

September 2007

B/07/M4

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE GOVERNING
BOARD, 12-13 SEPTEMBER 2007**

Present:

Ms Schweng (Chair), Mr Remaeus, Mr Riese, Mr Lusi, Mr György, Ms Asherson, Mr Fuente, Mr Takala, Mr Rial-Gonzalez, Mr Smith, Mr Taylor, Mr Jaccarini, Ms O'Brien and Mr Bejer (Secretariat).

The Chair started the meeting asking whether any of the present Bureau members would need interpretation during the meeting. This not being the case it was agreed not to make use of the interpretation facilities during this meeting. However, as this was too late to cancel interpretation and related services, the Agency would have to pay these expenditures anyway. To avoid this kind of unnecessary expenditures in the future, the Chair therefore asked the Bureau members to inform the Agency at least 12 days before the meetings whether they will attend the meeting or not, for the Agency to take a decision on whether to contract/cancel interpretation services or not.

Item 1: Adoption of the revised draft Agenda (B/07/A4rev)

The agenda was adopted.

Item 2: Draft minutes of the meeting of 14 May 2007 (B/07/M3)

Ms Schweng asked for changing "Communication and Promotion" on page 4 to "Communication, promotion and campaigning".

With this change the minutes were adopted.

Item 3: Recommendation on decision on financial irregularities panel (B/07/18)

Ms Asherson asked the Agency to provide information on what other Agencies do, when submitting the decision to the Board for approval.

With this additional information to be provided to the Board the Bureau agreed to give a positive recommendation to the Board on the adoption of the decision.

Item 4: Recommendation on decision on implementing rules for staff regulations (B/07/20)

The Bureau agreed to give a positive recommendation to the Board on the adoption of the decision, provided that the Commission does not request substantial changes.

(As the documents were tabled at the meeting, it was agreed that Bureau members could provide comments within one week after the meeting – no comments were received).

Item 5: Director's Progress Report (B/07/14)

The Director referred to the report distributed before the meeting and added the following information:

- PRIMA-EF Survey: The Director thanked the Bureau for their and the Board's input to the survey and added that any encouragement to the interest groups to provide more answers would be welcome. The Agency would send a last reminder after the meeting.
- The Agency was audited by the Internal Audit Service the week before the Bureau meeting to follow up on the IAS' 2005 report. The IAS will provide a report for comments in October, but the informal, preliminary conclusion was that work at the Agency regarding internal control was in progress. In this respect, it was noted that the Agency had made it a high priority to improve its internal control system and that important progress had been made over the last 4 months.
- A 'non-paper from the EFTA Secretariat' was tabled. The background was that the Agency via the Commission had been asked to provide a new estimate on the financial implications of involving the EFTA/EEA countries in the work of the Agency. The Agency would provide a new estimate on the basis of the following guidelines:
 - o There shall be no allocation of resources from the ordinary Agency budget to EFTA activities
 - o The increased workload at the Agency shall be covered by cost-free SNEs.

If an agreement is reached with the EFTA Secretariat and if this agreement can be applied from 2008 the Agency will take this into account when finalizing the 2008 budget and work programme. The Bureau took note of this information.

Mr Gyorgy stressed that if the EFTA/EEA countries should be more formally involved, the Agency must stress the importance of tri-partism. The financial conditions for effective tri-partism should be taken into account.

Mr Lusi asked about the focal points' role in developing the enterprise survey questionnaire.

Mr Rial-Gonzalez answered that the Agency is mindful of the focal points' workload, and therefore the only potential task for the focal points may be to "arbitrate" in cases of dispute over the correct translation of questionnaire items.

The Bureau took note of the report.

Item 6: Discussion of main activities under Agency Strategy 2009-2013 (B/07/15)

The Director, Mr Rial-Gonzalez, Mr Taylor, and Mr Smith introduced the item (presentation available here:

<http://extranet.osha.europa.eu/livelink/livelink.exe?func=ll&objId=811627&objAction=browse&sort=name>)

The discussion followed the structure of the five areas in addition to a separate discussion on the European Campaign themes.

