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Streamlining UNESCO's Official Travel

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IOS input to simplify UNESCO Official Travel

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key results

As part of a process simplification initiative undertaken by the Administrative Manual Working Group, IOS facilitated a workshop with the Headquarter Administrative Officers to clarify and simplify UNESCO's texts and procedures related to official travel.

The workshop participants identified 75 items to be addressed covering policy issues, simplification proposals, textual inconsistencies and clarifications on application of procedures.

As a follow-up action to the workshop, primary authors agreed to compile and issue a list of commonly asked questions and answers related to travel procedures and to conduct joint studies and revisions of the Administrative and Human Resource Manuals.

1.   Background, Scope and Objectives

In April 2010, the Administrative Manual Working Group proposed using the Administrative Manual as a platform for streamlining and simplifying UNESCO's processes and procedures.

The Administrative Officers (AOs) at Headquarters, as first-line users of the Manual, requested a forum to foster a common understanding of the rules and procedures, share best practices amongst AO units and facilitate ownership of the Administrative Manual.

Official travel is an integral part of programme implementation and covers up to 12 percent of UNESCO's programme budget in 35 C/5. As a pilot, IOS facilitated a workshop to help AOs provide inputs to improve the Manual items under official travel.

The objectives of the workshop were to:
1) Ensure ownership of the Administrative Manual by its primary users;
2) Achieve a common understanding of the rules and procedures;
3) Harmonize and foster best practices amongst AO units;
4) Have clear, simple and cost effective administrative texts and procedures.

2.   Methodology of the AO workshop

The workshop covered rules and procedures in the following six areas:
1) Introduction, definitions and categories of official travel;
2) General rules applicable to all official travel;
3) General rules for travel on mission;
4) Procedures for travel on mission;
5) Statutory travel;
6) Travel of the members of the Executive Board.

Under each topic, reviewers presented:
1) an overall objective of the item;
2) operational constraints due to over-controlled processes, errors in the administrative text (contradictions, omissions, repetition, unclear text and terminology) and tools;
3) possible solutions to address these issues.

Primary authors (BOC, HRM and ERC) provided clarifications during the workshop. IOS facilitated the workshop and recorded the issues raised, clarifications and proposals.

The proposed planning to simplify official travel is given below:

No	Step	Responsible	Deadline
1	AOs' workshop – review of travel processes	AOs, IOS	15 June
2	Provide questions & answers on Official Travel – clarifications on travel rules and procedures	BOC, HRM	30 September
3	Propose simplified Manual items and process	AM Working Group	TBD
4	Draft simplified items	BOC, HRM, BFC	TDB
5	Validate the simplified items	AM Working Group	TBD

This report will be submitted to the AM Working Group in September 2010. The Working Group may use contents of this report to further review and simplify the related administrative texts.

Annex 1 lists key proposals, inconsistencies in texts/procedures, simplifications and actions agreed during the Workshop. Alongside, clarifications provided by primary authors are also noted. In response to queries raised, primary authors agreed to provide an elaborate list of "Questions & Answers on Official Travel" in September 2010. The Workshop Matrix was distributed to the AOs and primaries on 15 July 2010.

3.   Summary of findings

To optimize the results of this workshop, the issues raised are grouped in four general categories:

1) Policy related issues,
2) Simplifications proposed,
3) Inconsistencies in texts/procedures,
4) Clarifications requested.

The table below provides a summary of above the issues.

Category	No. of issues raised	Agreed actions
Policy related issues	4	Follow-up actions agreed with primaries
Simplifications proposed in procedures	4	Manual revision by BOC and HRM
Inconsistencies in texts/procedures in AM and HR Manuals	10	Manual revision by BOC and HRM
Clarifications requested to primaries	57	Q & A to be provided by BOC and HRM
TOTAL	**75**	

4.   Annexes
1.   Workshop Matrix "HQ Administrative Officers review of Official Travel"
2.   List of Workshop participants
3.   List of administrative texts and other sources related to UNESCO's official travel