



Federation of International
Civil Servants' Associations

Briefing on FICSA participation in the 42nd session of ACPAQ

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42nd session of ACPAQ

FICSA as well as the other staff Federations participated (as observers) in the 42nd session of the Advisory Committee on Post Adjustment Questions (ACPAQ): an expert subsidiary body of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) that provides technical advice on the methodology applied to the post adjustment system.

ACPAQ usually meets every year to review methodological and other technical issues related to the operation of the post adjustment system, and makes recommendations for ICSC's consideration and approval.

42nd session of ACPAQ

The main agenda items of interest to FICSA and our members at that session were relevant to:

1. Methodological issues pertaining to the compilation of the post adjustment index and, in particular;
2. The preparations for a new round of surveys to be launched in June 2021.

42nd session of ACPAQ

The Committee's recommendations, based on its review of proposals for refinements to the cost-of-living methodology, will be submitted for approval to the ICSC at its ninety-first session, 3-7 May 2021.

42nd session of ACPAQ

Along with the revised system of operational rules that was approved by the Commission at its ninetieth session the Committee's recommendations, if approved by the 91st ICSC Session, are expected to form the basis for the methodology underpinning the post adjustment system for the round of surveys in 2021.

FICSA position

In view of the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic, with attendant shifts in expenditure patterns and price structures, as well as the potential for disruptions in data collection in general, **FICSA asked about the criteria that the ICSC will use to determine whether a baseline survey should or should not take place.**

FICSA position

FICSA also sought assurances that the ICSC would take measures to mitigate any negative impact of the global pandemic on the salaries of Professional staff in the duty stations concerned.

ICSC position

The Chair of ACPAQ pointed out that the ICSC secretariat would continue on the assumption that the launch of the 2021 round of surveys would go ahead, as scheduled, in June 2021, starting with the baseline survey in New York.

ICSC position

The ICSC also explained that the cost-of-living survey methodology and operational rules are designed to:

1. Incorporate changes in macro-economic indicators and consumer behaviour, as well as
2. the impact of any exogenous factors such as COVID-19 on these data points.

ICSC position

The ICSC continues to be of the opinion that the best way to account for the impact of COVID 19 is to:

1. Conduct a survey at the material point in time, and
2. To do so more frequently in the future, in order to capture any changes in expenditure patterns and price structures over time.

What are the options?

In the absence of a survey, the cost-of-living data collected in 2016 would continue to be updated on the basis of 2016 expenditure patterns, which do not reflect the current reality, and thus might not be in the best interest of staff.

What does this mean?

In essence, if no survey is conducted in 2021, the ICSC regular updating process will continue to assign more importance to categories on which staff spend less money currently than in 2016 (for instance, air travel, vacations, restaurants, haircuts, etc) and less importance to categories on which staff spend more money currently than in 2016 (for instance, electronic items, computers, online shopping with attendant high costs, higher housing-related costs, etc.).

What can we do?

Following the request of FICSA, the ACPAQ agreed that prior to launching the revised ICSC pricing and expenditures survey, the staff federations would nominate staff from various duty stations to test and provide feedback on the draft survey. Their comments could thus be fed into the design of the survey and so ensure that the questions asked would be clear, concise and comprehensible.

What can we do?

Immediately following the ACPAQ meeting, FICSA members were invited to reach out to their staff members at P and D levels to participate in the testing of the survey. Their comments will be taken into consideration by the ICSC.

The way forward / next steps for FICSA

- Test the draft staff expenditures questionnaire and provide feedback to ICSC
- Assist member organizations in the establishment of Local Survey Committees (LSCs)
- Provide briefings to LSCs and raise awareness to encourage staff participation

The way forward / next steps for FICSA members

- Regularly monitor the macro-economic indicators and the feasibility of the cost-of-living survey in the duty station and inform FICSA of any concerns
- FICSA members should ensure their participation in LSC
- LSC should channel its feedback through the lead Organization/Agency who will confirm with the ICSC Secretariat if the cost of living survey could go ahead as planned or if it should be postponed until the situation would improve.



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