

**MINUTES OF THE 11th MEETING OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD OF
THE EUROPEAN AGENCY FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK, BILBAO,
23-24 NOVEMBER 1999.**

Introduction and apologies

The Chairperson welcomed those present including new members:
Marc Sapir who attends as the Worker group observer
Jens Jensen who attends for the Danish Government as observer until his nomination is formally confirmed.

and noted apologies from:

Mr. Andersen (governments, Denmark) for whom Mr. Jensen is attending as an observer.
Ms. Ferraro (governments, Italy) for whom Ms. Rocca-Ercoli is attending.
Ms. Gibson (workers, U.K.).
Mr. González Fernández (governments, Spain) for whom Mr. Martínez de la Gándara is attending.
Mr. Gunkel, (employers, Germany)
Mr. Heider, (workers, Austria)
Mr. Heselmans (governments, Belgium) for whom Mr. De Coninck is attending.
Ms. Kafetzopoulou (governments, Greece) for whom Ms. Pissimissi is attending.
Mr. Larsson, (EC Member, Belgium).
Dr. Nilsson (governments, Sweden) for whom Mr. Barrefelt is attending.
Mr. Walsh (governments, Ireland) for whom Dr. Wood is attending.

Item 1: Adoption of the draft agenda (A/99/2A)

The Review of the Agency Regulation was added to the Agenda after item 8.
The Board adopted the agenda.

Item 2: Adoption of the minutes of the last meeting, 4-5 March 1999 (A/99/1M)

The Chairperson invited comments on the minutes.
The Board adopted the minutes.

Item 3: Action Points arising out of the minutes (A/99/16)

The Action Points were accepted.

Item 4: Election of new Chairperson and Bureau (A/99/17)

The Chairperson explained the procedure for the elections.

Members of the Bureau were elected as follows:

Commission:	José Ramón Biosca de Sagastuy Eggehard Rother (may also take part)
Employers' Group:	Torben Jepsen Olivier Richard (may also take part)
Government Group:	Richard Clifton Marc Boisnel (may also take part)
Workers' Group:	Marcel Wilders Marc Sapir (may also take part)

It was **AGREED** to continue with the special designation of a Spanish Government representative as a member of the “may also take part category”. (The current representative is Francisco Javier González Fernández.)

Richard Clifton was elected as Chairperson.

Item 14 (for Information): State of OSH report

Project Manager Anette Ruckert gave a short presentation of progress on the State of OSH report. . Copies of the presentation “slides” were tabled at the meeting. This was an information item as the draft consolidated report will be discussed at the TNG OSH monitoring meeting and at the Focal Point meeting both of which took place in the following week. The final draft consolidated report will be used at the proposed preboard seminar in February 2000. The purpose of the preboard seminar discussion will be to contribute to the evaluation of the project itself and to consider the next steps in the use of the report, however there would be a final opportunity to amend the document prior to publication.

Questions and points raised in discussion included:

- This is a very important part of the Agency's work
- The national reports should be made available to the TNG OSH monitoring members on request.

Item 5: Director's Progress Report (A/98/18)Revised

An updated version of the Director's progress report and an annex giving details of information requests were tabled at the meeting.

The Director responded to specific questions:

- A break down of information requests was given in the Annex to the report.
- The agency expected to use all of the operational budget as foreseen.

- With reference to paragraph 2.3, the Agency had made a request to CEN to make the standards freely available via the Agency Website. This request had been turned down, but they were considering making abstracts of the standards available on their site to which the Agency would be able to make a link. The Agency would continue the dialogue with CEN. Another possibility could be for Member States to enter into agreements concerning financial arrangements with their national standards organisation to make the national standards available.

The Board noted the report.

Item 6: Topic Centre Evaluation (A/99/19)

The Director introduced the overall Topic Centre development process, then the responsible project managers made short presentations of the Webpages developed by the Topic Centres, which are a major output of their work. Programme Manager Ulrich Riese then summarised the evaluation findings. Draft paper products from the Topic Centres were available for viewing on the information stand. The Chairperson explained that the Board had to decide upon the evaluation report itself and the continuation of Topic Centres.