European Risk Observatory (ERO)

Following a request from Ms Asherson, Mr Rial-Gonzalez explained that the ERO does not receive funds directly from the 7th research framework programme. However, the Agency works to help the OSH research community to apply for funds – e.g. via the identification of research priorities carried out in 2006, and the research seminar series that brings together OSH researchers and Commission services that provide funding for OSH research (e.g., DG Research and DG Employment).

Mr Riese made the following comments:

- The tasks on ‘sharing knowledge and stimulating debate’ and ‘fostering research on new and emerging risks’ are of particular importance. However, for the task ‘sharing knowledge’ it should be kept in mind that the two main target groups, researchers and policy-makers, are very different. For policy-makers it would for example be relevant to translate the information products.
- For the task on ‘forecasting methodology’, the pilot forecast should not be limited to risks arising from technological innovations

Mr Rial-Gonzalez agreed that the ERO needs to communicate with the two different audiences in different ways, in terms of technical/scientific content, style and also with regard to the translation issue (English may be enough for researchers, but not for policy-makers at national level; this, however, has to be balanced against the Agency’s resources for translation and the focal points’ resources for translation checking). The ERO will continue to seek feedback on its range of products (from English-only research reports and web features to multilingual factsheets and its *Outlook* publication) in order to fine-tune them.

Mr Rial Gonzalez also explained that the feasibility study for the forecast project had reviewed the experiences from other organisations, and that the first steps for the actual forecasting project will include a workshop to which those organisations will be invited in order to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the various methodologies. Focusing the forecast only to technological innovations had been discussed as an option by the experts during the feasibility study, but –in their opinion- narrowing it down would not bring methodological advantages, and would be more likely to miss wider socio-demographic factors relevant to OSH.

Following a request from Mr Fuente, Mr Rial Gonzalez explained that the Agency was finalising a report that will provide an overview of how labour inspectorates try to identify emerging risks.

Mr Rial-Gonzalez clarified, following a request from Ms Schweng, that the purpose of the ‘work-related life expectancy, morbidity and mortality’ project (page 5 of document B/07/15a) is not to develop a methodology for data collection by the ERO, but to review the methodologies that are currently used to estimate the occupational component of the disease burden. This topic has been proposed before by the Topic Centre and the ERO Expert Group, but it has not been addressed yet because it is a complex issue requiring a stepwise approach that goes beyond an annual work plan. Therefore it is proposed to do so over the period of the Agency strategy, reviewing the work carried out on this topic by experts across the world. This will be made clearer in the next draft of the paper.

Ms Schweng commented on the enterprise survey. The focus on psychosocial issues was too narrow and Ms Schweng questioned whether it should not have been the Bureau who decided on the topic.

Mr Rial-Gonzalez replied that:

- The advice given to the Agency by the contractor that carried out a feasibility study in 2006 (and by the Eurofound staff involved in their surveys) was not to make the survey too broad, as this would make it impossible to get valuable information on the selected topic. Psychosocial issues was selected as it is one of the major OSH issues – and most probably will remain that for a number of years – and it is well-suited for an EU-wide enterprise survey because it is not circumscribed to a particular sector or group. The experts on survey methodology actually recommended that it be even more focussed for the questionnaire.
- the Risk Observatory Advisory Group has the function as steering group for the enterprise survey –its members made it clear that they did not want an *additional* group to be created to oversee the survey. The Advisory Group has discussed the enterprise survey project over the last two years, including the choice of topic. Furthermore, the Agency had had separate communication with the employers' member of the Advisory Group and had the understanding that the employers accepted the topic – although with concerns that would be addressed during the questionnaire design phase.

