

**MINUTES OF THE 14<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD OF THE  
EUROPEAN AGENCY FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK.  
BILBAO, 15-16 MARCH 2001.**

***Item 1 Election of new Chairwoman (A/01/01)***

The Board elected Ms Christa Schweng (Employers) as its Chairwoman, replacing Mr Richard Clifton (Government).

The **Director** and spokespersons of the Board interest groups congratulated **Ms Schweng** on her appointment and thanked **Mr Clifton**.

The **Chairwoman** welcomed those present;

New members:

Ms Gertrud Breindl (government, Austria) attends as new alternate member replacing new member Ms Eva-Elisabeth Szymanski.

Mr Sven Bergström attends for the Swedish workers as Observer until his nomination is formally confirmed (replacing Mr Bo Tengberg).

And noted apologies from:

Ms Díaz Ojeda (workers, Spain) for whom Mr Carcoba attends.

Ms Ferraro (government, Italy) for whom Ms Rocca-Ercoli attends.

Ms Frenkel (employers, The Netherlands) for whom Mr Koning attends.

Ms Gibson (workers, United Kingdom) for whom Mr Tudor attends.

Mr Horst (government, Germany) for whom Mr Grütte attends

Ms Kafetzopoulou (government, Greece) who will no longer attend and for whom Ms Pissimissi attends.

Mr Laterveer (government, The Netherlands) for whom Mr Middelplaats attends.

Mr Thillaud (employers, France) for whom Mr Levy attends.

Mr Walsh (government, Ireland) for whom Ms Wood attends.

Mr Bodin (observer, European Foundation).

Mr Briscoe (employers, Ireland).

Mr Gunkel (employers, Germany).

Mr Heider (workers, Austria).

Mr Jensen (government, Denmark).

Mr Rasmussen (workers, Denmark).

Mr Sapir (observer, TUTB).

Mr Sauber (employers, Luxembourg).

And welcomed Mr Raoul Prado (Director of Resource Management at DG EMPL), attending as observer.

***Item 2 Adoption of the draft agenda (A/01/A1 - Revised)***

A programme and participants list for the "Quality at Work" workshop, organised jointly by the Swedish Presidency, European Commission and Agency, were tabled as A/01/17, under new Item 22.

With these amendments the agenda was adopted.

### ***Item 3 Minutes of the last meeting 28/29 November 2000 (A/00/M2)***

**Mr Boisnel (Government)** objected that important points of substance were missing from the draft minutes; the points were not sufficiently detailed and minority/diverging views were omitted.

**Mr Sedes (Workers)** added that the votes cast in the decision to renew the **Director's** contract should have been recorded.

**Mr Manzano (Employers)** supported Mr Boisnel, commenting that the minutes of European institutions meetings are more exhaustive and include all interventions.

The **Commission** supported the view that the minutes were too scant, describing them as aseptic and lacking opposing views.

**Mr Clifton (Government)** commented that minutes could be either a summary of conclusions with a record of decisions reached, or an exhaustive record of what was said.

The **Director** pointed out that the minutes of Agency Board meetings have always followed the same format. Any change should be by decision of the Board.

**Mr Wilders (Workers)** accepted the minutes and asked for more detail in future.

The **Chairwoman** called a vote on the adoption of the draft minutes, with the amendment to include the vote count on Item 4, adding that the interest groups should discuss what format for minutes is preferred.

The Board adopted the minutes by 22 votes to 10.

### ***Item 4 Action points arising out of the minutes (A/01/02)***

The actions are ongoing. It was noted that Action 4 is for the decision of the Commission. Also regarding Action 4, the French text is to be corrected so that it refers to the Director of the Agency.

The action points were accepted.

### ***Item 5 Director's Progress Report (A/01/03)***

The **Director** introduced the interim report on the activities of the Agency from November 2000 to February 2001 and tabled a brief update, including three new annexes giving information on Agency publications, attendance at external events and events/meetings hosted by the Agency.

