

Information Note

UNOPS Mobility framework
December 2025

I. Introduction

1. In line with Executive Board decision 2025/19, this information note provides an update on UNOPS' progress in developing a mobility framework for "regional directors, country directors, heads of programmes, operational managers, and senior headquarters management".
2. Mobility is a core component of UNOPS' cultural transformation and supports the priority to invest in people and build a future-ready workforce. Deploying a skilled, agile and adaptable workforce where it is most needed contributes to meeting partner expectations, strengthening organizational agility, and speeding up and scaling up delivery as set out in the 2026–2029 Strategic Plan. As such, the development of a mobility framework is also a key action in the UNOPS Integrated People Strategy (IPS).
3. This information note sets out where current mobility patterns are failing to reinforce UNOPS's culture transformation, and how the mobility framework will change those patterns in line with IPS People Goal 5 to develop an empowered workforce that is continuously building its skills for the future. It further outlines the mechanics of the mobility framework, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and the priorities for the transition period of 2026-2027.

II. Mobility patterns in UNOPS

4. The average time that international personnel spend on a post in UNOPS is 3.9 years for international professional staff (IP) and 2.4 years for International Individual Contractor Agreement (IICA) holders, indicating that most international personnel are changing positions fairly regularly. Yet, the data also indicates some segments of the workforce are less mobile than others. Although only 10% of all international personnel have spent seven years or more in the same position, 80% of them are at ICS10 levels or higher, and they are predominantly in Copenhagen, Geneva or New York.
5. Similarly, while more than 3/4 of the Global Leadership Network (GLN)¹ have served in two or more positions in UNOPS, almost half have served in only one duty station in UNOPS. UNOPS is a mobile organization, but current mobility patterns are not strategic in reinforcing the culture priorities to increase collaboration across the organization or building a global workforce for tomorrow. Limited mobility at higher levels and in H-category duty stations² are clear contributors to challenges highlighted in the KPMG review, including career development frustrations and divisions between HQ and other (regional and country) offices.

III. Design considerations and mobility objectives

6. UNOPS' relatively small size and the inclusion of both international staff (IP) and IICA positions in the workforce, and the positions highlighted in decision 2025/19 were key in shaping the design of the mobility framework. Analysis of the leadership positions demonstrated that there were insufficient posts to facilitate centrally managed mobility common in other UN entities, through which personnel are simultaneously moved at the end of their 'tour of duty'. Implementing such a framework in UNOPS would require moving personnel primarily on the basis of generic leadership skills at the expense of specialized technical skills, creating possible performance risks and requiring a significant investment in resources to manage mobility.

¹ The positions listed in EB decision 2025/19 are part of the Management Team and the larger Global Leadership Network.

² UN duty stations are classified by hardship levels from A (easiest) to E (most difficult), with H denoting Headquarters locations.

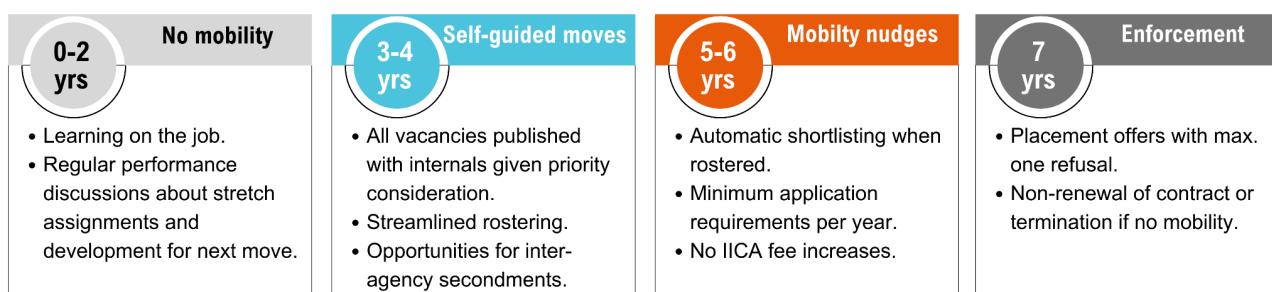
7. Consequently, the framework builds on existing mobility through a flexible approach that empowers personnel to continuously build their skills by regularly changing positions. 'Organizational nudges' are built in to redirect, rather than to simply increase, mobility patterns that are not in line with UNOPS culture transformation. UNOPS' Management Team endorsed this approach, clarifying that the objectives for the framework and organizational nudges were to:

1. Increase mobility between regions, and in particular between HQ and the field;
2. Increase mobility at senior level, and as a priority for the MT and GLN;
3. Enhance UNOPS' duty of care to its personnel, in particular in D/E-category duty stations;
4. Enhance career development for all international personnel.

