

October 2006

B/06/M3

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE GOVERNING
BOARD, 26 SEPTEMBER 2006**

Present:

Mr Remaeus (chair), Mr Riese, Mr Lusi, Mr Lopes, Mr Cerfeda, Mr Gyorgy, Ms Dapergola, Ms Schweng, Ms Waltke, Ms Asherson, Mr Takala, Mr Taylor, Mr Rial-Gonzalez, Mr Smith, Mr Blanch, Ms O'Brien and Mr Bejer (Secretariat).

The Chair welcomed Mr Takala to this, his first, Bureau meeting as Director of the Agency.

Item 1: Adoption of the draft Agenda (B/06/A3)

Some additional documents were tabled. These were:

- A copy of the letter dated 27 July 2006 from the Director of the Translation Centre to the Chair of the Agency Board
- A copy of the letter dated 14 June 2006 from the Chair of the Agency Board to the Director of the Translation Centre
- A note dated 22 May 2006 prepared by the Agency on "Future priorities and the role of the Agency in a future Community OSH Strategy"
- A note dated 26 September 2006 regarding "Preparations of the next Agency work programmes"
- A reply dated 12 September 2006 from the Commission to the consultation on the Board and Bureau's draft rules of procedure, "Commission opinion on the draft rules of procedure of the Governing Board of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work"

Ms Waltke requested that documents be communicated in due time before the meetings to the Bureau members.

Mr Bejer explained that the documents had either only been received just before the meeting at the Agency or had required internal decisions to be taken, which could not be taken earlier due to the change of Director.

Ms Waltke stressed that the note from 22 May 2006 should have been discussed with the Bureau before it was sent to the Commission.

The Director replied that when he took over the post as Director he had decided to provide the Bureau with a copy as soon as it had been possible. In the future, the Bureau would be closer involved in the preparation of strategy/policy documents.

Mr Cerfeda requested further information on the agenda item “Exchange of views about future Agency’s role, priorities and challenges on the eve of a new Community Strategy for OSH”.

The Chair replied that the idea was to give an informal opportunity for the groups to express their views on the issues mentioned. It was recognized that the formulation of the next Community OSH Strategy should take place in other fora, but it was for the Bureau and Board to decide on the future actions of the Agency.

The Agency requested two issues to be discussed under Any Other Business:

- A proposal to postpone the next Bureau meeting
- The reply referred to above from the Translation Centre

The agenda was adopted with these comments.

Item 2: Draft minutes of the meeting of 28 June 2006 (B/06/M2)

The minutes were adopted.

Item 3: Director’s Progress Report (B/06/05)

In addition to the written report communicated before the meeting, the Director commented on the following issues:

- The Agency had been invited to participate in the “Working Party. Community Strategy 2007-2012” under the Advisory Committee. The Working Party will provide an opinion to the Advisory Committee on the next strategy and the Agency participated for the first time in the meeting on 21 September
- The budgetary procedure regarding the 2007 budget is ongoing. The Commission included almost all of the additional EUR 800.000 the Agency had requested in its preliminary draft budget. The process is now in the European Parliament and will not be finalized until December
- The Agency is working on the finalization of a cooperation arrangement with Russia. The arrangement is, however, delayed, due to internal Russian decisions but it should be ready for signature by December

Mr Blanch added information on:

- An ongoing court case against the Agency brought by a number of contract agents
- The preparation of a staff policy plan which must be ready by the end of the year
- The situation as regards the Agency’s offices in Gran Via, 33. An agreement for the next four years had been reached with the owner of the building. The agreement would mean a gradual introduction over four years of the increase the owner had asked for instead of one major increase in 2007. The Agency had looked into possible alternatives, but real alternatives are scarce.

Following a question from Mr Gyorgy about the budget impact on projects of the new rental agreement, Mr Blanch informed that for 2007 the additional resources needed would be found within title 2, by deferring some internal projects, whereas for the following years there would be a need to request additional funds for title 2, including those not requested for 2007 at this time.

Mr Lopes pointed out that the Agency had paid a number of improvements to the building in Gran Via, 33, which would be lost if the Agency moved to another address. The Agency should avoid repeating that situation in the future.

The Chair reported from the European Construction Safety summit held 21 September in Brussels and stressed the facilitating role the Agency had had in relation to the dialogue between the social partners in the sector.

Finally, Mr Smith informed about the situation as regards the Agency's web-development projects. A frozen procurement procedure had delayed projects but it seemed that it now would be possible to start cooperation with the contractor again.

Item 4: Exchange of views about future Agency's role, priorities and challenges on the eve of a new Community Strategy for OSH

Ms Schweng presented the employers' view, which included:

- In general, the Agency should aim at fewer outputs of a better quality
- The European Week activity had been a valuable Agency activity which should be continued
- The format of the different products should be considered in the light of the target groups
- Tri-partism must be ensured in the work of the Agency
- The Risk Observatory is an important activity, but it is important to ensure involvement of the Board, especially as regards the Company Panel

Ms Waltke added that the Agency role should be to raise awareness and develop knowledge, not enforcement etc. In the employers' view, the Agency role should not be changed dramatically.

