

February 2007

B/07/M5

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE GOVERNING BOARD, 4 DECEMBER 2007

Present:

Ms Schweng (Chair), Mr Riese, Mr Lusi, Ms Breindl, Ms Smith, Mr Cerfeda, Mr Fuente, Mr Takala, Mr Rial Gonzalez, Mr Smith, Mr Taylor, Ms O'Brien and Mr Bejer (Secretariat).

The Chair started the meeting welcoming Ms Smith who has replaced Ms Waltke as coordinator of the employers' group in the Board. At the same time the Chair thanked Ms Waltke for the work she has delivered in the Board, the Bureau and the employers' group.

Item 1: Adoption of the revised draft Agenda (B/07/A5)

The Agency asked for the inclusion of three items under 'Any other business': Translations of Board documents; Agreement regarding EICs; Agency status as CIS Centre

The agenda was adopted.

Item 2: Draft minutes of the meeting of 12-13 September 2007 (B/07/M4)

The minutes were adopted.

Item 3: Director's Progress Report (B/07/21)

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

- A complaint has been lodged, under the Data Protection Regulation (EC) No 45/2000, with the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS). The Agency is currently preparing a response to the questions raised by the European Data Protection Supervisor, within the established deadline
- Situation regarding implementing rules: The Agency does still not have implementing rules in place for, among other things, contract agents and reclassifications (promotions). As a result no reclassifications have taken place in 2007. Furthermore, the absence of implementing rules for contract agents means that the Agency cannot recruit contract agents to replace the current auxiliary agents which will have an impact from the end of the year on e.g. the management of the pre-accession programmes.
- Agency budget: Recent decisions by the budgetary authority can have a significant impact on the future Agency budgets and important cuts in activities may become

necessary. The importance of support from the Bureau and the members of the interest groups via their national or European channels in the process of ensuring a sustainable future budget for the Agency was stressed

Mr Lusis requested the Agency's comments to the observation that the new web-system has meant a substantial decrease in the number of visitors to the national web-sites and problems in uploading information.

Mr Smith replied that the information about problems with uploading information was surprising but the Agency will look into the matter. The change in the number of visitors was probably due to a change in the way of counting visitors.

Mr Fuente requested that the Agency does not publish the result of the information collection on carcinogens initiated by the Agency at the request of the Commission before having discussed the issue with the Commission.

Mr Rial Gonzalez replied that there are actually two different projects: a report on carcinogens (including a literature review and an overview of policies and practices in relation to how OSH is included in assessment, recognition, recording and prevention of exposure to carcinogens and occupational cancer), and the Commission request regarding OELs received when the former report was already in progress. The Agency will – as usual – consult on these products before publication, and has in fact already provided DG EMPL with access to the extranet folders where the drafts are placed, and has forwarded the replies received for the OELs questionnaire from non-EU countries directly to the Commission, as agreed with Mr Biosca.

Regarding the Agency's budget the interest group representatives agreed on the importance of exploring ways to make the budgetary authority aware of the consequences for the Agency of the recent decision on future budgets.

The Bureau took note of the report.

Item 4: Conclusions from seminar on the preliminary draft Agency Strategy (B/07/22)

The Bureau provided the following guidance to the Agency on the preparation of the draft strategy and the draft management plan for the Board meeting in February:

General comments

Mr Cerfeda requested that the Agency should be explicit in what is expected from the Member States.

Ms Schweng requested a clearer identification of the origins of the different tasks. This should also include a clear link to the Community Strategy.

Ms Breindl requested the inclusion of an overview of when which unit will work on the different activities.

It was agreed that there was not a need for a Bureau-focal point seminar in 2008.

European Campaign Themes

It was agreed to postpone a decision on the 2012-2013 campaign theme to the management plan 2010 (i.e. February/March 2009 the latest). However, as input to that decision the preferences expressed are recorded in the following.

