

September 2002

B/02/M3

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE
ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD, 12 September 2002**

Present:

Mr Lopes (Chair), Ms Alexopoulou, Ms Waltke, Ms Breindl, Mr Konkolewsky, Ms Sedlatschek, Mr Smith, Ms Murillo and Mr Bejer (Secretariat).

The meeting noted an apology received from Mr Fernández Sánchez, Mr Biosca de Sagastuy, Mr Remaeus and Ms Schweng.

Item 1: Adoption of the Draft Agenda (B/02/A3)

The agenda was adopted.

Item 2: Draft minutes of the meeting of 5-6 June 2002 (B/02/M2)

Ms Waltke requested the following amendments of the minutes:

On page 3 (EN version) delete “to work towards a decision on the issue by the end of the year and” in the last paragraph;

On page 6 (EN version) of the minutes delete “are” and add “may be” after “Though women” in paragraph 8. In the same paragraph add at the end “It is not a priority topic.”;

On page 7 (EN version) of the minutes in the paragraph with the headline, “Occupational Safety and Health and Corporate Social Responsibility”, add “It is however doubtful if it adds any value, that the Agency enters this field.” after “business driven”.

Ms Waltke made a general comment, stating that in the future, minutes should to a higher degree reflect the discussions that had taken place in the Bureau.

Ms Alexopoulou requested the following amendments of the minutes:

On page 4, paragraph 5, delete the sentence “At the same time it is important for the Commission to stress that it does not intend to reform all institutions before enlargement.” and add “The Commission does not intend to make a proposal on reform before enlargement.”;

On page 4, paragraph 6, replace the words “sent to the Council” with the word “prepared”.

With these amendments, the minutes were adopted.

Item 3: Director’s Progress Report (B/02/12)

The Director introduced the paper and highlighted the following issues:

- The Agency has over the last few months been releasing a considerable amount of new publications and the Director asked the Bureau for its support in the promotion and distribution of the products within their groups etc.
- The new Agency web-site has been a success so far with more currently than 75.000 user sessions per month.
- The launch of the European Week in the EP in Strasbourg had attracted widespread media coverage.
- The PHARE activities will be continued as a second programme for 2002-2004 has been approved (1.070.000 Euro). This programme will allow the Agency to continue network and website developments, to support the involvement of Candidate Countries in European Week 2003 activities and to establish a good practice topic centre for candidate countries.
- At a more technical level, the Director explained that the Agency had found out that the current nomination of a local agent as Assistant Accountant was not in line with the Financial Regulation. The Director regretted the error and informed the Bureau that he has taken corrective action and suspended the nomination. The issue will be brought up at the next Board meeting in November.

Ms Breindl asked what would happen with the Candidate Countries Topic Center when the Candidate Countries become members of the EU.

The Director replied that the Agency so far has not received any guidelines from the Commission on how the Agency and its organisation and network shall adapt to the enlargement. The only topic being discussed relates to the future organisation of administrative boards of Agencies with tripartite boards. The Agency will take the initiative to carry out an assessment of the resource impact of enlargement following the model from other Agencies. In the opinion of the Director, when the Candidate Countries enter the EU they should be fully integrated in the existing structures, including Topic Centres. The Director mentioned that the enlargement could be a theme for the Pre-Board Seminar next year.

Ms Breindl asked in relation to the OSH Monitoring Inventory, when the inventory will be available.

The Director informed that the Agency currently is collecting information about the national OSH monitoring systems in order to make it available on line on the Agency website. A pilot model will be presented at the workshop 30/9-1/10 2002. Furthermore, the Agency's contractor is preparing a report about 20 different monitoring systems in Member States, which now is being consolidated by experts. At the seminar in September conclusions and discussion points at a horizontal level will already be presented by the contractor. Finally the Director stressed that the Agency is very careful to ensure that the information presented is fully consolidated and that no documents, which have not been consolidated, will be sent out.

The chairperson asked what themes are proposed for the US-EU Conference.

The Director replied that during the World Congress in Vienna the US and the Agency had only discussed EU/US developments and the common/global web-site.

