

B/99/M4

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE
BOARD, 22 NOVEMBER 1999**

Present

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

Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Mr. González Fernández for whom Mr. Martínez de la Gándara is attending, and Mr Sapir.

Item 1: Adoption of the Draft Agenda (B/99/4A)

A new item was added after item 6 at the request of the Commission-Evaluation of the Agency

With this amendment the agenda was adopted.

Item 2: Draft minutes of the meeting of 13-14 September 1999 (B/99/ M3)

Item 19 was amended to read “President of the Basque Government or Presidente del Gobierno Vasco”

With this amendment the draft minutes were AGREED.

Item 3: Action points arising from the minutes (B/99/45)

Regarding Action Point 5 Newsletter Publication: The Director explained that due to a publication time delay the external editor had mistakenly thought that the Spanish and German contributions to Newsletter 4 had become outdated so had omitted them. The Agency was considering ways to include them.

Item 4: Criteria for observer status on Board (B/99/46)

This document had been sent by email and was also tabled at the meeting. The draft document set out some general criteria for basing decisions on requests for observer status on the Board.

In the discussion the following points were made:

- As the reference to SLIC is not entirely accurate it should be omitted.
- Further clarification on the issue of involvement of candidate countries should follow from the Helsinki summit and would need to be taken on board.
- The Agency should address DG1 and other services as regards assistance on a financial package to allow participation.
- Apart from reimbursement, any inclusion of extras at the meetings will have implications for the administrative budget and practical organisation of meetings.
- There is a clear difference between the status of observers from UNICE and ETUC for example who have a specific role as co-ordinators and “outside” observers. This needs to be made clear.
- If the EFTA countries are to be properly involved this would involve them participating in the three interest group meetings as well. Candidate countries are a different case.
- It is important that the Agency should have good working relations and co-operation with ILO, EFTA countries etc, but this could be realised more effectively in other ways than as observers on the Board. It maybe that EFTA countries should be involved in the Board in the longer term but at this stage would there be a real benefit for them from attending an annual meeting?
- EFTA countries should pay their own expenses.
- If a lot of extra government representatives only attend, this could give an imbalance with the social partners.
- Could a preparatory meeting be held to explore methods of co-operation.
- If these parties are to attend the Board they would need some sort of induction into the process
- Current EFTA countries are participating in State of OSH report, but not in any of the network groups. However the Agency is already working with the EFTA and candidate countries regarding setting up common websites compatible with the Agency’s. Some have also expressed interest in the European Week.
- A model could be to include these parties in specific projects rather than formal Board meetings. This should include the social partners in some way.
- Can any ideas be borrowed form the way the European Foundation is working with these parties?

It was AGREED that a revised document will be drafted for the February Bureau meeting. Any final decision would be dependent on the level of financial assistance available.

Item 5: State of OSH – the way forward (B/99/47)

The Director introduced the item. The document set out a timetable for the work on the State of OSH report that the consolidation process of the report was taking place through the TNG OSH Monitoring and the Focal Points. The aim was that a final document would be available for a preboard seminar in February 2000 at which there would be a presentation of results and an opportunity for discussion. The discussion could focus on the evaluation of the project itself (lessons to be learnt, how to repeat it and improve it) and the next steps (how the results can be used). An extended summary would be published, translated into all languages. The main report would be in English only. An external contractor will evaluate the project. This exercise will include the Focal Point group and users.

In the discussion the following points were made:

- This has been the largest and most significant Agency project to date. It is a very important issue for the interest groups.

- The report should be seen as a “snapshot” at a point in time, to be repeated to look for trends.
- The Commission reminded that the report must not present political conclusions.
- There will be deficiencies, gaps and data compatibility issues. A lot of the data is qualitative. These points must be recognised and addressed openly. The introductory section to the report should set out the limitations of the study. It is useful to know gaps. These must be looked at and explained not hidden or ignored.
- The planned evaluation needs to be two-pronged. A technical evaluation should look at the methods used. A political or strategic evaluation should be set within the responsibilities of the Board.
- The evaluation should consider if the report reflects reality. If the answer is no this will suggest either methodological problems; not all aspects addressed; exposure time not long enough; lack of relevant data.
- The evaluation must relate to the original objectives set out for the project and see if they have been achieved. It must look at how robust the conclusions are and the comparability of the data. It must address what improvements could be made and how the process should be repeated.
- Very clear objectives need to be set for the evaluation itself.
- The evaluation must go beyond the TNG and include contact with social partners at European and national level.
- Is the time scale sufficient?
- The preboard seminar would be a first discussion of an evaluation process that will continue through the year, including in relation to the four year rolling programme.
- The contractor should be invited to the preboard seminar so the results can form a part of the evaluation.
- The contractor carrying out the evaluation project should be asked to put forward some discussion questions for the preboard seminar.
- To enable useful discussion at the seminar, Board Members would need the final report and translated summaries as far in advance of the seminar as possible. Interest groups may need to hold premeetings to discuss the report.
- At the preboard seminar several representatives from each group should be given the opportunity to give a presentation of their view point on the report, a reflection on the process and how to move forward.
- For the preboard seminar discussions it would be useful for the Agency to prepare a document giving an initial reflection on the project, the problems and how it could be improved.
- At the preboard seminar a short explanation of the background to the report and methodology will be needed to inform those who have not been involved in the report.

The Bureau AGREED that:

The purpose of the seminar will be to discuss the main themes of the report in terms of the way forward and evaluation of the project, and not the detail of the report itself. As a result of the preboard seminar it should still be possible to make necessary and final agreed amendments to the report.

The contractor should be invited to the seminar so the results can be part of the evaluation process.

The total evaluation process should look at both the technical/methodological aspects via the external evaluation and the political/strategic aspects. It should relate to the original goals of the project, examine the limitations of the exercise, how to overcome them and contain recommendations on how to repeat the exercise.

The evaluation should cover the opinions of the interest groups.

The evaluation will be an Agenda item for the November Board meeting.

New item: Evaluation of the Agency

The Commission explained that they would propose the completion of an evaluation of the Agency for submission to the Council of Ministers in 2001-5 years after the Agency became operationally effective. In line with the approaches taken with other Agencies an external evaluation should be carried out as part of this process. The Board should agree the terms of reference for the external evaluation. The Board, the Agency and its staff should have an input into the external evaluation. The precise budget required is not known at this stage but 30-50,000 ECUs should be sufficient. The timetable for this external evaluation could be: Tender for the evaluation drawn up in consultation with the Bureau for Board approval at the meeting in February 2000; study carried out in second half of 2000; the final report presented to the February 2001 Board meeting with the Board's comments to be submitted to the Commission.

The Bureau AGREED their general support for this approach.

It was AGREED that the Commission would prepare a document for the Board making a proposal for inclusion in the 2000 work programme for an independent evaluation report on the functioning of the Agency

Item 6: Preparation for Board meeting, (A/99/2A)

No issues were discussed under this item.

Item 7: Any other business (B/99/48)

There were no items of any other business.

Secretariat, Bilbao
December 1999