



MINUTES OF THE 99TH VIRTUAL MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING

7 AND 8 OCTOBER 2021

VIRTUAL (ZOOM) MEETING

Thursday 7 October 2021

1. WELCOME AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The Chairperson opened the meeting at 14.30 CET and welcomed the participants to the 99th meeting of Cedefop's Management Board (MB). She said that she hoped that the next meeting, the 100th one, could hopefully be an in-person meeting in Thessaloniki. The decision to hold a virtual Management Board meeting for a second year was taken in consultation with the Executive Board (EB) and Cedefop's management in light of the travel restrictions and the ongoing coronavirus outbreak. She reminded members that discussions were recorded for the purpose of minutes. According to Cedefop's rules on public access to documents (adopted by the MB on 2.9.2019), the final conclusions of EB meetings and the final MB minutes would be published on Cedefop's website.

She welcomed the following new MB members:

From the Employees' group: Ms Homerin, who replaced Ms Michel (BE), and Ms Cilona, who replaced Ms Teselli (IT).

From the Employers' group: Ms Lundetoft Clausen, who replaced Mr Hooshiar (DK), Ms Ackermann, who replaced Ms Van Erp (NL), and Ms Zabłocka, who replaced Mr Stepnikowski (PL).

From the Governments' group: Ms De Luca, who replaced Mr Menziani (IT), and Ms Olim, who replaced Ms Ribeiro (PT).

She also welcomed the appointment of the following new alternate members:

From the Commission: Ms Sukova (alternate for Mr Korte), Mr Holthuis (alternate for Ms Geleng) and Ms Crabb (alternate for Ms Riondino).

From the Governments: Mr Farrugia (alternate for Mr Cardona – MT), Mr Dionisio (alternate for Mr Cordeiro – PT), Ms Ooms (alternate for Ms Weerden – NL) and Mr Leite (alternate for Ms Olim – PT).

The following members were excused:

From the Commission: Mr Korte.

From the Employees: Ms Homerin (BE), Mr Kozak (HU), Ms Romele (LV), Mr Sos (SK) and Ms Andric (SE).

From the Governments: Ms De Luca (IT), Ms Radulescu (RO) and Mr Thiele (DE).

From the Employers: Mr Bassing (LU), Mr Ogrizek (SI), Mr J.C. Tejada Hisado (PT), Mr Lundström (SE) and Ms Coenegrachts (BE).

The Chairperson also welcomed Ms Maria Jepsen, Deputy Director of Eurofound, and Mr Xavier Matheu de Cortada, Head of the Knowledge Hub Department in the ETF, who were invited to attend this meeting as observers.

According to Article 11 of the Rules of Procedure of Cedefop's Management and Executive Boards, the presence of the majority of members of the Management Board or, in their absence, their alternates, shall constitute a quorum. This equalled 43 members or their alternates. The current meeting had 63 voting members present (including two alternates), out of a total of 84 voting members. Decisions of the MB were taken by the majority of members with the right to vote (Article 9(1) of the Regulation). However, for the adoption of the Programming Document, the budget, the election of Chairperson and Deputy Chairpersons, as well as the appointment, extension or removal from office of the Executive Director a two-thirds majority is required. In case of voting, to reach the simple majority of 43 votes would be needed (50% of 84 voting members +1 = 43) and to reach the two-thirds majority, 56 votes would be needed. Six proxies were given in this meeting. Thus, the total number of votes was 69.

The Chairperson reminded members that Article 14(1) of the Rules of Procedure provided that *'If there is consensus of the members present on the motion tabled, no vote is required'*. In case voting was required, arrangements had been done for the possibility of both secret and open voting. She invited the Executive Director to present Cedefop's management and staff attending the meeting.

Mr Siebel welcomed all members. He hoped that indeed the 100th MB meeting could be organised as an in-person meeting in Thessaloniki. He introduced Cedefop's management and staff: Ms Mara Brugia, Deputy Director; Ms Pascaline Descy, Head of DRS; Mr Loukas Zahilas, Head of DSI, Mr Antonio Ranieri, Head of DLE and ad interim Head of DSL; Mr Gerd Oskar Bausewein, Head of DCM; Mr Michalis Tanakidis, Chair of Cedefop's Staff Committee, and Mr Spyros Antoniou and Mr Vladimir Kvetan, members of the Staff Committee; Mr Adriano Graziosi, Senior assistant in the Director's office and Ms Schmid, Assistant to the Deputy Director. Mr Siebel announced that he had recently extended the mandate of the Deputy Director, Ms Brugia until 31 August 2024. This decision had been discussed in the Executive Board meeting of 6 October. The three groups had expressed their full support, while the Commission did not agree and would have preferred other arrangements to ensure business continuity, without putting into question Ms Brugia's performance. These positions would be reflected in the minutes of the EB meeting.

The Chairperson congratulated Ms Brugia on behalf of the Management Board. Members were very happy with her performance and the extension of her mandate. She thanked the Executive Director and the management for steering Cedefop effectively through the pandemic. The Management Board, as well as the EU and Greek national authorities, were being regularly updated on the measures taken by the Agency, which followed EU and national instructions.

Draft agenda

The Chairperson informed members that item 3b – Cedefop's survey on teachers and trainers, would be the first agenda item on 8 October in the morning and the election of the Chairperson and Deputy Chairpersons, the second. Under 'any other business' the following two items would be added: an update from the Commission on the State of the European Union and the ALMA initiative (item 10c); and an update on Cedefop's building (item 10d).

She asked members to comment on the draft agenda.

No comments were received.

The Chairperson informed members that, as discussed in the groups' meetings in the morning, an in-camera meeting would take place at the end of the plenary on 8

October 2021. The participants of this meeting would be the MB members of the three groups and the Commission, the Coordinators, the Executive Director, the Deputy Director, Mr Graziosi, Mr Ceuppens and the rapporteur.

The Chairperson concluded that the agenda was adopted with the proposed changes.

- 1 **Welcome and adoption of the agenda** (*decision*)
- 2 **Minutes of the Management Board meeting of 8 and 9 October 2020**
(*adopted by written procedure on 10 December 2020*)
- 3 **(a) Implementation of the Work Programme 2021** / including how additional activities are being decided (*information*)
(b) Cedefop's survey *Making excellence inclusive: towards a new Cedefop survey of VET teachers and trainers* (*discussion*)
- 4 **Integrated monitoring by Cedefop of VET Recommendation and Osnabrück Declaration** (*information*)
- 5 **Revised draft Programming Document 2022-24** / Opinion of the European Commission – including how priorities are adjusted and overlaps avoided (*discussion/adoption*)
- 6 **Reporting from the Executive to the Management Board** (*information*)
- 7 **Update on the implementation of the action plan following the external evaluation** (*information*)
- 8 **Administrative issues**
 - (a) Web services, conferences and publications (*information*)
 - (b) Reporting on Internal Control Coordination (ICC) activities – discharge 2019, audits, evaluations and other sources of assurance (*information*)
 - (c) Awareness-raising session for Management Board members on anti-fraud issues (*information*)
 - (d) HR developments – including latest Covid pulse survey (*information*)
 - (e) General implementing provisions (*if any – decision*)
 - (f) Transfers of commitment and payment appropriations in 2021 (*information*)
 - (g) Annual report of the Chair of Cedefop's Appeals Committee for the year 2020 (*information*)
- 9 **Election of the Chairperson and Deputy Chairpersons of the MB and composition of the Executive Board/Extended Executive Board** (*decision*)
- 10 **Any other business**
 - (a) Mode and frequency of Executive and Management Board Meetings post-Covid (*information/discussion*)
 - (b) Dates of Executive Board and Management Board meetings in 2022 (*decision*)
 - (c) State of the European Union/new ALMA initiative (*information*)
 - (d) Update on Cedefop's building (*information*)

In-camera meeting

2. MINUTES OF THE 98TH MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT BOARD ON 8 AND 9 OCTOBER 2021

The Chairperson said that the minutes had already been adopted by the Management Board on 10 December 2020 by written procedure and were available in English, in the eGB community and on Cedefop's website.

Members took note of the information.

3. A) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORK PROGRAMME 2021, INCLUDING HOW ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES ARE BEING DECIDED (INFORMATION)

The Chairperson reminded members that, as agreed in the Extended Executive Board (EEB) meeting in June 2020, the progress report, which gave an overview of the work progress from January to June of each year, had been replaced by cumulative tables providing an overview of all changes in the implementation of the work programme from January in any given year. The Agency's overall achievements continued to be presented in the Annual Report adopted by the Management Board by written procedure. In addition to the implementation of Cedefop's 2021 work programme, and as requested by the Executive Board at its meeting of 24 June 2021, the document also included information on how additional activities were decided. It also reported on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis and the actions taken by the Agency. She invited the Executive Director to present the item.