In discussion the following points were made:

- Topic Centres are an instrument of the Agency. Their task is to look for examples of good practice at European and international level. Focal Points are responsible for seeking national level examples and making them available via their Webpages. TNGs have a monitoring role, advising the Agency both on the management and the activities of Topic Centres
- It is important that the work of Topic Centres and therefore their contract renewal does not become self-perpetuating. There has to be a competitive tendering process for Topic Centres every three years, unless the Board take the decision to operate the process in a different way
- The Agency and its network are still in a learning phase with Topic Centres. Therefore in extending their contracts a number of issues will need to be examined or clarified.
- The remit of Topic Centres needs to be clarified and their role and strategy need examining.
- Member State examples of good practice should be collected and made available. In relation to this the working relationship between Focal Points and Topic Centres should be examined with a view to making it more open, including how good practice solutions can be gathered in Member States and whether Topic Centres can assist in this process. Co-operation and understanding is needed between Topic Centres. Focal Points need to discuss this issue.
- One model could be for Topic Centres to gather good practice solutions from Member States with the Focal Point having the role of verifying if they were acceptable.
- How can those Member States who do not have an institution in a Topic Centre be involved?
- For those Member State examples that are already available on via the national sites, can these be made more prominent by highlighting them at the Agency site level and making it clearer how to access to them.

- Who decides what is good practice? Academic institutions are not necessarily the most knowledgeable in this field. Their competence in this field should be verified. Use should be made of Social Partner experience in this field and Topic Centres should collect data from the Social Partners, including their institutions
- Can the consultation process on written Topic Centre documents be clarified. Can their relationship to TNGs be clarified so it is clear in which TNG they are discussed.
- Include Topic Centres, their working methods and relationship to the Agency and other network partners needs to be examined as part of the review of the Agency Regulation.
- Ensure there is access to European level documents such as Advisory Committee and Commission guidance on stress.

The Board approved the Evaluation Report and the renewal of Topic Centres for a further period of one year.

As a condition of taking the decision to continue with Topic Centres the Board AGREED that the following issues must be addressed:

- **Review and clarify the strategy, tasks and working methods of Topic Centres. Review the competence of Topic Centres in the field of finding good practice. Give these attention in the renewal of contracts.**
- **Examine the relationship between Topic Centres and the Agency and Topic Centres, national level data collection and Focal Points. Clarify the role and working relations with TNGs. This discussion must include the Focal Point group in order to see what improvements can be made.**
- **In consultation with Focal Points look at ways to involve those Member States without an institution in a Topic Centre in that Topic Centre**

Item 7: Draft Work Programme 2000 (A/99/20)

The Draft Work Programme included a general section and detailed individual project sheet proposals. The insert document A/99/20-amendments contained proposed amendments following comments from the Advisory Committee meeting. Document A/99/20-EW2000 competition/closing event was tabled on the day. It contained an update for project proposal IS-CS-01 about the award competition and closing event for European Week 2000.

An updated project sheet on employability, IP-MO-02, was tabled at the final plenary session.

A minor amendment was to be made to the wording in 5.2 concerning a reference to Spanish authorities.

The Director introduced the Work Programme.

The following points were made in discussion:

