

CRITERIA FOR OBSERVER STATUS ON BOARD

Background

Article 9 of the Agency's founding Regulation (2062/94) mentions that the Administrative Board may, after consulting the Commission, invite representatives of non-member countries, of Community institutions and bodies and international organisations, as observers.

The Administrative Board discussed the issue of observers at its meeting on 6th/7th November 1996 and agreed that, due to the size of the Board and the short time the Agency had been in force, there should be no additional observers.

At present, the Chairman and the Director of the Dublin Foundation and one representative for ETUC and one for UNICE are observers (group co-ordinators) at the Board meetings.

The Agency received a formal request from The International Labour Organisation (ILO) to be observer at the Board meetings and was also approached informally by the EFTA countries in this respect. DG Enlargement has indicated that they believe that the Candidate Countries should be involved in the network of the Agency (financed by the Commission) and in a few years as observers on the Board.

It is mentioned in the Communication from the Commission to Council of 20th December 1999 that "participation by the Candidate countries in the activities of the Agency can only be envisaged where they have organisations as representative as those in the Member States. In the meanwhile, representatives of the Candidate countries may participate, as observers, in specific work of shared interest."

The issue was discussed at the Bureau meeting in November 1999 and a draft document was subsequently prepared. At its meeting in February 2000, the Bureau approved the draft document and agreed that it should be tabled at a Board meeting.

Proposal

- a) The EFTA countries (ongoing) and the Candidate countries (from 2001) will be invited to participate in relevant Agency projects and to separate annual meetings with the Agency. The Agency will stress that it is important that the countries be represented by tripartite delegations in these meetings to which the European social partners will be invited as well. In addition, they will be invited to develop structures similar to the Agency's, i.e. build up web-sites, Focal Points and national information networks.
- b) The ILO and the WHO (and other international organisations with responsibilities in health and safety at work) will also be invited to participate in relevant Agency projects and to separate annual meetings, to discuss progress and future work. This will include close co-operation on the exchange of safety and health-related information on the web.
- c) The ILO, the WHO, the EFTA countries and the Candidate countries will not be invited to participate in the Board meetings as observers, at present. When a horizontal model for the participation of Candidate countries in agencies/committees with tripartite structure has been agreed, the Agency will present a global proposal for the Board covering all the relevant partners.
- d) The countries/organisations must cover their own expenses for participation in meetings, in specific projects or in the set up of Agency web-sites, Focal Points or national networks. (The Phare Committee has agreed co-financing of the CEECs participation in the Agency's network).

Action

The Board is invited to discuss and agree the proposal.