

Directive 8

Office of the
Principal Permanent Secretary

DIRECTIVE 8 - DECISION-MAKING STANDARDS RELATED TO HR ENTITLEMENTS AND SERVICES OFFERED BY THE PUBLIC SERVICE TO ITS EMPLOYEES

Issued on 16 October 2014 by the Principal Permanent Secretary in terms of the Public Administration Act.

This Directive applies in full to the Public Service that is, all Ministries and Departments of Government as defined by the Constitution or the Public Administration Act (Second Schedule).

1. AIM

1.1. This Directive concerns the improvement of the quality of services provided internally by the Public Service to its employees. It aims to ensure that employees are afforded with timely information, guidance and decisions on entitlements or services accessible to them. The Directive is an integral part of the process to instil awareness across the entire Public Service of the commitment towards quality assurance that every Officer has to both internal and external clients.

1.2. This Directive sets out quality standards defining maximum timeframes within which information, guidance and decisions on entitlements and services are to be provided.

1.3. The Directive also defines the mechanisms and structures by which adherence to these standards is ensured.

1.4. The primary aim of this Directive is to promote a commitment to service quality where services are provided internally within Government.

2. GENERAL PROVISIONS

2.1. This Directive is complementary and in addition to the provisions of Directive 4 - Consolidated Service Quality Standards, which relates to services provided by the Public Service to its external clients (<https://intra.gov.mt/file-attachments-2010-1/directive-4-updated>).

2.2. All requests submitted by employees for information, guidance and decisions on applicable entitlements or services shall be dealt with as specified in [Annex 1](#).

2.3. It is the responsibility of the receiving office to ensure that the accepted application is in full compliance with the governing policies and procedures and that it meets the required criteria and has the necessary information for it to be dealt with expeditiously.

2.4. All standards and timeframes identified in this Directive are applicable as of the date of receipt of a complete submission.

2.5. Any office handling any application or any request for guidance or information shall ensure that this is dealt with in full compliance with governing policies and procedures and / or where applicable, shall afford the employee with timely, accurate and comprehensive information or guidance as may be requested and which is necessary for perusal by the employee.

2.6. All applications and queries received shall be checked and acknowledged in a formal way, conventionally or electronically, within five (5) working days of receipt – provided that such acknowledgment is not necessary where the query has been satisfied immediately by telephone, in person or electronically to the employee.

2.7. All formal acknowledgements shall include the following general information:

- i. What is being acknowledged to have been received and from whom;
- ii. The case reference number where applicable;
- iii. The contact details to be used by the employee for follow-up purposes;

2.8. Without prejudice to the provisions of Article 2.9 below, where an application for an entitlement or a service is not decided on within the timeframe established by this Directive, it shall automatically be deemed that the decision is a positive approval to the submitted request – provided that this principle is not applicable to those entitlements or services for which the timeframes are classified as indicative and non-binding in Annex 1 of this Directive, provided that this principle is not applicable to decisions taken by entities outside the Public Service.

2.9. In the case of exceptional and complex situations wherein it results that it is not possible to issue a definitive reply within the timeframe stipulated in Annex I, the employee shall be afforded with a written explanation of the reasons why timeframes cannot be complied with. This written explanation shall be sent to the employee as early as possible from when it becomes evident that timeframes cannot be complied with. The written explanation shall give information on:

- i. The case details in question (applicant and entitlement or service);

- ii. The case reference number where applicable;
- iii. The reasons why the timeframes could not be complied with;
- iv. The date by which the employee shall be given a definitive decision;
- v. The contact details to be used by the employee for follow-up purposes;
and
- vi. That the application, query or request for information or guidance is being given priority with a view of its settlement as early as practical.

3. APPLICATION OF THIS DIRECTIVE

3.1. The standards, identified in this Directive, concern entitlements and services provided to public officers in relation to the Categories identified in [Annex 1](#) hereunder.

3.2. In general, the responsibility to ensure compliance with the standards and provisions of this Directive rests in the Officer responsible to address and/or authorise employees in availing the entitlements and services identified in Annex I.

4. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CENTRAL EMPLOYEE RELATIONS UNIT WITHIN PAHRO AND THE MINISTRY'S EMPLOYEE RELATIONS OFFICE ACROSS ALL MINISTRIES

4.1. A Central Employee Relations Unit shall be established within the Public Administration HR Office (PAHRO). A Ministry Employee Relations Office shall be established within all ministries.

4.2. Employees who feel aggrieved by the noncompliance to this Directive or by a decision taken, may launch an appeal to the respective Ministry's Employee Relations Office or the Central Employee Relations Unit within PAHRO as per procedure outlined in [Annex 2](#) of this Directive.

4.3. The newly founded Central Employee Relations Unit will take charge of the functions and responsibilities previously executed by the Client Support Unit (vide PAHRO Circular No. 28/2010) that in turn is being disbanded.

4.4. The principal responsibility of the Central Employee Relations Unit is to afford a readily accessible and effective avenue for aggrieved public employees to present and have their personal case independently reviewed and if so deemed appropriate, provide redress.

4.5. Furthermore, the Central Employee Relations Unit is appointed as the responsible entity to monitor compliance to the provisions of this Directive.

4.6. The roles, functions, policies and procedures pertaining to the Central Employee Relations Unit and the Ministry Employee Relations Offices are those defined in the Annex 2 to this Directive.

4.7. With regard to the Ministry Employee Relations Office, Ministries can define the model to be applied in establishing the Office, provided the provisions of this Directive are satisfied.

4.8. The Ministry Employee Relations Office shall have a single contact point who will be a Public Officer holding an appointment in Scale 10 or higher. Additional Officers proportional to the work load may be allocated to the Employee Relations Office, and in executing their respective duties, these shall report to the appointed Single Contact Point.

4.9. Ministries shall inform the Central Employee Relations Unit (PAHRO) with the relevant details of the Ministry Employee Relations Office's staff before the lapse of twenty working days from the issue of this Directive.

4.10. Ministries shall ensure that all staff within their Ministries are aware of the establishment of the Employee Relations Office within their Ministry before the lapse of the twenty working days from the issue of this Directive. Ministries shall also ensure that employees are also aware of the roles and responsibilities of the Ministry Employee Relations Office and the Central Employee Relations Unit and how to access their respective services.

5. IMPLEMENTATION

5.1. Unless otherwise defined, the provisions of this Directive shall come into force as of 01st January 2015.

5.2. Any pending submissions that were received prior to the coming into force of this Directive and for which the applicable timeframe has been exceeded shall be decided within five (5) working days of its coming into force.

5.3. Permanent Secretaries, Directors General and Heads of Department shall bring the Directive to the attention of all staff.

5.4. Failure to abide by this Directive is to be regarded as grounds for disciplinary proceedings.

5.5. This Directive applies indefinitely unless specifically revoked or amended by the Office of the Principal Permanent Secretary.

Attached:

- Annex I: Guidelines for Entitlements, Obligations and Standard Timeframes.
- Annex II: Policies and Procedures Manual for the Central Employee Relations Unit and the Ministry Employee Relations Offices.

Principal Permanent Secretary

Mario Cutajar