- A formal procedure for input into the Work Programme with dates and stages in the process should be drafted and followed for future work programmes. The procedure should include a clear time period during which members are formally invited to submit suggestions for the work programme.
- Two proposals for future work programme projects were suggested: Emissions such as noise from machinery, in relation to the physical agents directive; workplace health promotion (work design, training etc).
- Drafting of future work programmes should be linked to the Agency strategy document.
- In future the budget should be drafted and structured so it is linked more closely to the Work Programme.
- All the comments made by the Advisory Committee should be taken into account when drafting the four year rolling programme. In drafting the four year rolling programme account must be taken of projects, working methods and strategy.
- IP-GP-04. Promotion of Good Practice. Concern that this is three projects in one. An opportunity for Board evaluation should be built into the project, particularly regarding the email activity.
- Concern about the practicality of a good practice recognition or “labelling” scheme-project IP-GP-04. Clarification of this part of the project is needed.
- Further specification requested on the pre-project activity in the health care sector - project IP-GP-05. Social partners in this sector should be consulted in the implementation phase of the project
- IP-OM-02 project on employability. Clear terms of reference are needed. The project sheet should be expanded to specify the project in more detail, showing clearly the aims, means, content and scope. The concept is difficult to define. There is a difference between the employability of an individual and employability within a workplace. There is a need to ensure there is no overlap with the work being carried out by other institutes on this issue.
- IS-CS-01 European Week competition and closing event. Great care must be taken in the use of awards by the Agency as an impression of endorsement can be given. It is acceptable to give recognition to those who have taken part in the European Week. The criteria for assessment for recognition awards need to be specified.
- The principal of an annual European Week is subject to budget allocation and evaluation after each Week.
- The title of IP-SP-05 has been amended to read socio-economic impact of work related musculoskeletal disorders. The content of the project itself must also address the human social costs.
- IP-MO-01. Rename this project to read “Evaluation of the Agency information project State of OSH...”
- IP-SP-04 Use of OSH management systems. This project needs to look at real examples of management systems at company level, and address questions such as what are the criteria for success and what are the problems.
- Paragraph 2.7 on the participation of Focal Points in decision making needs amending to make it clear that the Focal Points are involved in the decision making but are not the decision making body.

It was AGREED that:

- **The project on voluntary agreements, IP-SP-06 be deleted.**

- A budget will be reserved for State of OSH follow up focus projects, and the projects themselves will be decided on the basis of the final State of OSH report at the February Board meeting
- The Bureau is mandated to clarify the content and scope of employability project IP-MO-02
- Regarding the projects that relate to awards, care must be taken in the use of the concept of award.

The revised draft Work Programme was **AGREED**, subject to the Board's minuted discussion comments being taken into account in finalising and implementing the programme.

Item 8: Agency Strategy (A/99/21)

The Director introduced the revised draft Strategy document. It had been restructured following discussion at the extended Bureau and Focal Point meeting in September. The Board was invited to discuss it in the groups and provide feedback to be used to produce the final version.

The draft Strategy document was welcomed as an important initiative.

The following general comments were made in discussion:

- It is an ambitious and long document so still needs some further focusing. Some key parts require further explanation and amplification.
- It is a basic document to show what the Agency is and what it does. Once agreed it will need to be made a living document that is developed over time. It will only mean something if it is made operational and used. It must be related to the real work of the Agency. For example it should be used to formulate future annual and rolling work programmes.
- A clearer distinction needs to be made to between the objectives of the Agency and the means of achieving the objectives.
- The functioning of the network etc needs linking to the Strategy.
- A clear communications strategy should be developed and linked to the Strategy.
- A clear statement of priorities needs to be included
- More importance needs to be given to the process of information collection and adding value through the analysis of trends etc.

The following specific suggestions for changes were made by the individual interest groups in the discussion:

- Section 2: The definition of responsibilities needs to be examined again in relation to the regulation and the relation to policy activities made clear

- Section 2 bullet 2. Consider deleting “promote” and replacing with “enable others to achieve”
- Section 3 first Strategic goal: Consider deleting “prominent”. Make clear that it is not ONLY information provision via internet. Refer to “principal source of information in Europe”. An important part of this goal is to enable people to get direct information to assist in the implementation of Community legislation and policies. More emphasis should be given to the provision of USER FRIENDLY information.
- Section 3 second Strategic goal: Consider amending to read “ shall actively support parties involved in...”. It needs to be made clearer which policies, look at merging with 4.2
- Section 4. Page 5. Consider moving third bullet on user needs to first. Regarding information activities, clarify who does the information collection. Concerning key OSH user groups rationalise this section and delete reference etc SMEs.
- Section 4.1.1: Clarify key information categories. Clarify concepts of basic information ready to use and encyclopaedic information and ensure consistency. Consider how this goal can be achieved in a cost effective way.
- Section 4.1.4: Consider deleting second paragraph
- Paragraph 4.15-user needs. This section is an essential aspect and needs expansion. Delete final sentence-assessment should be an on going process.
- Paragraph 4.3.1: This section is linked to the evaluation of the Regulation.

