

Process of Conflict Resolution at Institute of Atmospheric Physics of the Czech Academy of Sciences, v. v. i.

1. Introduction

The aim of this document is to familiarise all the employees of the Institute of Atmospheric Physics of the Czech Academy of Sciences (hereinafter referred to as the “IAP”) with a procedure that should be observed in the event of a problem in the workplace that cannot be resolved by the participants themselves. In resolving any conflict, escalation mechanism should always be preferred, i.e. involving the immediate superior in the resolution. If this is not possible for any reason, the issue should be raised to the next level of management.

2. Division of possible conflicts and to whom to turn

a) employment conflicts

Employment relationships are regulated by the Labour Code, i.e. Act No. 262/2006 Sb. This document incorporates also the relevant EU regulations. The purpose of the above document is, among others, to protect employees and to ensure equal treatment of them. The IAP has a Trade Union Organisation, which ensures that all the statutory rights of employees under the Labour Code are complied with.

In resolving employment conflicts, the members of the Trade Union Organisation may consult a legal advisor of the Czech and Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions and the Trade Union of Workers in Science and Research (OS PVV) <https://www.cmkos.cz/cs/obsah/228/pravni-poradenstvi-pro-cleny-cmkos>. The consultations are free. An applicant for legal advice will contact the Trade Union Organisation at the IAP, which will issue and confirm an application and provide contact details of a legal advisor. Employees who are not members of the Trade Union Organisation may raise a question and the Trade Union Organisation Committee at the IAP will pass it to the legal advice office.

The legal advice office of the OS PVV will help in all matters concerning work and employment relationships (e.g. consultation on the wording of a new employment contract, its amendments etc. proposed by the employer), work conditions, agreements on work performed outside an employment relationship (agreement to complete a job, agreement to perform work), collective bargaining, remuneration, circumstances in the workplace (e.g. mobbing, bullying, discrimination) etc. It is possible to help draw up written documents (e.g. notice of termination, action). The area of social security is closely related to the labour law. Free legal representation is provided to the members of the Trade Union Organisation in both these areas.

b) interpersonal conflicts

This type of conflicts is the most frequent not only in the workplace; it occurs mainly due to diversity of human nature and difference in opinion. It may often be caused by misunderstanding, taking information out of context. The main emphasis should be placed on keeping a level head and communicating the problem among the participants. Should parties with different opinions fail to reach a mutual settlement, the conflict should be according to the escalation mechanism raised to the next level of management (head of the department → Director). Another option is to seek the help of an uninvolved third person, a mediator. The mediator may be either a person from the respective institution, or an external professional who nevertheless must gain an understanding of the institution's operational procedures prior to the mediation session in order to be able to conduct the session in an even-handed manner. The mediator's role is not to be a judge; the mediator does not decide which party is right or wrong. The mediator tries together with the parties to find such a solution to the problem which could be acceptable for both conflicting parties (for more details, see e.g. www.amcr.cz).

Communication skills and assertive behaviour may be developed through thematic courses and training, which may be paid from the education funds within the individual departments.

c) conflicts related to intellectual property

Intellectual property is covered, besides statutory rules (e.g. Act No. 121/2000 Sb., the Copyright Act), also under Guideline No. 2018/05, The Manner of Disposal of the Results of Research, Development and Innovation Activities, posted on the IAP's internal website. The Code of Ethics for Researchers of the Czech Academy of Sciences is also an important document. This document is based on the European Charter for Researchers and other internationally recognised documents. Point VII of this Code provides guidance on procedures to be followed when the principles of proper conduct in science and research are violated. In the first place, the problem should be resolved directly at the workplace where the problem occurred. If the conflict is beyond the workplace, or if the workplace is unable to resolve it itself, it is possible to address the Committee for Ethics in Science of the Czech Academy of Sciences which was established for these purposes. Contact details of the secretary of this Committee are published on the website of the Czech Academy of Sciences.

d) conflicts related to the contradictions in the attestation procedure/evaluations

The positions of university-educated employees of the Institute are regulated by the Career Development Rules of the Czech Academy of Sciences which also include the summary of the procedure of evaluations (Article V). If a conflict arises in relation to the result of the evaluation procedure between the personnel evaluation committee and the assessed employee, the employee is entitled to draw up in writing his comments and objections. These comments will be attached to the conclusions of the personnel evaluation committee and together with them they will be submitted to the Institute's Director.

3. Conclusion

Conflict is a normal phenomenon in human society; it is not necessarily only an unpleasant part of life but it may have a positive effect too. Conflicts of opinion may contribute to better organisation of the society and better interpersonal communication. Besides communication skills, the ability to listen to others and also the ability to accept compromise so that the resolution is beneficial to both conflicting parties are of crucial importance.