RB2023-1443253173-35190

MINUTES OF THE 101ST MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING
5 AND 6 OCTOBER 2023
THESSALONIKI

Thursday 5 October 2023

1. WELCOME AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Welcome

The Chairperson opened the meeting at 15.00 and welcomed the participants to the 101st meeting of Cedefop's Management Board (MB).

She informed members that discussions would be recorded for the purpose of the minutes. According to Cedefop's rules on public access to documents adopted by the MB on 2 September 2019, conclusions of Executive Board (EB) and MB meeting minutes would be published on Cedefop's website, after members had approved the text.

She addressed a special welcome to the new MB members and alternates and to the newly appointed expert of the European Parliament.

Note: The names were displayed on screen.

According to Article 11 of the Rules of Procedure of the MB and EB of Cedefop (RoP) the presence of the majority of members or, in their absence, their alternates shall constitute a quorum. This equalled 43 members or alternates. In this meeting, out of the total of 84 voting members, 64 were present (including 6 alternates) and 14 had given a proxy. Thus, the quorum was met. The total number of votes was 78.

Decisions of the MB were taken by the majority of members with the right to vote (Article 9(1) of Regulation (EU) 2019/128). However, for the adoption of the Single Programming Document, the budget, the election of the Chairperson and Deputy Chairpersons, as well as the appointment, extension or removal from office of the Executive Director a two-thirds majority was required. When voting, 43 votes were needed to reach the simple majority (50%+1 = 43) and 56 votes were needed to reach a two-thirds majority.

Article 14(1) of the RoP the provided that *'If there is consensus of the members present on the motion tabled, no vote is required'.* A vote of the Management Board was thus required if there was no consensus of all members with the right to vote present at the meeting. The Chairperson reminded members that in some specific cases, secret voting was required. In particular, Article 14(2) of the RoP provided that *'the vote shall be secret: (a) if the Chairperson thinks it necessary; or (b) if so requested by one third of the members present; or (c) if the issue addressed concerns an individual, including nominations,* *appointments and renewals, as well as the temporary suspension of the delegation of the appointing authority powers to the Executive Director'.*

The Chairperson said that the Executive Board (EB) met on 4 October to prepare the Management Board meeting and the groups held their respective meetings in the morning of 5 October.

She invited the Executive Director to present Cedefop's staff attending this meeting.

Mr Siebel welcomed the members to the 101st MB meeting. He introduced Cedefop's management and staff attending the meeting: Mara Brugia – Deputy Director; Maurizio Roncaccia – the new Head of DCM; Loukas Zahilas – Head of DVQ; Antonio Ranieri – Head of DVS; Pier Paolo Angelini – Chair of Cedefop's Staff Committee; Adriano Graziosi – senior assistant in the Executive Director's office; Ms Dina Morica – the new Cedefop legal adviser who took up duties on 16 September 2023; and Christina Koufa – rapporteur.

<u>Draft agenda of the MB</u>

The Chairperson congratulated the Executive Director, the Deputy Director, the Heads of Department and Cedefop staff on finalising the MB documents in time and to a high-quality standard. This was a lot of work, which should be acknowledged and praised. She informed members that Mr Stephen Temkow, accounting officer of Cedefop, would join the meeting to present item 9 – Sharing of accountancy services with EIGE, and Mr Konstantinos Pouliakas, expert in DVS would present item 12c – Cedefop's European VET teachers survey. Item 12d – Updated ReferNet Charter, would be a decision point as the ReferNet Charter should be approved by the Management Board.

No comments were received.

The Chairperson concluded that the agenda was adopted.

1 **Welcome and adoption of the agenda** (*decision*)

2 **Minutes of the Management Board meeting of 6 and 7 October 2022** *(adopted by written procedure on 29 November 2022)*

3 **Implementation of the Work Programme and budget 2023** *(information)*

4 **Extension of the term of office of the Executive Director** *(decision)*

5 **Climate neutrality strategy and roadmap** *(discussion)*

6 **Programming and financing**

(a) **Revised draft Single Programming Document 2024-26,** including opinion of the European Commission *(discussion/adoption)*

(b) **Budgetary challenges and future financing avenues** *(discussion)*

7 **Elections of the Chairperson and Deputy Chairpersons of the MB and composition of the (Extended) Executive Board** *(decision)*

8 **Annual Report – Proposals for the way forward** *(decision)*

9 **Sharing accountancy services with EIGE** *(discussion/decision)*

10 **Reporting from the Executive to the Management Board** *(information)*

11 **Administrative issues**

(a) Conferences, publications and web services *(information)*

(b) Reporting on Internal Control (ICC) activities – discharge 2021, audits, evaluations and other sources of assurance *(information)*

(c) HR-related issues including staff engagement survey follow-up *(information)*

(d) Annual report of the Chair of Cedefop's Appeals Committee for the year 2022 and chairmanship for the next mandate *(information)*

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

(f) Reporting officers for the annual appraisal of the Executive Director *(discussion/decision)*

(g) Transfers of commitment and payment appropriations in 2023 *(information)*

12 **Any other business**

(a) Dates of Executive Board and Management Board meetings in 2024 *(decision)*

(b) Pending declarations of interests *(information)*

(c) Cedefop's European VET teachers survey (EVTS): in support of VET teachers *(information)*

(d) Updated ReferNet Charter *(decision)*

2. Minutes of the Management Board meeting of 6 and 7 October 2022

The Chairperson reminded members that the minutes had been adopted by the Management Board on 29 November 2022, by written procedure.

The minutes were available in English, posted in the eGB community and on Cedefop's website.

Members took note of the information.

3. Implementation of the Work Programme and budget 2023 *(information)*

The Chairperson reminded members that, as agreed at the Extended Executive Board meeting in June 2020, the progress report which reviewed 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 table also included information on how additional activities had been decided.

Cedefop's overall core business achievements continued to be presented in the Annual Report brochure, adopted by the Management Board by written procedure.

She invited the Executive Director to present the item.

Mr Siebel said that in terms of commitments, the budget implementation by the end of 2023 was expected to reach 100%. This was in line with Cedefop's high-performance record in the past years. An amending budget was planned in 2023 for two reasons: (a) the increase of revenues due to EFTA countries' contributions; and (b) the increased needs for payment appropriations to cover obligations deriving from past years' contracts. Mr Siebel highlighted the postponement of the 5th 'Policy learning forum on upskilling pathways' to February 2024 (point 2.14). In the framework of the European Year of Skills (EYS), the event would take a broader focus, covering upskilling for all adults. As a result of this postponement, the publication *Thematic country review on upskilling pathways in Italy* (point 2.4) would also be moved to February 2024.

The Chairperson invited members to comment.