Mr Siebel said that throughout the pandemic Cedefop had managed to maintain business continuity, while at the same time addressing staff health and safety. Currently, staff had access to the premises in shifts, while flexible teleworking was still the norm. Internal meetings were possible, as were business-critical missions, subject to the approval of the Executive Director. It was also possible to receive visitors on the premises. The management was following the instructions of the Greek authorities and aligned with other EU institutions as well in order to adapt its de-escalation plan. The next steps would be to resume mandatory presence of staff in two shifts and allow the organisation of in-person events, possibly before Christmas. In its meeting in June, the Executive Board had requested information on how changes of the work programme were being decided. According to the MB decision of April 2019 on non-substantial changes, the MB delegated the power to make non-substantial amendments to Cedefop's annual work programme to the Executive Director. Such changes were considered those that had an overall total value of less than 20% of Cedefop's budget. The overview that members had received reflected these changes and an update was presented in every Executive Board meeting. Cedefop's management held weekly team meetings and three performance management meetings per year, which addressed issues such as ICC, procurement, human resources, etc. The Kanban methodology was used to develop COVID-related ideas, which were then discussed in these meetings. This methodology was currently being revamped to include themes chosen on a quarterly basis. The overview listed changes and new activities, as well as activities already completed. While postponements and changes always occurred, overall Cedefop had not diverged from its work programme and new activities had not come at the expense of the agreed programme.

Mr Zahilas said that slight changes were linked to ongoing activities (i.e. format changes). In most cases, developments went hand in hand with big projects. Most activities were on track.

The Chairperson invited members to comment.

Comments from the Governments

Ms Lindén said that the group took note that business continuity was ensured while protecting staff. She welcomed the continuing follow-up of COVID-related issues in VET and the high rate of implementation of the work programme. The delays were minor, and the cancellations were due to the pandemic. However, the group requested information on the reasoning behind taking up new activities while postponing others. For example, in the section of valuing VET (p. 5), eight new activities had been initiated and seven postponed. The group was aware of the MB decision on non-substantial changes and took note of the information provided by the Executive Director. They welcomed the interagency cooperation on innovation, and Cedefop capitalising on different projects. This was money well invested and an efficient way of spreading resources. Activities carrying over to 2022 should be visible in the Programming Document (PD). The document provided a concise and clear overview of the main changes to the Work Programme 2021.

Comments from the Employees

Mr Patuzzi thanked Cedefop for its good work in difficult times. Indeed, non-substantial changes were in the discretion of the Executive Director. However, there were a few postponements and an even bigger number of new activities not related to the pandemic. The group would like to know if these would create additional workload for staff. New activities might not always be in line with the PD and the work programme. A justification was required. In the next EB meetings, negative priorities should be identified.

Comments from the Employers

Mr Riember thanked the Executive Director and the management for their good and clear overview. It was important to know how new activities were taken on board and how postponements were justified. The main challenge was to combine the running business with the new activities.

Comments from the Commission

Ms Geleng said that the Commission acknowledged that this was a rather difficult year due to the pandemic. They were really satisfied with the implementation of the Work Programme 2021. She thanked Cedefop's management and staff for their good work and the explanations provided.

Mr Siebel said that this had been a team effort, which reflected the good cooperation with the stakeholders and networks. The table presented an overview of all carry-overs to 2022. Cedefop tried to avoid long delays of projects for more than a quarter. A lot of the new activities were built on results already produced or on ongoing work. New activities were a derivative of work already done. As an example, the European company survey had been conducted before the pandemic, and there was a need for a follow-up capturing its impact, while staying close to the work programme. By doing so, Cedefop's results became more relevant. The workload stress of staff was related to the effects of the pandemic, but it was manageable. He was not in favour of negative priorities, which meant cutting on the margin. However, proposals were welcome.

Ms Brugia said that indeed new activities derive from activities already agreed and included in the work programme. They were by-products that allowed Cedefop to reach out better to its stakeholders. She presented the example of the new activities in relation to the implementation of the European framework for quality and effective apprenticeship (points 2.14-2.16 of the table). These were small by-products that had not been planned but derived from the information collected in the database for apprenticeships. These by-products would be a contribution to the EAfA-ILO conference. This example proved Cedefop's agility and flexibility.

No further comments were received.

The Chairperson concluded that the MB congratulated Cedefop management and staff on their excellent work.

4. INTEGRATED MONITORING BY CEDEFOP OF VET RECOMMENDATION AND OSNABRÜCK DECLARATION (INFORMATION)

The Chairperson said that at the ACVT meeting of December 2020, the Commission had presented a proposal for the integrated monitoring by Cedefop of the VET Recommendation and the Osnabrück Declaration. The feasibility of this proposal and its possible impact on other Cedefop activities had been discussed with the Executive Board at its meeting of 3 March 2021. She invited Mr Zahilas to present the item.

Mr Zahilas said that the VET Recommendation invited the Commission to ‘*ensure qualitative and quantitative monitoring in line with the common objectives*’ and ‘*report to the Council on the implementation of the Recommendation every 5 years, building on data available at national and European level and annual monitoring by Cedefop*’. The Osnabrück Declaration reaffirmed the role of Cedefop and the ETF in the process of European cooperation on VET, and asked them to monitor implementation of the agreed actions and report annually to the ACVT and DGVT. At the ACVT plenary meeting of 16 December 2020, the European Commission presented its proposal on the implementation and monitoring of the Recommendation and the Osnabrück Declaration. This proposal described an integrated process in implementing and monitoring both policy documents to avoid parallel reporting and monitoring processes. Building on Cedefop’s and the ETF’s long-standing experience in monitoring the European cooperation on VET since 2002, the Commission had proposed that the two Agencies carry out the annual monitoring of the implementation of the Recommendation for both qualitative aspects (reforms) and quantitative objectives together with the monitoring of the Osnabrück Declaration. ACVT members had agreed with the Commission’s proposal for an integrated approach entrusted to Cedefop and the ETF. The national implementation plans (NIPs) which were a formal requirement in the Recommendation, would be the reference point for Member States in implementing the agreed priorities and quantitative objectives. These implementation plans should include the following sections: (a) brief information on national context and baseline; (b) challenges and general objectives of the plan; (c) detailed description of flagship measures; (d) governance of the implementation of the plan; and (e) expected effects of the plan. Following discussions at the ACVT meeting, it was proposed that ReferNet national representatives be included in the governance structures. ACVT members agreed in the meeting of 9 June 2021 that Member States would develop their NIPs in consultation with social partners and other relevant stakeholders covering the period up to 2030. DGVTs would submit the NIPs to the European Commission by 31 May 2022. Cedefop and the ETF would analyse the NIPs, establish a baseline and define the scope for further analysis. Specifically, based on the information in the NIPs, Cedefop and the ETF would identify a set of priorities most often addressed by the countries and, possibly, clusters of countries dealing with them. Comprehensive monitoring of all priorities across all countries would not be feasible. The main source of qualitative country-based information would be the annual reporting by ReferNet. This would be complemented with Cedefop’s research and analyses on the progress of the European tools and instruments (e.g. EQF and NQFs, validation and recognition of prior learning, quality assurance, lifelong guidance) and evidence available on themes as apprenticeships, VET teachers and trainers and upskilling pathways. Regarding the quantitative objectives, Cedefop would develop a specific dashboard of statistical headline indicators including the quantitative objectives of the Recommendation. The factual information collected by Cedefop’s ReferNet should be validated by the national representatives. The complexity and the wider scope of the reporting on the NIPs required a revised approach and, in this respect, ACVT members proposed that DGVTs and ReferNet national representatives establish a cooperation mechanism for reporting and validating the collected information. Cedefop and the ETF would prepare annual

country policy briefs on the main developments related to the national priorities and specificities defined in the NIPs. The country policy briefs would be available on Cedefop's website and inform relevant EU monitoring and reporting processes, including the Education and Training Monitor and the European Semester. A brief analysis of the NIPs would be presented to the ACVT in December 2022, along with a proposal on the scope of the monitoring. In Q4 2023, Cedefop and the ETF would summarise and present the progress of 2021 and 2022 to the ACVT and DGVTs. In Q4 2025, a synthesis report (joint Cedefop-ETF flagship publication) would summarise the progress on the selected priorities, thus contributing to the Commission's mid-term review of the Recommendation. The report would also inform the Ministerial meeting (expected to take place in the second half of 2025), which would define the next set of post-Osnabrück priorities. Cedefop and the ETF would organise joint events with the Commission to present and discuss their progress. In the transitional years 2021 and 2022 the modalities would be defined and an agreement on the scope and monitoring approach would be reached upon submission and analysis of the NIPs. Cedefop and the ETF would pilot their monitoring against the priorities defined in the Council Recommendation on VET and the Osnabrück Declaration. Implementation was ongoing. The DGVT meeting on 4 and 5 October 2021 discussed the way forward. The ReferNet annual plenary in November would also discuss the implications of the integrated monitoring approach. Participants would consider the results of the discussions and identify and suggest possible changes in the ReferNet framework partnership agreement 2024-27 and the roles of ReferNet national representatives and coordinators.