It was AGREED that the draft Strategy document would be revised with regard to the Boards comments. Members could send additional comments to the Agency up to the end of December

The document needs to be made a living document for the work of the Agency. It should be used to draft the Work Programmes and project sheets.

Item 8 bis: Commission report on the functioning of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work

This document was tabled at the meeting by the Commission.

The Commission explained that it was proposed to complete the review of the Agency by 2001, which is five years after it became operational.

The Director clarified that the Agency already intended to carry out a user needs survey as part of Work Programme 2000 (paragraph 3.4). The Agency proposed modifying this project so some of the budget could be used to integrate the Commission’s proposal.

The following procedure was proposed to carry this forward:

A tender for the project would be drafted in consultation with the Commission and the Bureau. This would go to the February 2000 Board meeting for approval and the project would be carried out in the second half of 2000, in order that a report would be ready for the Board meeting in February 2001.

The role and functioning of the Agency’s network elements, including the Topic Centres, would be included in the review.

The Board APPROVED this approach and the document.

Item 9: Budget issues

Draft Budget 2000 (A/99/22)

Joan M. Pijuan, Resource Manager introduced the Draft Budget 2000.

The Commission explained that the proposed 2% increase from 1999 to 2000 covers the cost of living. A budget carryover from 1999 to 2000 is needed as the additional budget from the European Parliament allocated for European Week in 1999 will not be used until 2000. As the European Parliament and Council have not modified the Commission's proposed budget it is likely to become the definitive budget. The year 2000 budget should be reviewed when clarification is received of the subsidy offered by the Spanish Government for 2000.

The Draft Budget for 2000 was ADOPTED.

Draft Decision on transfer between chapters (A/99/23)

The Board approved the budget transfer

Item 10: Code of Conduct (A/99/24)

The Board was being asked to give the Director a mandate to discuss and adopt a Code of Conduct on good administrative behaviour for the Agency, in line with the other Agencies.

The Board AGREED this approach, as given in the document.

Item 11: Interest Group participation in Agency Conferences (A/99/25)

The Bureau approved the conference participation arrangements for interest groups given in this paper for the employability conference held in September only. It now needed general approval.

The Board AGREED that:

Themes for Agency conferences arranged with the EU presidency should be in line with the Work Programme

The principles for participation and reimbursement should apply to all major conferences in which the Agency is a major organiser.

The document, after amendment to incorporate the two points above, was AGREED.

Item 12: Proposed dates for Board meetings (A/99/26 Revised 2)

A revised paper giving proposed meeting dates was tabled at the meeting.

It was **AGREED** that the Board meetings for 2000 would take place on:

- 22 February (preboard seminar), 23-24 February
- 7-8 November or 28-29 November (with an event for European Week the evening before, on the 6 or 27 November)

7-8 November is the most likely date for the November Board meeting, with the bilateral US EU conference proposed for the 14-16 November and the Advisory Committee plenary session on 26 October. These dates all subject to confirmation.

For information it was reported that Bureau meetings for 2000 would take place on:

- 22 February, evening meeting after the preboard seminar
- 7-8 June
- 6-7 September or 13-14 September, extended meeting with extra Board representatives and Focal Points. (Date depends on November Board meeting date)
- 6 November or 27 November, starting 3.00pm. (Date depends on November Board meeting date)

Item 13: Any Other Business

There were no items of any other business.

Handover of Chair

The Board gave thanks to the outgoing Chairperson, Marcel Wilders for his services, and welcomed the new Chairperson, Richard Clifton.

The new Chairperson outlined the key tasks he envisaged for the coming year:

- the preparation of the next four years Rolling Programme 2001-2004, based on the principles in the strategy paper and on the specific information provided by the State of Occupational Safety and Health report, and the successful implementation of the Work Programme 2000;
- the Agency as a global player - preparing for enlargement and developing co-operation with key partners world-wide;
- developing the exchange of good practice-a key goal for 2000, with the European Week 2000 and its focus on musculo-skeletal disorders and back pain as a key instrument.

Secretariat, Bilbao
December 1999