Ms Alexopoulou informed that the issue of enlargement is in the hands of the General Secretary and found it useful to have enlargement as a theme for the Pre-Board Seminar. Concerning themes for the US-EU Conferences, Ms Alexopoulou

informed that a Programming Group in the Advisory Committee is preparing a proposal, which will be communicated to the US when it is ready.

Item 4: Seminar Conclusions (B/02/13a and B/02/13b)

The discussion was separated in two parts: 1. The rolling work programme, and 2. the annual work programme.

The Rolling Work Programme

The Director introduced the slide annexed to these minutes (annex I). The slide was drafted on the basis of the discussions at the Planning Seminar the day before and showed the proposed Groups at Risk, High-Risk sectors and themes for the European Weeks. The Director commented the following:

- At the Planning Seminar there had been strong support for replacing Noise with Construction as the theme of the European Week 2004. Noise would then be the theme for 2005. Furthermore there had been support for coordination with SLIC and their construction sector campaign concerning the European Week 2004.
- Migrant Workers as a Group at Risk 2004 should be seen in light of the fact that Construction was proposed as the theme of the Week 2004 and agriculture was the proposed Risk Sector the same year. Both sectors are known to have many migrant workers. Furthermore 2004 would probably be the first year with the Candidate Countries as members.

Ms Waltke commented that at the June Bureau meeting there had been strong support for Noise as the theme of the European Week 2004. If there was to be a change of the theme for the European Week 2004, a discussion within the interest groups was required.

Ms Waltke further commented that having sectors as topics for the European Week was acceptable. However the Service Sector is not a high-risk sector and is therefore not a good topic for the European Week. Concerning groups as topics for the European Week Ms Waltke noted that this approach would make it difficult to focus activities.

Ms Breindl remarked that regarding the European Week 2004 the government group was divided. While some preferred Construction as the theme in 2004 others preferred Noise. If Construction was to be the theme, there should be coordination with SLIC. Concerning the Risk Groups, reference was made to the discussions at June Bureau meeting and it was stated that the work situation should be in focus, not groups as such. Concerning Ageing Workers as a Risk group it was remarked that this was a demographic problem, not a health and safety problem. Regarding Risk Sectors it was stressed that the focus shall be on high-risk sectors, and that the Service Sector is not a high-risk sector.

Mr Lopes said on behalf of the workers' groups that his doubts concerned the group approach and that this would have to be discussed in the interest groups.

Ms Waltke commented that some strategic choices had to be taken concerning to what extent the Agency has to adapt to the Community Strategy. These choices had particular importance for the "groups approach" and Ms Waltke asked why focus consistently was on minority groups. Furthermore, focus cannot exclusively be on "new risks". Attention has to be given to "traditional risks" as well.

Mr Lopes supported the idea of having Migrant Workers as a Group at Risk for 2004 and remarked that the proposed activities for 2004 taken together seemed to be almost ideal.

Ms Alexopoulou remarked that the Agency should contribute to the implementation of the Community Strategy. And from the strategy it is clear that some groups have particular needs. Concerning the themes for the European Week there seemed to be a consensus on Construction as the 2004 theme. 2005 would be the year of the implementation of the new Noise directive, and therefore Noise would be a good theme for 2005. Concerning the suggested Risk Group, Migrant Workers, it was remarked that the Strategy does not mention this group, but that this had been criticised by the European Parliament.

The Director made the following remarks to the discussion:

- Concerning the European Week there was a need to broaden the scope to include other themes than topics, because besides noise there were not many common high-risk topics left (as MSD, accidents and stress have already been dealt with). This is why the Agency suggests looking at sectors and groups at risk in future European Weeks.
- The Agency is looking for a broad consensus on the priorities for actions over the coming planning period in line with the new Community strategy. In order to facilitate the consensus process it might be helpful to get a feed back from the interest groups before preparing the draft work programme.

Ms Breindl remarked that it might be an idea to have an evaluation of the European Week in 2007. Some members of the Government Group would prefer only to have a European Week every 2nd year.

The Annual work Programme

Ms Breindl made the following general remarks:

- In the future the work programmes should indicate the needed resources in the Agency and in the Focal Points.
- The projects sheets shall indicate who does what.
- The proposed 12 new projects, 6 workshops and 6 expert groups meetings were too ambitious for the Agency and for the Member States.