The Chairperson invited the members to comment. She also invited Mr Xavier Matheu de Cortada from the ETF to present his views.

Comments from the Employers

Mr Riemer thanked Mr Zahilas for a clear overview of this important project. Cooperation with the ETF was very important. Equally important was cooperation with the national representatives and the stakeholders. The group was interested in the future results of this project, as this would determine if the process was worthwhile. He asked if a couple of points of the ETF and Cedefop analysis for the years 2023-25 could already be highlighted.

Comments from the Employees

Ms Roman said that the group welcomed Cedefop's work in monitoring together with the ETF the Bruges, Riga and Copenhagen Processes. She reminded members that effective social dialogue was essential to reach the objectives of the VET Recommendation and Osnabrück Declaration, and to ensure access to quality and inclusive training for all, and especially for workers in the green and digital transitions. Member States should involve the social partners, particularly the Trade Unions, in developing and implementing the NIPs. The group welcomed the involvement of social partners in the governance of the implementation of the NIPs. However, the note put more emphasis on the cooperation with the DGVT and less with the ACVT, which was a tripartite body. Ms Roman urged Cedefop to continue reporting to the ACVT and consult its members on the monitoring exercise.

Comments from the Commission

Ms Geleng congratulated Cedefop on developing the framework which set out the way forward for monitoring the implementation of the priorities and actions defined in the VET Recommendation and the Osnabrück Declaration. The decision of the Member States to entrust Cedefop with the monitoring put the Agency on centre stage. This task was already reflected in the PD 2022-24. For the first time, there was an EU vision through the Council Recommendation. This was an important change, which would highlight Cedefop's and the ETF's work in supporting VET developments. The Commission was looking forward to cooperating with Cedefop and the ETF.

Comments from the Governments

Ms Lindén said that the group welcomed the integrated monitoring approach where Member States would address the policy documents jointly. This was the most effective approach. She also welcomed the cooperation with the ETF on the follow-up, which would respect Member States' implementation priorities and provide scope in accordance with national political priorities. The group welcomed Cedefop's role and the level of ambition. It was clear that comprehensive monitoring of all priorities would not be feasible, and a set of priorities should be identified to avoid affecting the Agency's work programme. The group expressed some concerns regarding the implications for ReferNet representatives and the risk of diminishing reporting on comparable data. Cedefop's role as a centre for VET should be reflected in the upcoming contracts with ReferNet. The group also welcomed the workshops organised with ReferNet.

Mr Matheu de Cortada said that Cedefop and the ETF were closely cooperating on the integrated monitoring of the Osnabrück Declaration and VET Recommendation. The challenge was that the reporting on Copenhagen and Riga had now been extended to the VET Recommendation. Candidate countries believed that the priorities of the VET Recommendation were also relevant for them. It was therefore important for their future accession to conduct this exercise at the same time as with the Member States.

The Chairperson said that the process was an excellent opportunity to strengthen the cooperation of Member States with social partners at national level.

Mr Zahilas said that the role of ReferNet representatives was also a concern for Cedefop. A working group would be established for discussion of the new framework contract. Cedefop could support the networks by inviting stakeholders to events. The Member States should organise the cooperation schemes in the most effective way in order to get the right results. Cedefop and the ETF had a long-standing cooperation on monitoring. The intention was to keep both the DGVT and ACVT equally informed. Results were important but, based on experience, progress was happening even if it was in small steps. Common objectives were always a mean to help countries move ahead in areas they lagged behind. The main idea of the monitoring was to see how countries would respond to the common priorities; any indications that Member States were changing structure and focus could be considered an indication of success of EU cooperation.

No further comments were received.

The Chairperson concluded that members took note of the information and wished the project success. Cedefop would keep members updated on developments.

10-minute break till 16.10

5. REVISED DRAFT PROGRAMMING DOCUMENT 2022-24 / OPINION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION – INCLUDING HOW PRIORITIES ARE ADJUSTED AND OVERLAPS AVOIDED (DISCUSSION/ADOPTION)

The Chairperson reminded members that the draft PD 2022-24 had already been endorsed by the MB by written procedure in January 2021 and sent to the European Commission, the Parliament and the Council on 27 January 2021. The Commission's opinion was received on 10 August 2021. The draft PD 2022-24 was revised taking into account the opinion of the Commission, as well as the developments since January 2021. For ease of reference, members had received a version with tracked changes showing the changes between this draft PD 2022-24 and the version endorsed by the Management Board on 25 January 2021. Members were invited to adopt the PD 2022-24. The PD would become final after adoption of the Union budget,

expected in December 2021. Further, in November the Commission services would announce the 2021 salary indexation factor, which would affect the budget projections for Title 1 (Staff costs). Therefore, Cedefop's budget could only be fine-tuned after that date. Possible adjustments that would lead to significant changes, in particular concerning the Work Programme 2022, would be discussed in the Executive Board meeting in December and, if needed, the approval of the Management Board would be sought by written procedure.

The Chair invited the Commission to present its opinion.

Ms Geleng said that the formal opinion of the Commission had been adopted in August. Overall, Cedefop's strategic objectives were aligned with the EU policy framework defined in the VET Recommendation and the Osnabrück Declaration, as well as the Skills Agenda. The prioritisation of the Agency's activities should be based on a set of transparent criteria, such as compliance with the Founding Regulation, alignment and relevance to the EU VET, adult learning and skills policy agendas, the uniqueness of Cedefop activities ('unique selling proposition'), the impact on promotion, development and implementation of the Union policies and the contribution to the Agency's visibility. These criteria should be kept in mind when balancing the research-type work with other activities to support stakeholders in the implementation of objectives and priorities set out in the EU policy framework. The Commission acknowledged the efforts made for a structured approach towards cooperation with other actors in the field of VET, such as the OECD and the ILO. Activities of Cedefop and the Commission should be strongly aligned, and cooperation with the other decentralised Agencies under the remit of DG EMPL should be further strengthened where possible. The Commission was pleased with Cedefop's efforts to achieve efficiency gains, and with the budget implementation.

The Chairperson invited the Executive Director to present an overview of the main changes in the text.

Mr Siebel said thanked the Commission for its opinion, which arrived in time to be integrated in this final draft PD submitted to the MB for adoption, subject to any final budgetary adjustments. The changes in the draft reflected the developments since January, such as the Porto summit, the EESC opinion, the discussions on the indicators (p. 16) and the Commission's formal opinion, the new monitoring activity (p. 23) and the change in mission costs (p. 39). In relation to the last one, while face-to-face meetings were very important, Cedefop would try to benefit from the opportunity of virtual meetings, the new reality that had emerged during the pandemic. Technology could allow significant budget savings as well as a reduction of Cedefop's carbon footprint. Mr Siebel also highlighted the changes in the text that reflected the validation festival and the biennale initiative. He thanked Ms Geleng and Ms Riordino for their initiative for a more structured operational cooperation between Cedefop and DG EMPL, which would promote further alignment of activities and even better cooperation.

Comments from the Employees

Mr Patuzzi welcomed the timely reception of the Commission's opinion. This had not been the case in previous years. The group strongly supported the Commission's comments on the promotion exercise (p. 28) and on the staff gender balance (p. 30). The Commission asked Cedefop to define its performance indicators (p. 10). However, the Agency's indicators had been revised by the MB in 2020. If another revision was required, then this should be well justified. The Commission also stressed that an approach was needed to strengthen synergies with the OECD and the ILO and avoid overlaps (p. 19). This was indeed important; however, it should not be a one-way process. The support of the Commission to OECD and ILO activities

should also be transparent in order to ensure the fruitful and successful cooperation with these organisations.

