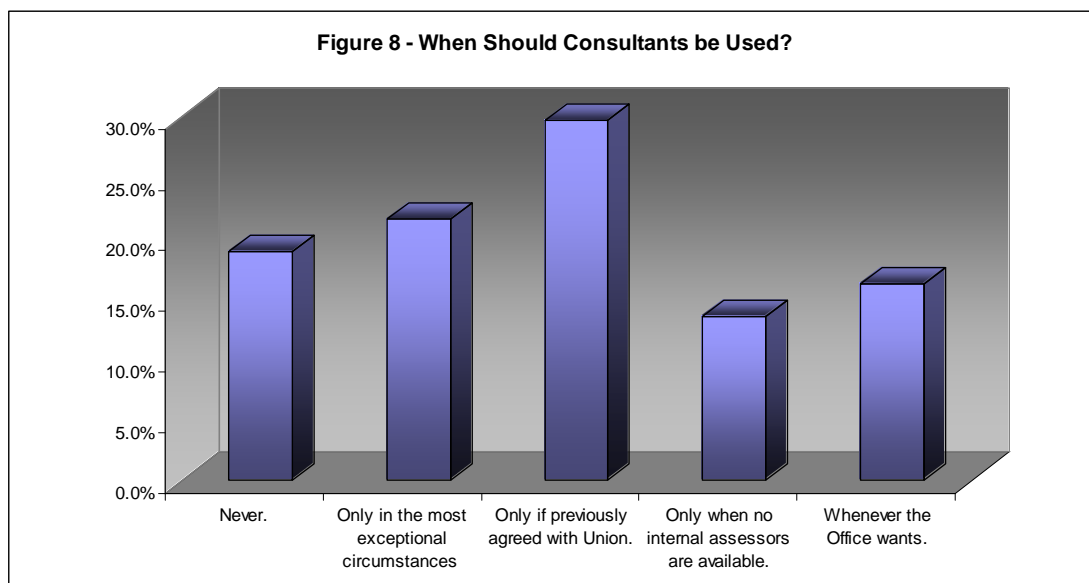
Most importantly, the Office exposes itself to considerable liability if it continues to make use of external consultants, as it risks having any selection decisions having made use of external assessors overturned on a procedural flaw. Both the 2001 Collective Agreement and the Staff Regulations stipulate that assessors be *jointly nominated* from among *ILO Officials*. The Staff Regulations (Article 10.7) read: “*The assessors shall be selected jointly by the Human Resources Development Department and the Staff Union from officials who have successfully completed an appropriate training course in the International Labour Office.*”

While linguistic and cultural bias have both been raised as complaints about the ADC, these were not among the most important for the candidates. This contrasts somewhat with the opinions of Responsible Chiefs and Technical Panel members, for whom cultural and linguistic bias rank 2nd and 4th respectively. Technical panels did note, however, the same concern as relates to the “activities producing enough information on core competencies” (ranked 1st) and the independence of assessors (ranked 3rd).

In an era where the Office is making increasing use of consultants as assessors, nearly one-third of jointly-nominated assessors report having not been utilized at all!

Assessors themselves were invited to complete a section of the survey, with 31 respondents having been an assessor in the past three years. The majority (70%) of assessors responding to the questionnaire stated that they had undertaken between 0-5 assessment and development centers in the past three years. While a slight majority (51%) reported a positive experience, and an identical number reported having been “used effectively”, a troubling 46% reported either being underutilized or not utilized at all (27%). In addition, 44% assessed the training and support provided to assessors as either “insufficient” or “very insufficient”.

The Union asked the Assessors what they would need in order to make themselves more available to undertake Assessment and Development Centres. By far (nearly double the next most selected option) the most popular option was perhaps also the simplest: Assessors sought the inclusion of their responsibilities as official functions in the Performance Management system. An individualized letter from HRD to their responsible chief, explaining the Assessment and Development Centre and encouraging the chief to exercise flexibility and understanding (as s/he would with a Panel member) was another option which met with some interest. More than three-quarters believed that the activities were up to date, and nearly 80% thought the competencies were complete and up to date.



Regarding the use of external consultants as assessors, the Assessors selected “only if previously agreed with the Union” as their most popular response, followed by “only in the most exceptional circumstances” and “never”.