Ms Waltke supported the wish for more detailed resource estimates and better financial information.

The Director replied that the Agency in accordance with the model agreed by the Bureau last year has prepared a detailed human resource estimate of the preliminary draft work programme for the Agency staff resources. Concerning the Focal Point resources the Agency has tried to clarify the key tasks for Focal Points in the individual project sheets. However, it was impossible to make very precise estimates of the Focal Points workload, because it would differ individually according to the contribution to the implementation of the projects. A detailed planning exercise with the Focal Points is foreseen in early December, once the Board has decided the Work programme. The Director stressed, that the Agency in general for 2003 does not expect an increased workload for the Focal Points compared to this year. The Agency will include financial information in the draft work programme the way it did in 2002 and will look into the possibility of giving more information on staff resources in the project sheets.

Concerning the number of expert meetings and workshops foreseen, the Director replied that the Agency shares the concerns expressed. This is why the Agency will study the possibility to reduce TNG meetings from two to one a year. The proposed workshops reflect the recommendations of the Agency Evaluation and the Communications Survey, which suggest better communication of Agency work to key stakeholders and user groups. Some workshops will be carried out in co-operation with the Commission, others with EU-Presidencies.

Ms Alexopoulou informed that the Commission is interested in co-arranging two seminars next year in areas of interest for the Commission, but that it would have to know which before the end of October. Topics of interest are especially the Agency's OSH and gender project and the mainstreaming OSH into education project.

The Director welcomed these offers and added that the possibility of organising the workshop on fisheries jointly with the Greek Presidency currently is being looked into.

The Bureau then went on to discuss the different project sheets:

Follow-up to inventory of existing OSH monitoring systems

The Chairperson summarised the conclusions from the Planning Seminar by stressing that this project depends on the outcome of the seminar. If there is to be a project then there should be a clarification of the procedure for selection of the test countries and the role and participation of the Candidate Countries and the EFTA Countries should be clarified.

Ms Waltke supported that the Board should decide the future steps of the project based on the outcome of the seminar in September.

Ms Breindl asked about the purpose of the September seminar.

The Director explained that according to the Board decision the purpose of the seminar was to identify possible steps forward as regards OSH monitoring at EU level based on Member State experiences and more specifically the future role of the Agency in this respect. This was the basis for the Board's decision on a possible project activity in 2003.

Socio-Economic Benefits of OSH

The Chairperson presented the conclusions from the Planning Seminar:

- The objectives of the project should be brought in line with the output of the project.
- The relevance to SMEs of the project should be highlighted.

Ms Waltke doubted the added value of this project since the data already exists. There was not much the Agency could do, which had not already been done. Furthermore the project sheet was not clear.

The Director explained that the project aims at the company level by providing practical measures for companies. The next step would be to collect practical examples on the relation between good working environment, productivity and quality.

Ms Breindl asked for clarification of the objectives in the project sheet.

Ms Waltke wanted the output specified

Ms Alexopoulou informed that there was a project going on in cooperation between the EUROSTAT and the DG5. The title of the project would be forwarded to the Agency in order to be included in the project sheet.

Developing Mainstreaming of OSH into Education

The Chairperson summarised the Seminar conclusions, which were:

- Conclusions from March 2002 Workshop in Bilbao should be included as “context”
- The Finnish Conference in November 2002 should be included among the data sources.
- A link should be established to a possible future European Week on Young Workers.

Ms Waltke supported the project and stressed that it was an important one.

Ms Alexopoulou remarked that teachers at all levels should be included among the target groups.

OSH and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

The Chairperson introduced the seminar conclusions:

- There is a strong need for clarification of the Agency role by the Commission Forum.

Ms Waltke commented that it was important to define the role of the Agency in this field. The Agency should focus its activities on gathering Good Practice examples. However the Agency should not give “expert advice” on what companies should do concerning CSR.

Ms Breindl found that a lot was already done in this field and Member States did not want the Agency to repeat what others had already done.

Mr Lopes speaking on behalf of the workers’ group wanted a clarification of the project and felt the need for an internal interest group discussion on this issue.

The Director clarified that what the Agency can do in this field is to continue to collect good practice examples and assist the Commission in that sense.

Ms Waltke mentioned that the Agency should ask UNICE and other organisations to contribute with good examples.