The **Director** drew attention to the new Canadian web site that has adopted the Agency's internet format, with the ILO and EFTA to follow. Several new publications are available and the data show that a high number are being downloaded via internet. The State of OSH report has received an award from the European Information Association.

The **Director** informed that a good practice online forum is available on the Agency web site with a five-language interface and asked members to raise awareness in their countries. Further electronic developments include an online user-survey and the OSH-Mail newsletter.

The 2001 European Week for Safety and Health at Work has been launched with the theme "Success is no accident".

The Agency is planning to move all meetings to the Lagun Aro building (Gran Via 35) to provide more working space in the Agency building (Gran Via 33). There has been a new security assessment of the premises carried out by the European Commission.

In response to a query from **Mr Wilders (Workers)**, the **Director** clarified that the online user survey is a pilot version for the approximately 75000 monthly users of the Agency web site. Following an assessment, this survey will be available to the Focal Points, which are in any case free to make surveys of their own.

**Ms Wood (Government)** congratulated the **Director** on the Agency's achievement of putting European health and safety at work at the forefront globally and inquired about assistance in disseminating information in developing countries, as raised recently at a Dublin Foundation seminar. The **Director** responded that the Agency has received a number of information requests following the Dublin Foundation seminar and all information is provided free. The Board has not given priority to this issue to date and the regulation refers only to candidate countries and principal trading partners. There is, nevertheless, strong co-operation with WHO, ILO and PAHO and it is hoped that information can be disseminated via these organisations.

**Mr Carcoba (Workers)** commented that a recent study has shown that the Agency's information services are excessively English-focused and do not reflect information produced in southern European countries. The **Director** answered that publications that are directed at the research community or policy makers are available only in English, with fact-sheets produced in all languages. As regards content, there is inevitably a degree of bias resulting from the nationality of the contractor responsible for the project, but the content depends fundamentally on national input and this comes from the Focal Points. The Agency always makes a great effort to ensure that proper information is provided from all member states.

Further comments emphasised the importance of translation and its specification in project sheets and the cultural differences that result from the use of different languages.

The Board noted the report.

### ***Item 6 Implementation plan for SME Programme (A/01/04)***

The **Chairwoman** commented that in respect of the mandate delegating the Bureau to oversee the preparation of the programme, the Bureau would only approve the Agency's proposal after discussion had taken place in interest groups. The Director was invited to give further details on the proposals.

The **Director** tabled the European Parliament budget decision (Official Journal dated 26/02/01, p.871) for information and reminded members that the proposal responds to an initiative from the European Parliament. Following the Board's decision at its last meeting to approve the programme, subject to the Agency providing detailed proposals for its implementation, a workshop was organised attended by over 40 experts. The proposal presented to the Board (A/01/04) is based mainly on the conclusions of this workshop and contains decisions for the Board regarding the financing of projects. Linking with the European Week, both have as their theme the prevention of work-related accidents. However, there will be no funding of projects under the European Week, as the role of the SME programme is to co-finance sustainable projects with a view to improving accident prevention in SMEs, where the problem is particularly acute.

The **Director** clarified that two models are proposed. The first provides co-financing up to 50% for all projects; the second proposes co-financing up to 50% for national projects and up to 75% for transnational projects. In both cases, a maximum funding is proposed of €100000 for national projects and €200000 for transnational projects.

Responding to a question regarding the likelihood of extension of the programme, the **Director** informed that no decision has been taken regarding multiannuality, although the programme can be administered over two years and therefore activities will be carried over into 2002.

The **Commission** drew members' attention to the budget decision, explaining that these are the requirements set out by the European Parliament for the spending of the budget. Any proposal not following these, or not within the specified topic, will fail. The **Commission** also clarified that the funding covers only preparatory actions for a multiannual programme.

Answering questions on the legal basis of such a multiannual programme and implications for Agency staff resources, the **Commission** stated that preparatory actions have a two year budget, after which a programme must be proposed to Council. The **Commission** will not present a budget application for another preparatory action in 2002, but will propose the re-introduction of a budget for a European Week of €1.5M.