Ms Roman said that before adopting the document, the group would like Cedefop to take on board all amendments requested in January by email. More specifically, in para. 36 (tracked changes version), reference was made to '*The expertise Cedefop generates through the wide spectrum of analysis and research it undertakes will support EU-led VET initiatives such as the Centres for Vocational Excellence...*' The close relation between Cedefop and VET institutions should be deleted, as their research should be covered by the Erasmus budget and not by Cedefop's limited budget; the tripartite nature of the future PLF on apprenticeship was very welcome (para. 108); the involvement of social partners in the EU skills and jobs survey was also welcome but the language was rather employer-focused (para. 109). Ms Roman requested a more balanced formulation to reflect the employees' side as well. Cedefop should ensure the support to the survey of a tripartite group; the reference to social partners in para. 111 should not be deleted and the addition proposed in para. 112 should be rejected. The group welcomed the tripartite advisory group on microcredentials. Such tripartite groups should also be involved in other Cedefop studies. The group also welcomed Cedefop's online database on financing CVET/adult learning, which was a great support for the social partners' joint event on skills and innovation (par. 144). Cedefop should ensure that the work on individual learning accounts also involved a tripartite advisory group.

Comments from the Governments

Ms Lindén said that the group took note of the Commission's opinion and the developments since January. The draft was very good. However, the extended use of abbreviations throughout the document could be confusing. She proposed to use the full names of the Agencies. In Annex II, p. 74 (tracked version) the group noticed a steep increase (almost 28%) from 2021 to 2023 and then a decrease in 2024. At the same time, there was a significant decrease from 2021 to 2023 in the 'Informing VET and skills policies' activity and then an increase in 2024. On page 80, under 'Title 3 Operational expenditure', there was an almost 38% decrease in 'Skills and labour market' and in line 34 an increase of 118.5% in 'Learning and employability'. She asked Cedefop to elaborate on the reasons behind these fluctuations. The postponements and the activities carried over should be made visible in the document.

Comments from the Employers

Mr Riemer said that the PD had a good mixture of visionary aspects, concrete activities and framework for further development. The budget situation would dictate the implementation of most activities. The group considered the document ready for adoption.

Mr Plummer said that the tripartite advisory group on microcredentials was a good approach. The wider involvement of the MB should be extended to other topics. In para. 144 (p. 56 of the tracked changes version) reference was made to ongoing support to individual learning accounts. The group requested the inclusion of a reference to the recent ACVT opinion. He thanked Cedefop for a good draft.

The Chairperson said that the comment of the Commission concerning the promotion exercise appeared disproportionate.

The Executive Director said that, in the meantime, the comments on promotions had been discussed and clarified with the Commission. The different readings of the relevant regulation would be aligned. Cedefop would not double fund the centres of vocational excellence; however, in the interest of synergies, the centres could benefit from Cedefop's research. Cedefop provided support in close cooperation with the ETF and the Commission.

Mr Zahilas said that this was not a new activity. In the Skills Agenda and the VET Recommendation, reference was made to the importance of the role of the centres of VET excellence. In consultation with the Commission and the ETF, Cedefop would support developments by providing work already available.

Mr Siebel said that concerning the tripartite advisory groups, Cedefop had collected several ideas. While it would not be possible to extend this approach to every study, it would be considered for ground-breaking or strategic themes. The use of abbreviations was for practical reasons. Cedefop would try to find a more user-friendly way to present the table of abbreviations to the readers. A more balanced formulation to reflect the employees' side would be made in para. 109. Reference to the recent ACVT opinion would be included in para. 144.

Mr Ranieri said that the tripartite approach was also beneficial for Cedefop. The work on the database was directly related to the work on incentives, and the social partners were represented in the respective advisory group. However, Cedefop was open to further cooperation. The alignment between the narrative and the output concerning the publication on monitoring and evaluation would be checked.

The Deputy Director said that the increase and decrease between years in the allocation of resources (ref. comments from the Governments on p. 74 and 80) was linked to the way Cedefop managed the cycle of its projects. For example, if a survey was launched in a given year, there was a substantial increase in the budget line for that year. In the following year there would be a substantial decrease. This was reflected in the ABB (Annex II). The list of acronyms was provided at the beginning of the document. Cedefop would check if all acronyms were covered.

Ms Roman said that the Employees did not request tripartite advisory groups for all topics. However, it was important to involve the social partners in certain projects. She thanked the Executive Director for the explanations concerning the centres of vocational excellence and suggested clarifying it in the text to avoid misunderstandings.

Ms Rioldino said that all financial support from the Commission was public and transparent, including support given to organisations such as the OECD. The Commission did not request a revision of Cedefop's indicators, but clarifications on how these indicators were linked to the policy framework, which had been provided by Cedefop in the meantime. The Commission was ready to adopt the document.

Ms Coenen stressed the importance of involving the Employees in the advisory groups.

The Chairperson said that the comments did not concern fundamental changes. Subject to budgetary changes, the PD could be adopted. She congratulated Cedefop and asked members if there were any objections or abstentions.

None were received.

The Chairperson concluded that the Management Board members adopted the PD 2022-24. It would become final after adoption of the Union budget setting the amount of the contribution and the establishment plan (expected December 2021). Moreover, after the 2021 salary indexation was announced by the Commission services (expected in November), possible adjustments within and between titles might be required. If such adjustments led to significant changes, in particular concerning the Work Programme 2022, the Executive Board would be consulted during its meeting in December and the approval of the Management Board would be sought by written procedure, if needed.

6. REPORTING FROM THE EXECUTIVE TO THE MANAGEMENT BOARD (*INFORMATION*)

The Chairperson said that the reporting stated the main issues considered by the Executive Board since the Management Board meeting of 8 and 9 October 2020 and until September 2021.

This was an updated version of the one forwarded to members on 24 March 2021.

The Chairperson concluded that members took note of the information provided.

7. UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN FOLLOWING THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION (*INFORMATION*)

The Chairperson invited the Deputy Director to present the item.

Ms Brugia reminded members that in April 2019 the Commission published its Staff Working Document (SWD) on the external evaluation of the (then) four agencies in the employment and social affairs policy field. Agencies were assessed individually and comparatively. The report contained two Cedefop-specific recommendations and one cross-agency recommendation, advising Cedefop, Eurofound, the ETF and EU-OSHA to align their performance measuring systems (PMS) further. Cedefop had prepared an action plan, which was discussed with the MB in October 2019 and then formally approved by DG EMPL. The progress on the proposed actions had been discussed in the EB and MB meetings in 2020. Most of the actions were either being implemented or formally closed by the Commission. Only two of them were still pending. The first was about further streamlining administrative workflows and procedures through digitalisation. In April 2021, Cedefop adopted its first ICT and digitalisation strategy. As part of this strategy, the full digitisation of workflows and procedures was planned by the end of 2022. The second was the consultation with the sub-network of the EU agencies on performance development in order to align the PMS of Cedefop's contributions to policy documents with other agencies. The four agencies had set up a task force and had already aligned their methodologies for administrative indicators, in particular on budget implementation. By the end of 2021, the methodology for the PMS indicators concerning the contributions to policy documents would also be aligned.

Ms Riondino said that the Commission welcomed the update and the progress made, even in such difficult times. They strongly supported the continued efforts to reassign staff to the core business, the ICT strategy, and the synergies with other agencies.

Ms Lindén congratulated Cedefop on the work carried out and the allocation of resources which made the Agency more effective. The alignment of PMS indicators with other agencies was very welcome. Concerning the first Cedefop-specific recommendation, the Commission proposed to continue the efforts. She asked if further actions would be needed.

Ms Brugia said that the formal closure of a recommendation should be distinguished from the continued efforts of Cedefop to redeploy resources to operations.

No further comments were received.

The Chairperson concluded that members took note of the information and congratulated Cedefop's management on the digitalisation of HR and financial processes and the swift implementation of the recommendations stemming from the external evaluation.

8. ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

(a) Web services, conferences and publications (*information*)

The Chairperson invited Mr Bausewein to present the item.

Mr Bausewein said that the joint Cedefop/OECD symposium would take place on 21 and 22 October, just 1 day after the launch of Cedefop's new web portal. He highlighted the forthcoming Brussels seminar of 15 November and the fifth CareersNet annual meeting, both organised together with the Slovenian Presidency. On 25 and 26 November the initial findings of Cedefop's study would be presented in the conference on microcredentials for labour market education and training. He informed members that the working paper series, which complemented the official publications, gave researchers an opportunity to author papers. These provided additional outreach before the official publications were published. The forthcoming web tools would be visible in the new web portal, to be launched on 20 October. Mr Bausewein highlighted the skills intelligence sub-theme in the new web portal, which was the legacy of the Skills Panorama. The new web portal would offer an overview of the strategic themes that would provide users a good understanding of Cedefop's work. It would have a user-friendly, multi-level approach for different stakeholders. It had been an ambitious project but Cedefop's data deserved a next-generation presentation level. Mr Bausewein invited members to register on Cedefop's web portal to receive alerts of all forthcoming events and publications.

Ms Lindén said that the group welcomed the launch of the new web portal. The thematic approach was an interesting development that would increase the engagement of different stakeholders.