Responsible Chiefs

A series of questions were reserved for responsible chiefs, who according to the Staff Regulations, are responsible for:

- Making a proposal to open a competition (relevant job description, job family, grade, and means of filling the vacancy);
- Ensur[ing] rigorous technical evaluation of all candidates who have successfully completed the Assessment Centre's process, and
- Prepar[ing] a report.

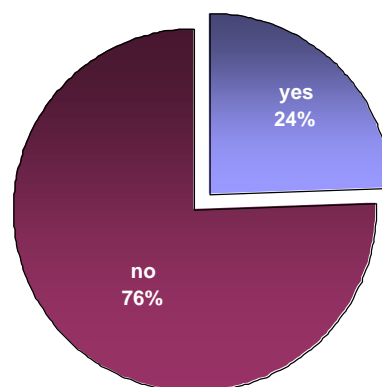
Responsible Chiefs who had interacted with the Union were over five times more likely to report a positive than a negative experience!

In all, 146 responses were received from Responsible Chiefs. Responsible chiefs (RCs) reported a wide variety of approaches, involving many different actors in drafting vacancy announcements, from the Resourcing Unit (31%), her / his hierarchy (30%) to the Technical Panel / Selection Board (25%). A full 70% reported that the current Generic Job Descriptions either “fully” or “somewhat” met their needs, with 26% noting that they did not meet their needs. There was a 50-50 split in those Responsible Chiefs who had interacted with Staff Union representatives, but of those who had interacted with the Union, they were over five times more likely to have a positive than a negative experience.

While this should come as little surprise to the staff, this evidence proves that the *dialogue* process, intended to take place *between* the Union, the RC and HRD, as provided for in the Staff Regulations, remains as relevant today as it did in the past.

Nearly 60% of RCs involved the Technical Panel / Selection Board in the shortlisting process, and a large majority (81%) reported being able to review applications based on merit. However, in an extremely troubling development, a full *one-quarter* of RCs reported having received instructions to shortlist a candidate which s/he would not have shortlisted based on merit. This has serious consequences for the integrity of the recruitment and selection procedures, and the ability of the office to “obtain a staff of the highest standards of competence, efficiency and integrity.”

Figure 9 - Asked to Shortlist Someone Who You Wouldn't Have Based on Merit?

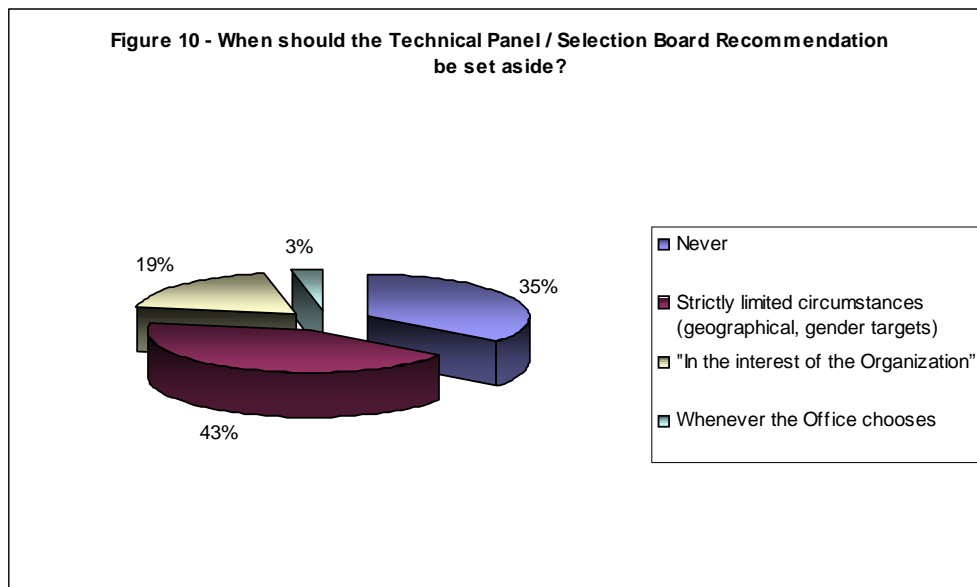


Nearly all RCs reported being able to get the best candidate for the job either “sometimes” (73%) or “always” (24%), but of those who responded that they could

not always get the best candidate, they were asked to indicate why. The results revealed that a number of factors stood in the way, including: an overall lack of rigour in the process, the limited shortlist (two candidates and one reserve), vacancy announcements / GJDs were too constraining, their inability to rank candidates, and political pressure. Figure 9 provides additional information on these reasons.