Following the interest group discussions and the Bureau meeting, the **Chairwoman** reported on the Bureau's decision to agree the guidelines on the following basis:

- Include the proposed category 3 "Development of effective Good Practice".
- The maximum levels of co-financing should be raised to 60% of the total eligible cost for national projects and 80% for transnational projects.
- Various amendments have been made to the text referring to the applicant selection.
- Simplified criteria and procedures for selection have been agreed.

**Mr Clifton (Government)** added that the issue of the timetable, raised in the government interest group, was discussed but the Bureau concluded that it could not be changed due to administrative and budgetary necessities. Also raised in the group was the question of resources within the Agency and the Focal Points.

The **Director** replied that document A/01/09 describes roles of the Agency and Focal Points in the assessment of the applications and noted that this is the only phase involving work from the Focal Points. The proposed Agency project team was outlined.

### ***Item 7 Follow-up on Evaluation of the Agency (A/01/05)***

The **Chairwoman** asked for ratification of the interest groups' and Commission's opinions on the report on the evaluation of the Agency, as expressed in the pre-Board seminar and tabled a new mandate to the Bureau:

*"To oversee the follow-up of the evaluation report. This will include the approval of the protocol to be drawn up by the Agency expressing the viewpoints of the groups participating in the seminar. This protocol shall be attached to the cover-note proposed by the Chairman of the pre-Board seminar and be submitted together with the evaluation report to the Commission"*

The **interest group spokesmen** and the **Commission** ratified their group's comments made in the pre-Board seminar.

**Mr Clifton (Government)** asked for the following points from the government group to be noted as additional comments to Mr Weber's contribution:

- There was a majority view within the group that the Commission should, as soon as possible, put a proposal to Council for review of the Agency's regulation.
- A minimum requirement should be established for the operation of Focal Points, noting the observations made in Mr Weber's comments.
- There is a need to identify priority customers more clearly.
- The specific role of the Topic Centres with respect to Focal Points is still of concern.
- No new model regarding the Board and Bureau emerged, therefore, the optimisation of the current model and the reduction of the negative aspects should be considered.

After a discussion on the status of Mr Clifton's pre-Board seminar summary paper and inclusion of an amendment requested by Mr Manzano replacing the opening words "The Board met..." with "Members of the Board met...", it was agreed that this document should be adopted by the Board.

The Board agreed that written submissions from each of the interest groups and from the Focal Points and the Agency will be sent to the Commission, together with the summary paper from Mr Clifton (Government), as Chairman of the pre-Board seminar, as a protocol that will accompany the evaluators' report.

Interest group spokesmen agreed to submit the comments in writing within ten days.

**Mr Sedes** requested replacement of the word "expressing" with "bringing together" to avoid possible misinterpretation of the mandate when translated into French.

With this amendment, the revised mandate was adopted.

### ***Item 8 Evaluation of Topic Centres (A/01/08)***

The **Chairwoman** proposed withdrawing this item from the Agenda, explaining that the Bureau considered that it was addressed in the mandate under Item 11.

The Board agreed to the withdrawal of Agenda item 8.

### ***Item 9 European Week of Safety and Health at Work 2002 (A/01/07)***

At the invitation of the **Chairwoman**, the interest group spokesmen and the Commission representative gave reactions to the proposed themes.

**Mr Wilders (Workers)** reported that a majority of the group supported "Handling of chemicals with special focus on organic solvents" as a first choice with a majority supporting as second choice "Psychosocial risks with special focus on stress at work", although this would need some redrafting.

**Mr Clifton (Government)** reported majority support for "Psychosocial risks with special focus on stress at work" with a suggestion to include violence and new risks. The second preference, also by majority, supported "Handling of chemicals with special focus on organic solvents".

The **Commission** supported as a first preference "Psychosocial risks with special focus on stress at work" and the suggestion to add violence and as the second preference "Handling of chemicals with special focus on organic solvents".