Mr Cerfeda preferred 'better health' while an alternative could be 'dangerous substances'.

Ms Schweng preferred 'dangerous substances'.

Mr Riese preferred 'ageing workers' but reformulated as 'vulnerable groups'. A second option could be 'dangerous substances' and a third option could be 'better health'.

The Chair asked the Agency to add 'preventive culture' to the list of future options.

Strategic framework

No need for changes to chapter 1.

European Risk Observatory (ERO)

Mr Fuente requested the development of an early alert system as part of the risk observatory. The system would work in a closed network and help network partners to be aware of potential new risks, their consequences and possible solutions.

Mr Rial Gonzalez responded that before the establishment of an early alert system it would be necessary to establish clear criteria for the Risk Observatory's involvement in an area.

Mr Takala requested that the Commission provided a more detailed description by mail.

Mr Riese welcomed the clear definition of target groups for the ERO. However, the wording regarding self-employed should be adapted as it is more relevant to establish an overview of the state of knowledge than to look for new and emerging risks. As regards climate change, Mr Riese questioned whether it was the moment to look at that issue in an OSH context.

Mr Breindl found that more added value would be created by continuing work on nano-technologies instead of initiating work on climate change.

Mr Rial Gonzalez clarified that what is intended for the climate change activity is a literature survey which implies a small amount of resources (around EUR 20.000). However, having listened to the comments it was suggested to merge the activity on emergency workers and climate change.

Ms Breindl requested that the Agency gives more priority to the preparation and organisation of expert group meetings.

Mr Rial Gonzalez remarked that the Agency is aware of the challenges in keeping expert group member interested and therefore already had already launched a survey among the group members at its previous meeting (20-21 November).

Ms Schweng requested that it should be made clearer that it is the Board and Bureau who decide on the tasks for the Risk Observatory.

Working Environment Information (WEI)

Ms Schweng commented on the task on occupational health. It should be clear that employers are not responsible for employees' decisions on lifestyle issues. As regards themes to be revisited, it was suggested that the Agency selects Accident Prevention and Dangerous Substances.

Mr Riese requested that it be made clear that the occupational health activity will be coordinated closely with DG SANCO and its network. As regards economic incentives, the Agency should not focus on what governments can do, but rather on what financial institutions and other private actors do.

Mr Fuente asked for the inclusion of the European Social Funds in the scope of the activity on economic incentives.

Communication, promotion and campaigning

Mr Lusi requested that the Agency applies a flexible approach to the translation of the 'Healthy Workplaces' slogan.

Ms Schweng supported the point made by Mr Lusi and added that the employers would have preferred another slogan, though it was accepted that the slogan had been discussed in the relevant fora.

Following a request from Mr Riese and Mr Lusi, Mr Smith confirmed that the Agency will provide more detailed information on the plans for the 2nd campaign year in the new campaign model at the meetings in February.

Networking and coordination

Mr Cerfeda stressed the importance of the Agency being a meeting point for networking. Furthermore, the Agency should consider target works councils.

Item 5: New OSH ERA project: Strategic workshop in Brussels (B/07/23)

Mr Rial Gonzalez informed about the item and the workshop in Brussels.

The item was an information item.

Item 6: Any Other Business

Mr Smith explained about the proposal of the Agency formalising its cooperation with the DG Enterprise/the EICs via the signature of a declaration of intention.

The Bureau agreed to the Director signing the declaration

The Director informed about the proposal to give the Agency status as CIS Centre.

The Bureau agreed to the Agency's recognition as a regional CIS Centre.

The Director informed about translations costs. Currently, around 1/3 of the Agency's annual translation costs are spent on translation of Board meeting documents – and not on translation of information for the intended users of the Agency's information. The established practice of translating work programmes into all languages is particularly costly. The Agency therefore suggested a change to the established practice of translating work programme documents into all languages and in the future translate these documents into German and French from the English original.

The Bureau did not want to give its support to the proposal without consulting their groups.