Comments from the Employees

Ms Roman said that the EYS was rather challenging for Cedefop's resources. Postponements were understandable but could also affect the Agency's work programme in 2024.

Comments from the Employers

Mr Donohoe congratulated Cedefop on the effectiveness of the implementation of a (reduced) budget. The increase of EFTA contributions was encouraging but the budget constraints remained. The changes in the work programme were very practical. For example, the cancellation of the pilot survey of principals, teachers and learners and in-company trainers in VET (point 2.1), which had poor statistical findings. The group noted the postponement of the publication on thematic articles of the Community of apprenticeship experts to Q4 but requested not to move it further. The new internal communication process was very welcome.

Comments from the Governments

Ms Lindén congratulated Cedefop on the budget implementation and the expected rate of commitment appropriations to almost 100% by the end of 2023. The group welcomed the increase of EFTA contributions and noted the need for increased payment appropriations. The changes in the work programme were very reasonable. However, the publication of the main developments related to the National Implementation Plans (NIPs) was very important (point 1.6). Although the postponement due to lack of human resources in the VPS team was understandable, the commitment for the thematic synthesis for the ACVT remained a priority and should be delivered. The group invited Cedefop to elaborate further on the internal communication process.

Comments from the Commission

Ms Geleng congratulated Cedefop on the work and the clear overview of changes. The Commission noted Cedefop's commitment to provide the thematic synthesis on NIPs for the ACVT meeting in December. She thanked Cedefop for its contributions to the EYS, in particular the 'Making skills count' event in June and the 'Skills, skills, skills' event jointly organised with the Parliament and the other agencies under the remit of DG EMPL. The Commission also noted with satisfaction the expected 100% implementation rate of the budget by the end of 2023.

The Chairperson invited Cedefop's management to reply.

Mr Siebel said that postponements often concerned the outcomes of work done in the previous year and would, therefore, not necessarily increase the workload in the next year. The table of changes was an update of the one presented at the EEB in July. He thanked members for supporting the cancellation of the pilot survey (point 2.1).

Mr Zahilas said that the human resources challenges in the VPS team (point 1.6) had been resolved. The thematic synthesis would be prepared in time for the ACVT meeting of December. The thematic policy briefs would be ready before the end of 2023 but the publication would come later.

Mr Roncaccia said that currently, and in the absence of a strategy, there was no systematic approach to internal communication. Engaging all actors in the Agency would allow improving collaboration and fostering a shared understanding of goals. There were different actions foreseen and one of them was the planned revamping of Cedefop's intranet, as the main internal communication medium.

Mr Ranieri said that results of the apprenticeships community were the work of independent experts. Some of them had been published, while some had not yet been delivered. Cedefop's work was to make a synthesis of all when ready.

Ms Descy said that the document did not reflect the latest revision of the budget forecast in terms of payment appropriations. The additional appropriations needed amounted to EUR 500 000. A written procedure would follow for the approval of the Management Board.

The Chairperson congratulated Cedefop management and staff on their work and concluded that members took note of the information.

4. Extension of the term of office of the Executive Director *(decision)*

In accordance with Article 5(1)(l) and Article 18(3)(4) Regulation (EU) 2019/128, Management Board members were invited to decide on the potential extension of the term of office of Cedefop's Executive Director.

In the absence of consensus of all members present at the meeting, in accordance with Article 14(3) of the Rules of Procedure of the MB and EB of Cedefop secret voting was conducted.

The Chairperson concluded that the Management Board decided to extend the term of office of the Executive Director for five (5) years and to reclassify him, both as of 1 September 2024. His new contract would be signed by the next Chairperson.

Note: As proposed by the Chairperson, the meeting continued with the discussion of item 7 – Elections of the Chairperson and Deputy Chairpersons and composition of the (E)EB, item 8 – Annual Report – Proposals for the way forward, and item 10 – Reporting from the EB to the MB.

7. Elections of the Chairperson and Deputy Chairpersons of the MB and composition of the (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:

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.

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(4) of Regulation (EU) 2019/128 provided that *'[t]he Executive Board shall be composed of the Chairperson of the Management Board, the three Deputy Chairpersons, the coordinators of the three groups referred to in Article 4(6) and one representative of the Commission. Each group referred to in Article 4(6) may designate up to two alternates to attend the meetings of the Executive Board in the event that a member appointed by the relevant group is absent. The Chairperson of the Management Board shall also be the Chairperson of the Executive Board'.*

Article 10(5) of Regulation (EU) 2019/128 provided 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 concluded that – subject to the agreement of the Management Board – 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 7 October 2022, the Management Board had confirmed the mandate of the Chairperson (Ms Nerguisian Governments' group) for a second year. The chairpersonship should rotate among the groups in the order applied until now (i.e. next chairpersonships: Employees, Employers).

The Chairperson invited the groups to present their nominations. Following the election of the Chairperson and Deputy Chairpersons, the Management Board would take note of the composition of the Executive Board, as laid down in Article 10(4) of Regulation (EU) 2019/128. Should the Management Board decide, in compliance with Article 4(3) of the RoP, to extend participation to the Executive Board with up to three additional members per group for meetings covering strategic issues, the coordinators were invited to nominate these additional members for the Extended Executive Board meetings.

On behalf of the Employees' group, Ms Roman proposed Mr Mario Patuzzi, representative of Germany, as the next Chairperson.

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

On behalf of the Governments' group Mr Staudecker proposed Ms Carina Lindén, representative of Sweden, as Deputy Chairperson.

On behalf of the Commission Ms Riondino said that Ms Geleng would remain Deputy Chairperson and she would remain the second representative of the Commission.

Members unanimously agreed to the nominations.

The Chairperson congratulated the new Chairperson and the Deputy Chairpersons.

The Chairperson invited the groups to present their nominations for the Executive and Extended Executive Boards.

On behalf of the Employees' group Ms Roman said that Mr Carlo Frising (LU) would be the spokesperson to the Executive Board, 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 Mr Bernhard Horak (AT).

On behalf of the Employers' group Mr Plummer said that he would continue as the group's coordinator. The composition of the Extended Executive Board would include Mr Gerhard Riemer (AT), Mr Pär Lundström (SE) and Ms Siham Saidi (FR).

On behalf of the Governments' group Ms Lindén said that Mr Staudecker (AT) would continue as coordinator. For the Extended Executive Board, the group nominated Mr Dimitrios Skiadas (EL), Ms Marta Stará (CZ) and Ms Rita Kask (EE). Mr Skiadas and Ms Stará were also nominated as alternate members in the Executive Board.

Members took note of the EB and EEB composition.

8. ANNUAL REPORT – PROPOSALS FOR THE WAY FORWARD *(DECISION)*

The Chairperson said that the MB had adopted the Annual Report 2022 on 5 May 2023. The report was published on Cedefop's website on 10 May 2023 (https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/9182_en.pdf).