IV. The Mobility Framework

8. The underlying premise of the mobility framework is that international personnel in UNOPS' regular workforce³ are expected to move to a new position approximately every three to six years, and that most personnel would not remain in the same position for longer than seven years. Some positions that require niche expertise or longer term incumbency may be excluded from the framework. .

9. Through improvements to UNOPS' talent acquisition process and strengthened career pathways, personnel move by applying to and being selected to a different position that they choose and which fits their career aspirations and personal or family needs. Personnel who engage early with mobility decide their type of mobility - lateral, vertical, functional or geographic, all of which add value to their development and the organization. Personnel failing to apply to a broad range of positions or struggling to be selected, will receive mobility nudges to facilitate a move within six years (or slightly earlier for those in D/E duty stations). Those who are still not mobile are subject to enforcement measures. The graphic below outlines the phases and elements of the mobility framework.



10. The flexibility of the model along with the organizational nudges and tools to foster self-guided mobility, are designed to address UNOPS' particular mobility needs. It discourages, for example, any international personnel from spending more than seven years in the same position. As these personnel move out of their positions, more opportunities are created for other personnel to move into those positions. This is particularly valuable in bringing agility and new perspectives to leadership roles and in H-category duty stations (Copenhagen, Geneva and New York), which have experienced less mobility than other regions. Mobility is therefore about redirecting mobility in a more balanced manner across all duty stations, as compared to the current situation where geographic mobility happens predominantly across field locations. It therefore aims to improve the return on investment of mobility expenditures more than increasing the cost of mobility.

³ The 'regular international workforce' consists of International Professional Staff (IP) and International Individual Contractor Agreement Personnel (IICA) who are not on hosted or project positions.

11. A more balanced approach to all forms of mobility also increases the development opportunities for all personnel. Accordingly, success will be measured through a consistent increase in engagement survey scores on learning and development, as well as the following KPIs:

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	2025 Baseline	2027 Transition Target	2030 Final Target
International Personnel reaching 7+ years in same position	10%	7%	2%
International Personnel moving themselves every 3-6 years	77%	87%	98%
Proportion of geographic moves that are to/from HQ	35%	38%	45%
Average tenure in post in D/E hardship	3.4 yrs	3 yrs	3 yrs

V. Implementation and transition arrangements

12. The mobility framework will be implemented prospectively, with some transitional adjustments intended to facilitate mobility amongst the GLN during the two year transition period (2026 - 2027). These include automatic shortlisting when GLN members apply to positions for which they are rostered, and use of the Executive Director's lateral placement authority to facilitate placements and post swaps for the priority target group of GLN members who have been on the same position for seven years or more.

13. For sustainability and a lasting culture shift, mobility implementation will be integrated within ongoing organizational people-centric transformations. Talent Acquisition and Performance Management policies are key enablers and will integrate mobility as a core component of their ongoing revisions. Talent+, UNOPS' new recruitment and onboarding platform, and the Enterprise Resource Planning system, OneUNOPS, are other key enablers that will be configured for mobility during 2026 and 2027. In parallel with operationalizing these enablers, the focus during the 2026-2027 transition period will be to facilitate the aforementioned leadership movement, prior to full implementation of the framework in 2028.

VII. Conclusion

14. By providing a structured approach that facilitates knowledge-sharing, continuous development and organizational agility, the UNOPS mobility framework represents a key milestone in the organization's culture transformation journey and its investment in people.

15. UNOPS invites the Executive Board to take note of UNOPS' mobility framework and the planned implementation during the 2026–2027 transition period.