

Workshop talks good governance for better social security services

An international workshop themed “Good Governance for Better Social Security Services” was held in Ho Chi Minh City on July 17 by the Vietnam Social Security (VSS), which also holds the chair of the ASEAN Social Security Association (ASSA) for 2018 – 2019.

This was an important event among activities of the ASSA’s action plan, approved at this association’s 35th Board Meeting in Vietnam in 2018, and on the threshold of the country’s ASEAN Chairmanship next year.

Giving an overview of good governance, Ortiz D. Maribel, an expert from the International Social Security Association (ISSA), said governance is the way in which authorities perform their tasks to achieve targets.

There are several principles that must be ensured in governance, namely transparency, responsibility, forecasting, connection among parties concerned and dynamism. These are the factors that social security organisations need to have to improve their governance efficiency; create positive, effective and more equal changes; and become trustworthy partners of clients and participants.

She suggested social security organisations set up targets, standards and scores to assess their performance. In particular, they should devise mechanisms to encourage staff members to improve their knowledge and sense of responsibility in regards to the organisations’ activities.

Echoing the view on the need for good governance, World Bank expert Philip O’Keefe said governance efficiency can be evaluated via client satisfaction. To win over clients, managers should be dynamic and actively interact with their clients.

He cited the results of a survey of 6,000 managers as showing that among the decisive factors for the success of efficiency improvement, managers’ interaction was mentioned three times more frequently than others. However, managers can’t interact with clients on their own, especially managers of social security organisations whose targeted group is big. Therefore, managers need to know clients’ demands, their organisations’ structure and staff’s skills to make changes to satisfy clients.

O’Keefe also mentioned technology, noting that when services are provided online, the community becomes more cohesive and demand for more channels to access online social security services or other services also increases. Therefore, technological changes require social security organisations to make changes and improve themselves to better serve clients.

According to head of the National ASEAN 2020 Secretariat Nguyen Viet Dung, the social security system of ASEAN is entering a new development period with challenges posed by globalisation, the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0) and the free movement of skilled labour in the region.

“To turn challenges into opportunities, ASSA needs to adopt a creative approach with a long-

term vision to bring into play experience and technology of its member organisations, while connecting effectively to capitalise on the strength of the whole association for sustainable social security for all people in the ASEAN Community,” he said.

At the workshop, Azirruan Bin Arifin from the Social Security Organisation of Malaysia said there are some similarities between corporate governance and social security governance. The important thing is the culture of an organisation, not only how to achieve its targets. Good governance also requires good personnel and policies.

On the concentration of information into the national insurance database to improve governance, Deputy Director of the VSS’s IT Centre Nguyen Hoang Phuong said this is a focal task for VSS leaders. About 4.7 million paper dossiers of social insurance participants have been digitalised into 25 million e-pages so far to serve activities of social security agencies. In the past, it could take local VSS units weeks to search for and handle dossiers, but now they only need seconds.

IT use has helped reduce paper dossiers considerably, he said, adding that in 2018, the information system for health insurance eligibility verification received more than 160 million e-dossiers seeking medical examination and treatment payments. The sector’s e-portal also received nearly 50 million dossiers of all types.

At the event, participants discussed good governance for better social security services, Industry 4.0’s impact on good governance, IT application to the provision of occupational accident insurance benefits, Industry 4.0 and the national database, Japan’s system for drug price management, management of drug prices in negotiations, and solutions for pharmaceutical management through concentrated tendering and drug price negotiations.

In his concluding speech, VSS Deputy Director General and ASSA Secretary General for 2018 – 2019 Dao Viet Anh highly valued the participation of Vietnamese and foreign experts at the workshop. Their suggestions will help improve governance efficiency and standardise social security services provided for people in ASSA member countries.

He said that following this workshop, there will be an array of events to promote awareness and change governance methods to ensure people and businesses’ satisfaction. The VSS, along with other regional social security organisations, has been working on this issue.

“We can hope that the social security system of ASEAN will become an advanced governance system in the world in the near future,” Anh added./.