WHAT NEXT: AN ASSOCIATION BOARD'S CHECKLIST

This year's remuneration survey points to a clear governance message: how boards support, structure and invest in their secretariats increasingly shapes association performance and leadership retention.

Association leaders face greater policy volatility, sustained workloads and rising expectations around development, professional support and organisational clarity. Yet, as the most recent study results demonstrated, many associations still rely on informal practices, including discretionary salary reviews, limited benchmarking, ad hoc training budgets and weak succession planning.

The question this raises for boards is straightforward: is the secretariat managed as a strategic, long-term asset, or simply expected to absorb growing pressure?

2nd Joint ESAE-Mavence Survey on
Leadership Structures in European Associations

MAVENCE ESAE

KEY QUESTIONS FOR BOARDS

1. SALARY REVIEW:
Do we have a structured salary review process, or are increases handled on a discretionary basis?

2. BENCHMARKING:
Do we benchmark leadership compensation against comparable associations by size, sector, seniority and scope of responsibility?

3. RETENTION RISK:
Do we know what would make senior staff leave?

4. FINANCIAL PLANNING:
Are we creating adequate financial space for salary progression, team development and inflation-related adjustments?

5. DEVELOPMENT:
Are we ensuring that the Secretary General and senior team have the mandate, resources and time to support real professional development, or does development depend mainly on ad hoc training requests?

6. LEADERSHIP SUPPORT:
Are we treating coaching, mentoring or peer support as part of the leadership infrastructure of the organisation, or as an optional personal benefit?

7. SUCCESSION PLANNING:
Do we have a succession plan for key leadership roles, or would the organisation be exposed if a senior leader left unexpectedly?

Strong, professional and resilient secretariats do not happen by accident. Boards that formalise salary reviews, benchmark compensation, create financial space for salary progression and development, invest in leadership support and plan for succession will be better placed to attract, retain and support the leadership talent their associations need.