

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE
ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD, 6/7 JUNE 2001**

Present:

Ms Schweng (Chair), Mr Biosca de Sagastuy, Mr Clifton, Mr Remaeus, Mr Sapir, Mr Wilders, Mr Konkolewsky, Mr Pijuan, Ms Sedlatschek, Mr Smith and Mr Cockburn (Secretariat).

The meeting noted an apology received from Mr Fernández Sánchez.

Item 1: Adoption of the Draft Agenda (B/01/A1)

The agenda was adopted.

Item 2: Draft minutes of the meeting of 28 November 2000 (B/00/M4)

The minutes were agreed without comment.

Item 3: Director's report (B/01/01)

An update, including information on communication/contacts was tabled.

The Director introduced the papers, highlighting the following issues:

- Nomination of candidate country (CC) Focal Points (FP) and transfer of CC funding from the Commission
- The clear conclusions from the FP meeting of 28/29 May regarding the follow up to the evaluation of the Agency and the work programme 2002 discussion document
- Dissemination of European Week information material and the dedicated web site
- Attendance at the A+A conference in Dusseldorf
- The number of monthly user sessions on the Agency's web site has passed 100 000

The Director thanked Mr Biosca and Mr Remaeus for organising the workshop on "Quality at Work – a future strategy for safety and health at work", hosted by the Agency and added that the draft proceedings have been sent for consultation to the Commission and Swedish presidency.

A shortlist of candidates for the post of head of the working environment unit was circulated.

Responding to requests for clarification, the Director made the following comments:

- The renewal of staff contracts is normally for three to five years; shorter periods are given in special circumstances, for example at the request of the staff member.
- The Agency will inform the Bureau of the dates of meetings with the CCs

- Mr Bekes of the Hungarian Labour Inspectorate has been nominated as FP for Hungary. The responsibilities of this FP and the other CC FPs will be defined clearly and monitored to try to ensure sufficient coverage and co-ordination of health and safety activities at national level.

The Commission clarified that regarding the funding for the SME scheme the financial control has two concerns. Firstly, to ensure that no administrative costs will be included as part of the expenditure and secondly, to avoid double financing of Agency activities. The issue needs to be resolved by the Commission heads of cabinet. Mr Oostens is the appropriate point of contact for the Agency.

Item 4: Work programme discussion document (B/01/02 & B/01/02a)

The Director introduced the discussion document and the summary of FP conclusions and reminded members of the schedule for drafting the work programme. A preliminary draft will be prepared in July, for discussion at the planning seminar in September.

The following general comments were made:

- The Agency needs to provide an estimate of the resources that will be available in 2002 and of the resources that will be needed to carry out the different activities proposed in the discussion document.
- The Agency's capacity to undertake activities will not only depend on its staff resources, but also on the network structure chosen, the Topic Centre (TC) role and the methodologies used.
- The Agency's strategy should be user-centred
- The new Community Strategy will be adopted in 2002 under the Spanish presidency. Therefore, there will be a need for Agency support regarding the dissemination of information related to the new strategy, but there is no need for a substantial reservation of resources for the strategy itself at this stage.
- The consolidation approach of the proposals is supported.

The meeting addressed each section of the document in turn:

Ongoing activities

There was discussion on the resources required from Agency and TC to collect and maintain Good Practice (GP) information, the merits of a sector-based approach and of continuing with the same topic-based methodology.

Ms Sedlatschek informed that the percentage of Agency and TCs' total effort dedicated to database maintenance is between 15-30%, depending on the topic. The Director added that the collection of GP is still in a development phase and the different methods used to date have to be evaluated. The healthcare project indicates that the sector-based approach may be promising, but it is too early to say. Increasing databases creates serious maintenance problems, although new technology may alleviate this.

The collection of GP examples is one of the Agency's most important tasks and should include a link between the topic and sector approaches.

It was agreed that the Agency should produce a position paper, describing the current status of topic-based GP information collection and maintenance, including current and

projected resource demands. Information should also be provided relating to sectors, for example, those raised frequently in the GP on-line forum.

Mr Smith gave estimates of the financial and human resources involved in the various information services.

The Director described the enlargement-related activities, noting that all financial costs are met by the Phare programme. This funding will also cover staff costs and an external IT consultant. At present, Turkey, Cyprus and Malta are not included, but they may participate on an own-costs basis. The Commission recommended contacting the TAIEX programme regarding funding for these countries.

Commenting on a brief description of the OSH-Monitoring project by the Director, the Commission advised caution with respect to the area of a methodology for indicators, as this issue will be worked on by the Belgium presidency and the Dublin Foundation. Good co-ordination and co-operation on the issue is essential; the Commission will suggest to the cabinet of the Belgium ministry that the Agency be invited to participate in the discussions.

Mr Smith briefed on extranet and web site developments, highlighting the new search engine and plans for a keyword thesaurus and new Agency homepage design.

Activities carried over from 2001

The Director confirmed that GP information collection would be extended to SMEs.