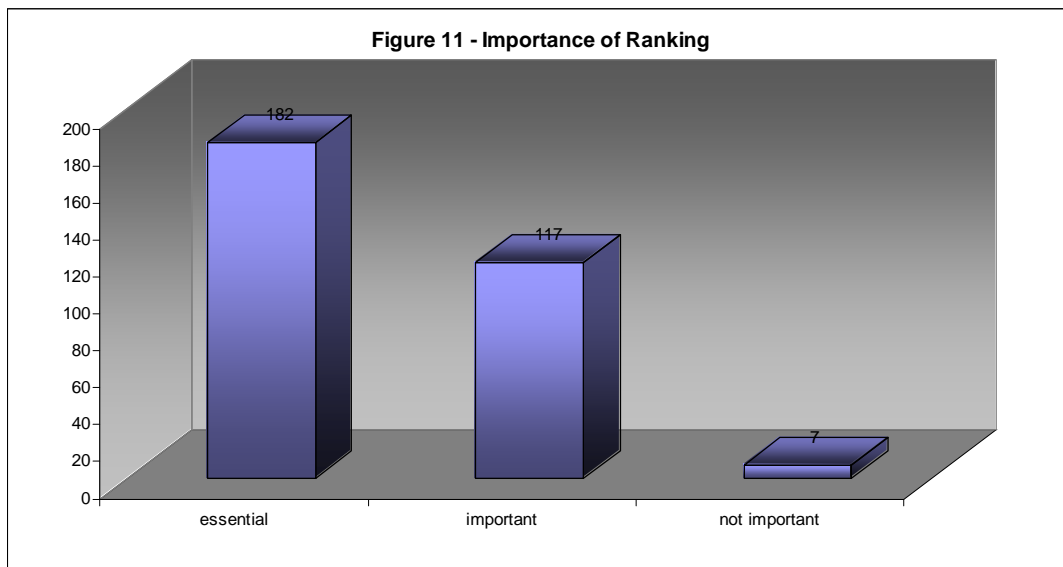
Technical Panel (and Selection Board where applicable)

Over 300 staff responded to this section, aimed at Technical Panel members (including Responsible Chiefs) and Selection Board members where applicable. The vast majority (79%) had participated in fewer than 6 recruitment and selection procedures, with more than two-thirds (70%) reporting a positive experience. Over 80% believed that the report of the Technical Panel should be the main determining factor in making a final decision on appointments, with almost the same number calling for their recommendations to be overturned in “strictly limited circumstances” such as to achieve gender or geographic targets, or not at all.



According to Technical Panel members, the *minimum* number of candidates in a shortlist should be between three (50% of respondents) and five (nearly 40% of respondents replied either 4 or 5 candidates).

The importance given to ranking in a recruitment procedure was not overlooked by members of Technical Panels. Nearly 60% saw ranking as an “essential” part of the process. Combined with those who believed ranking was “important” this figure rises to 98%.