Mr Remaeus, who is also member of the Risk Observatory Advisory Group, stressed that if the Bureau would now interfere in the choice of the topic for the survey, it would be meaningless to continue to involve the Advisory Group. The Advisory Group had discussed the survey during two days before the Bureau meeting, and no objection to the topic had been raised.

As the Agency considers it decisive that all interest groups find the survey useful, but recognizing the time constraints for the survey, the Agency tabled a document to accommodate the employers' concerns. The Bureau agreed that given the situation now existing, the proposals in the document tabled by the Agency were acceptable and should be included as an annex to these minutes. At the same time it was agreed that members of any of the three Advisory Groups (ERO, Work Environment Information, and Communications and Promotions) may ask explicitly for a particular decision to be referred to the Bureau, that minutes from Advisory Groups should be available to Bureau members, that the interest groups can send additional experts to the Advisory Group meetings if considered necessary and that the Agency will prepare a briefing paper on the enterprise survey for the November interest group meetings.

Working Environment Information (WEI)

Mr Riese made the following comments:

- before initiating work on REACH the Agency should check if there is a need for the Agency to go into this area as many organisations are working on this.
- activities in this area should help Member States reaching the 25 pct. reduction target for accidents – without forgetting occupational health issues.

Ms Asherson commented that it should be taken into account that not all good practices are transferable due to different contexts in different places.

Ms Schweng supported the idea of not taking up new topics before previous ones have been finalized. On the specific proposals, Ms Schweng made the following comments:

- the road transport activity should follow the same model as other projects in this area, i.e. have a duration of four years
- when working with occupational health issues, the Agency should cooperate with other organisations in the area to avoid double work
- regarding priority group projects a clear link should exist to the Community Strategy request for analysing the consequences of demographic change. Doing an activity on migrant workers would be welcome, while work on women's occupational safety and health had already been done in the past. As regards temporary workers, it is not clear whether this is a task for the Agency.

Mr Taylor replied that there is an OSH issue in relation to temporary workers and that this is therefore an area for the Agency to work with. Regarding women, new OSH issues have arisen since the Agency did its work on this group.

Mr Remaeus, referring to the amount of activities suggested in the document, asked the Agency to be clear about resource implications when presenting proposals. It was not possible for the Bureau to recommend which activities to carry out, if there was no information on the necessary resources or on what the Agency could do with existing resources.

It was agreed that the Agency will draft the preliminary draft Agency strategy for the November interest group meetings in a 'realistic way', i.e. the activities included in the strategy can be carried out by the Agency with existing resources. If the Agency has more proposals than resources allow to implement, these will be presented in a separate note with clear indications of the implications of including them in the strategy.

Communication, promotion and campaigning

Mr Smith tabled a presentation on the campaign cycle – available here: <http://extranet.osha.europa.eu/livelink/livelink.exe?func=ll&objId=811627&objAction=browse&sort=name>

Mr Remaeus stressed that it is important to have a meaningful definition of what is meant with an SME. The standard definition makes the concept too inclusive.

Mr Riese commented on the involvement of EU presidencies. This involvement was a good idea, but difficult to implement, as presidencies usually have their own agendas.

Following a request from Mr Lusi, Mr Smith informed that there will be a campaign week every year – also after the move to two-year campaigns. Having a campaign every year is a way to not lose the momentum build up – as also recommended at the March seminar.

Networking and coordination

Mr Fuente informed that maritime transport was becoming an increasingly important policy area and that the Agency may be requested to carry out activities in this area in the future.

European Campaign themes

Mr Remaeus and Mr Riese considered that it was too early to decide on the themes for the campaigns 2012-13 and 2014-15.

Mr Smith replied that as the European Risk Observatory would have to start work on the 2012-13 campaign in 2010, a decision would be necessary for at least that campaign. And in the strategy it would be helpful if the Board could agree a short indicative list of potential themes for the 2014-15 campaign. The ongoing development of a flexible response capacity at the Agency as regards campaigns would make it possible to accommodate the governments' concern about not being able to address new issues.

