

ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF INCOME FOR FICSA

History

Worldwide, trade union density (number of trade union members versus number of total workforce) has been in a declining trend, as can be seen in various researches and through a simple online search on Google Images through the link below:

<https://www.google.com/search?q=trade+union+density+trend&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X>

The same trend is also having an impact on FICSA member associations and unions. There is therefore an urgent need for FICSA to consider alternative funding sources in order to be sustainable in the long run. It has become noticeable in recent years that some FICSA members are having difficulty in meeting their dues commitment, owing to factors such as lower membership dues collection, lower financial aid from the organization, etc.

These FICSA members are however willing, and have the capacity, to contribute in a non-financial manner (in-kind contribution) but the current system does not permit this type of practice. As a result, any member with financial constraints are requested to submit a special request for reduced dues for FICSA Council's consideration.

In the past, in-kind contributions, or contributions of staff manpower, building/rental, etc., to offset FICSA membership dues, were allowed. However, no mechanism was in place to ensure this would be done in a fair and transparent manner. As such, it was sometimes perceived that parties were taking advantage of this mechanism to reduce their dues, whilst not contributing anything of a similar value, for example, providing FICSA with an office and charging FICSA rental as in-kind contribution, when the office is actually provided by the administration for free and at no cost to the FICSA member.

Proposal

FICSA should leverage on its members strengths and diversity in order to carry out its work. It should allow in-kind contributions to be made to FICSA, subject to its needs and fair, transparent, neutral valuation.

One aspect where this could be utilized is in the use of consultants. From time to time, the work of FICSA requires the secretariat or the Executive Committee to obtain external expertise or manpower to carry out specific tasks, such as issuing contracts for consultants to carry out research on legal issues or to expert statisticians, independent reviewers, etc. or offering internship opportunities where students can help out with some of the work while

at the same time learn about FICSA and the international organizations. The latter would be at minimal cost to the Federation. The costs of consultancy in 2017 amounted to **CHF 93,500** (an increase due to the unfilled position of Information Officer) and **CHF 70,000** in 2016.

Some of the work performed by consultants includes:

1. Professional accountancy services by an accountant – to assist the FICSA secretariat in Geneva one half-day per week to verify and check all the Federation’s financial transactions and to enter the data using an accounting tool called Cresus (<https://www.epsitec.ch/>)
2. Professional research usually performed by qualified international lawyers to obtain legal opinions or legal positions on specific subject matters.
3. Professional research regarding past FICSA topics or positions (backfilling the work of the Information Officer) to obtain or create a new FICSA position or a conference room paper.
4. General support work when administrative staff in the office are absent / away / retired / posts unfilled, etc.
5. Work to translate documents, materials from English to French or vice-versa.

Considering the situation, it would make sense to first perform insourcing if a new task has to be performed by FICSA i.e. to look from within the FICSA membership for the same expertise, talent or skills required for FICSA to carry out its mandate and as such reimburse the relevant FICSA member through a reduction or rebate on their fees equivalent to the value of the work undertaken by the consultant.

One risk is delay to the work, as it might take a while for FICSA members to reply to any advertisement for consultancy work. It is therefore expected that strict deadlines would be imposed. In the event that there is no reply from the members, FICSA would immediately reach out to external resources to carry out its work.

The following general terms of reference could be adopted to allow this:

- FICSA would identify its needs, in terms of the specific work required, duration, effort estimate, and quantify in terms of value if it were to source out the work to external consultants and inform all FICSA members of the terms of reference (ToR) of the work required and the estimated value (based on whether it is carried out commercially by an outsourced provider within the UN or by retired experts).
- Members of FICSA who have the capacity and capability to meet FICSA’s requirements such as providing a professional/chartered accountant, legal adviser/retainer, researcher, administrative staff who can be loaned, can do so by sending in writing its proposal to FICSA, within the stipulated deadline.
- If the FICSA member agrees, a contract would be signed with FICSA to perform and deliver the work, and the estimated value would be credited towards the FICSA member’s dues upon certified acceptance/receipt of the work and at the value as stated in the ToR and accepted by FICSA.
- Work modality, whether remotely, in FICSA’s premises, through teleconference/email, etc., will depend on the deliverables required.
- All work remains the property of FICSA.

The second part where FICSA could save costs would be in travel for missions, by cost-sharing with individual member staff associations/unions when the missions overlap or if the representative could take a dual role to represent both FICSA and their association/union at the same platform.

Any FICSA member could opt to share the travel costs of FICSA-related missions with their own staff association/union or organization, if they were going to attend the same meeting or undertake the same mission on behalf of their own staff association/union or organization, provided that they agree to represent both and that there would be no conflict of interest in representing FICSA and their own staff association/union or organization in the same fora. In such a situation, a cost sharing arrangement could be discussed and agreed to with FICSA in advance that that a credit could be made towards the dues of the FICSA member association/union. For example, FICSA and the staff association/union could share the travel cost 50/50.

Any FICSA member could also donate, provide, furnish or give FICSA any resources voluntarily without requesting any credit against dues, if they wish to do so. For example, many members have combined FICSA duty travel with that of their organization or went on FICSA missions paid for by their organization or staff association/union to alleviate costs to FICSA. The member could therefore opt to consider such activities as a voluntary donation towards their dues without requesting any credit. However, if they wished to have the funds credited to their dues, they would have to seek prior authorization in writing by the FICSA Executive Committee, stipulating the portion which needed to be covered by FICSA versus the staff association/union or organization. No credit could be granted after the event if approval was not sought beforehand.

Alternative funding sources for FICSA – Corporate sponsorship/organizing events/fundraising

The new FICSA website has a crowdfunding feature so that members of the public can donate or support the work of the Federation through online donations. It is envisaged that if people browse our website and are able to find valuable resources published there and also find the work of FICSA to be important, they may make small donations to the Federation. While this may not be sufficient to offset the membership's dues, it might at least cover small expenses such as the web hosting itself.

Secondly, FICSA should actively seek donation/sponsorship from related NGOs/organizations which are willing to support the Federation's work. It could also organize activities for fundraising, such as sports events or gala dinners, where the income received after deducting costs, could be used to increase the Federation's funds.

Thirdly, FICSA workshops, although primarily its intention is to serve member's needs and build member's capacity, should also be leveraged as a potential revenue stream. A good communication network and strategy should be in place to attract more non-FICSA participants, since a lot of feedback received by workshop participants is that they did not know about the workshop since they were not affiliated and as such did not use the FICSA website. Perhaps a network of inter-agency email focal points could be identified and used,

that could forward FICSA circulars to their own network. Members in each duty station around the world should also play a vital role in spreading the news, forwarding communication, promoting workshop to their network.

Corporate sponsorship from FICSA partnering banks such as UNFCU, AMFIE has always been a practice during FICSA Councils. However, seeing that FICSA provides such corporations or coops with a network of potential new members and customers, we should discuss further with such entities (and any other similar entities) on how they could provide more sponsorship in return for being able to attend the FICSA Councils or in sending promotional materials to the FICSA membership.