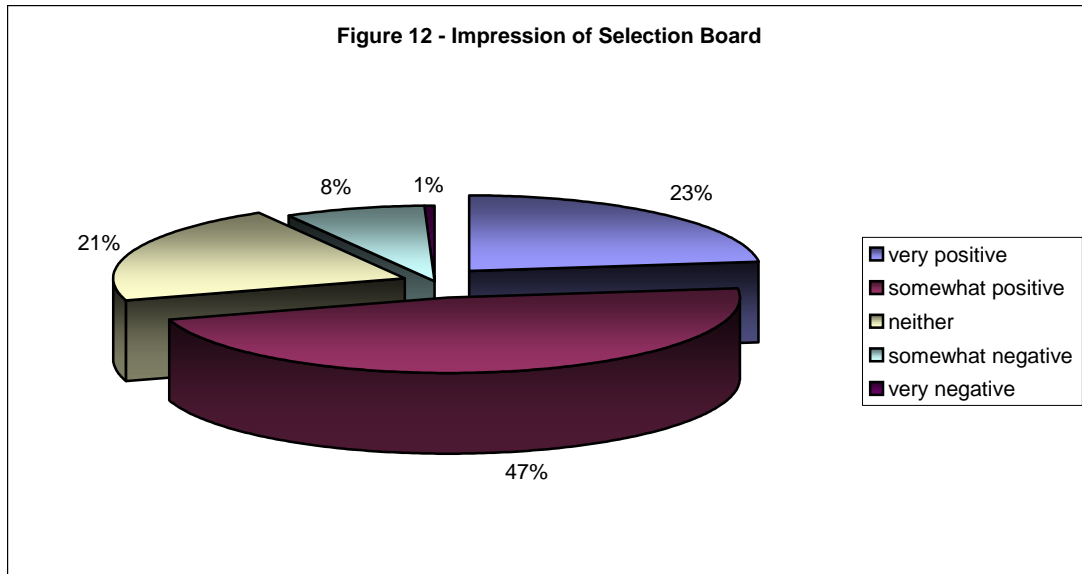
In fact, only *seven* panel members felt that ranking was “not important”.

Selection Boards

Again, Selection Boards are defined here as a joint body, where representatives appointed by the Union, by management, and neutral members meet regularly as an integral part of the recruitment and selection procedures. Selection Boards remain constant in Turin and the Americas, are used sporadically in Asia and the Pacific and Africa, and are all but non-existent in Headquarters, Europe and the Arab States. 174 colleagues responded from those offices making use of Selection Boards, with almost an equal breakdown of staff representatives, management representatives and neutral / independent members.

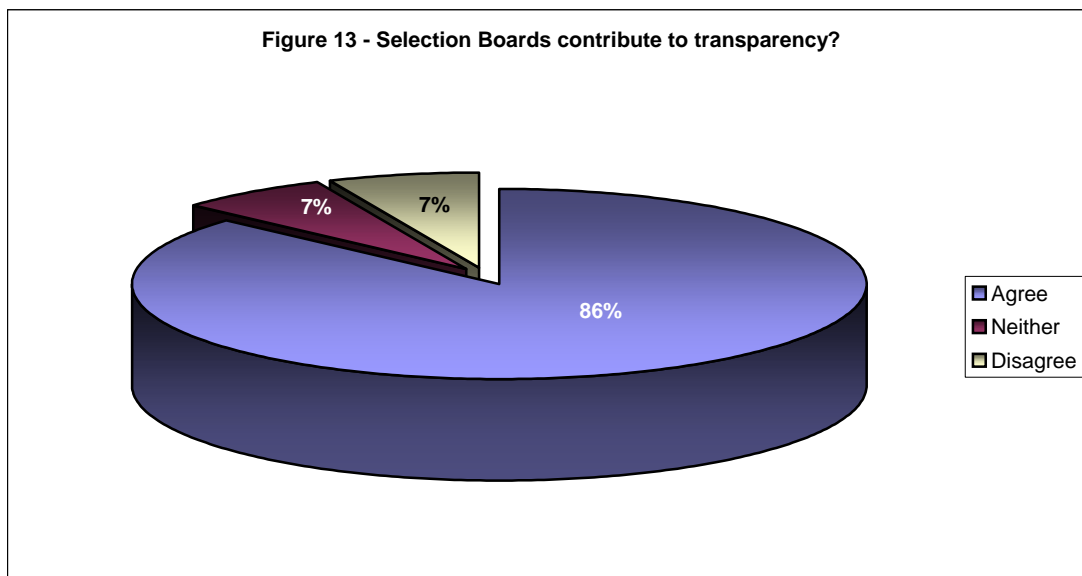
98% of Technical Panel Members (including Responsible Chiefs) saw ranking as essential or important...compared with only seven respondents (2%) who disagreed.

Figure 12 provides a very important complement to the information received on satisfaction levels by region, as reported above. According to the members themselves, including representatives of management, their impression of the Selection Board has been overwhelmingly positive (70% “positive”, including nearly a quarter responding “very positive”) with only 8% responding “somewhat negative” and only *one respondent* (0.6%) reporting a “very negative” impression. Removing “neutral” responses, and the Selection Board members report a positive experience at a rate of nearly 9 to 1 (89.5% positive vs. 10.5% negative).



