

Minutes of the meeting of the Bureau of the Governing Board, 19-20 May 2009

Present:

Mr Remaeus (Chair)

Mr Cerfeda, Ms Schweng, Mr Riese, Ms Breindl, Ms Böhm, Mr György, Mr Alvarez, Mr Takala, Ms Schneider, Mr Smith, Ms Murillo, Mr Taylor, Ms O'Brien.

Ms Brun, Mr Elsler and Mr Munar were present for particular agenda items.

Item 1: Adoption of the draft agenda (B/09/A2)

Mr Remaeus welcomed all members to the meeting

Mr Takala proposed two information items to be added under Any Other Business: the first item on the preparation of the selection procedure for the Director of the Agency and the second on the Agency premises.

Mr Takala also told the Bureau that **Mr Bejer** was absent due to the happy occasion of the birth of his second child, and **Mr Rial González** was unfortunately absent due to a family illness.

The amended agenda was adopted.

Item 2: Draft minutes of the last meeting of 2 March 2009 (B/09/M1)

The minutes were adopted.

Item 3: Status report:

- Progress on implementation of the 2009 management plan (B/0901a)
- Progress on achieving the objectives in EU-OSHA Strategy (B/09/01b)

Mr Takala presented this item, outlining the differences in the new reporting system. In the first report, the focus remained on the objectives and outputs defined for the year and followed the structure of the Annual Management Plan. The second report covered progress towards the achievement of general objectives in the EU-OSHA Strategy 2009-2013. Such monitoring tools allowed for measurement and greater transparency.

Ms Böhm congratulated the Agency on impressive reporting and valuable work. It was her opinion, however, that the Agency was not doing enough in the area of occupational illness. The Community Strategy focused on accidents at work, but the Governing Board had expressed its regret at this. The European Risk Observatory (ERO) website had most hits on those parts dealing with vibration and MSDs. So, there was a clear interest. Also, the Agency should do more to provide OSH in figures for occupational diseases. The ILO methodology should be used and developed by the ERO as a starting point.

Mr Takala reminded participants that the progress report was looking only at the work done so far this year. New ILO figures had just been published one week previously. There was information on occupational diseases planned. **Ms Schneider** said that OSH figures were available for MSDs, data collection was underway for respiratory diseases and the Agency had recently published a report on skin diseases. **Mr Taylor** said that a lot of work in occupational disease was planned in the Working Environment Information Unit (WEIU) and currently work was underway on MSDs in the agriculture sector and legionella. He stressed the importance of having input from the full Working Environment Advisory Group to the WEIU work programme.

Ms Breindl requested more information on the new website strategy presented at the Focal Point meeting. **Mr Smith** explained that this was confined to the FOP/Agency websites and did not refer to the entire Agency website. Efforts were being made to improve the national pages.

In response to other questions, **Mr Takala** explained that the legal advice mentioned in the progress report referred to internal matters and that the mapping described was an internal management system.

Ms Schweng thanked the Agency for more transparent reporting. She requested more information on the surveys mentioned, both in 2010 and 2013. When had it been decided to carry out a second survey, in addition to ESENER? **Mr Smith** said that these were tools to examine the impact of the Agency's work, such as using the Flash Eurobarometer tool which was an opinion poll conducted for a moderate cost. The survey in 2013 would be a survey of our performance carried out by an external evaluation company.

Item 4: Expert forecast on Emerging Chemical Risks – presentation of project results

Ms Brun presented the principal findings of the report on emerging chemical risks and on the feedback gathered at the expert workshop held in Brussels at the beginning of March with some 30 participants.

A discussion ensued on the report and on the next steps. **Ms Brun** reiterated the need for further research. **Ms Böhm** said that the work was absolutely commendable and gave visibility to the problem. She encouraged the Agency to do the same for occupational diseases, with good practice. **Mr Takala** emphasized the need to focus on exposures, as reporting systems were uneven and those countries with better reporting practices were often perceived as having bigger problems simply because in other countries under reporting underestimated the problem.

Item 5: Road map for “Better health and safety at work through prevention campaign” (B/09/02)

The **Director** presented the paper, reminding participants that at the last Bureau meeting a compromise had been achieved which provided the Agency with some challenges for identifying the next steps. So, the Agency took as its starting point the implementation of the risk assessment hierarchy, encouraging the “whole life” approach, incorporating health and disease and good practices. He did not wish to reopen the entire discussion but asked the Bureau for its assistance and input in providing a focus for the campaign which was now urgently needed. Preparatory work was well under way but he hoped that the

rather broad spectrum of the campaign could be discussed within the Bureau to provide guidance for the way forward.

