

March 2004

B/03/M4

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD, 24 NOVEMBER 2003

Present:

Mr Remaeus (Chairperson), Mr Lopes, Mr Glynn, Mr Sapir, Ms Breindl, Ms Waltke, Mr Konkolewsky, Ms Ortega, Mr Carreira and Mr Bejer (Secretariat).

The meeting noted apologies received from Ms Schweng and Mr Fernandez.

The Chair welcomed Mr Glynn as a new Bureau member for the Commission.

Item 1: Adoption of the Draft Agenda (B/03/A4)

The Director explained that only very recently it had been clarified how the Agency staff situation would be in 2004, and the Agency had therefore not been in a position to prepare the document for item 7, Planned use of resources 2004 (B/03/18). The document will be forwarded to the Bureau as soon as possible.

The agenda was adopted.

Item 2: Draft minutes of the meeting of 11 September 2003 (B/03/M3)

The minutes were adopted.

Item 3: Preparation for Board meeting (A/03/A2)

The Bureau worked through the Board Agenda items.

Adoption of the draft agenda (A/03/A2)

There were no comments.

Minutes of the last meeting, 19 February 2003 (A/03/M1)

There were no comments.

Action points arising out of the minutes (A/03/10)

The Director reminded the Bureau about the reasons given to the Bureau in June, why it has been decided not to reimburse Cyprus and Malta for their travel expenses.

Election of new chairperson and Bureau (A/03/11)

On the request of Ms Breindl the Director explained that the Agency expects the official constitution of the new Administrative Board with representation from the 10 Accession Countries at the planned Board meeting in November 2004. The Agency understands, that until a new regulation enters into force, the Board and Bureau have to work on the basis of the current regulation.

Mr Glynn confirmed that until a new regulation enters into force, the Agency and its Board and Bureau have to work according to the current regulation.

Director's Progress Report (A/03/12)

A brief up-date note was tabled.

The Director commented on the activities throughout 2003 and highlighted the following developments:

- The 2003 work programme was being implemented in a satisfactory way.
- The PHARE programme is developing very well, especially as regards the establishment of a Topic Centre Good Practice for Candidate Countries and the organisation of European Week activities in all 10 PHARE countries and in Cyprus and Malta.
- The Agency's international networking activities were progressing and at the EU/US conference in Greece and agreement had been reached with the US about the future co-operation on the joint website, which had been face lifted and updated for the event. Furthermore, the Agency was working on establishing cooperation with the Organisation of American States, including the setting up of a website in the Agency's information network.
- Work on the Thesaurus had been finalized and translation into 20 languages was progressing.
- A new model has been agreed for the 2004 European Week, which includes a joint launch and a joint week. This will strengthen the European dimension of the week. Also, positive commitment from the European social partners in the sector had been achieved.

Mr Sapir noted the general progress of Agency work, but was concerned about the following issues: Progress on the Risk Observatory activity, the handling of comments on the report on Workers' safety and health, productivity and quality, the Agency website where more attention should be given to the question of user-friendliness and finally the Agency relation with presidencies and SLIC, where Mr Sapir would like to know if the European Social partners could be more involved.

Ms Waltke raised concerns about the progress of the Risk Observatory, the OSH monitoring project and the Information system on new research findings. It would be helpful if the Director could explain to the Board what the plans are as regards these 3 activities. Furthermore, Ms Waltke asked for more information about the OSH and CSR project and stressed that the project should focus on companies' activities.

Ms Breindl asked the Director to confirm that the European Week material will be ready in all languages in May 2004 for the launch.

The Director commented:

As regards the Risk Observatory, OSH monitoring and the Information system on new risks projects it had been agreed with the Bureau that no decision regarding the Risk Observatory should be taken before the February 2004 Board meeting. The OSH monitoring project and the project on the Information system were being implemented according to plans. The OSH monitoring and the research information project will form part of the package for the February Board meeting. The Agency is currently working on a discussion paper on the Risk Observatory, which is to be discussed in an advisory group preparing the February Board decision. Bureau representatives will form part of

this group. Mr Paoli from the Agency will contact the chair and the social partner coordinators for further details, but the Agency proposal will be a stepwise approach.

Mr Sapir asked if the projects already concluded or in progress would serve as a basis for the Risk Observatory – or if the Agency would have to start from zero. As regards the process, Mr Sapir urged the Agency to send the discussion document on the Risk Observatory as soon as possible, as time would be needed to prepare for a consensus decision in February.

The Director confirmed that project activities already carried out – or in progress – would be included in the basis for the Risk Observatory. As regards the discussion document, this would be forwarded as soon as possible.

