

23 June 2022

LSCTH meets Site Manager VP1

Report on meeting with VP1 joined by VP4 on 13 June 2022

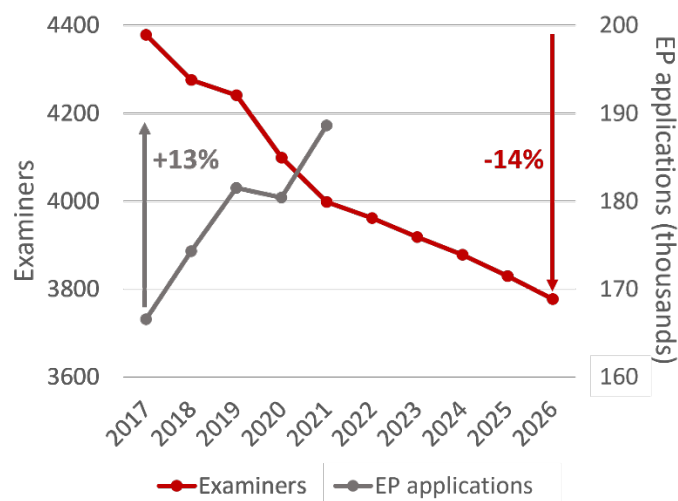
Dear colleagues,

On 13.06.2022 the LSCTH had its fourth meeting with VP1 in his function of Site Manager The Hague together with VP4 and other members of the administration in order to discuss issues regarding staff in TH. During the meeting the following points have been discussed:

1: Production Pressure

- Replacement rate and increase in filings

The Staff Representation (SR) pointed to the low replacement rate of examiners and rising application numbers¹.



In this context it, is inevitable that the production pressure on colleagues has increased. With this in mind the following questions were asked:

- Is it not reasonable to look carefully and realistically at how we want to achieve the production objectives?
- How is the health of our colleagues being safeguarded in view of the pressure they feel?
- How is the investment of colleagues in OCFD and in strategic projects being valued so that the colleagues are not frustrated?

¹ See also [slide 14 of LSTCH GA, CA/50/21](#) p14, [CA/100/21](#) p6+8, [Patent Index 2021](#). Up to date figures show a -11% drop in examiner numbers over 2017-2026 as the planned replacement rate has increased since this graph was made.

Management answered:

- Non examiner staff: 50% replacement rate, 0% replacement rate for FOs for the time being, but this isn't definite. Looking at reskilling and how skills can be used efficiently;
- Some teams in chronic under and others in over capacity;
- Objectives are based on number of examiners available and not on the filings;
- There are more than 2000 withdrawals behind plan;
- DG1 needs to do quality, production, investments in SP2023;
- Examiners can only do what they can do. Colleagues put themselves under pressure because they want to give a good service. TMs who have only a certain capacity are told that they should not try to do more;
- Whatever workload cannot be dealt with is the problem of management, and not the responsibility of the individual staff members.

SR pointed out that under capacity is mentioned much more often than overcapacity by staff and kindly requested transparency about where the claimed over capacity lies in the Office. Furthermore, SR clarified that production pressure is created by the workload coming into colleagues intrays combined with tight timeliness targets and quality requirements – all being equally important.

- **Harmonisation efforts**

SR pointed to the “harmonisation” efforts made after merging of directorates due to the DG1 reorganisation which has been a cause of increased stress because of imposed changes on well-established and legally certain working procedures by some directors, which are inappropriate to the fields that have been merged. For example, SR is aware of teams where colleagues are strongly advised not to apply some legal provisions for financial reasons, or because our “customers” do not like them.

Management answered that they have been made aware of this; harmonization between sites is good for applicants as there should be consistency of practice between MU and TH. However, harmonization needs a discussion and should not be imposed. Management stated that they will follow up on this with SR.

- **Contradictory instructions from COO and VP1**

SR pointed to the fact that some teams receive contradictory instructions from VP1 and COO which creates stress. One example: message has been sent by team managers as coming from COO: "Teleworking is not a right, it is a privilege to be earned by production" Is that supported by VP1 + the President?

Both VP1 and VP4 replied very clearly that teleworking – also from abroad - is a right. Only in very exceptional cases would a request for teleworking be denied: if nothing is working (collaboration, production, etc...) then a colleague would be asked to return to Office premises. VP1 promised that this message would be reinforced in management meetings with team managers.

2: Job Group 5&6:

SR kindly requested to reschedule an appointment which had previously been turned down by management.

Management replied that written proposals are preferred but will look into scheduling the

appointment.

3: Education allowance reform:

- Siblings:

SR reiterated the concern that a group of 29 parents are under increased stress due to some siblings being included in the transitional measures whereas the other(s) is/are not. The request made during the GCC was reiterated: a group solution is urgently needed for the colleagues concerned to have legal certainty. Furthermore, the group will phase out in time.

The administration replied that a group solution would only create another subgroup.

- Education portal:

SR noted that colleagues are having trouble with asking for tuition fee advancement. The administration replied that if parents have questions, they should refer to HR, which has contacted all parents in ASH who have not filed a request.

- Mandatory trips

SR raised the concern of mandatory trips not being included in the reimbursement of school fees.

The administration replied that the aim is to treat all parents in the same way: all residential trips - even if mandatory and included in the curriculum - are excluded from tuition fees reimbursement.

Management added that transparency about what is and what isn't covered will be provided. SR pointed that staff does not feel supported, this exclusion was unexpected and never discussed.

AOB1: Mandatory skill self-assessment:

SR kindly requested from management to publish to staff the missing information:

- how the skill assessment will be used,
- considering that staff is being asked to spend time filling in the assessment and attending meetings, what benefit has been identified?

VP1 replied that this will be done shortly.

AOB2: Back to the office:

SR raised the following questions:

- Why isn't staff representation being consulted²?
- Kind request to VP1 to publish to staff clear policies so as to ensure harmonisation and avoid different interpretations by line managers.

Management replied that:

- no buildings will be sold and colleagues will have their own office if and when they want one;
- there are no changes in working conditions, the pilot of hotelling (room booking for the day) in the ISAR building was a success.

² See also [LSCMN's publication](#) on the topic, [CSC request for consultation](#) and [CSC reflections on hot-desking](#).

Conclusion

SR notes that some clarity was found on certain aspects:

- although permission from the line manager must be sought there is a presumption that teleworking from abroad is allowed;
- staff is only expected to do their best, and to work collaboratively and if there are red files remaining then this is a matter for the TM, Director and senior team working with colleagues from across the office to ensure that we have the right capacity in the right areas;
- no buildings will be sold³ and colleagues will have their own office if and when they want one.

Many topics still need clarification or further discussion.

With kind regards,

Your Local Staff Committee The Hague ([LSCTH](#))



Stay informed by receiving staff representation announcements [directly in your outlook inbox](#), joining our [MSTEAMS \(UPDATED!\)](#) or visiting our [intranet-page](#).

³ No mention was made of whether buildings would be destroyed.