At the Extended Executive Board (EEB) meeting of 3 and 4 July 2023, Cedefop presented three scenarios for the way forward, detailing the degree of involvement of the EB and MB in the Annual Report process. Members reached consensus on scenario 2, according to which the Executive Board would continue to be consulted, but there would no longer be a formal adoption of the Annual Report by the Management Board. Management Board members were invited to decide on the way forward.

She invited the Deputy Director to present the item.

Ms Brugia said that for the past 15 years Cedefop had been producing two complementary but separate reports: the Annual Report (AR), which focused on Cedefop's core business achievements, and the Consolidated Annual Activity Report (CAAR), which focused on budgetary and internal control issues. At the EEB of July, three scenarios had been proposed for the way forward: (1) keep the status quo, i.e. consultation of the Executive Board and adoption by the Management Board; (2) consultation of the EB but no longer adoption by the MB; (3) no consultation of the EB nor adoption by the MB. Under all scenarios, the MB would continue to adopt the CAAR, which was a formal requirement stemming from Cedefop's Founding and Financial Regulations. At the EEB of July all groups had agreed on scenario 2. This proposal was now being presented to the MB for decision.

The Chairperson invited members to comment.

All groups and the Commission confirmed their support for scenario 2.

The Chairperson concluded that Executive Board would continue to be consulted on Cedefop's Annual Report but the Management Board would no longer adopt it by written procedure.

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

The Chairperson said that the reporting concerned the main issues considered by the EB/EEB since the MB meeting of 6 and 7 October 2022 and until September 2023.

This was an updated version of the one sent to the members on 7 March 2023.

The Chairperson reminded members that this reporting was indicative. Members should refer to the final minutes of the EB meetings, which had been sent to all MB Members once adopted.

The Chairperson concluded that members took note of the information.

The Chairperson thanked members and closed the meeting at 19.00.

<u>Friday 6 October 2023</u>

The Chairperson welcomed the members and opened the meeting at 9.30.

5. CLIMATE NEUTRALITY STRATEGY AND ROADMAP *(DISCUSSION)*

The Chairperson reminded members that at the 2022 MB meeting, members had endorsed Cedefop's pledge to become climate neutral by 2030 and approved the inclusion of a climate neutrality study in the 2023 work programme. At the EEB of 3 and 4 July 2023, members had discussed the progress of the study (item 3 of the EEB agenda) and concluded that the climate neutrality strategy and the roadmap to 2030 would be included in the 2024-26 Single Programming Document (SPD).

The Chairperson invited Ms Descy to present the item.

Ms Descy said that Cedefop's strategy presented the measures proposed to reduce the Agency's carbon footprint. The first step to becoming carbon neutral by 2030 would be to reduce emissions to the lowest possible level, while ensuring business continuity. The second step would be to find ways to compensate for any unavoidable remaining emissions. The study carried out in 2023 assessed the level and sources of the Agency's emissions in 2019, and devised a roadmap to reduce them to the maximum possible extent while preserving core business objectives. Cedefop's strategy defined five blocks of actions:

(a) improving building management by increasing energy efficiency and turning to green sources of energy. This was one of the most important levers for action as it concerned a big part of the Agency's carbon footprint and required challenging investments;

(b) reducing business travelling by shifting from physical to online participation and promoting greener ways of travelling whenever possible;

(c) reducing travelling related to meetings and conferences by organising online and hybrid meetings or using more central locations for physical events;

(d) adopting new ways of working which would include the way staff commute to work, but also exploring more efficient and collaborative use of working spaces;

(e) acquisition and management of resources concerning goods and services.

The management had considered two pathways for reducing the Agency's emissions: the medium one, which would reduce emissions by 60%, and the high-ambition one, which would reduce emissions by 76% by 2030. The most realistic one appeared to be the medium ambition pathway, which, whenever feasible, could be complemented with extra measures from the high-ambition one. The roadmap to 2030 had been designed based on the study, as well as on internal discussions, 'green chats' with the staff, and a staff survey. The implementation of each measure would require a cost/benefit and feasibility analysis, including staff consultation if needed. It would then be included in the work programme and would be submitted to the MB for approval in the context of the SPD. Cedefop had assigned a climate neutrality project manager for the coordination of the actions. Although most of these actions would not have a direct cost, they would lead to significant savings for Cedefop. In the medium-ambition pathway, these savings were estimated to reach EUR 500 000 per year by 2030. This was an opportunity for Cedefop to reduce its carbon footprint, but also to find more efficient ways for using its resources. A lot of effort and staff engagement would be required but as proven during COVID, the Agency could adapt to crises and ensure the wellbeing of its staff, while meeting its objectives.

The Chairperson invited members to comment.

Ms Geleng said that the Commission fully supported Cedefop's strategy and roadmap towards climate neutrality. Staff engagement would be a key factor for the success of this approach.

Ms Lindén said that the Governments' group welcomed and endorsed Cedefop's strategy, which also reflected an important political statement. Safeguarding Cedefop's objectives and its role as knowledge broker was of paramount importance. It was equally important to ensure the right balance between physical and online meetings, as stakeholders should be given the opportunity to meet in person. The group requested information on how other agencies were working towards carbon neutrality. Ms Lindén asked if the purchase of electric vehicles referred to Cedefop's service car.

Ms Roman said that the climate neutrality strategy was closely linked to Cedefop's budget. However, the timeline might not be realistic. A detailed analysis of the required investments, listing urgent ones first, would be required for the MB to support Cedefop's strategy and decide accordingly. The Employees' group would like to see the study conducted in 2023. The group welcomed the assignment of a climate neutrality officer, as the green transition also required a change in attitude. Many of the actions proposed would impact the working conditions of staff, e.g. the reform of the canteen, or the way they commuted. Carpooling and use of trains did not appear feasible for

Thessaloniki. The Staff Committee should be involved in every step of the implementation and monitoring of measures. The opinion of the Chair of the Staff Committee would be very welcome.

Mr Patuzzi said that the MB should receive the study in order to discuss further the potential outcomes of the strategy. Considering the investments required, the target to become climate neutral could be moved beyond 2030, i.e. to 2035. The Employees' group requested more information on the potential use of solar energy. Commuting with public transportation in Greece was not as easy as in other parts of Europe. It therefore appeared that carpooling and trains might not be an option for Thessaloniki.

Mr Donohoe said that, compared to other agencies, Cedefop was indeed a front runner in climate neutrality. The study was available on the eGB community, but was not very detailed. However, the current presentation had addressed concerns on the feasibility, cost and benefit of the different measures.