Selection Board members were also asked to respond to a series of questions, indicating the extent to which they agreed with a given statement. Nearly two-thirds *disagreed* with the notion that the Selection Board “was the reason why the recruitment and selection process was too long”, compared to only 23% who agreed with this statement.

Figure 13 shows that nearly all respondents (86%) agreed that the Selection Boards contributed to the transparency of the recruitment and selection procedures, with fewer than 7% (6.7%) of respondents disagreeing with this statement. Similarly, fewer than 5% of respondents disagreed with the idea that Staff Representatives played a constructive role in the process, compared with more than 70% who believed that staff representatives were constructive counterparts.



More than three-quarters of respondents believed that the Selection Board built the confidence of the staff in the recruitment and selection procedures. Most importantly, nearly 72% of respondents agreed that the Selection Board allowed all

parties to ensure the fairest, most objective outcomes in a recruitment and selection procedure. This appears to fit well with the evidence provided by our Regional Titular Committee Member from the Americas, who reports that in 85% of cases, the management follows the recommendations of their Selection Boards.

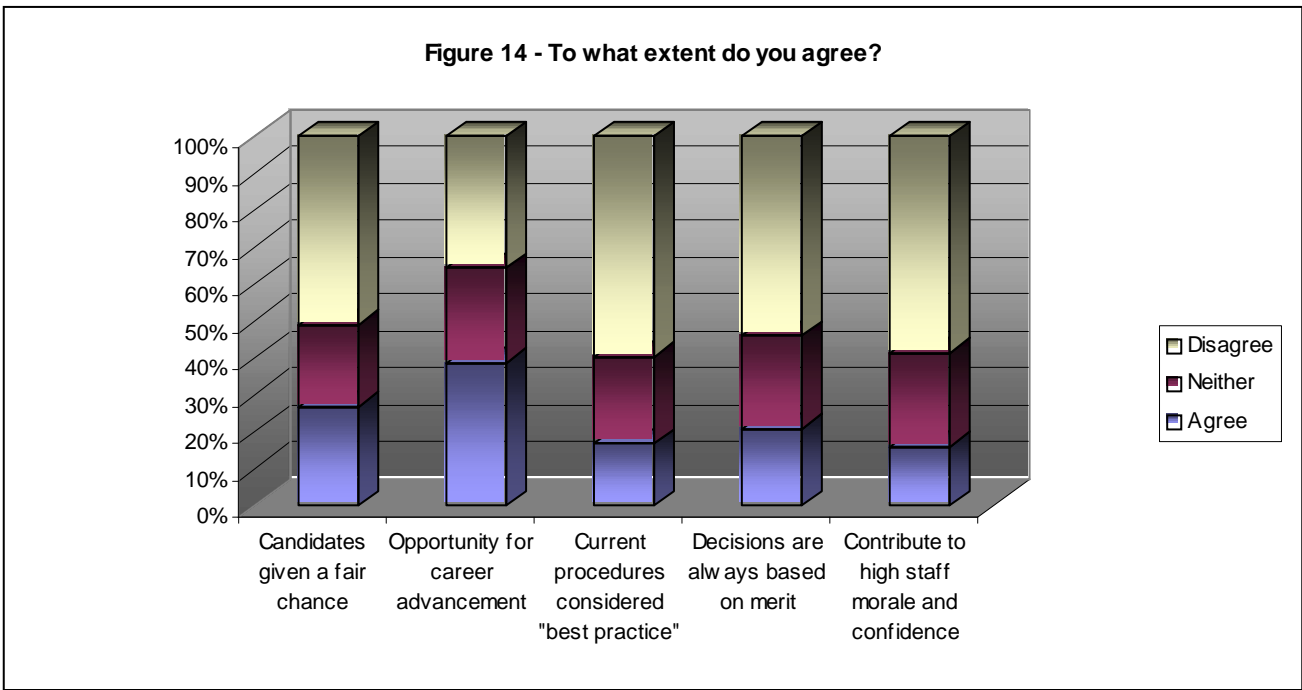
Perhaps most importantly, 67% of respondents believed that staff were happy to have a Selection Board in their office, compared with only 3% who believed staff were unhappy with the Selection Board.