The GP Recognition Scheme will be finalised with a discussion at the Board at the beginning of 2002. Mr Clifton noted the importance of the project.

New, already planned activities 2002

It was agreed that the theme for European Weeks should be decided by the Board two years ahead in order to facilitate planning. In November 2001 the Board will be asked to agree on themes for 2003 and possibly 2004.

Mr Clifton said he judged that there was widespread support within the government group for the continuation of the themes of MSD, stress and dangerous substances.

It was agreed that the Agency should set aside a small amount of resources for promotion of the new European Community strategy, including assistance to the Spanish presidency in the organisation of a conference in April in Barcelona.

New proposed activities 2002

Support was expressed, subject to available resources, for the FP proposal for a project to review the existing research/evidence on women's health and safety to see whether further work on gender is needed.

The proposal on SME-related policies, programmes and practices was supported.

Mr Clifton requested that it focus on effective actions and policies undertaken by SMEs. Ms Schweng requested the inclusion in the study of SME assistance schemes already in place in member states. Mr Sapir noted the importance of taking into consideration the different contexts and environments that SMEs work in.

The proposal on mainstreaming of OSH in other policy and activity areas was not considered a priority, however the possibility of organising a workshop regarding the inclusion of OSH in education policies was discussed.

The proposal on programmes and practices to improve OSH in high-risk sectors was supported. Mr Biosca suggested fishing as an appropriate sector in view of the request of the European Parliament fishing committee and the lack of initiatives in this area compared with agriculture and construction. It was agreed that different sectors should be examined in future years, and there was strong support for starting with the fishing sector in 2002.

The Director reminded members that Agency stakeholders should submit proposals for inclusion in the draft preliminary work programme by end June if possible, otherwise at the September planning seminar.

Item 5 – Agency evaluation (B/01/03)

The Director informed that the protocol on the evaluation of the Agency was sent to the Commission on 21 May in English and that translation of the document was underway.

Mr Clifton commented that the government group is keen to see progress and asked how long the review of the Agency's regulation is likely to take and whether the Agency intended to draw up an action plan. Mr Biosca replied that the Advisory Committee on Safety, Hygiene and Health (ACSHH) would take as short a time as possible. Any advice from the ACSHH to amend the regulation would be adopted by the Commission and proposed to Council in the first quarter of 2002. The Director responded that the protocol would guide all of the Agency's actions and that specific follow-up activities include a user communication-needs survey and a revision of the Agency's current network structure, including TCs.

Item 6 – Proposal for a Topic Centre structure (B/01/04)

The TC structure was discussed in depth with general concerns being voiced regarding their flexibility, the reasons for wanting representation from all member states and their working procedures.

Doubts were raised regarding the creation of the TC Good Practice/Systems & Programmes due to the likely management problems posed by a consortium of many large organisations covering many topics.

The Director responded that the Agency is aiming to create a flexible structure that meets the work programme needs. Representation from as many member states as possible increases added value. TCs operate with greater transparency than individual contractors and do not require a lead-in period of familiarisation with the Agency.

The Agency's experience with the large TC on research showed that, after a difficult start, an effective working method developed, based on task leaders, that had the advantage of a wide variety of approaches.

The Agency was urged to ensure proper leadership of TCs and to allow as much time as possible for the nomination procedure. The precise structure and working method of the TC will depend on the information that is being collected.

It was agreed that the Agency should proceed with the preparation of the Board's designation of two new TCs.

Item 7 – New aspects of Topic Centres work: co-operation with the network (B/01/05)

The Director informed that the clear reaction of the FPs was that the proposed National Reference Centres would increase complexity. Therefore, this was dropped in favour of direct TC-FP co-operation. In view of the reduction in the number of TCs from four to two, a corresponding reduction is proposed for the Thematic Network Groups (TNG).

There was support for the proposal to increase resources for FPs through the reduction in TNGs. The network diagram was revised to clarify that the TC-FP link represents communication rather than delivery.

It was agreed that there should be two TNGs, each with two nominees from each of the European social partners. The TNGs should have a greater validation role together with an obligation to report back to national level.

Item 8 – Budgetary transfers between chapters (B/01/06)

The Director explained that the transfer was required to cover the rental of further meeting room space in the Lagun Aro building.

The meeting agreed to recommend the adoption of the proposal by the Board.

Any other business

User Communication needs survey – draft CFT

Mr Smith introduced the draft call for tender, commenting that it follows-up the first recommendation of the Agency evaluation report, but goes further in giving practical information to support a communication strategy. It represents the start of an ongoing feedback mechanism.

It was clarified that the FPs will assist in the designation of the user panel. The survey methodology is yet to be finalised, but will probably be principally based upon telephone interviews. The methodological limitations will be included in the final report.

Nominations for European Week jury

The Director recognised that nominees need to be impartial and independent and clarified that initial prioritisation of projects will be done at national level and selection will be made at the Agency.