

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD, 15-16 JUNE 1998.

Present

Dr Asherson (Chairperson), M. Weber, M.Carlslund, M.Boisnel, M.Richard, M.Wilders, Sr.Gómez-Hortigüela, Mr Haigh, Sr.Biosca, Mr Konkolewsky, Mr Riese, Sr. Pijuan and Ms Valentiny (minutes secretary).

Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Mr Larsson.

Item 1: Adoption of the draft agenda (B/98/A2)

1.The agenda was adopted as tabled.

Item 2: Draft minutes of the meeting of 23 February 1998 (B/98/M1)

2.The Chairperson suggested amending paragraph 25 to read “This item was withdrawn from the agenda” and the first sentence of paragraph 26 to be changed to read the same. Mr Carlslund suggested that paragraph 26, second sentence should read “the list...was shown to members.” rather than “was circulated to members”.

3.The Chairperson asked for the Action points to be listed separately, showing which had been discharged.

The minutes were agreed as amended and it was agreed that the Action points should be listed separately. (Action point 1)

Item 3: Director’s progress report (oral)

Information network

4.All the Thematic Network Groups were up and running and their future work would be discussed under item 5. The Director reported that he had visited 10 Focal Points to meet the national networks, obtain an overview of their activities and to explain the Agency’s work. He had noted differences in their development, especially where separate Ministries handled health and safety. However, he was very pleased to note that all the

Focal Points had made positive developments in establishing or maintaining their national networks.

Internet

5.The Agency was working with Member States to develop the content and co-ordinating this with DG VF. A meeting had also been arranged with the Director of the Office for Publications to discuss making the full text of European directives available. There were potential difficulties as this service was currently was charged for.

Information services

6.The first edition of the Newsletter had been printed and the second edition was given to members. The quality of the content from all contributors was high. A database was being set up with the National Editors. The first edition of the Magazine would be ready by late 1998, based on a thematic approach and dealing with a topical issue.

7.The Agency was organising a major conference from 19-21 October jointly with the Austrian Presidency in Bilbao on “The Changing World of Work”. It would run in parallel with a Spanish event during the “European Week of Health and Safety”, with common opening and closing sessions. The Finnish, German, Swedish and UK Presidency’s had been encouraged to take part. (see also paragraph 42)

8.A small seminar was proposed for November, probably the day before the Board meeting, to follow up the National Priorities and Programmes report, on the subject of “New developments in OSH management”. A workshop was also being organised with the Swedish Institute on valorisation of research. (see also paragraph 43)

9.The Agency continued to receive and action information requests from the MS and from the Commission.

Information projects

10.The State of OSH project was progressing well and a good draft manual was being developed with the MS help (copy in Bureau papers). The final version would be sent to Bureau and Board members.**[Horst – do we want to keep this in, as we are not giving the September Bureau a copy??]** National replies were expected by the end of 1998 and the Agency’s consolidated report in early 1999.

11.Work on the follow up to the National Priorities and Programmes report was on-going and the report on the Economic Impact of OSH would be printed in September. Follow-up action on the latter was being considered.

12.The Research TNG was preparing a request to MS on data collection about existing databases and developing links to them. A data collection model had also been

developed on information about research needs and priorities and the model would be sent out for comment.

13.The Practical Solutions TNG had developed a data collection model in parallel with the Research TNG and both groups agreed on the need for continued collaboration.

14.The Information Society conference was now called the Changing World of Work (as mentioned) and work on OSH campaigns would begin in 1999.

Staffing

15.Recruitment of the A and B posts was continuing and the Director welcomed Ulrich Riese as the head of the OSH Unit. The Agency would have 26-28 staff in post by the end of 1998. Offers had been made to 4 B post applicants, whose replies were awaited, and to 1 A level on the reserve list. The Temporary B Accountant post had been offered to Paul Cladas after a selection procedure assisted by the Commission. The interviews for local staff had been completed and offers would be made this week. There had been a lot of well-qualified local candidates.