Mr Lundström said that the Employers welcomed the strategy which was closely linked to the Single Programming Document. However, the use of real-time data, in particular related to the twin transition (AI and green skills) was missing. Under the current budget constraints, it appeared that Cedefop could not proceed with the required investments. The financial models of other EU agencies should also be explored. With the proper investments, the current consumption of the Agency could easily be reduced to 50% in the next 5 years.

Mr Angelini said that Cedefop's Staff Committee supported the carbon neutrality pledge. However, becoming carbon neutral required investments and did not come for free. Thessaloniki was not Brussels, where trains could be used instead of other means of transportation. Tailored actions and dedicated measures were required for Cedefop to reduce its carbon footprint. Staff were indeed on board and directly involved in the ongoing discussions, which would contribute to the regular monitoring of actions and measures. Efforts and measures towards carbon neutrality should not be detrimental to Cedefop's budget concerning its core business.

Ms Descy said that the proposed action plan was similar to the Commission's. The European Environmental Agency and EFSA had also developed plans for climate neutrality. The other agencies were currently considering theirs. Adopting a strategy would also make Cedefop a front runner locally, in Thessaloniki and a leader by example across agencies. Taking into consideration the budget constraints, Cedefop would conduct a feasibility study for each measure to be taken. The MB and staff would be involved, and measures would be implemented after careful assessment. The study was indeed available in the eGB community. The target of reducing emissions by 50% by 2030 was set by EU Governments. Should Cedefop be able to implement the medium ambition pathway measures, then its emissions would be reduced by 60% by that time. Before moving this target beyond 2030, it would be good to assess the results of the measures taken. Cedefop had installed two chargers for electric cars and planned to inform staff of the tax benefits. If there was a need to replace the Agency vehicle, an electric alternative would be considered. The use of trains was indeed not an option for reaching Thessaloniki. However, staff going on mission in central Europe could use the train instead of taking a flight to reach their next destination, whenever possible. Physical Cedefop events could be organised in central locations, where most participants could arrive by train. Carpooling could be promoted to staff, but bicycles were not a safe option for reaching Cedefop. The reform of the canteen had been extensively discussed with the Staff Committee. Solar panels had already been installed but the authorisation from the Greek Authorities was still pending. The building management system could be improved with the use of better sensors and real data. The latest energy efficiency study had been conducted in 2021 and would be repeated in 2024.

Mr Siebel said that the efforts to become carbon neutral should indeed not come at the expense of the operational budget.

The Chairperson concluded that the members endorsed the general orientation of the climate strategy.

6. PROGRAMMING AND FINANCING

(A) REVISED DRAFT SINGLE PROGRAMMING DOCUMENT 2024-26, INCLUDING OPINION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION *(DISCUSSION/ADOPTION)*

(B) BUDGETARY CHALLENGES AND FUTURE FINANCING AVENUES *(DISCUSSION)*

The Chairperson informed members that, as agreed at the EB meeting of 4 October, items 6a and 6b would be discussed together.

The Chairperson reminded members that the 2024-26 draft SPD had been endorsed by the MB by written procedure, which had been concluded on 25 January 2023 and, in compliance with Article 6(2) of Regulation (EU) 2019/128, had been sent to the European Commission, the Parliament and the Council on 27 January 2023. The Commission's formal opinion was received on 13 June 2023 and sent to MB members together with the MB documents. The 2024-26 draft SPD had been revised considering the developments which had occurred since January 2023 and the formal opinion of the European Commission. For ease of reference, members also received a version with tracked changes, showing the changes between this 2024-26 draft SPD and the version endorsed by the Management Board on 25 January 2023. Members were invited to adopt the (general orientation of) the 2024-26 SPD. However, the SPD would only become final after adoption of the Union budget setting the amount of the contribution and the establishment plan (expected in December 2023). Further, in November the Commission services would announce the 2023 salary indexation factor, which would affect the budget projections for Title 1. Therefore, Cedefop's budget could only be fine-tuned after that date, leading to potential adjustments within and between titles.

The Chairperson thanked Cedefop management and all staff for having worked around the clock to finalise the document.

She invited the Commission to present their formal opinion on the 2024-26 draft SPD.

Ms Geleng said that as every year, the Commission adopted its Opinion on Cedefop's SPD. The Opinion comprised two parts: the first focused on the policy-related content of the document, and the second on human and financial resources. Content-wise, the 2024-26 SPD was overall aligned with the EU policy framework, in particular the Council Recommendation on VET and the Skills Agenda. The Commission welcomed Cedefop's support to the European

Year of Skills, as well as the monitoring and analysing of VET policy developments, the work on the National Implementation Plans (NIPs) and the key input the Agency provided to the European Semester and the Education and Training Monitor. The Commission invited Cedefop to update the SPD to cover the new priorities set out in spring 2023, laid down in the Green Deal Industrial Plan for the Net-Zero Age, and the Commission Communications on the long-term competitiveness of the EU, and the Single Market at 30. The Agency was also invited to continue providing relevant labour market skills intelligence to support addressing the labour market and skills shortages, and the forthcoming initiatives on facilitating the recognition of skills and qualifications of third country nationals and the EU talent pool. The Commission encouraged Cedefop to continue providing intelligence on jobs and skills driving to the green transition and welcomed synergies on skills intelligence work with other Agencies. It also supported the efforts of the Agency for further efficiency gains. While acknowledging the constraints of a small Agency like Cedefop located in a relatively remote part of the EU, the Commission invited the Agency to develop a targeted strategy to improve its gender and geographical representation.

The Executive Director thanked the Commission for the timely submission of its Opinion. As agreed at the Executive Board, the disclaimer in the beginning of the document would not be included in the final document, as the intention behind it was to highlight the squeeze out of the operational budget (Title 3). Cedefop was a cruising-speed Agency with a yearly inflation adjustment of 2% of the budget, and no perspective for further increase, despite the fact that the demand for skills was of major importance in all policy domains. This 2% adjustment was not enough to cover the required work on skills, especially under the new developments and the European Year of Skills. In real terms due to inflation and the automatic increase of staff costs (Title 1), the budget of 2021 had been decreased by 1.6% and the budget of 2022 by 6.8%. As a result, between the period 2017-23, the share of Cedefop's budget allocated to operations had decreased from 36% in 2017 to 25% in 2023 (an 11 percentage point decrease over 5 years). This would not be sustainable in the future. Cedefop's target to become carbon neutral by 2030 and the need to refurbish the conference rooms for good-quality future online and hybrid meetings would also inflate the budget allocated to infrastructure (Title 2). This would result in further pressure on the operational budget (Title 3). Cedefop was working together with the Commission to find alternative resources for the required investments in the building (T2) and face future challenges.

