

B/98/M4

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE
BOARD, 16 NOVEMBER 1998**

Present

1. Dr. Asherson (Chairperson), Sr. Biosca de Sagastuy, M. Boisnel, Mr. Carlslund, Sr. Martínez de la Gándara, M. Richard, Mr. Wilders, M. Weber, Mr. Konkolewsky, Mr. Riese, Sr. Pijuan and Ms. Copsey (Secretariat).

Apologies for absence

2. Apologies were received from Mr. Larsson.

Item 1: Adoption of the Draft Agenda (B/98/A4)

3. The agenda was adopted as tabled. It was agreed to add the paper on the model for dealing with information requests, as an item under "Any other Business".

Item 2: Draft minutes of the meeting of 14-15 September 1998 (B/98/M3)

4. On page 3, the third bullet point was **amended** to read "Clarification requested on the roles and decision making process and powers of the different Agency structures".
5. On page 4, regarding the extent of the Agency's work with Applicant countries, the Director explained that discussions had taken place with DG 1A about extending the Agency's network to Eastern Europe.

It was **AGREED** that extension of the Agency network and Focal Point system to Eastern Europe should address Social Partner representation too.

The final point on page 4 was **amended** to read "limiting work with Applicant and Eastern European countries to information provision **PRIMARILY** via the Internet and that any other substantial activity in this field needs to be referred to the Bureau, for prioritisation, according to its Mandate.

On page 4, final paragraph, "minimising the project on waste" was **amended** to read "withdraw the project on waste".

It was **AGREED** that the changes to the minutes would be cleared by Marcel Wilders.

Item 3: Action points arising from the minutes (B/98/27)

6. The Director presented the action points arising from the September meeting: The presentation of the Website would be carried forward to the March meeting; the final copy of the Court of Auditors report had still not been received; as the follow-up proposal to the “Priorities and Strategies” report had not been finalised this project was postponed.

Regarding re-nominations to the Board, the Commission explained that they had not received all the re-nominations in time to clear them through the Council of Ministers.

New item: Proposal relating to “The Changing World of Work” Conference (for Board meeting, Draft Work Programme 1999 (A/98/18 Addendum 1))

7. The Director introduced the proposal to set up a small working group to look at the conclusions arising from “The Changing World of Work” Conference, run by the Agency during the “European Safety and Health at Work Week” in October, and put forward suggestions for follow-up work. The proposed working group included Social Partner and Commission representatives.
8. General points made by members in discussion were:
 - “Changing World of Work” issues can be broader than purely health and safety issues.
 - The conclusions of the Agency’s conference did not reflect all interest groups views as, due to cost, there had only been limited worker representation at the Conference. The issue of reimbursement to ensure adequate representation of the Social Partners needed to be addressed for future Conferences.
 - The envisaged conference should support the Work Programme set by the Board, not divert or modify it.
 - It was suggested that some clarification of role was needed as the work appeared to overlap with the work of Thematic Network Groups and that activities on “The Changing World of Work” were also proposed under several different Work Programme sections.
 - Support for the follow up proposal, but some concern with the decision making process due to insufficient Board involvement.
9. The Director explained that “The Changing World of Work” was covered in the 1998 Work Programme as the Information Society.

It was AGREED that the group will have the specific task of discussing a topic for the conference with the Finnish Ministry. It may also be used to “brainstorm” ideas for Agency activities in this area, as an input to further specification of project activities in 1999-2000. The results of the meeting will be given to the March Board for their decision.

Item 4: Follow up to the “Economic Impact” report (B/98/28)

10. The Director introduced the proposal. During discussion, he clarified that the proposal had been drafted to ensure no overlap for example with Commission and Dublin

Foundation work; that the proposal is to collect existing examples of good practice in this area, and then to look in greater depth at a selection of the most interesting examples.

11. General points made by members in discussion were:

- Time scale short.
- Differing interest group opinions not reflected in the report itself, so a procedure is needed to ensure that for future reports where interest group views differed, this is presented in the report.
- Query about how the proposal relates to the report itself.
- There had been insufficient time to fully consult within interest groups.
- Approval of the presentation of the project specification.
- Companies themselves would be unlikely to respond to a survey about this area.
- The project, for example point (c), should limit itself to purely health and safety issues.