Resources

16.The European Parliament had released the reserve. The Court of Auditors had visited the Agency in April and their first draft report had just been received. A copy of their final report would be sent to the Bureau and Board. The draft report confirms that the Agency had improved its financial management a lot but there were still criticisms of some systems. However the new flexible approach of DG X1X would allow the Agency to set up a new, flexible budget system.

17.The Chairperson thanked the Director for his report and asked if there were questions on it. There were a number of points raised by the members and the following points were made:

- spare articles not used in the Newsletter would be put on the Agency's website;
- trades unions and employers' organisations could be included in the collection of information on practical solutions in MS (referred to in Ad.3 of Annex 5);
- the Commission agreed to investigate if there was a JANUS database and if so, to send it to the Agency;
- replies to Agency questionnaires could reflect different viewpoints but should be a consolidated, national reply;
- Community funds would not be used for double expenditure in the October conference;
- Any work on OSH management systems would be on information exchanges and there was no danger of duplicating the Commission's work;
- the Agency would continue to avoid imposing English in its activities;
- The Practical Solutions TNG had received the Solbase database and would consider the group's work in future;

- The question of how the Agency handles requests for information from the Commission needed discussion and the Agency would draft a model for discussion at the next Bureau meeting.

The Commission agreed to send the JANUS database to the Agency (Action point 2). The Court of Auditor's final report would be sent to Bureau and Board members (Action point 3).

The Agency and the Commission would draft a model for dealing with information requests from the Commission, to be discussed at the next meeting (Action point 4).

Item 4: Update on current Mandates (B/98/5)

18. The Director explained that the Environment Agency had established Topic Centres on a subvention programme based on contracts. The Agency planned to organise consortia via the Focal Points. The contracts would be for 3 years, flexible, multi-national and closely linked to the activities in the Work Programme and Four-Year Rolling Programme. The principal of annual budgets would not be changed. He wanted the Bureau's views on this proposal and if it was worth exploring the Environment Agency model further.

19. The Freedom of Information rules had been amended to take account of the Commission's Legal Services' comments and a copy of their comments circulated to members. The Memorandum of Understanding with the Dublin Foundation had also been amended to take account of comments from Mr Gómez-Hortigüela and the Commission's Legal Services. The Bureau was asked to approve the final drafts of both documents.

The Bureau approved the Agency rules on Freedom of Information and the Memorandum of Understanding with the Dublin Foundation.

Item 5: Draft catalogue of Agency activities 1999-2002 (B/98/6)

20. The Director introduced the document by saying that the Chairperson and he had agreed to present the Agency's initial ideas for its future Work Programme to this meeting, rather than waiting until the September meeting as had happened in 1997. It was based on a number of documents including the Agency's own Work Programme 1998 and the current Four Year Rolling Programme, the Commission's draft mid-term report and the comments of the Advisory Committee, especially on the National Priorities and Programmes report. It was structured in the same way as the Work Programme 1998.

1. Information Network

1.1 Organisation.

21. The Director said that the Agency had firstly established the European network and was now moving to develop Topic Centres to improve the way projects were handled.

Enlargement was the biggest challenge and the Agency had received a request from DG1 for help. The reply would be co-ordinated with DGV. On infrastructure, there was a need for health and safety experts on short and long term contracts and DG1 asked if the Agency could facilitate organising their recruitment via the Focal Points. The other question was how to get information to the applicant countries.

22. In discussion the following points were made:

- Partnership arrangements would mean benefits flowing both to and from Europe;
- Search engines would be developed to link with other organisations e.g. ILO, NIOSH etc.;
- The Agency should take account of the Board's discussion of enlargement at the meeting in February 1998;
- It would be very useful to involve the CEECs in the State of OSH project and to get information from them, but as they do not have a Focal Point structure, this would need further discussion.

Enlargement/Agenda 2000 would be discussed at the September Bureau meeting and at the November Board meeting, if appropriate (Action point 5).

1.2 Technology

23. The Director explained that this covered how the Agency would help the MS and that the aim was to reflect the user's needs and improve the user-friendliness of the site.