Ms Descy said that the current Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) foresaw a yearly increase of Cedefop's budget by 2%. In nominal terms, the budget remained stable, but due to inflation in the past years the budget had decreased in real terms. Cedefop's budget was divided in three titles. Title 1 (T1) concerned staff expenditure. This title was automatically affected by the coefficient applicable according to the Staff Regulations. More specifically, salaries of EU staff were adjusted according to inflation and the cost of living in the countries where the institutions and agencies were located. As a result, salaries could increase or decrease in a given year. This adjustment would be applied retroactively, as the information on applicable coefficients would only become available in early November every year. But any increase or decrease would also affect the following years. The coefficient adjustments were beyond Cedefop's control. Title 2 (T2) concerned expenses related to infrastructure, which, as such, were not compressible. There was little room for manoeuvre in T1 and T2, which was used for investments (i.e. training or IT equipment). However, this would not exceed 5% of both titles. Any increase of T1 and T2 would subsequently lead to a compression of Title 3 (T3), which concerned Cedefop's core business. Any underspending in T1 and T2 would be transferred to T3 (core business) by the end of each year. However, in 2022 due to inflation and the automatic increase of salary costs, funds had to be transferred from T3 to T1. In the years to come Cedefop would try to keep T3 stable; however, if inflation increased, then T3 might have to be reduced further. Cedefop was one of the few agencies (four in total) that owned its building. However, the building was 25 years old and required not only maintenance but also investments concerning energy efficiency and the new working conditions. The estimated budget for these investments would be between EUR 1 to 1.6 million over the next few years. In the medium-ambition scenario of the climate neutrality study (item 5 of the agenda) the absolutely necessary investments until 2030 were estimated at EUR 1 million. In the high-ambition scenario of the study, these investments would be higher. Investments would be prioritised according to the budget that could potentially be allocated to T2, but it was important to note that these investments would eventually pay off, as in the case of the solar panels, which had already been installed. Under the current budget situation, investments in the building were not possible. Other means to address budget constraints were also being considered. Cedefop continued to rationalise and streamline surveys, set negative priorities and seek efficiency gains through streamlining of procedures and sharing services with other agencies. However, these efforts would not suffice to address the budget constraints. Cedefop would therefore need the support of the Management Board to explore future financing avenues. The proposed avenues were: (a) advocating for an increase of the EU subsidy in the next MFF; (b) seeking partnerships by joining forces with other agencies or institutions and exploring new financing and governance models, e.g. for EU-wide surveys or ReferNet. The Agency could also run projects on behalf of the Commission, like Skills Panorama in the past. However, the selection of projects should be made carefully in order to complement Cedefop's work programme and ensure a win-win situation. These solutions would not lead to an increased budget for Cedefop but to the reduction of the budget needed for a given project, or additional funds dedicated specifically to a new project.

The Chairperson invited members to comment on the tracked changes version of the 2024-26 SPD.

<u>Comments from the Governments</u>

Ms Lindén said that the group took note of the budget constraints and welcomed the priority setting, as well as the efforts for further efficiency gains through institutional cooperation. The Governments could not commit to an increase of the EU subsidy. The group supported the exploration of additional financing from the Commission for investments related to the building and the climate strategy. It also welcomed the proposals for new financing avenues and possible synergies with ad hoc projects. However, these projects should comply with Cedefop's work programme and should have added value for the Agency. Any investments concerning the climate strategy should not affect Cedefop's core business. As discussed in the past, the support to individual countries (page 6 of the SPD) should have EU added value. Ms Lindén asked why the integration in employability and lifelong learning was limited to NEETs and green jobs only (page 31, point 66). Under Communication and dissemination (page 35, point 77 and page 79, point 178), the document referred to the '*mapping of the Agency's stakeholders which will allow further targeting and tailoring of communication activities*'. The group welcomed the increased effectiveness but asked Cedefop to elaborate on the trade-off between targeted communication activities versus broader communication. Cedefop should clarify if the investment in Open Science (page 35, point 80) would also include a wider audience and not only the scientific community. The group also welcomed the idea of new, more sustainable ways of working for more efficient and collaborative use of the office space (page 37, point 84). Given the ownership of the building (table on page 39), the group wondered how other agencies in similar situations were working to meet the target of climate neutrality. It was important to stress that Cedefop's core business should be safeguarded despite the investments required in the building (page 43, point 98). Different networks were referenced, i.e. ReferNet, Community of apprenticeship experts and CareersNet (pages 63-67). In some of these networks, government experts were involved. Under the budget constraints, Cedefop could explore if there could be gains by further coordinating these networks and avoiding any possible overlaps. The group would like some further explanations on the successful implementation of training funds in view of the expected audit (page 69). Members would also need some explanation of the figures mentioned on pages 92-94, more specifically in rows 20, 30 and 32.

Comments from the Employers

Mr Donohoe said that the group had a broad support for the revised 2024-26 SPD. A lot of the concerns referred to balancing ambition. The Agency should hope for the best but plan for the worst. The Executive Director clearly explained the rationale of the disclaimer. It would be preferrable to use the word 'postpone' instead of 'cancel' throughout the document. The carbon neutrality was very important. However, the reality might be different in view of the next MFF. The group fully supported the proposed new financing avenues, in particular the increase of the EU subsidy as skills were a matter of great importance. Seeking partnerships would allow the best use of Cedefop's highly valued expertise in a broader sense. The group urged Cedefop to act like a business and explore all alternative financing avenues. There was an explicit concern that in this case, there was a risk that the Commission would reduce its subsidy. The group was in favour of sharing accounting services with EIGE (item 9 of the agenda) and the revenue, no matter how small, would be used for T3. The Commission should encourage entrepreneurial activity from the agencies. It appeared that a huge amount of management time was spent in meeting regulatory requirements. It would be good to reflect on how much of the management resources were allocated to this regulatory activity. The group welcomed the positive opinion of the Commission, which was reflected very well in the document. In the specific remarks on financial and human resources (paragraph 22, point 6) the Commission Opinion acknowledged *'...the constraints of a small agency in a relative remote part of the EU...'*. Although this was a well-intended comment concerning the challenges for maintaining the geographical balance of staff, the wording was not considered appropriate and should be revised. Under the current situation in which the borders of the EU were under threat, members should be sensitive to the

Union's cohesion. The group welcomed the proposal for a tripartite exchange seminar together with the European Environmental Agency and Eurofound (paragraph 173). Social Partners had a particular perspective on green skills, which should be incorporated in the SPD. The group requested further explanations on the stakeholder mapping exercise (paragraph 178). ReferNet was highly valued and should not be seen as a budgeting exercise. The current model should not be disrupted but improvements would be welcome.