The Director, while referring to the seminar conclusion, explained that the Agency project would be directed towards the company level and include web-site presentations of good practice. This will be clarified in the project sheet.

European Week 2004 on Noise at Work

The Director informed that this project sheet would be replaced with a project sheet on the European Week 2004 on Construction.

Ms Waltke commented that if it would fit better with the implementation of the new directive on noise to have the European Week on Noise in 2005, then this could be acceptable to the employers.

Communication of Information to the Fisheries Sector

The Chairperson informed that at the Planning Seminar there had been no comments to this project sheet.

The Bureau had no further comments to the project sheet.

Good Practice Information: Education Sector

The Chairperson referred to the Seminar conclusion:

- The target groups should be broadened in order to include other groups at risk in the sector.

Ms Waltke expressed support for the seminar conclusions.

Development of Agency Construction Sector Information

The Director informed that in the light of the decisions taken on European Week this project sheet would be deleted.

Good Practice Information: Disability at Work

The chairperson informed that the Seminar had not led to changes in the project sheet.

The Bureau had no further comments

Workshop on “Including the Gender Dimension in OSH activities”

The Chairperson informed that the Seminar had concluded that there should be a reference in the Rolling Work Programme, section 5.1 to the 2002 Gender project.

Ms Waltke informed that a workshop could be a good start.

Creation of an “Occupational Safety and Health Observatory for New and Emerging Risks (OSH Observer)”

The Chairperson summarised the conclusions from the seminar:

- Further clarification would be necessary following feedback from Commission and the European Parliament.
- The Agency does not at present have the resources for this activity

Ms Waltke commented on the precondition of additional resources stating that instead of more resources, one should consider prioritising within existing resources. This was clearly an activity that the Agency was expected to carry out according to the Strategy.

The Director replied that in fact the Agency had – with existing resources – managed to integrate the strategy except for one point, the risk observatory. The Agency has been looking at other Observatories like the EIRO, and based on that experience considerable amounts of financial resources and additional staff would be needed, which cannot be financed within a budget that basically remains unchanged from 2002 to 2003.

Ms Alexopoulou informed that feedback from the Commission would await the European Parliament opinion on the strategy.

The Director informed that according to his understanding it seemed that the European Parliament might support another SME scheme, which then would be the third and last preparatory scheme. Hereafter a continuation (multi-annual scheme) would require a proper legal basis.

Safety and Health Information for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises

The Chairperson informed about the conclusions from the planning seminar:

- More details on available data sources should be included, including data from social partners.

The Chairperson concluded that he would write and suggest to the chairs of the Advisory Committee Interest Group meetings that will take place in September that there should be discussions of the preliminary draft version of the work programme. The interest groups should then communicate their proposals and comments to the Agency so that they can be included in the Draft Work Programme. The key issues concerning the Rolling Work Programme were: 1. Is the Risk Groups approach a good idea? 2. Are the links between the Commission Strategy and the work programme adequate? and 3. Should there be an overall evaluation of European Week in 2006/2007 before deciding on whether to continue.

Item 5: User Communications Survey (B/02/14)

Mr Smith, head of information and communication, informed about the Survey and the process of the follow-up to the survey. In November the Board will be presented with a proposal for a Communications Strategy, which will include a proposal for annual communications plans for the Focal Points.

The Chairperson remarked that based on the survey in the future more emphasis should be given to other target groups than OSH-practitioners.

Mr Smith agreed but commented at the same time that the challenge for the Agency is how to reach beyond the OSH professionals.

Item 6 – Update on the future composition and functioning of Management Boards (Cedefop, Bilbao and Dublin)

A document was tabled. The Chairperson informed that no document had so far been received from the Commission.

Ms Waltke remarked that the November Board meetings must adopt resolutions if they want any influence.

The Director commented on the conclusions in the tabled documents saying that the issue of “enlarged” Bureaus mainly concerned the Cedefop which had a very small Bureau (chair and vice-chairs only) compared to the Agency.

Item 7 - Any other business

There was no comment.

Annex 1 – Slide from Bureau meeting: European Week Themes, Groups at Risk and Risk Sectors.

Annex I – European Week Themes, Groups at Risk and Risk Sectors