**Mr Manzano (Employers)** reported unanimous support for a modified theme on the "Organisation of OSH in high-risk sectors" with a sufficiently wide remit to include the all the mentioned topics.

The **Chairwoman** called for a vote to decide the theme, given the lack of unanimity in preferences expressed by interest groups.

"Handling of chemicals with special focus on organic solvents" received 17 votes in favour, 11 against, with 20 abstentions. "Sector approach – high-risk sectors" received no votes. "Organisation of OSH" received 8 votes in favour, 6 against, with 25 abstentions. "Organisation of OSH in high-risk sectors" received 21 votes in favour, 10 against, with 14 abstentions.

The Board agreed on "Psychosocial risks with special focus on stress at work" by 27 votes to 15 with no abstentions.

### ***Item 10 Budget Matters (A/01/08)***

The **Director** explained that the staff estimates in the preliminary draft budget 2002 are based on a continuation of the SME programme or European Week. Auxiliary contracts are problematic from a human resources perspective and would be replaced by temporary agent contracts.

The **Commission** confirmed that it would include €1.5M in the Agency budget lines for 2002 onwards in order for it to run European Weeks.

The Board approved without comment the discharge to the Director in respect of the implementation of the budget 1999.

A revised Preliminary Draft Budget (Document A/01/08B) was tabled to take account of the information received from the Commission representative regarding the funding of €1.5M for the European Week 2002.

The **Commission** informed that it would propose an increase in the Agency's staff of three Temporary Agents, whereas the tabled document specifies five, adding that the Agency must progress slowly.

The **Director** responded that the Agency had planned a staff increase of three last year. The Commission's commitment to integrate the European Week into the Agency's activities implies a further two members of staff; one A-grade and one B-grade. The €1.5M allocation for European Week should be split so that €0.25M are for staff and €1.25M for operational costs and this is reflected in the Agency's establishment plan so that Temporary Agents can be recruited.

Responding to a question from **Mr Boisnel (Government)**, the **Commission** informed that there are no plans or legal basis at present to implement a multiannual SME Programme.

The tabled Preliminary Draft Budget 2002 was adopted with the votes of the government, workers and employers groups.

### ***Item 11 Review of Mandates for the Bureau – March 2001 (A/01/09)***

The Board agreed the current mandates given to the Board in paper A/01/09.

### ***Item 12 Any other business***

**Mr Clifton (Government)** informed on the following requests to the Agency arising from discussions in the government group:

- The minutes of Board meetings should be somewhat fuller, with more information on the points discussed, but should not be a complete transcription of all interventions. Results of votes should be recorded.
- The French and Italian translations of the Corporate Plan had some inaccuracies; the Agency should investigate these.
- The scheduling of meetings needs to be improved as the work programme relies on consultation with the Advisory Committee on Safety, Hygiene and Health (ACSHH).

The **Director** acknowledged the requests.

The **Commission** and **spokesmen for the employers and workers interest groups** supported the comments on the minutes and scheduling of meetings.

The **Commission** and **Mr Manzano (Employers)** further noted that, as the ACSHH has to give an opinion on the work programme and has greater scheduling problems than the

Agency, the next Board meeting should be postponed until December. **Mr Wilders (Workers)** commented that, due to the difficulties of scheduling the meetings and the fact that most members of the Board also sit on the ACSHH, the regulation should be revised to remove consultation on the work programme.

The **Director** responded that the Agency had attempted to be flexible regarding the ACSHH meeting dates by identifying two possible dates at the beginning and end of November. It is impractical for the Agency to hold the Board meeting in December, as this does not allow time for implementation and consultation with the Focal Points. The **Director** proposed holding the Board meeting on 6/7<sup>th</sup> November with approval of the work programme by written procedure after the meeting of the ACHSS.

An objection from **Mr Manzano (Employers)** was noted.

The Board agreed the 6/7<sup>th</sup> November dates for its next meeting and approval of the work programme by written procedure.