

June 2003

B/03/M1

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE
ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD, 18 FEBRUARY 2003**

Present:

Mr Remaeus (Chair), Ms Alexopoulou, Mr Biosca de Sagastuy, Ms Schweng, Ms Waltke, Ms Breindl, Mr Lopes, Mr Konkolewsky, Mr Carreira, Ms Ortega, Ms Murillo and Mr Bejer (Secretariat).

The meeting noted an apology received from Mr Sapir.

Item 1: Adoption of the Draft Agenda (B/03/A1)

The agenda was adopted.

Item 2: Draft minutes of the meeting of 25 November 2002 (B/02/M4)

The minutes were adopted.

Item 3: Approval of final draft of “Call for proposals regarding SME scheme 2003-2004 (B/03/01)

Ms Murillo introduced the item. Compared with the compromise reached in the Bureau on the 2002-“Call for proposals”, the changes presented to the Bureau today were not substantive.

Ms Waltke suggested as an amendment to the text in the 1st paragraph on page 3 the replacement of the words “a real (not theoretical)” with the word “an”.

The Bureau adopted the amendment.

On the request of Ms Waltke, Mr Konkolewsky clarified the meaning of the concepts “voluntary organisations” and “sector organisations” on page 3. These organisations should be seen as something other than social partners.

Mr Lopes asked if the Focal Points will promote the SME scheme 2003-2004 and if the call would be made in all languages.

Ms Murillo answered that the call will be published in the Official Journal of the European Union – Serie C, in all Community languages. Promotion at European level will be made by the Agency and the Focal Points will be invited to promote the SME scheme at the national level.

On the request from Ms Waltke, Ms Murillo explained that this year there would be 10 more working days to submit proposals.

On the proposal of Mr Remaeus, the Bureau decided to add the words “and improve work related health” after “accidents” in the 3rd bullet point on page 1.

Mr Biosca remarked that the budgetary comments from the European Parliament gave the possibility of broadening the scope of the SME scheme.

On the proposal of Ms Alexopoulou, “gender equality” was included as an objective on page 1.

In reply to a query, Ms Murillo said that the evaluation of the SME Funding Scheme was not sufficiently advanced yet to influence the present call for proposals.

Ms Breindl suggested to delete point 10 (2), h on page 5, which was agreed.

The Call for proposals was approved with the amendments mentioned.

Item 4 – Enlargement Strategy (B/03/02)

The Director introduced the item. The Agency asked the Bureau to agree to a parallel consultation process with Candidate Countries regarding the Work Programme 2004 and to the participation of the Focal Points from the Candidate Countries in the December Focal Point seminar. The objective is to involve the Candidate Country Focal Points in the planning of the 2004 work, as the Candidate Countries will participate in the implementation.

As a consequence there will be only one Focal Point Group from December 2003.

The Bureau agreed the steps suggested in the documents B/03/02.

The Chairperson raised the issue that had been mentioned during the pre-board seminar: That some Candidate Countries are excluded from the PHARE funds.

The Director informed that at the moment Cyprus, Malta and Turkey pay themselves the expenses related to participation in Agency activities. This however, is not without problems. Therefore the Agency suggests the following:

1. The Agency and DG Employment contact DG Enlargement to discuss what can be done for the 3 non-Phare countries.
2. If there cannot be found a solution with DG Enlargement, the Agency will look into its own budget in order to find a solution.

Ms Schweng asked about support for the social partners in the Candidate Countries as these were not mentioned in the document B/03/02.

The Director replied that Focal Points have to work through tripartite consultations.

The Bureau agreed the two-step approach suggested by the Director regarding the 3 non-Phare countries.

Item 5 - Preparation of the Board meeting (A/03/A1)

Item 1: Adoption of the revised draft Agenda

The Chairperson informed that a revised agenda was tabled (A/03/A1 rev), which included an additional information item, Joint opinion on future of Administrative Boards. The Bureau had no comments to the revised Board Agenda.

Item 2: Minutes of the last meeting, 26-27 November 2002

Ms Waltke had some comments, but as these comments only concerned her own statements in the minutes, it was agreed that the comments would be forwarded by Ms Waltke after the meeting. There were no further comments to the draft minutes.

Item 3: Action Points arising out of the minutes

There were no comments.

Item 4: Conclusions from the Pre-Board seminar

The Chairperson informed that a set of draft conclusions would be prepared for the Board meeting. There were no further comments.