Ms Roman said that the working papers did not always include the names of all researchers. She requested information on the difference between working and research papers. The group would like to know how Cedefop decided which of the documents would be translated in the different languages.

Mr Bausewein said that the working papers had been identified as an additional need. Research papers were the outcome of research and had to be planned long in advance, often based on a 2-year project. The working papers had an editorial board with a rolling plan. Their number should be manageable considering the resources available. The quality of these papers should be closely monitored. In the case of working papers with a collection of articles, the names of the authors might not always be on the cover page but were included in the contents list. Feedback for improvements would be welcome. Concerning the translations, colleagues were currently working on an e-publishing and e-dissemination policy. This would be used to develop a future profile that would include a multi-language approach.

The Chairperson said that the issue of translation had been extensively discussed in EB meetings and Cedefop had presented its proposals. She invited the Executive Director to comment.

Mr Siebel said that working papers were a smart strategic decision to allow people to author papers, and thus attract experts to Cedefop. If this approach continued to work as well as it started, then it would give researchers a motivation and top-up incentive, as it would signal to colleagues that they would not lose their research identity. It had been a voluntary decision of colleagues on top of their regular work. Concerning translations, Cedefop proposed the solution of licensed translations by interested

parties, as well as the use of automated translation tools. The Centre de Traduction (CdT) was also moving in this direction.

The Chairperson concluded that members took note of the information.

(b) Reporting on Internal Control Coordination (ICC) activities – discharge 2019, audits, evaluations and other sources of assurance (*information*)

The Chairperson invited the Deputy Director to present the item.

(1) The European Court of Auditors (ECA) report on Cedefop's annual accounts for the financial year 2020. The Deputy Director said that on 31 May 2021 Cedefop had received the ECA preliminary observations. The Court considered that the Agency's accounts were legal and regular in all material aspects. The report included two observations: (a) on a negotiated procurement procedure for Europass, which the Court flagged as 'irregular'; (b) on incorrect application of the method of calculation of Norway and Iceland contributions to Cedefop's budget. Concerning the first observation, Cedefop had informed the ECA that the irregular procurement procedure had already been cancelled. Concerning the second, the Agency was in contact with DG EMPL and DG BUDG, as well as the EFTA Secretariat for the next steps. The final ECA report was expected later in the autumn.

(2) The Commission's Internal Audit System (IAS). Ms Brugia said that the IAS had informed Cedefop that there would be no audit in 2021, as the Agency's profile was considered 'low-risk'.

(3) Cedefop's discharge 2019. Ms Brugia said that Cedefop's final discharge report on 2019 had been adopted by the European Parliament on 29 April 2021. The report was very positive and praised a number of aspects of Cedefop's work, including: the high budget implementation; the Agency's performance measurement system, which was praised as exemplary for the third consecutive year; Cedefop's work on skills intelligence and the impact of the pandemic on VET and the labour market; the cooperation with other agencies; the Agency's internal control system; the efforts to create an environmentally friendly workplace and the measures taken to reduce the Agency's carbon footprint of energy consumption and to develop a paperless workflow. However, as mentioned at the EB meeting of March 2021, the final discharge report also included some issues of concern. The first was the incorrect application of the method of calculation of Norway and Iceland contributions to Cedefop's budget, which was a rather technical issue. The second was the externalisation of Cedefop's legal service, and, the third, the loss of the legal case with the former legal advisor before the EU General Court and the subsequent payment of EUR 40 000 in compensation. The Parliament also noted with regret that a number of declarations of interests had still not been submitted by MB members. This was the fourth consecutive year that the Parliament made this comment in the discharge report. Cedefop had sent several reminders to individual members, as well as the coordinators of the groups. In addition, the issue had been raised in almost every EB and MB meeting. At this point a total of 10 declarations were still missing (one from a main member and nine from alternate members).

The Chairperson informed members that the Executive Board had discussed in June 2021 the possibility of applying sanctions to members who had not signed a declaration of interest. It was concluded that the Commission would check if Cedefop had a legal basis for not inviting MB members who had not signed a declaration of interest.

Mr Ceuppens said that they had consulted colleagues of the Legal Service of the Commission, and they confirmed that the obligation of MB members to submit a declaration of interests could be enforced. The Chairperson must ensure the independence and impartiality of the Management Board's deliberations and decisions, and the declarations are the means of assessing any potential conflict of

interests. As a solution, he proposed giving a last call reminding the members of their obligation. If that call was not answered, then the Chairperson would have a basis for not inviting these members to the next MB.

Mr Siebel highlighted that the discharge concerned the Executive Director. It was not fair that it included comments on this issue. He invited members who had not yet done so to submit their declarations.

The Chairperson said that direct communication with members had very good results. She encouraged the coordinators and Deputy Chairpersons to contact the members again.

Ms Roman said that several declarations had been received in the past weeks. She would approach the colleagues again. In recent years there had been no induction session for newcomers and, in any case, alternates could only participate in a MB meeting in the absence of the main member. Members and alternate members might not be receiving enough information on basic procedural aspects.

Ms Brugia said that Cedefop had invested time and resources to send individual reminders for several years. She appreciated the efforts of the coordinators and Deputy Chairpersons. It would be easier if each member signed the declaration immediately upon appointment. Cedefop sent a package of information including the declaration of interest to all new members and alternate members upon their appointment. If members considered that emails did not always reach their target, then Cedefop would welcome any proposals.

The Chairperson said that induction meetings could be organised virtually. As these involved no travelling cost, all members and alternate members could be invited.

Ms Brugia said that while it would have been better to welcome newcomers in person, virtual sessions could be a good alternative.

Mr Patuzzi said that sanctions for MB members should have a legal basis. He requested that the Commission provide a written legal analysis in the next EB meeting.

Ms Riondino said that there was always room for improving communication. She thanked Cedefop for its efforts over the years. The signing of the declaration is an obligation of MB members and alternates provided in Article 4(4) of Regulation (EU) 2019/128 and the decision adopted by the MB on the Rules on Conflict of Interest. Members who had not signed one could potentially be in a situation of conflict of interest. Thus, in the absence of a signed declaration and as a precautionary measure, these members should not be involved in the work of the MB. This is not to be considered as a sanction, but as the logical consequence of the Chairperson's obligation to preserve the independence and impartiality of the Management Board's deliberations and decisions.

The Chairperson concluded that members took note of the information. The Coordinators and Deputy Chairpersons would make every effort to contact again the members who had not yet signed a declaration and report back in the EB meeting in December.

The Chairperson closed the meeting at 18.10.

Friday 8 October 2021

The Chairperson opened the meeting at 9.30 CET and welcomed the participants. As discussed in the groups' meetings on 7 October, after the plenary meeting, members with the right to vote were invited to an in-camera MB meeting. The first items to be discussed in this plenary would be item 3b – Cedefop's survey on making excellence inclusive and item 9 – Election of the Chairperson and Deputy Chairpersons.

3. (b) CEDEFOP'S SURVEY *MAKING EXCELLENCE INCLUSIVE: TOWARDS A NEW CEDEFOP SURVEY OF VET TEACHERS AND TRAINERS* (DISCUSSION)

The Chairperson invited the Head of DLE to present the item.

Mr Ranieri said that the study was part of the work programme. It was still at an early stage. Since it would be a comparatively huge investment for Cedefop in the long term, it was important to ensure the engagement of stakeholders, as their support might be needed at some point. It was a feasibility pilot study, as it would not be easy to reach such a specific target group. At this stage it would target schools at ISCED level 3 in six EU countries. In the core of the survey was the teachers' and trainers' professional development, not as an end *per se* but, as a way of making teaching and learning more effective. Learning opportunities were often disconnected from classroom practices. The survey aimed at understanding better how schools and companies could become more learning conducive, including for teachers and trainers. The four questionnaires, one for each target group (i.e. teachers, trainers, principals and students) were currently being developed. The survey did not intend to measure country performance. The answers would be important for potential policy implications. A broad range of stakeholders was engaged since the early preparatory phase in 2019. The webinar organised in February had large stakeholder participation (DG EMPL, DG EAC, social partners, VET providers, etc.). In parallel, consultation with European and international organisations (JRC, OECD, ETF, etc.) was carried out to avoid overlapping with other similar studies. An advisory group was set up including national experts nominated by the ministries and the relevant social partner organisations of the six pilot countries: Austria, Croatia, Greece, Lithuania, Spain and the Netherlands. Ms Psifidou, expert in DLE would be available to answer technical questions.

The Chair invited members to comment.

