

SHIF General Meeting

The General Meeting was opened by the Chairperson Jean-François Santarelli, followed by a presentation by the Executive Secretary Florian Léger (see <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/shif>). Subsequently the Executive Secretary of the Former Officials Section and several other members of the Bureau spoke, as well as the Chairperson of the Staff Union Committee and a number of other participants. There were numerous comments, questions and observations, covering both governance and the reimbursement of benefits.

In the area of benefits, many expressed their surprise that some drugs were no longer reimbursed as they had been in the past. The reply from SHIF was that it follows in particular the Swiss Federal Law on Health Insurance, as well as those in the respective countries where the drugs are purchased: policies in these countries can change over time. Various speakers felt that neither hospitalization costs in general nor the agreements reached between international organizations' health funds and the various providers, especially hospitals, are very transparent. Bills sometimes appear higher than they should be. The maximum reimbursement threshold of US\$ 150,000 may in certain cases be exceeded upon the decision of the permanent subcommittee or the Executive Secretary of the SHIF as provided for in the Statuts

Concerning management of the Fund, reimbursement delays, particularly for beneficiaries in the Geneva region, have been reduced thanks to the recruitment of two people. A third person will be hired very soon. But the possibilities for improving the reimbursement of benefits for staff in the regions remain problematic because other factors linked to the routing of claims and payments also play a role. Less easy to understand is the delay in the publication of annual financial reports, the most recent being the one for 2012. No plausible explanation for this delay has been provided by the SHIF secretariat. Another point raised: the increase in contributions, which the Bureau of the Section had advised members to vote against, came into force on 1 January 2017. Changes in the ceiling for certain benefits have also been in effect since 1 January 2016. Retired staff are nonetheless anxious to know the results of the new actuarial study that has just been completed. Several participants were also surprised by the lack of response from the SHIF secretariat to their letters and emails. The Executive Secretary of the SHIF acknowledged the shortcomings in this area and the efforts that still need to be made. Finally, questions were raised on the high management fee of the assets of the Fund by external service providers and the high cost that this entails, financed from its technical rather than administrative budget.

The Fund is currently subject to an external audit following the decision taken by the DG in May 2016. This audit mainly focuses on governance, with fears resurfacing about the management of benefits again being entrusted to an external service provider. Such audits had already been carried out in the mid-nineties (1996) and in 2005. The result was in-house management being maintained, which has the particular advantage that SHIF technical staff know the situation on the ground and can be in close contact with members.

To conclude on an optimistic note, retired staff recognize all the efforts made to improve the timeframe for reimbursement of benefits by the SHIF and trust the Management Committee to pursue improvements in the area of governance which raises questions which will not go away.

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