A number of proposals were put forward by the members of the Bureau and Agency staff present:

Mr Cerfedda asked for more clarification regarding language usage, for example, prevention, prevention culture and work culture. The paper should be shortened and more targeted. He agreed on the logical follow-up of the risk assessment campaign. He called for an overview regarding prevention in the 27 Member States – a Europe-wide inventory or *Etat de Lieux* of control systems, instruments and policies to encourage prevention and good practices. It was possible to identify sectors, but would it be more helpful to target SMEs? Emerging risks should be included, clearly identified by **Ms Brun**. Also, we should look at young people, migrant workers, the crisis and work precarity. The campaign should reinforce the responsibility of the social partners.

Ms Breindl concurred that the document required focus. In her view, the focus should not be on sectors, but on clearer, sexier messages.

Ms Schweng added that focusing on sectors would make the campaign lose momentum. The focus should be on results and on clearly defined main messages. What could these messages be? Risk Assessment? Implementation and follow-up?

Mr Alvarez said that the Agency had summarized quite well the key messages but that there were too many of them and that these messages should be prioritized and tightened up. He supported the continuity idea of following on from risk assessment. Looking at the hierarchy, these messages could be clear about active involvement of workers, the whole life approach and if a sector was required, perhaps the health sector. But perhaps a cross-sectoral approach with clear basic messages might be the better option. He urged the Agency to include health in the priority messages, including emerging risks, and to also encourage the business advantages.

Mr Remaeus liked the idea of building on the risk assessment campaign and concentrating on the health sector if the approach was to be a sectoral one.

Mr Taylor said that both health and economic aspects were important, but it was a big challenge to try to please everyone. The campaign description was currently so broad that it was beyond the resources of the Agency. Existing work should be used and brought in under the campaign banner. In the WEIU, three existing projects could be brought under the banner of the campaign – the occupational health promotion project, the economic incentives project and the mainstreaming OSH into education project. The WEIU could coordinate these projects in the context of a broader campaign. This could be one of the best campaigns ever.

Mr Smith added that the ESENER data would provide a lot of information and would certainly cover the management systems mentioned by **Mr Cerfedda** in his *Etat de Lieux* request, though this type of work on providing an overview of legislative regimes would normally be the work of the European Commission. In his view, the logical step to follow on from the risk assessment campaign which everyone agreed on, would be to ask the question - how do you implement proper risk prevention?

The answer lay in two key messages: Leadership and worker participation.

This would provide a structure for the next steps and for redrafting the paper. If we could look at one sector, it should be the health sector as there were gaps in our information and this was a public sector.

Mr Takala summarized that there was a clear consensus for a follow-up to the risk assessment idea. In his view, the *Etat de Lieux* or inventory would be a very big undertaking and would be partly covered by the forthcoming EUROSTAT Panorama report on OSH. He insisted that a focus was still needed for the Agency to progress and if not the sectors, then where? What would the factsheets be about, for example?

Ms Schweng said that the focus could be on the three projects identified by **Mr Taylor**. **Mr Remaeus** said that such a broad campaign, without targeted messages, would have to reduce the material produced or be more focussed.

Ms Breindl supported the overarching theme put forward by **Mr Smith**, examining what prevention was all about – leadership and worker involvement. A factsheet on such a topic would be very useful across the board. But the material produced by the Agency should be brighter, catchier and sexier.

Mr Alvarez said that the three projects could of course be incorporated under the campaign banner which was pragmatic. But he would still like to see the health sector included and it need not have a narrowing impact on the campaign.

Mr Riese concluded that the three projects could be used but if that were the case, **Mr Smith's** ideas should be used as the overall key message – leadership and worker participation.

Ms Schneider reiterated the key ERO contributions to the evidence base: the ERO would address the vulnerable groups through its work on diversity, the results of ESENER would be made available, the project on labour inspections and priority setting and the continued work on occupational disease. The assessment of the burden of disease would be started in 2010.

Mr György said he supported the inclusion of the three projects from the WEIU but also supported the development of the key message to get the stakeholders involved, employers and workers alike. Perhaps at national level they could add a sectoral approach if necessary. It was clear that the sectoral unions and organisations were interested in this.

Mr Takala concluded that a lot of common points had become clearer. The AMP 2010 was agreed and therefore a final consensus would need to be reached by September at the latest.