Ms Roman said that this study was very important and Cedefop's support was much appreciated even though the Agency's resources were limited. According to a recent OECD report, 53% of school principals could not find VET teachers and 60% of the VET teachers were not satisfied with their job. The survey was a good example of Cedefop working together with ministries and social partners. According to the Founding Regulation, *'where new studies are needed, and before taking policy decisions, the Union institutions shall take into account Cedefop's expertise and any studies that it has conducted'*. Quite often Cedefop and the OECD worked on similar topics. This had been repeatedly highlighted in the EB meetings in 2016 and 2017, but in this case, the OECD report did not cover all EU countries.

Ms Saidi enquired about the financial aspects of the study. The OECD had already received funds from Erasmus+.

Mr Farrugia asked if the survey would also cover teachers' career guidance.

Ms Simeonova said that the survey was very important, as it involved Croatia and covered the east European region where deeper transition was needed. The combination of countries was very welcome.

Ms Lindén said that the study was very interesting, but the group expected more information on the process. She asked if the questionnaires were available in the national languages. Cedefop should avoid problems with the quality of translations, which was a general issue.

Ms Geleng said the Commission supported this initiative.

Mr Ranieri said that his team would provide members with a short information note.

Ms Psifidou said that the methodological aspects had been shared and discussed with the advisory group. The survey would cover VET teachers teaching both VET and general subjects (e.g. language, mathematics) but not those working in career guidance. This would require a different methodological approach and different questionnaires. The questionnaires were translated into all national languages of the six pilot countries, using professional translators. During the design of the questionnaires, the first step was to carry out cognitive testing of the English master questionnaire with the target populations to ensure that it was clear and understandable by all four target groups. The questionnaires were then revised based on the results of the cognitive testing and sent for professional translation into the six pilot languages. Translated questionnaires were revised by national experts in each country and then went through cognitive testing again – this time in the national language – and revised accordingly. Finally, the advisory group would meet on 21 October to discuss the questionnaires and would be asked to revise and approve them by the end of the month. This rigorous process ensured the quality of the translations.

The Chair concluded that members took note of the information and looked forward to the results of the survey.

9. ELECTION OF THE CHAIRPERSON AND DEPUTY CHAIRPERSONS OF THE MB AND COMPOSITION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD/EXTENDED EXECUTIVE BOARD (DECISION)

The Chairperson said that Article 7 of Regulation (EU) 2019/128 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 January 2019 provided that:

1. The Management Board shall elect a Chairperson and three Deputy Chairpersons as follows:

- (a) one from among the members representing the governments of the Member States;*
- (b) one from among the members representing the employers' organisations;*
- (c) one from among the members representing the employees' organisations; and*
- (d) one from among the members representing the Commission.*

*The Chairperson and the Deputy Chairpersons shall be elected by a majority of **two thirds** of members of the Management Board with the right to vote.*

2. The term of office of the Chairperson and the Deputy Chairpersons shall be one year. Their term of office shall be renewable. Where their membership of the Management Board ends at any time during their term of office, their term of office shall automatically expire on that date.

Article 10(5) of Regulation (EU) 2019/128 provides that *'the term of office of members of the Executive Board shall be two years. That term shall be renewable. The term of office of a member of the Executive Board shall end on the date on which his or her membership of the Management Board ends'*.

The Chairperson said that usually, the Commission did not take a turn holding the Chairpersonship.

Ms Geleng confirmed.

At its meeting of 2 October 2019, the Executive Board had agreed that the terms of office of the Chairperson of the Management Board and the Deputy Chairpersons should be renewed for a second year for reasons of continuity. At its meeting of 9 October 2020, the Management Board had confirmed the mandate of the Chairperson (Ms Dorn, Employers' group) for a second year. The chairpersonship should therefore rotate among the groups in the order applied until now (i.e. next chairpersonships: Governments, Employees).

The Chairperson invited the groups to present their nominations.

On behalf of the Governments' group Ms Lindén proposed Ms Nadine Nerguisian, the representative of France as the next Chairperson.

On behalf of the Employees' group Ms Roman proposed Mr Mario Patuzzi as Deputy Chairperson.

On behalf of the Employers' group Mr Plummer proposed Mr Tony Donohoe, the representative of Ireland, as Deputy Chairperson.

On behalf of the Commission Ms Geleng said that she would remain the Deputy Chairperson.

All members unanimously agreed to the nominations.

The Chairperson congratulated the new Chairperson and the Deputy Chairpersons.

Ms Nerguisian thanked members for the great honour. She had been a member of the MB for 6 years and was very familiar with Cedefop's work and expertise. VET had been at the heart of her professional experience in the French Ministry of Education for the past 20 years. Ms Nerguisian gave a short presentation of her professional background. She was currently in charge of VET at the Directorate for European and International Relations and Cooperation of the French Ministry. She was also the French representative in the MB of the ETF. Ms Nerguisian was also in the ACVT and the advisory groups of Europass and ESCO. She thanked members for their trust.

Mr Siebel welcomed the new Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the Employers' group.

Mr Donohoe thanked members for their trust. He had been Head of Education and Social policy for almost 20 years and a member of the Business Europe social affairs committee. He was more than familiar with Cedefop's role and activities. At national level, he was in the apprenticeship Council and the project on microcredentials. He looked forward to cooperating closely with all groups in his role as Deputy Chairperson.

The Chairperson thanked Ms Lindén and Mr Riemer for their dedication and support as long-standing members of the EB and invited the coordinators to present their nominations for the Executive and Extended Executive Board.

On behalf of the Employees' group Ms Roman said that Mr Mario Patuzzi would remain Deputy Chairperson, and she would continue as the group's coordinator. For the Extended Executive Board, the composition would include Ms Tatjana Babrauskiene (LT), Ms Isabel Coenen (NL) and Georgios Christopoulos (EL).

On behalf of the Governments' group Mr Staudecker said that Ms Lindén (SE) would be the spokesperson and he would continue as the group's coordinator. For the Extended Executive Board, he nominated Mr Torben Schuster (DK).

Mr Plummer said that Mr Donohoe would be the Deputy Chairperson, and he would continue as the group's coordinator. For the Extended Executive Board, the composition would include Ms Barbara Dorn (DE), Mr Gerhard Riemer (AT) and Ms Siham Saïdi (FR).

On behalf of the Commission Ms Geleng said that Ms Chiara Riondino would be the second representative from the Commission.

(c) Awareness-raising session for Management Board members on anti-fraud issues (*information*)

The Chairperson invited the Deputy Director to present the item.

Ms Brugia said that one of the strategic objectives of Cedefop's anti-fraud strategy, adopted by the MB in 2019, was to foster an anti-fraud culture underpinned by high levels of awareness, integrity, impartiality and transparency within the organisation, including the MB members. One of the key actions to reach this strategic objective was to maintain a regular communication channel with the MB through annual awareness-raising sessions. The aim of these sessions was to inform all members about what constitutes fraud, why countering fraud was important and what the MB's role was. Countering fraud was a top EU priority and one of the requirements of the Treaty of the functioning of the EU. According to the Commission's anti-fraud strategy, EU citizens and taxpayers deserved EU institutions that operated with the utmost integrity and spent their contributions to the EU budget in a sound and efficient way. If EU funds were not used for their legitimate purposes, the effectiveness of EU policies would be compromised, and public trust would be undermined. The principle of zero tolerance to fraud applied to all EU institutions. Fraud was defined as a deliberate act of deception with the intent of personal gain or loss for another party. Irregularity was defined as an act non-compliant with EU rules, with a potentially negative impact on EU financial interests but which might be the result of genuine errors. However, if an irregularity was deliberately committed, then this constituted fraud. The Commission's anti-fraud office, OLAF, was the competent authority to decide if an act constituted fraud. Possible reasons to trigger fraud were pressure, opportunity or lack of personal integrity. Cedefop had adopted a wide definition of fraud deriving from the Commission's anti-fraud strategy and also shared with the other EU agencies. According to this definition, fraud covered infringement of the EU financial interests, misbehaviour which might have a reputational impact, and favouritism and collusion. Ms Brugia presented three examples and members took part in a short poll. The results of the poll were discussed. Cedefop was one of the first agencies to establish an anti-fraud strategy in 2014. In 2019 the MB adopted a revised anti-fraud strategy, which derived from the Commission's strategy and was aligned with the Common Approach principles. The strategic objectives of Cedefop's anti-fraud strategy were: (a) to maintain an anti-fraud culture; (b) to strengthen detecting measures, and (c) to focus on mitigating fraud risks. These objectives encompassed all stages of the anti-fraud cycle (prevention, detection, investigation, recovery and sanctions). Cedefop staff, MB members, external experts and consultants were expected to act according to the highest standards of honesty, propriety and integrity. In addition, Cedefop had zero tolerance for fraud, irregularities, impropriety or dishonesty. Internal communication on the anti-fraud strategy was very important but external communication was equally important, as it served to protect the EU reputation and reassured the public of the integrity and sound financial management of the Agency. It could also deter potential fraudsters. The MB and EB members had the responsibility to monitor its implementation and the follow-up of any OLAF findings. In the course of their duty, members might be a potential recipient of whistleblowing. Any staff member suspecting a given act to be fraudulent had the obligation to report in good faith to their immediate superior, or the Executive Director or the Chairperson of the MB or OLAF. If Cedefop or OLAF did not respond within 60 days, the staff member could report to the President of the Parliament, the Council, the Commission, the European Court of Auditors or as a last option to the EU

Ombudsman. If MB members were contacted by a staff member, they should ensure that he/she had first used all available channels. If this was not be possible, then the MB members had the obligation to report directly to OLAF. If an MB member suspected fraud, then he/she could seek advice from the Executive Director, or the Internal Control Coordinator (ICC) of Cedefop or report directly to OLAF. Cedefop's ICC coordinated the implementation of the strategy and steered the annual anti-fraud risk assessment. The ICC reported to the Executive Director or directly to OLAF. The ICC also advised staff and management on the prevention of fraud. The ICC team was composed of Ms Brugia, Ms Tine Soerensen-Ballis and Ms Josephine Kiorpelidou.