Item 5: Director's Progress Report

The Director gave the following additional comments:

- The 2003 Agency Work Programme had been presented by the Director in the European Parliament.
- That the Agency is in a difficult situation regarding its administration due to on the one hand absences of key staff members and on the other hand the requirement of implementation of the new Financial Regulation. However, a temporary solution has been found according to which the Agency's Controller, Mr Carreira and the Agency's Legal Adviser, Ms Ortega, share responsibility of the Agency Administration.

On request from Ms Breindl, the Director informed that very soon the "facelift" of the Focal Points' web-sites would be implemented. The exercise would however, not be demanding in terms of resources.

In answer to a question from Mr Lopes, the Director confirmed that a broad concept as regards the scope would be applied to the European Week on Construction. Regarding the same issue the Director informed that the Agency would republish its factsheet on Accident Prevention in the Construction Sector indicating that the republished factsheet is related to the SLIC-campaign. There will also be a special web-feature for the SLIC campaign.

Item 6: Budget matters/Financial matters

Draft budget 2004

The Director introduced the item. The budgetary and planning exercise for 2004 is a special challenge due to the enlargement. However, the Agency suggests to divide the budget discussion in two: 1. The 2004 budget as if there were no enlargement, i.e. a budget for the EU-15, and 2. The 2004 budget for an enlarged European Union.

Regarding the 2004 EU-15 budget: The estimate is based on the following assumptions: 1. A 5 per cent price increase, which is reflected in the title 1 figures; 2. An unchanged activity level in 2004, except; 3. an appropriation of 500.000 euros for a Risk Observatory (reflected in title 3 and which do not include the resources for the two necessary staff). This means that compared to 2003, the Board will be invited to approve one change: The 500.000 euros for the Risk Observatory. The 500.000 euros is an estimation based on the budgets of other comparable observatories at EU-level, including the ones run by the Dublin Foundation.

Regarding the budget for the Agency in an enlarged EU: The Agency has made a budget line by budget line review of the consequences of enlargement. On this basis the Agency has calculated that the Agency expenditures will increase with 56 per cent or 5,9 million euros as a result of enlargement. The enlargement has special consequences for an organisation like the Agency due to its network structure. At the same time the Agency has to make sure that full and equal integration of the 10 new member states takes place. The main elements of the enlargement budget were presented by title.

The Board would be invited first to agree on the EU-15 budget for 2004, then to agree on the impact of enlargement and finally to adopt a resolution on the impact of enlargement which would be communicated to the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council. Based on more specific information from the Commission, the Council and the Parliament, the Agency and the Bureau would then through 2003 amend the budget to the new parameters, and the budget would then together with Work Programme for 2004 based on the available resources be adopted by the Board in November 2003.

The Director introduced the major points that could form part of a resolution.

Mr Biosca remarked that the 12 per cent that had been mentioned as the general increase in the Agency's budget following enlargement had to be calculated on the basis of the Agency ordinary 2003-appropriations plus the Phare appropriation plus the SME scheme. Furthermore the Commission found the idea of adopting a resolution positive, though the Commission would not be able to sign it.

The Bureau agreed the suggested 3 step-approach and the major points to be included in a resolution.

Report of the Court of Auditors and discharge to the Director in respect of the implementation of the Budget 2001

The Director explained that the new Financial Regulation implied that the discharge would from 1 January 2003 be given by the European Parliament, and not by the Board. However, the Agency does not want to exclude the Board from the follow-up process to the budget, which the Board agrees in the first place. Therefore it had been suggested that the Board expresses its opinion on the discharge.

There were no further comments.

Amendment to 2003 budget

The Director explained that the budget adopted by the Board in November had to be amended to include the final decisions taken by the European Parliament in December. At a later stage the Board would be asked by written procedure to accept another amendment in order to include the Phare programme.

There were no further comments.

Item 7: Meeting dates 2003 – revised

The Director explained that the item was on the Agenda because following the November Board meeting, where the 2003 Board meeting dates were fixed, the Agency had received information from the Commission about a SLIC meeting in November. However, a meeting had been organised with the coming Italian presidency, and the issue was now pending on the Commission's willingness to change the dates for the SLIC meeting.

Mr Biosca remarked that the Commission would look positively on changing the dates for the SLIC meeting.

Item 6: Any other business

There were no comments.