Mr Cerfeda gave the workers' view and mentioned among other issues:

- The Agency is an important tool to support the implementation of policies formulated by the Commission. The usefulness of the Agency therefore depends on the Commission taking new initiatives
- The focal points play an important role in the dissemination of Agency information but a real two-way dialogue between the Agency and the focal points is needed. Furthermore, tri-partism must be ensured at the focal point level
- As regards the European Week, sustainable outcomes should be aimed at by extending the campaigning period. Real progress cannot be ensured if the campaign is limited to one year. Furthermore, monitoring groups should be set up to follow the campaigns
- The messages for the ongoing campaign on Young People should be made clearer
- There is a need for higher degree of involvement of the interest groups in the development of the Risk Observatory

Mr Lopes commented that a role for the Agency should be to inform about the social partners' activities.

Mr Gyorgy stressed that Agency communication must be targeted at the end-users. The end-user is not only the company, but also the workers inside the company. As regards tri-partism and Agency – focal point relations, it is important to ensure real feedback from the focal points to the Agency based on national tri-partite consultation. For the involvement of the Board/Bureau, it could be considered to actively involve the Bureau in the agenda setting of Board/Bureau meetings. It should also be considered how the written procedure can be improved.

Mr Lusi, on behalf of the governments, gave the following guidelines for Agency activities to support the overall objective of ‘better implementation’, while stressing that there was no need for major changes in the role of the Agency:

- More coordination between all involved actors is needed
- Development of guidelines for implementation (including good practice examples)
- Support the strengthening of the prevention culture and awareness raising
- The Agency’s products should meet the real needs of the end-users by adapting information to the groups, sectors etc.
- Development and distribution of practical manuals, checklists and information materials for the company level with a particular focus on SMEs
- Support to the Commission, the Member States and the social partners in their work on occupational safety and health
- Further work on the relation between OSH and economic performance needed
- Mainstreaming of OSH into other policies

According to the governments, major challenges include:

- Identification and provision of high-quality and useful information
- Getting the message across to the users
- Ensuring a similar high level of involvement of all focal points in collecting and disseminating practical OSH information as well as improving the financial support mechanisms and the delivery of products to the focal points
- Coping with the differences between the Member States
- Improvement in the web-based information as regards structure, maintenance and accessibility
- Improvements in the Risk Observatory and the organisation of the Healthy Workplace Initiative
- Work on new and emerging risks

Mr Riese added that it should be considered how the sustainability of the Agency activities could be increased.

Ms Dapergola informed that no new Community OSH Strategy has been adopted yet, but a document should be ready by the end of the year.

The Director thanked for the input received, appreciating that the ILO global strategy was reflected in the governments’ ideas. As regards the issue of sustainability raised by the workers, it should be kept in mind that there is a limit as to how many messages can

be communicated at the same time. It is therefore necessary to limit the campaign periods.

Item 5: Decision on 2007 Board meeting (B/06/07)

The Bureau approved the proposal to organise the 2007 Board meeting on 20-21 March and the European Week Summit on 22 March.

Item 6: Participation of Croatia and Turkey in Agency activities (B/06/08)

The Bureau approved the proposal to let Croatia and Turkey participate in the Agency's operational networks, providing that the participation is financed via PHARE.

Item 7: Intermediate 2006 campaign results – Healthy Workplace Initiative and European Week

Mr Thiebaud presented the intermediary results of the HWI campaign and Mr Rimmer presented the progress of the European Week 2006 campaign (presentations available here

<http://extranet.osha.eu.int/livelihood/livelihood.exe?func=ll&objId=657396&objAction=browse&sort=name>)

Mr Lusi commented that the HWI campaign had been a good initiative, and that the products had been good and well received. There had, however, been problems with the local sub-contractors, which had been contracted without any consultation of the national focal point.

Mr Lopes commented on the EW campaign and expressed concerns about the message, which in some countries had not been clear. In some cases the message had not been clearly related to the workplaces and the social partners had not been systematically involved at the national level.

Mr Rimmer replied that the Agency had stressed the workplace dimension, but that the implementation at the local level may vary.

Mr Takala suggested that the Agency followed up at the focal point meeting regarding the national EW campaigns.

Item 8: Any other business

Mr Smith commented on the answer received from the Translation Centre dated 27 July. There were some issues in the answer that may lead to wrong conclusions. Among other things, it should be stressed that the Agency is not in breach of its Regulation as regards the use of the Translation Centre. The case referred to in the answer from the Translation Centre, was an information development project, where a specific tool was adapted to national circumstances. The Agency will now arrange a meeting with the Translation Centre to follow up on the issue of translation quality.

Following a request from the Bureau, Mr Smith confirmed that the Agency would make an excel sheet with the Thesaurus available to the Bureau members.

The Bureau agreed to postpone the foreseen November meeting to January in order to have a better basis for the discussions on the 2008 work programme. The Agency would contact the Bureau members to identify the exact meeting dates.