1.3 Information content

24. The aim was to make detailed information available on the subjects listed, starting with legislation and OSH systems, and to have a multi-lingual site. The plans for redesigning the website would be discussed with the Internet group before the end of June. The Agency also planned to give all the answers to information requests to the Focal Points and they might be put on the Internet. This would be discussed with the Commission and would exclude political requests.

In order to clarify these two sections, the Director agreed that the Agency would give a presentation of the plans for the new site at the September Bureau meeting. (Action point 6)

2. Information services

25. The Director said that the Agency would do another User survey after the third Newsletter, as it was a useful tool to obtain feedback. A number of national organisations had contacted the Agency for help in organising conferences. Section 2.5 on a European OSH college was intended to support the exchange of expert knowledge on training, not to organise training. Section 2.6 and 2.7 had been discussed earlier.

26. In discussion, the following points were made:

2.3 Conferences and seminars

- Members wanted more information, especially on the October conference. The Director explained that more detail on the latter would be given under the Information projects section;
- A conference on a subject in the Work Programme for Board members was suggested.

2.4 European Film and Multimedia Festival

- The Commission confirmed that as this was an information exercise, it may be appropriate for the Agency to handle it. Members cautiously agreed.

2.5 European OSH College

- The Commission could not accept this, considering that it was outside the Regulation and some other members expressed concern;
- Other members were supportive and suggested exploring whether it was feasible;
- The Chairperson suggested it be held over until the Regulation was reviewed.

2.6 Information requests

- Concern was expressed about whether the Agency had the resources to do all this work;
- It was important to understand the types of question the Commission was asking and how best to answer them.
- It was agreed that the Agency and the Commission needed to discuss this further and the September meeting would consider a model (See Action point 4).

2.7 Enlargement

- It was essential to include enlargement in the Work Programme, especially as DG1 had asked for the Agency's help on the subject, but it was also important to work closely with DGV.

27. The Chairperson asked for the Agency to provide an indication of the resources needed to complete each part of the Work Programme to the next Bureau meeting.

The Director agreed to provide more detail on each issue and include an indication of the resources need for each part (Action point 7).

3.Information projects

28.General points made by the members in discussion on this section were:

- There was a heavy programme of conferences and consideration could be given to the Topic Centres helping to organise some of them;
- Agenda 2000/enlargement is a key issue and needs to be stressed;
- The border between the Topic Centres on Good Safety and Health Practice and on Working Environment and Health should be made clearer and any overlapping needs to be avoided. This would largely be achieved by close co-operation between the two Topic Centres;
- Changing patterns of work should be included in all parts of the Work Programme.
- It was difficult for members to give detailed comments, as the current paper only gave headlines.

29.The Director thanked the members for their initial comments. He said that a more detailed draft would be discussed at the September Bureau, including clarification of who would do the work, justification for the work through references to the Regulation and the resources needed (as described in Action point 7 above). It would also refer to changing patterns of work throughout. The four key areas for action were then discussed in more detail.

Action point 8:Changing patterns of work will be screened in to all parts of the Work Programme.

3.1 Monitoring system – the State of OSH in the EU

30.The Director introduced the project by explaining that it involved the Agency's survey, liaison with the Dublin Foundation on their survey and co-operation with EUROSTAT. By the end of 1998, the Agency expected to have received 15 reports from each of the MS. The project involved the collection of all existing data and not the creation of new sources of information.

31.In discussion the following points were made:

- Care should be taken to avoid duplication of the Commission's on-going work to report on the state of safety and health in Europe;
- The project would need to cover contracting and outsourcing, as well as gender issues, in the context of changing work patterns.

3.2 Good Safety and Health Practice

32.Christa Sedlatschek, the responsible Project Manager, introduced the project and explained that the Thematic Network Group had met in May and had agreed how to classify practical solutions broadly and to start the data collection. The Director said that

the first three items were carried forward from the 1998 Work Programme and the TNG would especially monitor information on them. The next task was to define the tasks for the Topic Centre to include them in the 1999 Work Programme. He also explained that the Agency had been invited to a DGV network about Workplace health and that they would participate in looking at the subject from a holistic viewpoint.