Priorities for Bargaining

This section was intended to collect the views of all staff on a variety of subjects, with a view to identifying those issues which would serve as the main priorities for the Staff Union during the bargaining process. Nearly 900 staff responded to this section of the questionnaire.

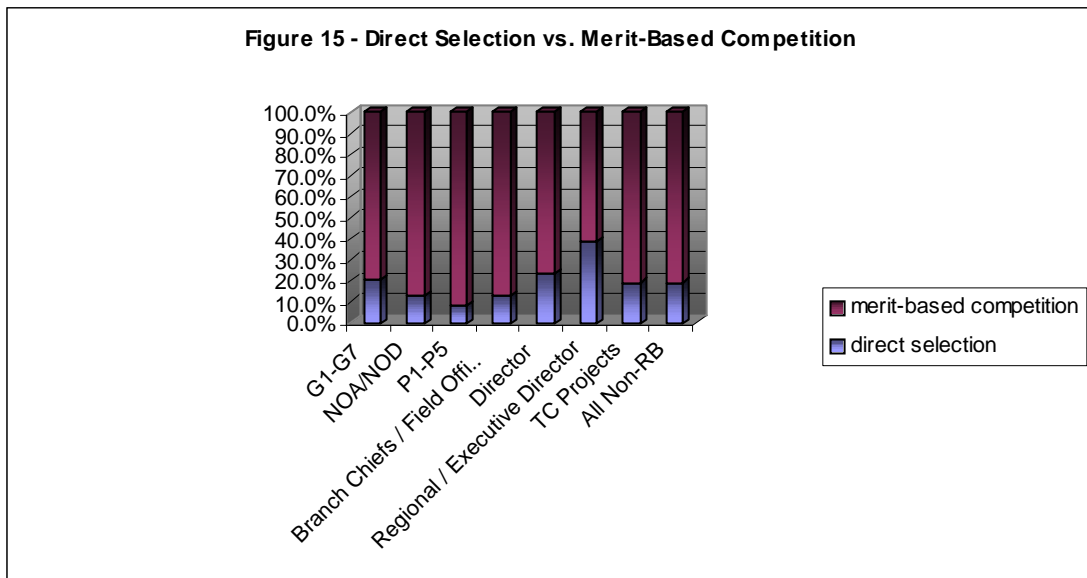
*“More than **three-quarters** of respondents believed that the Selection Board **built the confidence of the staff in the recruitment and selection procedures.**”*

This section began with a series of questions regarding the extent to which staff agreed with a series of statements, which were aimed to gauge confidence levels in the current system. Figure 14 provides an overview of responses, to such statements as: “I feel that candidates are always given a fair chance in recruitment and selection procedures” (51% disagree, 27% agree); “The recruitment and selection procedures provide an opportunity for career advancement of staff” (39% agree, 36% disagree); “The current recruitment and selection procedures can be considered “best practice” (60% disagree, 17% agree); “Selection decisions are always based on merit” (54% disagree, 21% agree), and “The current recruitment and selection procedures contribute to high staff morale and confidence” (59% disagree, 16% agree).