Mr Takala added that there is a link between the long-term planning of the campaigns and the fact that they are the Agency activities with the highest impact.

The following was agreed:

- accident prevention should be included in the maintenance campaign to maximize the contribution to realising the Community Strategy objectives
- the interest groups should be invited to select a theme for the 2012-13 campaign at the meeting in November. The final decision would be taken by the Board in March 2008
- the interest groups should be invited to give input to an indicative list of potential themes for the 2014-15 campaign at the meeting in November.

Item 7: Decision on summaries of Board meetings for web (B/07/16)

The Bureau decided not to publish outcomes/minutes of Board meetings on the Agency web-site.

Item 8: World Congress – Agency session (B/07/17)

This was an information item.

The Bureau asked the Agency to send the request for speakers to the coordinators.

Item 9: Financial assistance to national activities (B/07/19)

The Director introduced the item, making clear that a continuation of the current scheme would not be in accordance with the principles of Sound Financial Management, especially as regards efficiency. As authorising officer, the Director would not be able to assure that the Agency resources had been spent according to the principles of Sound Financial Management. It was therefore necessary to discontinue the current scheme.

Mr Smith introduced the new scheme that will replace the current scheme (presentation available here:

<http://extranet.osha.europa.eu/livelink/livelink.exe?func=ll&objId=811627&objAction=browse&sort=name>)

Mr Remaeus stressed that a key condition for his support to Agency activities is that the activities are programmed and implemented in accordance with the relevant rules.

Mr Lusis commented that the low number of focal points who had opted for the alternative to the grant scheme this year could indicate that the new scheme is not attractive. It is furthermore important to take into account national differences. In Latvia the services of the contractor are disproportionately expensive.

The Bureau took note of the need to discontinue the current system and asked the Agency to refine the new system together with the focal points and present the new system to the interest groups in November in Luxembourg.

Item 10: Any other business

There were no items.

ANNEX: Enterprise survey: proposal for next steps

Forthcoming dates

Closing date:	1 October
Opening tenders:	8 October
Evaluation and selection of successful tender, and signature of contract	By end of October / early November
Kick-off meeting (ROAG and contractor):	November (date tbc – ROAG members' availability)

Proposed next steps:

The Agency will prepare a full briefing paper for employers, governments and workers to discuss within their interest groups. This will contain all the background information, overall schedule of work, and the general issues that the survey could address (e.g., awareness, resources enterprises can draw on, barriers to action, factors that would facilitate action, etc.). This would help the interest groups to collate and prepare their views on the key issues, and prepare their input into the questionnaire design and survey methodology discussion.

The Agency will ask the contractor to run Work Packages 1.1 and 1.2 in parallel, to maximise the time for discussion and agreement on a questionnaire. This means that the period for questionnaire design will cover from November 2007 to June 2008. The Agency will organise as many meetings as necessary (in Bilbao or Brussels) to facilitate discussion and reach an agreement.

According to the advice from the feasibility study contractors and the Eurofound staff who have run their enterprise survey, the minimum period for the development of the national-version questionnaires should be six months. Any delays beyond June 2008 would have an impact on quality and cause significant risks to the achievement of sound and reliable data.

Current schedule from the tender specifications:

2.8 Schedule

The contractor should start work upon signature of the contract, which is expected to take place in October 2007. With respect to execution of phases two and three, the contractor will start work upon approval by the Agency of the final deliverable required for payment of the previous phase of work.

The table below is an indication of the expected schedule of work; tenderers are expected to provide a more detailed plan as part of their proposal.

		2007		2008				2009			
Work packages		Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Phase 1	WP 1.1 Design of the survey methodology										
	WP 1.2 Design of the questionnaires										
Phase 2	WP 2.1 Development of national version questionnaires										
	WP 2.2 Design and implementation of a sampling strategy										
Phase 3	WP 3.1 Fieldwork										
	WP 3.2 Data delivery										