33.The following points were made in discussion:

- There was a need to clarify what work would be undertaken by the TNG, the Topic Centre and the Focal Points;
- There was also a need to explain clearly how the issues in the Work Programme 1998 fit in with the key areas of action in the current draft;
- The Bureau should discuss the details of the work and how it will develop;
- There was a lot of work to cover compared with the Agency's resources;
- The Commission considered that Workplace health problems were outside the Agency's mandate and did not see a role for the Agency in qualifications.

34.The Chairperson concluded by saying that there was strong support for the first bullet point and the three indents, campaigns were also important but care was needed on OSH management. There was no agreement on the Agency taking forward the last three points at present but they could be reconsidered in future if the need was defined clearly.

35.The Director stressed that the first three projects were continued from the Work Programme 1998 but no decisions had been taken for future work in these areas. He urged the Bureau to give the Agency contributions and guidance on priority areas for the next 4 years. He repeated that a more detailed draft would be discussed in September, with more explanation of what each group would do. He stressed that the proposed work on OSH management was not political but aimed at collecting information on the subject.

3.3 Working environment and health

36.Markku Aaltonen, the responsible Project Manager, introduced the project and explained that the group had started work on ULD with DGV and an English consultant (the Robens Institute). New and emerging risks and risk sectors were being discussed.

37.In discussion, the following points were made:

- New risks could include homeworking and its consequences for the future of health and safety, people sensitised by the environment;
- Information on risk sectors could be obtained from the State of OSH project and could inform the work on this project. Other risk sectors could include agriculture, construction and food safety;
- The title should be changed to avoid confusion with one of the Dublin Foundation's 'challenges'
- The Commission's comments on stress, pollution and waste should be considered.

3.4 OSH systems and programmes

38.Martin den Held, the responsible Project Manager, introduced the project and explained that the Agency wanted to follow-up on the two reports, as a lot of information had been provided by MS.

39.The Commission mentioned that at the moment the issue of the economic aspects of OSH was being discussed by an ad-hoc group of the Advisory Committee on Socio-Economic Appraisal. The Agency's report might give valuable information to this group. In addition, the relationship with the SHAPE-project, funded by the European Commission was discussed and the Director explained that the Agency's project and the SHAPE-project were independent projects with different aims. The former will provide an overview of all kinds of economic subjects; while the latter is a more scientific multi-annual project aiming at establishing a harmonised, high quality cost-benefit instrument that can be applied in all Member States. In this context the Agency mentioned that in the short term it did not foresee any activities in the specific area of cost-benefits and would wait for to see the results of the SHAPE project.

40.The Chairperson concluded by thanking the Bureau members for their comments and the Project Managers for their presentations.

Item 6:Any other business

41.Copies of the correspondence between the Agency and the Commission about dealing with information requests from the Commission were circulated for information. Advanced, embargoed copies of the 2nd edition of the Newsletter were also given to members.

42.A draft programme for the Changing World of Work conference in Bilbao in October was given to members and their suggestions for speakers were requested by 24 June. There was a role for the Chairperson and the Vice-Chairmen to play in the conference and h hoped they would support the conference.

Action point 9: Bureau members would submit their suggestions for speakers for the conference to the Agency by 24 June.

43.A draft programme was also circulated for a proposed seminar on OSH management, to be held the day before the November Board meeting. The subject was based on Chapter 13 of the Priorities and Strategies report. If the Bureau agreed, members of SLIC or the Advisory Committee could be invited or it could just be Board members. The Bureau welcomed the idea of a seminar for Board members but were unhappy with the subject proposed and it was agreed that members should bring their suggestions for a subject to the September Bureau.

Action point 10: the September Bureau would discuss topics for the seminar on 16 November.

44.The Director also explained that the call for expression of interest, which had been tabled, was the first step in a system, to be repeated each year, to build up a database based on the responses. The Agency would select companies from it to help with all aspects of the Work Programme. In addition, the Focal Points would be asked to suggest consortia to run Topic Centres.

45.The presentation of the Agency's financial management system was withdrawn from the agenda.

Action point 11: The presentation of the Agency's financial management system would be given at a future meeting.