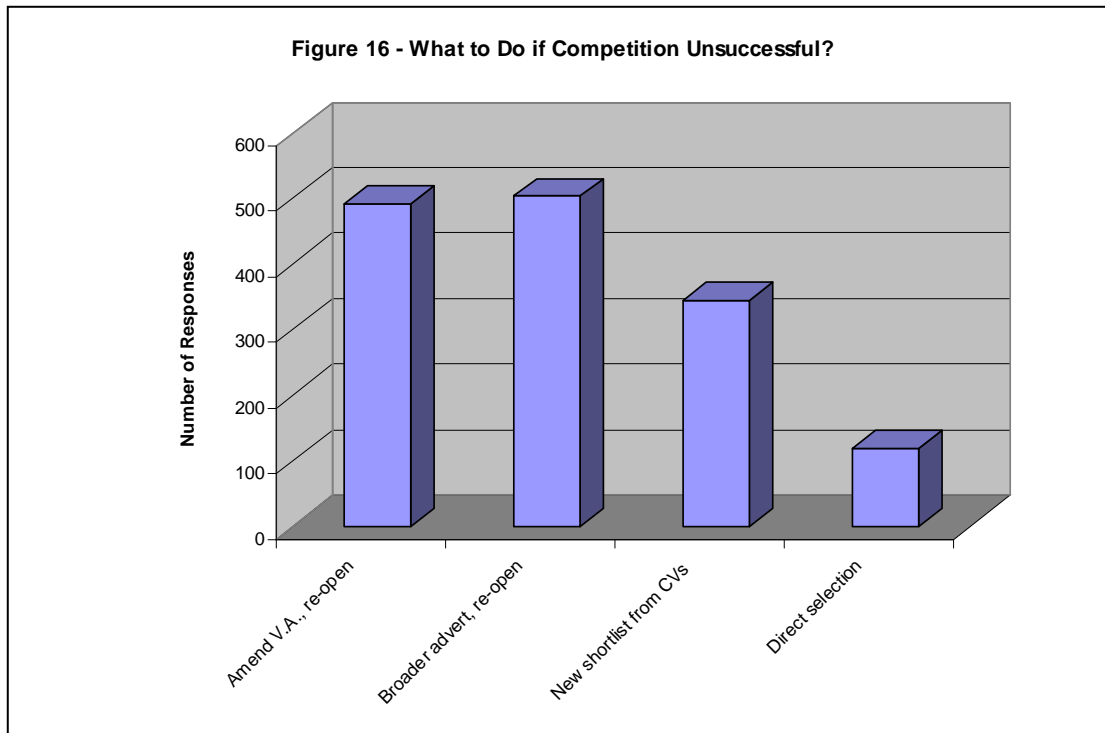


It should be noted here that the patterns of selections were very similar between Gs and Ps in this section. While Professional staff tended to be more likely to choose "strongly disagree", both General Service and Professional Staff had the same options as their "most selected" category (strongly agree, agree, etc.) for each of the five different statements.

Next, staff were asked their opinion on when recruitment should be carried out through merit-based competition, as opposed to when it should be subject to direct selection by the Director-General. Here, staff responded overwhelmingly in favour of merit-based competition. In each case, the majority called for competitions, including at the level of Regional and Executive Director. What was surprising was the extent to which staff were calling for competitions, from 61% (Regional / Executive Directors) to 92% (P1-P5). For G1-G7, 80% were in favour of competitions, staff were 87% in favour of competitions for NOA-NOD. The same held true for Branch Chiefs / Field Office Directors (87%), D1-D2 (76%) and all non-Regular Budget, including TC Projects (81%).



When asked what should be done if a competition was declared unsuccessful, the majority of respondents identified a number of logical steps to re-opening the competition either with broader advertisement or with an amended vacancy announcement. Consideration should also be given to the pool of existing CVs, which, for reasons of artificial limitations to the shortlist, may contain other candidates meeting the minimum qualifications. The choice which was *by far* the least popular, was the one which the Office uses currently, "direct selection without competition". It is clear that the staff are keen to avoid this scenario, as it opens the door to arbitrariness and abuse. On more than one occasion, the Union has received comments from colleagues that a particular manager *intentionally* declared a competition unsuccessful in order to get their preferred candidate – who themselves showed no interest in the post by submitting an application.



It is difficult to imagine how this approach produces more reliable results in comparison to a merit-based selection procedure. Even if there have not been such abuses as outlined above, this is an area requiring immediate attention in order to avoid such problems (or potential problems) in the future.

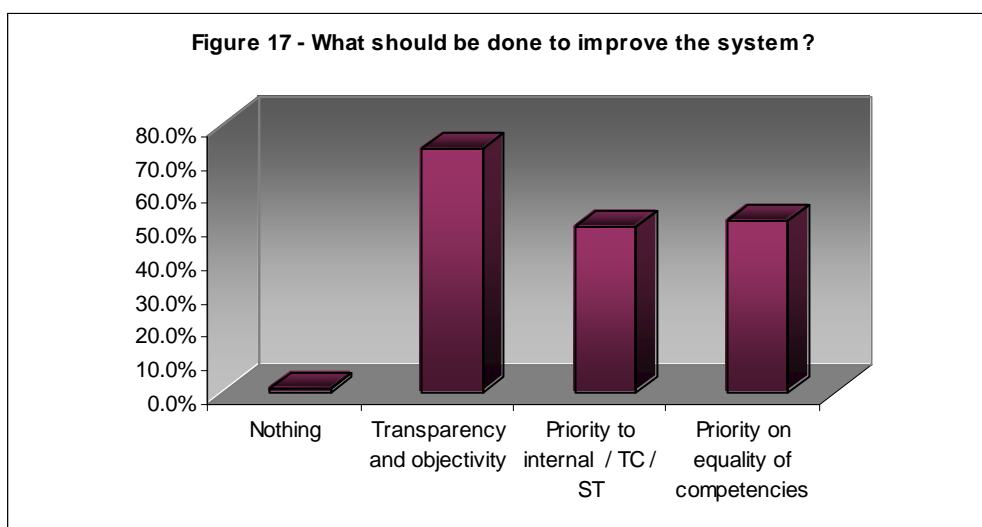
The staff responded overwhelmingly with regard to preference being given to current employees. When asked, “Should current employees (including those who have more than 5 years on Technical Cooperation projects or Short-Term contracts, and have passed the Assessment Centre) have preference over people off the street for job openings?” 82% replied positively.