In light of the many ideas which emerged from the discussion, the Bureau agreed that the Agency should now redraft the road map paper with a new and sharpened focus, in time for the next Bureau meeting in September.

Item 6: Participation of Western Balkan countries and Turkey in the Governing Board (B/09/03)

Mr Takala introduced this topic with a summary of how the last ten Member States to join the EU had been incorporated into the Agency activities. Gradual involvement of these countries had taken place only after the signing of accession treaties. The guidance from the Commission on the participation of Western Balkan countries and Turkey was clear about awaiting accession treaties. In the meantime, because of the various programmes available, the Agency was engaged in directing its funding to building up national focal points and national networks, encouraging the establishment of social partner organisations.

Mr Alvarez said that it was clear also that only Member States could participate in Governing Board meetings.

Mr Cerfeda thanked **Mr Takala** for following up this issue and supported the idea of building up the national networks and social partner organizations through information exchange and seminars.

Mr Takala informed the Bureau that the Belgian government had also offered its support as part of its EU presidency programme.

The Bureau supported the Agency proposal.

Item 7: Format of November Board meeting (B/09/04)

Given the desire of the Governing Board to have a second meeting per year, **Mr Takala** proposed a second meeting in Bilbao to coincide with the Closing event and network day in November this year and in Luxembourg the following year before or after the Advisory Group meetings, although the time for preparation for interest groups might be tight. This model – alternating between Bilbao and Luxembourg each year – best suited the needs of the members and followed a consultation with the Commission.

Following a discussion, the Bureau agreed to the format presented with the exception of the timing of the Bureau in Bilbao in 2009, which should take place on the morning of the Governing Board at 8.30 am.

Item 8: Interactive Risk Assessment Tool prototype – presentation

Mr Smith and **Mr Munar** presented the prototype of the interactive risk assessment tool (OIRAT).

Following the presentation, **Mr Munar** said that the Agency proposed to set up a steering group of governing board representatives which would monitor the development. Already, a meeting had taken place in Brussels to consult the ETUI and BusinessEurope. Mock-ups would shortly be available on a restricted website. Eventually, the hope was that the tool would be tailored to national situations and reflect different sectors. The tool was aimed primarily at small and micro enterprises.

A discussion ensued involving all members of the Bureau, mainly seeking clarifications or supplementary information.

The Bureau unanimously supported the further work of the Agency on the online risk assessment tool and agreed to the setting up of a steering group.

Item 9: Any other business

- Information on recruitment of a successor to **Mr Takala**

Mr Takala informed the Bureau that he had requested the Commission to inform the Bureau at its next meeting of the necessary steps to be taken for the recruitment procedure to be launched, as this should be presented to the full Board in March of 2010.

Mr Alvarez said he would report back to the Bureau on the procedure at the next Bureau meeting.

- Information on the Agency's premises

Mr Takala said that the Agency had been working for two years in its attempt to procure a seat agreement with the Spanish authorities. This initiative had received support from the Commission and the European Parliament, and several meetings had taken place at national and European level. The likelihood was that a seat agreement could be agreed but without the provision of a building as there were no suitable government-owned premises that could be converted into the Agency's headquarters. It would be far more feasible to receive a long term subsidy. This would entail remaining in the private property sector.

As the Agency was really experiencing a space problem, the Director informed the Bureau that he was currently examining the possibility of renting additional office space on the first floor of the adjacent building which was currently available and that this would have financial implications. The existing building was foreseen to cater for some 40 people. But the Agency had grown to 64 and space was at a premium. No-one except Heads of Unit had individual offices and the open plan spaces were full, with staff functioning in crowded and noisy conditions.

Ms Murillo said that the impact on the budget would require an amending budget because Title 2 would not be sufficient. Money would have to be transferred from Title 3. She presented the calculations based on current prices under discussion with the owner. She did not know how long the offer would stand as the floor was available for all bidders. The ultimate hope would be that the rent would be covered by the Spanish authorities' subsidy.

A lengthy discussion ensued on the need for new space, the location, telework possibilities, the square meters required and the need for more documentation.

Ms Murillo said that this was an information point and that the Bureau would receive a paper detailing all the negotiations and background to the problem. The negotiations would continue.

The Bureau agreed that the Agency should continue the process and provide full information to the Bureau as soon as possible.

The **Chair** thanked the Bureau members for their attendance and the interpreters for their good work and closed the meeting.