The Chairperson said that if members were contacted by staff, they should first inform the Chairperson, who had a better overview.

Ms Brugia said that although this was not regulated, it was indeed a good proposal. In any case, it was important for the recipient of the information to transmit it to OLAF.

The Chairperson invited members to comment.

Mr Skiadas said that in his capacity as global certified anti-fraud examiner he congratulated the Deputy Director on her thorough presentation. Cedefop's anti-fraud strategy highlighted the importance of the submission of declarations of interests by MB members. Conflict of interest was one of the main risks regarding fraud. Cedefop should have these declarations in order to mitigate any potential risk. He looked forward to further cooperation on the issue with Cedefop and the revision of the anti-fraud strategy in 2022.

Ms Lindén welcomed the useful presentation. The group would like to know if Cedefop had faced specific challenges concerning cyber-fraud.

Ms Brugia said that Cedefop conducted an annual risk assessment including ICT security. Until now, no particular actions of mitigation were needed in this field.

Ms Geleng encouraged all members to take due note of this important issue.

The Chairperson thanked Cedefop's ICC team for the presentation and concluded that members took note of the information.

(d) HR developments – including latest COVID pulse survey (information)

The Chairperson invited the Head of DRS to present the item.

Ms Descy said that Cedefop currently operated in almost the full capacity of its establishment plan, which included 91 posts. By the end of the year it was therefore expected to meet the target of 95% occupancy of the establishment plan. In the context of the HR strategy, management applied a rolling workforce planning exercise, which ensured the allocation of staff to the right post at any given time. Members had received the list of ongoing and planned selection procedures. In 2020, Cedefop adopted its first HR strategy, which grouped activities and projects in three building blocks: (a) talent acquisition; (b) talent development, and (c) staff wellbeing. In the past 2 years efforts had focused on talent acquisition and staff wellbeing. The efficiency and quality of selection procedures had been improved and resulted in very good and diverse recruitments even during the COVID times. The workforce planning focused on skill needs and organisational priorities. In the context of the pandemic, special attention had also given to staff wellbeing. Cedefop had developed an extensive health and psychological wellbeing action plan. The staff engagement survey planned for 2021 had been postponed, as it would not yield comparable results due to the COVID-19 crisis. To measure how staff coped professionally as well as personally in the pandemic, Cedefop had conducted two pulse surveys, one in November 2020 and one in September 2021. The latest survey showed that staff was

coping well. More than 50% of the respondents had reported that they were still energised, optimistic and motivated. However, the protracted teleworking showed a somehow divided picture. While performance and productivity remained unchanged and staff reported good online interaction with colleagues, it appeared that more and more colleagues missed the in-person informal interactions and the in-person meetings. Some staff had difficulties disconnecting at the end of the day and workload remained an issue. Management was planning a progressive return to the office. In this context, the majority of staff would like to continue in more hybrid forms of work. Concerning the geographical balance of staff, Cedefop had 46% Greek staff. This was expected, as the Agency was located in Greece; however, efforts were being made to improve the attractiveness of Cedefop as an employer. Moreover, staff recruited during the COVID-19 crisis, including in periods when relocation was very difficult, came from a variety of countries.

The Chairperson said that Cedefop had currently 19 different nationalities. This was a good balance, even if the percentage of Greeks was high. The same situation with locals appeared to be the case in other agencies as well. Ms Dorn asked for information on the current conditions for working on site.

Ms Lindén said that the group welcomed the positive results of the pulse survey. It was good to see that more than 70% of staff stayed with Cedefop for more than a decade. This signalled the attractiveness of Cedefop as an employer. However, very few staff members appeared to be under the age of 40. Ms Lindén asked if Cedefop would consider apprenticeships.

Ms Geleng welcomed the efforts to improve the selection procedures. A relatively high number of complaints related to selections had nevertheless been lodged. The Commission had already provided comments on the promotion rates in its 'Opinion on the PD 2022-24'. She commended management for the attention to staff wellbeing. She requested more information on the plans of management in relation to the staff request for hybrid working conditions. More than 10% of staff were above 60. The small percentage of young newcomers appeared to create an age distribution issue. Ms Geleng asked how the loss of expertise in the coming years would be addressed.

Mr Patuzzi thanked Ms Descy for her presentation. The first ever Cedefop HR strategy was a positive development. The group would like to hear the views of Cedefop's Staff Committee.

Mr Plummer said that the Employers' group welcomed the HR strategy of 2020, which had already shown its effectiveness.

Mr Vaughan said that the selection procedure for an internal legal advisor was planned to be launched in October. He asked if this was still on track.

Mr Tanakidis said that it was important to note that all achievements discussed were done by staff. The management took good care of staff in the pandemic and communicated measures efficiently. Teleworking was much appreciated. The Staff Committee (SC) expected issues on trust and participation to be addressed in the next survey. Concerning the geographical balance, in almost all agencies 'locals' were the predominant group. The Staff Committee invited the management to check the situation in other agencies. Greece was not considered a very attractive relocation country and even Greeks faced difficulties. Incentives were needed to attract and keep staff, such as a good Seat Agreement. As in any relationship, the cooperation between the SC and management had its ups and downs and recently there had been some issues, possibly due to the COVID situation and the general pressure this created. He was positive that these issues would be resolved.

Ms Descy said that the establishment plan had 91 post, while Cedefop occupied in total about 120 people, i.e. also including contract agents and national seconded experts. The high proportion of locals was quite common in decentralised agencies. The location of Cedefop at the borders of Europe was a challenge for attracting people

from central and northern Europe. Greek colleagues, however, are not evenly distributed across job functions and tend to occupy administrative posts and assistant posts in the operational departments. The geographical distribution of experts in core business was more diverse. Currently, staff was working under a flexible teleworking regime with two shifts ensuring 50% maximum presence in the office and single office occupation. Work arrangements were made in consultation with the heads of department and in the interest of the service. Progressively staff would be requested to work on site during their shift. However, this would depend on epidemiological indicators and the measures announced by the Greek authorities, as the situation in Greece regarding the pandemic had deteriorated. In the next phase, presence in the office would be required during one's shift but staff would still be able to request teleworking. Cedefop demographics were slowly changing, as staff retired and was replaced by younger recruits. The strategy also focused on knowledge transfer, and measures were taken to ensure overlaps, where possible. Cedefop did not hire apprentices but had a fully-fledged traineeship programme and offered unpaid internships. Indeed, complaints for selections were common but none had been upheld, which proved the compliance and quality of the selection procedures. Concerning promotions, Cedefop tended in the past to have longer careers than the foreseen average careers. In the past years, the number of promotions had increased and Cedefop had moved closer to the average career in all grades. Cedefop follows the developments regarding the new Commission rules on hybrid working. Agencies would like a bit more flexibility than foreseen in the Commission's rules. Post-COVID Cedefop would like to reduce its carbon footprint with fewer missions and hybrid meetings. The selection procedure for a legal advisor was on track. According to the selection planning, the post should be published in November, thus the successful applicant should be offered the post in April 2022.

The Chairperson concluded that members took note of the information.

(e) General implementing provisions (if any – decision)

No presentation.

Members took note of the information.

(f) Transfers of commitment and payment appropriations in 2021 (information)

No presentation.

Members took note of the information.

(g) Annual report of the Chair of Cedefop's Appeals Committee for the year 2020 (information)

The Chairperson said that none of the complaints listed in the report had been upheld by the Appeals Committee.

Members took note of the information.

10-minute break – back at 11.30 CET

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(a) Mode and frequency of Executive and Management Board Meetings post-COVID (information/discussion)

The Chairperson invited the Executive Director to present the item.