Mr Plummer said that the group welcomed the skills intelligence work on real-time data with Eurostat, which was very important (paragraphs 29 and 71). The focus on skill shortages, including legal-migration-related aspects was crucial for skills matching and fully aligned with the upcoming Talent Package and the Year of Skills priorities. The work on recognition of qualifications had an ongoing relevance (paragraph 59), especially in view of the forthcoming Commission initiative of 15 November on the recognition of qualifications from third countries. Focus would not only be on qualifications but also on recognition of skills and experience as proxy for qualifications within the EU. In general, the group fully supported the revised SPD.

Mr Riemer asked if the 25% of the total budget could be maintained for T3. This should be the threshold, as otherwise Cedefop's core business could be seriously affected.

<u>Comments from the Employees</u>

Ms Roman requested the deadline for sending written comments on the SPD. Budget cuts had been discussed for the past 10 years. The group welcomed the strategy and solutions proposed by Cedefop. The group considered that the estimated EUR 1.6 million for investments in the building was a reasonable amount, also taking into consideration the total budget of the Commission and the cost of certain activities (i.e. the Skills Panorama). Cedefop was a public institution, and as such could not create profit. The group fully supported the request for an increase of the EU subsidy, particularly as Cedefop owned its building and was facing the challenges of the green transition. The group strongly supported the cooperation with other agencies, such as ELA on the labour and skills shortages. Cedefop could also explore other options, e.g. free or cheaper accommodation for the Brussels liaison office or pre-agreed hotel prices in Brussels for staff going on mission. Rationalising of the Agency resources use was very welcome. Content-wise, it was important to see if the work programme was realistic, as new priorities and tasks continued to emerge. The SPD should allow for certain flexibility. The group welcomed the tailored communication with stakeholders and the broader use of tripartite advisory groups, including the one on greening. As stakeholders, Management Board members should have an advisory role in the various networks. Ms Roman asked for further explanations on the change of the wording from *'social partners'* to *'socio-economic partners'* (page 31). The group also welcomed the focus on CVET and the forthcoming conference with social partners. The last European skills and jobs survey focused on digitalisation. However, reference on digitalisation and AI appeared to be missing in the SPD. The Commission Opinion invited Cedefop to contribute to the upcoming initiatives on the recognition of qualifications of third country nationals and the EU talent pool. However, under the current budget constraints it was difficult to see how the Agency could contribute to a policy initiative that had not yet been finalised. The group suggested listing policies in the SPD, keeping the link to the general EU policy, but avoid specific references when the exact contribution had not been defined. The work on excellence and inclusion was very welcome (page 58) but research should also focus on gender equality in VET, including IVET and CVET.

Mr Frising said that the topic of AI was indeed not prominent enough in the SPD, especially considering Cedefop's work done in 2020-22. This was an ongoing process as more companies were using AI processes, which would impact all kinds of employees. The SPD should include more information on how to deal with the challenges in terms of training. Digitalisation and AI would be a priority for the forthcoming Belgian Presidency. AI would be at the top of the Hungarian Presidency as well. Cedefop's work on AI should be clearly mentioned in the SPD.

Mr Patuzzi said that training related to the AI in IVET and CVET was very important and would increase in the coming years. Cedefop should continue to be a front runner in EU research. The group welcomed the symposium on CVET which could bring together the role of social partners, social dialogue but also collective agreements and the participation of interested groups in companies and public administrations, as well as the involvement of social partners in the development and designing of qualification measures. But there was very little research on the link between social partners and CVET policies in Member States. The group invited Cedefop's management to include this topic in its research, as it would be very useful for all groups and the Commission. Concerning the budget, it was time for action. In light of the developments in coming years, the EB and EEB should discuss how the constraints could be communicated to a wider audience. He asked the Commission if a joint resolution of this Management Board could reinforce the request for additional funds.

<u>Comments from the Commission</u>

Ms Geleng thanked Cedefop for taking the Commission's Opinion into account. Some additional comments were provided at the EB meeting of 4 October. Cedefop was in the middle of the 2021-27programming period. Thus, it was premature to discuss the post-2027 MFF. This discussion should take place after the change of the new Commission and the Parliament in 2024. The Commission was ready to explore the possibility of action-based financing for the work programme of 2025. However, this kind of financing should have added value for Cedefop and complement the already agreed work programme. The Commission strongly supported efficiency gains through sharing of administrative and support services, as well as seeking partnerships and joint projects that would be bilaterally beneficial. A new ReferNet model could be explored but it was up to Member States to decide. The Commission was exploring solutions for additional funding of the necessary infrastructure investments. Internal discussions were ongoing. However, the budget of the Agency had been agreed by the budgetary authority, i.e. the EU Parliament and Member States. The Commission could make proposals but could not take decisions related to the budget. The comment concerning the wording of the Opinion on the '*remote location*' of Cedefop was duly noted for the future. Nevertheless, location was an important factor and should be considered when looking into constraints. The reflection on the time that the management spent on content versus administrative issues was very welcome. It could also apply to Executive and Management Board meetings. The relevance of an Agency was also determined by its ability to respond to key policy developments, such as the impact of AI and climate neutrality on VET.

Mr Siebel thanked members for their support. It was important to safeguard Cedefop’s core business and make its research more visible. ReferNet was a good example of how much time and administrative resources were required for a relatively small amount of grants. Provided that a solution would be found for the necessary building refurbishments, the 25% of the total budget dedicated to core business could be safeguarded. These investments would also lead to future savings. Cedefop had proved very responsive, adaptive and agile to the various crises and would continue being so in the future. The Agency had to work with a variety of relevant stakeholders. Advisory groups were suitable for some projects, while in some others cooperation with scientific communities was required. He thanked the Commission for trying to find a solution for the building investments. Further synergies for possible efficiency gains would be explored.

Mr Ranieri said that Cedefop had different types of networking activities. Part of Cedefop’s activities directly involved the tripartite approach of advisory groups, e.g. the Individual Learning Accounts (ILA) training funds and the policy learning fora on upskilling pathways. However, some networks required specific expertise, i.e. the apprenticeships network. Some of the research products were the outcome of the work of independent experts on a voluntary basis, who worked for free. This was not the same as engaging stakeholders in a tripartite approach. The European Jobs and Skills survey would be complemented with a specific module focusing on AI. Cedefop was teaming up with Eurostat and the ELA on skills intelligence. In addition, Cedefop co-produced the latest review of the Employment and Social Developments publication of the Commission, concerning labour shortages and imbalances in the labour market. The engagement of employers in adult learning would be very welcome for the symposium, taking into account the specific angle of the role of social dialogue and collective agreements.

Mr Zahilas said that Cedefop did not have a dedicated project for the recognition of third country qualifications but provided support to the EQF advisory group and its subgroups.