When considering the conditions under which in-grade transfers could be made *without competition* the top five responses, in order of importance, were:

1. Only with the staff member’s consent (518 responses)
2. To implement the mobility policy (447 responses)
3. For documented humanitarian cases (365 responses)
4. To resolve problems or disputes in a work unit (356 responses)
5. Following consultation with the Union (355 responses)

Whereas 98% of respondents believed that it was either “very important” or “important” to improve promotional opportunities, and 96% believed that career development initiatives would lead to greater motivation and job satisfaction, *two-thirds of staff* did not believe the current staff development and learning programme contributed to career advancement. These results were similar among GS and P staff, as well as between those based in the field and those in headquarters.

Staff were also asked “what more should be done” to improve the system, with the responses calling loudly (73%) for greater transparency and objectivity. In addition, giving priority consideration to staff currently in the employment of the ILO, whether internal candidates, staff having served the office over a long period on technical cooperation or staff on a long series of short-term contracts, was an important priority. This is equally true for giving priority *before* considering external candidates (i.e., if a suitable internal (ST/TC) candidate is found, external applications are not considered), and for priority to be given on *equality of competencies* with externals. However given the great difficulty in quantifying exact “equality” between internal and external candidates, and the risk of unfairly influencing the outcome to ensure there is no equality, and to favour one candidate, the former option would be preferable.



While it is clear that the staff are seeking means of addressing the growing precariousness among the ILO workforce, providing “internal” status for TC and ST staff requires a measured and rules-based approach. The Staff Union will put together a proposal calling for internal status to be provided once a staff member has more than five (5) years in the Office, and after having passed the Assessment and Development Centre. In addition, considerations related to grading, training and other key issues must be taken into account.

Two open-ended questions were included at the end of the questionnaire, one allowing staff to provide inputs when expressing themselves on that more should be done to improve the system, and the other aimed at gathering any other comments staff wished to share. Over one hundred distinct responses were received in respect of the first question, and nearly 300 comments were offered in the latter instance. For reasons of both space and confidentiality, these comments will not be reproduced here. However, it should be noted that the most widespread comments involved:

- Expressions of frustration with perceived cases of favoritism, nepotism or outside political influence;
- Staff wishing to see a return to a fully merit-based system, with numerous references to the importance of ranking and identifying the most qualified for the job;

- Calls for greater consideration to be given to service within the ILO, including on TC and ST contracts;
- Requests that internal status to be given to TC and ST staff after a certain time, with some calling for internal consideration even without time limits;
- Clear demands for a more coherent career development policy, including to assist G / NO staff to pass to the P Category;
- Demands for a fair, effective and consistently applied mobility policy, giving particular attention to movements from the field to HQ, and allowing for moves from RB to TC without losing the right to return;
- Staff members sought the strong involvement of the Staff Union throughout the process;
- Many believed that open competition was necessary for positions up to and including Directors;
- A number of candidates expressed their disappointment with the levels of information and feedback provided to them, and expressed their wish for greater – and more timely – information to be shared with unsuccessful candidates, and
- The efficiency of the system was a concern for some staff, who wanted to see less bureaucracy.

The overall written comments have been shared, in their entirety, with the Staff Union team who are in the process of renegotiating the Collective Agreement on a procedure for recruitment and selection.
