



Resolution 2206 (2018)¹

Jurisdictional immunity of international organisations and rights of their staff

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly refers to its [Resolution 1979 \(2014\)](#) on accountability of international organisations for human rights violations, which underlines the fact that international organisations are subject to human rights obligations.
2. The Assembly notes that international civil service law is not codified and employment disputes are dealt with in accordance with the rules governing the functioning of international organisations that are found in their statutes or regulations, and not in national law.
3. The Assembly notes that international organisations enjoy jurisdictional immunity, which is a “functional” immunity that can be waived only in exceptional circumstances. In accordance with the established case law of the European Court of Human Rights in cases concerning employment disputes opposing members of staff to international organisations, waiving this immunity can be an option only if there are no other “reasonable alternative means” of protecting the rights of those concerned.
4. The Assembly stresses that the staff of international organisations enjoy the human rights and fundamental freedoms guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5, “the Convention”), and in particular the right of access to a tribunal and a fair trial in the event of a dispute with their employers (Article 6 of the Convention) and the right to freedom of association (Article 11 of the Convention), as well as the European Social Charter (ETS Nos. 35 and 163). Nonetheless, it notes that there is frequently a lack of democratic and media scrutiny of the functioning of international organisations, which can result in the concealment of certain abuses, especially in the context of employment disputes.
5. The Assembly considers that the Council of Europe member States should exercise greater scrutiny regarding the functioning of international organisations, with a focus on whether the human rights and fundamental freedoms of staff are upheld, and in particular whether staff members have access to a “tribunal” within the meaning of Article 6 of the Convention.
6. In the light of the above, the Assembly recommends that member States of the Council of Europe and the international organisations to which they belong:
 - 6.1. introduce, in international organisations, “reasonable alternative means of legally protecting” the rights of staff, in accordance with Article 6 of the Convention, in all cases where such means of redress are not yet available (if appropriate, especially for smaller international organisations, by submitting to the jurisdiction of tribunals established within other international organisations);
 - 6.2. ensure that these means of redress are also available to trade unions or other groups (such as staff committees and staff associations) working to protect the rights of staff;

1. *Assembly debate* on 26 January 2018 (9th Sitting) (see [Doc. 14443](#), report of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, rapporteur: Mr Volker Ullrich; and [Doc. 14487](#), opinion of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, rapporteur: Mr Stefan Schennach). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 26 January 2018 (9th Sitting).

See also [Recommendation 2122 \(2018\)](#).



6.3. introduce procedures for lodging appeals against decisions of the internal tribunals of international organisations in employment disputes, ideally by creating tribunals of appeal, where they do not yet exist, for the more established internal tribunals (such as the Administrative Tribunal of the International Labour Organization and the Administrative Tribunal of the Council of Europe), and by having smaller international organisations submit to their jurisdiction;

6.4. ensure that internal redress mechanisms at all levels are independent and impartial, respect the principle of equality of arms and issue reasoned decisions, and that these mechanisms are given the means to operate effectively and without undue interference so that decisions are fair and taken within a reasonable time;

6.5. ensure transparency of the work of international organisations and that information on procedures relating to employment disputes is accessible to their staff.