Ms Brugia said that control activities, audits and evaluations were requirements of Cedefop’s Financial Regulation. The Agency could not intervene or change these requirements. Cedefop was audited every year by the European Court of Auditors (ECA) and the Internal Audit Service of the Commission (IAS). While these audits were cumbersome, they also led to important outcomes on how to improve Cedefop’s functioning further. Cedefop strived for efficiency gains in relation to internal evaluations and control activities by externalising them or using framework contracts led by other agencies or the Commission. A good example was the ongoing joint effort with other agencies for the purchase of a common tool to monitor auditing recommendations, as a detailed action plan was prepared and followed after each audit. It should be noted that Cedefop, albeit a small agency, was subject to the same depth and frequency of auditing as the Commission in its entirety. Comparatively, the administrative burden was much higher for the Agency but the efforts for efficiency gains had been successful so far. The total direct and indirect cost for evaluation and control activities in 2022 amounted to 6% of Cedefop’s total budget. This was the lowest compared to the other agencies under the remit of DG EMPL. Ms Brugia said that additional written comments should be consolidated by the coordinators of each group and should be sent to Cedefop in tracked changes, by 18 October 2023 at the latest. Comments already received at the present meeting would be inserted in the document by Cedefop.

Mr Roncaccia said that members would be asked to help shape the analysis concerning the mapping of stakeholders. Individual interviews with the contractor might be required. He said that Open Science had two aspects: the first was the need to be in the right network and to get Cedefop's content shared and disseminated in the scientific communities; the second was about making data available, so that even private citizens interested in the field of vocational education and training could shape and manipulate data for their needs. The latter was an area not yet investigated. However, the comment from the Governments was very welcome and Cedefop would work to broaden the scope of Open Science to include EU citizens as well.

The Chairperson concluded that the Management Board adopted the general orientations of the 2024-26 SPD. However, the SPD would become final after adoption of the Union budget setting the amount of the contribution and the establishment plan, expected December 2023. Moreover, after the 2023 salary indexation was announced by the Commission services (expected in November), possible adjustments within and between titles might be required. If such adjustments lead to changes, in particular concerning the 2024 work programme, the Executive Board would be consulted during its December meeting, and the approval of the Management Board would be sought by written procedure.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(a) Dates of Executive Board and Management Board meetings in 2024 *(decision)*

The Chairperson said that, as concluded at the MB in 2021, the MB meetings would take place in Thessaloniki as physical meetings only, while the first and last EB meetings of each year would take place virtually. She also reminded Members that they should coordinate with their alternates to ensure the two-thirds majority required for strategic decisions such as the Programming Document.

The following dates and format of meetings for 2024 were confirmed.

Dates	**Meeting location**
Executive Board meetings in 2024 4 March 2024 27-28 June 2024* 2 December 2024	 Virtual Thessaloniki Virtual
Management Board meeting 2024 Thursday and Friday 3 and 4 October with an Executive Board meeting on the eve, Wednesday 2 October 2024	Thessaloniki

* Note: The final date for the EB meeting of 27 and 28 June 2024 was agreed after the Management Board meeting. A possible extension of this meeting would be decided in due time.

15-minute break

Note: As proposed by the Chairperson, the meeting continued with the discussion of item 11e – General implementing provisions and item 11f – Reporting officers for the annual appraisal of the Executive Director.

11. Administrative issues

(e) General implementing provisions *(decision)*

The Chairperson invited Ms Descy to present the item.

Ms Descy said that the current general implementing provisions (rules) on working time and hybrid working of Cedefop staff had been adopted by the MB by analogy under Article 110 of the Staff Regulations. Acknowledging the particularities of the agencies, the Commission had provided a model decision and given *ex-ante* agreement to the agencies for its adoption. Cedefop had adapted this model decision to the least possible extent to reflect the Agency's specific nomenclature, as well as the timing of the main working hours, the disconnection period and the times within which staff should be available. Cedefop's Health and wellbeing Committee would monitor the implementation of these rules (DGE). The Staff Committee had been consulted and, to the extent possible, its comments had been accommodated by the management. Members were invited to adopt the new implementing provisions on the working time and hybrid working of Cedefop staff (CEDEFOP/DGE/47/2023).

The Chairperson invited members to comment.

Mr Patuzzi said that the Employees' group would like to hear the opinion of the Staff Committee.

Mr Angelini said that the Staff Committee welcomed the decision of the management to accommodate all comments to the extent possible. However, the model decision of the Commission was not suitable for decentralised agencies. In particular, Article 11 of the DGE limited teleworking outside the place of employment to only 10 days per year. The Staff Committee strongly supported the need to derogate from this Article. This derogation would improve the work-life balance, especially for staff with families away from the place of employment. It would also make Cedefop more attractive in terms of recruitment.

No further comments were received.

The Chairperson concluded that the Management Board adopted the general implementing provisions on working time and hybrid working in Cedefop.

(f) Reporting officers for the annual appraisal of the Executive Director *(discussion/decision)*

The Chairperson invited the Deputy Director to present the item.

Ms Brugia said that the current implementing provisions (rules) governing the appraisal of Cedefop's Executive Director were adopted in 2013. Based on these rules, by its decision of 20 August 2018, the MB had appointed two reporting officers, Ms Manuela Geleng from the Commission and Mr Mario

Patuzzi from the Employees' group. DG HR recommended revising these rules as they did not reflect Regulation (EU) 2019/128 nor the 2014 reform of the Staff Regulations and CEOS. Cedefop's Staff Committee had been consulted. Cedefop should now request the formal approval of the Commission and then submit the new rules to the MB members for adoption. While rotation of the members of the reporting panel was not foreseen in the current rules, the established practice had been to rotate the reporting role among the three groups (Governments, Employers, Employees), bearing in mind that one reporting officer should be from the Commission. According to this established practice, the second reporting officer should be from the Governments' group. Management Board members were invited to take note of the revised implementing provisions, mandate the Executive Director to request the Commission's formal approval and nominate the two reporting officers. After the Commission's formal approval, the Management Board would be asked to adopt the new implementing provisions by written procedure, and at the same time adopt/confirm the decision appointing the new reporting officers, who from now on would be called 'reporting panel'.

On behalf of the Governments' group Ms Lindén nominated Mr Eduard Staudecker. The group also suggested limiting the time of the mandate of the future reporting panel.

Mr Donohoe said that the Employers' group agreed.

Mr Patuzzi said that the Employees' group also agreed.

Ms Riondino said that the Commission nominated Ms Geleng for the reporting panel and supported the proposal to limit the mandate of the panel, by changing the reporting officers after three reports (including a probation period report).