Mr Siebel said that although virtual meetings had been successful, after 2 years there was a need for in-person interactions. He hoped that the next MB meeting, which would be the 100th one, could be held in person. The possible scenarios he presented proposed a physical MB meeting every other year. Concerning the EB meetings, the

first scenario proposed two physical meetings per year (summer and autumn), while the second scenario proposed one physical meeting, always in the autumn. Apart from money savings, this would also reduce Cedefop's carbon footprint. This was very important as EU institutions were expected to become carbon-neutral by 2030. The final decision on the meeting format was up to the members.

The Chairperson clarified that the need for in-person meetings was not disputed. However, the frequency could be reduced. The MB meeting would take place in person every other year. Concerning the EB physical meetings, two were proposed (in Brussels in the winter and in Thessaloniki in the summer) or only one every autumn in Thessaloniki.

Ms Lindén said that the Governments' group considered that MB meetings should always be in person. It was difficult for members to get involved in virtual meetings. Coming out of the pandemic, meetings should be revitalised. In the past, there were even two MB meetings per year. After these were reduced to one, discussions focused more on administrative issues and less on VET policies. Members were acting as ambassadors for Cedefop. Dynamic, in-person meetings helped networks work better. Practical and structural issues could be discussed in virtual meetings and there was a need to take environmental aspects into account. Concerning the EB meetings, these could take place in person twice a year. The frequency of physical meetings should be reassessed in the future.

Mr Plummer said that for the Employers' group, the climate considerations were greater than the financial ones. The 100th meeting of the MB should be an in-person one. The group agreed to have two physical EB meetings per year, one in Brussels and one in Thessaloniki. The situation should be reassessed after the next MB meeting. The dates for the EB meetings should be confirmed the soonest possible, especially if this involved travelling.

Mr Patuzzi said that the Employees' group strongly supported the yearly in-person MB meetings. An important part of the VET community met every year at Cedefop, both formally and informally. This facilitated sharing and interacting with one another. Physical MB meetings should resume the soonest possible. To allow the participation of more members who might not be able to travel in the future, hybrid meetings should be considered. The group agreed to hold two in-person EB meetings per year, one in Brussels and one in Thessaloniki.

Ms Geleng said that in-person meetings were indeed important. After two consecutive years of online meetings, the next MB should take place physically. However, the carbon footprint of the Agency should be considered. It might be useful to look at the approach of Eurofound and EU-OSHA. Concerning the EB, at least one physical meeting should take place every year. The situation could be reassessed in the next MB meeting.

Mr Siebel said that hybrid meetings should be thoroughly discussed, as they could potentially have complications, i.e. last-minute changes in participation, which would be difficult to handle. In terms of the carbon footprint, Cedefop's mission budget would be drastically reduced in the coming years. In general, more virtual meetings would be the reality in the near future.

The Chairperson said that during the EB meeting of 6 October members proposed to extend the EB meeting of 1 December 2021. She invited the Deputy Director to present the arguments discussed.

Ms Brugia said that one of the key points on the EB agenda in December would be the first draft PD 2023-25. The discussion of this strategic issue would prepare members for the decision to endorse this draft by written procedure in January 2022.

The Chairperson asked members if they agreed.

No objections were received.

The Chairperson asked the Commission if they could provide a meeting room in Brussels.

Ms Geleng said that in-person meetings were slowly resuming; however, it might not be easy to find a meeting room for an EEB. This should be reassessed closer to the date.

Mr Patuzzi said that it was too soon to resume in-person meetings. For safety reasons, he strongly recommended do so later in the year, by summer 2022.

Mr Plummer agreed that in-person meetings should not resume before summer 2022.

Ms Lindén said that due to the ongoing pandemic the next two EB meetings should be virtual.

The Chairperson concluded that the next MB meeting would take place as an in-person meeting in Thessaloniki. The EB meeting of 1 December 2021 would be an extended one and would take place virtually. The EB meeting of March 2022 would also take place virtually, and, depending on the pandemic, in-person meetings could resume in summer 2022.

(b) Dates of Executive Board meetings and Management Board meeting in 2022 (decision)

The Chairperson said that the following dates had been discussed and proposed by the Executive Board:

Dates	Meeting location
<p>Executive Board meetings in 2022</p> <p>Week 8-11 March 2022</p> <p>Week 27-30 June or 1 July 2022</p> <p>1 or 2 December 2022</p>	<p>Virtual meeting</p> <p>In-person meeting in Thessaloniki</p> <p>tbc</p>
<p>Management Board meeting 2022</p> <p>Thursday and Friday 6 and 7 October with an Executive Board meeting on Wednesday 5 October 2022</p>	<p>In-person meeting in Thessaloniki</p>

All members agreed on the dates for the next MB meeting. A doodle survey would be conducted for the proposed dates of the EB meetings.

The Chairperson concluded that the next MB meeting would take place in-person in Thessaloniki on 6 and 7 October 2022 with a preceding EB meeting on 5 October. The dates of the next EB meetings would be confirmed in the EEB on 1 December 2021.

(c) Update provided by the Commission on the State of the European Union and the ALMA initiative

Ms Riondino said that the speech of President von der Leyen showed the strong focus of the Commission on the digital and green transition, the recovery and the attention to youth. 2022 was proposed as the Year of European Youth. The initiative was very important, as young people were hit twice in the crisis. As part of this effort, the Commission was launching a new programme called ALMA (Aim, Learn, Master, Achieve). This would help young people, who were not in employment, education or training find their way into the job market. The Erasmus+ experience has proved that travelling and studying abroad is very beneficial. ALMA would give young people an opportunity to acquire brief work experience in another EU country. It would help them develop not only professional but also life skills and confidence. ALMA was in line with the EU Pillar of Social Rights, the commitment to tackle inequalities and offer support to employment (principle No 4), especially for disadvantaged young people. ALMA would be implemented through the European Social Fund+ (ESF+). The estimated budget for the first year would be EUR 15 million. It complemented student mobility and the actions of the EU Solidarity Corps. More information on this initiative, which was still in early stages, would follow in due time.

The Chairperson said that some questions had already been raised in the EB meeting on 6 October concerning the details of this initiative, i.e. the financial support.

Ms Geleng said that the initiative would be funded by ESF+. ALMA was built on existing experience at transnational level, called 'integration through exchange'. Several Member States worked on this scheme together. In designing ALMA, the Commission would take into account the criteria set out in the European quality framework for traineeships.

The Chairperson concluded that members took note of information.

(d) Updated information on Cedefop's building (information)

The Chairperson invited the Head of DRS to present the item.

Ms Descy said that Cedefop was the owner of the building, which was built with EU funds on a piece of land donated by the American Farm School of Thessaloniki. The works started in 1998 and the building was finalised in 1999. The works were overseen by a Greek company. A few years after the building started operating, some cracks were discovered. It became apparent that severe restoration was required for safety reasons. The restoration was funded by the Greek Government and carried out by the company Egnatia Odos. The works were concluded in 2015. In 2017, Egnatia Odos delivered a report confirming that the main building was safe. However, caution should be given to building block 4, where the conference rooms are. Monitoring was required and, therefore, Cedefop installed monitoring equipment and regularly sent the measurements to Egnatia Odos. In February 2021, the company announced that they would stop providing their monitoring services in September 2021. Cedefop contacted the Greek Government but so far, no response had been received. In the meantime, the Executive Director decided not to use the conference rooms. Ms Descy said that Cedefop would like the members' support to approach the Greek Government in order to obtain a renewed commitment regarding the continuous monitoring of the building. More specifically, she asked the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson from the Commission to send a joint letter to the Greek Government.

Ms Geleng and Ms Nerguisian agreed with the proposed way forward.

The Chairperson concluded that the next Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson of the Commission would send a joint letter to the Greek Ministry of Infrastructure asking the Greek authorities to provide a solution for the future monitoring of the building.

The Executive Director, on behalf of all staff and the management, thanked Ms Dorn for serving as Chairperson for 2 challenging years. He also thanked Mr Riemer, who was a long-standing Deputy Chairperson and spokesperson for the Employers' group.

All Groups and the Commission thanked Ms Dorn.

Ms Dorn congratulated the new Chairperson, Ms Nerguisian and the new Deputy Chair in the Employers' group, Mr Donohoe. She thanked the MB and Cedefop's management and staff for their good and trustful cooperation and looked forward to the next in-person MB meeting.

Before closing the meeting, she asked members with the right to vote and coordinators to attend the in-camera MB meeting.

The Chairperson closed the meeting at 12.30 CET.

Signed on 14 December 2021

Nadine Nerguisian
Chairperson of the Management Board

Jürgen Siebel
Executive Director