As regards the structure of website content, the Director informed about the agreement reached with the Internet group on the implementation of the 3rd generation website, which had as its aim to improve the user friendliness of the website.

Regarding presidency events, the Director informed that the Agency always invites social partners as speakers at its events, including those organised with the Presidencies. Assistance in this matter from the European social partners is welcome.

The Director informed that the report on OSH and CSR is under preparation and should be ready for consultation end 2003/beginning 2004. Following the consultation process the report will be finalised and promoted with a special view to the current development at EU level.

As regards the project on Workers' safety and health, productivity and quality the Director informed that the Agency will take the comments received into account.

Finally the Director confirmed that the first wave of European Week material will be available in all language versions for the launch.

Draft work programme 2004 (A/03/13)

The Bureau discussed the different information projects:

Effectiveness of Economic Incentives

Ms Waltke reminded, that the Bureau had indicated that public procurement policies, labelling and certification should not be seen as economic incentives.

Mr Sapir remarked that the Accession Countries should be involved as much as possible in the Economic Incentives project. Furthermore, the project should not only focus on the direct effects of economic incentives but also on the (negative) indirect effects.

The Director replied that the Economic Incentives project will be more focused when the workshop gets closer and that the Agency expects the Boards agreement to involve the Accession Countries from the beginning of all new 2004 projects. Regarding the indirect effects, the Director remarked that he expected that the workshop should consider the impact of different incentive models in a broad sense.

On the request from Mr Glynn the Director explained that the Agency and the Bureau had agreed that the Agency should not enter the area of comparing national incentive systems (based on the graduation of insurance/social security contributions) at this stage due to the complexity of such assessments.

Good Practice in Agriculture

Ms Waltke informed that the European Association of Farmers would very much like to contribute to the project.

Mr Lopes remarked that it would be important to establish contacts to other DGs than DG Agriculture.

European Week on Noise

Mr Sapir asked the Director to consider addressing the new areas that will be included in the new legislation on Noise (e.g. entertainment). It should also be considered if help could be provided for companies to choose the correct equipment.

The Director replied that it is not possible for the Agency to establish a comprehensive database on emissions of different types of machinery and equipment to help companies choose the correct equipment, but that it was envisaged to provide links to existing databases in the Member States and beyond. Furthermore, the Director confirmed that new areas covered by the new Noise directive would be included in the planned European Week products.

Ms Breindl suggested that the Agency makes the guidelines to be prepared nationally according to the new noise legislation available.

The Director agreed with Ms Breindl's proposal and confirmed the Agency's willingness to establish links such national guidelines.

On the request from Mr Breindl, it was agreed to change the wording in the Noise project sheet about "the unborn child" to make it clear that it is the pregnant woman, who is the objective of health and safety measures.

Finally the Director informed that due to a request from European Parliament the work programme procedure would have to be changed as the Agency has to forward a draft work programme in March to the Commission. Therefore the Board would have to adopt a draft work programme for 2005 at its first meeting in 2004. It was agreed that due to the limitations for the preparation this draft would be based on the current corporate plan 2003-2006 and the work programme 2003. The only major new activity to be included would be an action plan for enlargement, addressing the special information needs of the new Member States. Following the preparation of this first draft the normal detailed planning procedure would commence including the preparation of a new corporate plan 2005-2008.

Future Structure of the Agency Network (A/03/14)

The Director remarked that the proposal presented to the Board had been agreed with the Focal Point group at a meeting in Bilbao 20-21 October.

Ms Breindl commented that the government group is concerned about adopting a new network structure now, while discussions on a new Agency Regulation are still ongoing.

The Director suggested that the new network structure be adopted with a reservation as regards the new regulation.

Mr Sapir remarked, that it is important that flexibility measure does not mean that some countries simply stop contributing to the Agency's work. The Member States have to aware of their responsibilities.

The Director remarked that flexibility is needed with an enlarged European Union so that not all Agency publications necessarily need to include information from all 25 Member States. However, a request from a Focal Point for not participating in an activity has to be justified, e.g. because there are no relevant good practice examples in that Member State.

Financial Matters / Budget Matters (A/03/15)

The Director briefly introduced the item.

There were no further comments.

Proposed meeting dates for Board meetings in 2004 (A/03/16)

Ms Waltke remarked that there was a clash between the meetings scheduled for social partners' negotiations in February and the proposed February Board meeting.

The Director answered that the Bureau agreed the February Board meeting dates in September and therefore before the dates for the social partners' meetings were fixed. However, the Agency would explore the possibilities for finding a solution.

Item 4 – Meetings Dates 2004 (B/03/16)

On the request from Mr Remaeus, the Director informed that the Agency would look for another date for the May Bureau meeting.

Item 5 – Any other Business

There were no comments.