There was general interest in the project proposal. If the interest groups did not have time to discuss it, it was AGREED to retable a proposal at the March Bureau meeting.

Item 5: Preparation for the Pre-Board Seminar. Draft Focal Point Questionnaire (B/98/29)

12. The Director explained that the purpose of the Survey was to provide an up-date on how the Agency network functions for review. In discussion it was suggested that the exercise should not result in a performance league table.

Additional questions were proposed covering how the Focal Points took the view points of the Social Partners into account in their submissions to the Agency. The amended questionnaire was AGREED.

Item 6: Preparation for Administrative Board meeting: Draft Work Programme.

13. The Director introduced the Work Programme. A revised summary had been prepared following discussion at the Luxembourg Committee which gave proposals for prioritisation and for deleting and merging some projects in the draft Work Programme.

14. General points made by members in discussion were:

- Employability has a broader remit than just health and safety, so care is needed.
- An information gathering project on the health and safety issues of employability would be interesting.
- The Agency needs to have a clearly defined information strategy, describing the complete map of information it aims to obtain. Work Programme activities can then be planned to contribute to the completion of this strategy. The decision making process needs to be clear.
- Project proposals, and the draft Work Programme, should clearly show the following information for each Project proposal: who asked for it; who is it aimed at (the recipients); identification of user needs; if needed selection of those needs;

identification of different stages and decision moments; what are the precise aims and objectives; how will it be implemented and managed; budget allocation. Clarity is needed in order for the Bureau to be able to advise the Board and for the Board to be clear about the decisions it is making.

- The proposal for the follow-up to the “Economic Impact” report provides a useful model or template to follow for specifying future project proposals and the Work Programme annexes. In addition, proposals should identify user needs, project time scale and a stepwise procedure for implementation. Each project should have a summary and a detailed project specification. The summary can then be used to assess the project’s progress.
- Progress reports should be provided for each Board/Bureau meeting.
- The table giving an “Overview of information projects 1998-2000” is a useful example of a template.
- Information on which tasks the Commission intends to transfer to the Agency is lacking.
- Mandates from Board to Bureau are needed to speed up the decision making and implementation process of projects and the Work Programme.
- Commission information requests should form part of the Agency’s agreed Work Programme and procedures.
- Any major requests for information or project tenders should also be published on the Internet.
- There are two types of Commission information requests: The first is a request for the information on the current state of a topic, e.g. epidemiological information on the risks of a chemical; the second is an invitation to the Agency to contribute to a specific project. In the future, the Agency information database should provide most of this information.
- Conferences can generate much work.

15. The Director explained that the Agency was in the process of introducing project progress charts to aid project management, and confirmed that the Thematic Network Groups were advisory, whose remit was to discuss ideas and to assist the Agency in the implementation of the Work Programme as agreed by the Board.

16. The Director informed the Board about the work regarding the Agency Internet structure. Work was continuing on development of the Extranet. It was envisaged that it would be used to give full access to the results of information requests to Board, Bureau and Agency Expert Group members.

It was AGREED that proposals for criteria for project specifications would be drafted for the March meeting.

It was AGREED that the next Work Programme would be drafted to show proposed projects in this way.

Item 7: Any other business.

Information Requests to the Agency from the Commission.

The Commission reported that the general guidelines were acceptable, but some minor amendment was needed. It was AGREED that the Commission would finalise

the document with the Agency and that the final draft would be given to the Board meeting.

17. A general discussion on Commission information requests followed, during which the following points were made:

- One group should not have privileged information. Information collected should be published on the Internet.
- The views of Social Partners need to be adequately taken into account in information gathering exercises.
- No fundamental reason why the results of any information request should be confidential.
- It was intended to use the Extranet to provide the results to Board and Expert Group members.
- In terms of publishing information on the Internet, practical issues that would need to be looked at include handling the volume of information, and the views of Focal Points regarding information collected prior to the decision to make it available on the Internet.
- Large information requests outside of the Work Programme have an affect on the Agency, its resources and the implementation of the Work Programme, as well as having implications for Focal Points. The Board need to be kept informed of when information requests are made. The Bureau should be asked to approve such information requests according to its mandate.
- Guidance is needed from the Commission about the publication of results.

(See also Item 6 regarding discussion on information requests).