The Chairperson concluded that Management Board members mandated the Executive Director to request the Commission's formal agreement under Article 110(2) of the Staff Regulations for the adoption of the revised rules for the annual appraisal of the Executive Director. Members nominated the following reporting panel:

Mr Eduard Staudecker from the Governments' group

and

Ms Manuela Geleng from the Commission

Following the Commission's formal approval, the Management Board would be asked to adopt the revised rules for the annual appraisal of the Executive Director, and at the same time adopt the respective decision appointing the reporting panel by one single written procedure. The mandate of the reporting panel would be limited to three reports, including a possible probation period report.

9. Sharing of accounting services with EIGE *(discussion/decision)*

The Chairperson invited Mr Stephen Temkow, Cedefop's accounting officer, to present the item.

Mr Temkow said that Management Board members were invited to approve the appointment of Cedefop's accounting officer also for EIGE. The intention was to sign a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with EIGE, whereby Cedefop would provide accountancy services to EIGE in exchange for an annual fee.

This agreement would replace the agreement EIGE currently had with the Commission. The overarching concept was Cedefop's constant effort to increase its efficiency and use of resources and – in this case to – also generate an income. The sharing of accounting services between agencies was not new. The same practice was followed by the ERA and ESMA as well as the ETF and EU-OSHA. Discussions between the Executive Directors of Cedefop and EIGE had started at the end of 2022. The proposal had been discussed with the EEB in July 2023. In addition to the small income to be created, it would enhance Cedefop's reputation and encourage cooperation with other agencies. It would also improve the capabilities of Cedefop's accounting officer and his team, pave the way for further administrative service sharing, and generate savings for the EU taxpayer. In terms of feasibility, EIGE used the same financial tools as Cedefop. The accounting officer and his team had extensive experience and were familiar with the tasks, and Cedefop had controls and workflows in place. The tasks required on a yearly basis (December to March) would focus on monitoring and helping to resolve queries arising from day-to-day activities. Risks included incomplete information from EIGE, changes of local systems and controls without foreknowledge of the accounting officer, or low-quality outputs jeopardising Cedefop's reputation. However, these risks could be mitigated by additional (*ex-post*) controls, frequent communication between the two agencies, planning work well in advance, and relying on the competent and experienced teams of both agencies. Business continuity should be ensured, thus, should Management Board members agree to the proposal, they would also be invited to appoint a deputy accountant, Ms Angeliki Gkritzali. The annual fee was estimated at EUR 60 000 per year. If inflation exceeded 5%, there was the possibility of re-negotiation. The MB would also be invited to take a formal decision to enable Cedefop's accounting officer also to be appointed as accounting officer of EIGE. Members would also need to appoint Ms Angeliki Gkritzali as deputy accounting officer for Cedefop and enable her to be appointed as EIGE deputy accounting officer as well. However, the appointments of Mr Temkow and Ms Gkritzali would be subject to the decision of EIGE's Management Board.

Ms Dorn said that the Employers' group supported the proposal. The group requested information on the time Cedefop's team would have to spend on these tasks. They would also like to know if frequent travelling would be involved.

Mr Temkow said that cooperation would be organised via online meetings. Travelling might need to take place for one week per year maximum.

Ms Lindén said that the Governments' group supported the proposal and considered it a very good approach for further efficiency gains. The risk analysis was duly noted and well addressed.

Mr Donohoe said that the Employers' group fully supported this good example of entrepreneurial approach. The risks had been well addressed.

Ms Roman said that the Employees supported the proposal and hoped that the workload of Cedefop's team would be manageable.

Ms Geleng said that the Commission also supported the proposal.

The Chairperson concluded that the Management Board approved the project of sharing accounting services with EIGE and appointed Mr Stephen Temkow as accounting officer for EIGE as well, subject to a decision by EIGE's

Management Board. The Management Board also appointed Ms Angeliki Gkritzali as Cedefop deputy accounting officer. Ms Gkritzali should perform all accountancy duties required in the absence of the accounting officer. When executing these tasks, she should functionally report to the Management Board. Ms Angeliki Gkritzali was also appointed as deputy accounting officer for EIGE, subject to a decision by EIGE's Management Board.

11. ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

(a) Conferences, publications and web services *(information)*

No presentation.

Management Board members took note of the information.

(b) Reporting on Internal Control (ICC) activities – Discharge 2021, audits, evaluations and other sources of assurance *(information)*

No presentation.

Management Board members took note of the information.

(c) HR-related issues including staff engagement survey follow-up *(information)*

No presentation.

Management Board members took note of the information.

(d) Annual report of the Chair of Cedefop's Appeals Committee for the year 2022 and chairmanship for the next mandate *(information)*

No presentation.

Management Board members took note of the information.

(g) Transfers of commitment and payment appropriations in 2023 *(information)*

No presentation.

Management Board members took note of the information.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(b) Pending declarations of interests *(information)*

No presentation. None missing.

(d) Updated ReferNet Charter *(decision)*

The Chairperson invited Mr Zahilas to present the item.

Mr Zahilas said that the ReferNet Charter was a public document defining the scope and objectives of ReferNet, as well as the role and responsibilities of the network members. The current charter had been adopted by the Management Board in 2011. An update was necessary to reflect the new policy priorities and Cedefop's recast Founding Regulation. The draft charter was updated following discussions with the ReferNet national representatives.

Changes were minor, e.g. ‘regional meetings’ were renamed to ‘partnership fora’ and ‘grant beneficiaries’ to ‘partners’.

Ms Lindén said that the Governments’ group suggested introducing further feedback loops from national stakeholders to improve the quality for the future.

Ms Riondino said that the Commission relied on Cedefop’s contributions for the Education and Training Monitor, as well as the Semester, and Cedefop relied on the expertise of ReferNet partners. The Commission supported the minor updates and the increased focus on quality assurance.

Ms Roman said that the Employees’ group supported the Governments’ proposal to include national stakeholders.

Mr Donohoe said that the Employers’ group supported the updated ReferNet Charter.

Mr Zahilas said that the role of the national representative was to filter and ensure the quality of the information provided at national level. This was further specified in the Framework Partners Agreements. The call for the Framework of 2024-27 also specified that proposals should include social partners and the required quality assurance.

The Chairperson concluded that the Management Board approved the updated Referent Charter.

(c) Cedefop’s European VET teachers survey (EVTS): in support of VET teachers *(information)*

The Chairperson invited Mr Konstantinos Pouliakas, expert in DVS to present the item.

Mr Pouliakas said that in the face of multiple socioeconomic crises (e.g. COVID-19 pandemic, Ukraine war of aggression, energy and cost of living price crisis, climate change shocks), VET teachers in the EU needed to exhibit strong resilience and should continuously develop a wide range of skills (e.g. digital, social inclusion, green skills). Enhancing understanding of the opportunities, experiences, challenges and contextual factors affecting the continuous professional development (CPD) of teachers in initial VET schools in the EU was therefore a key aim of the EVTS. In addition to measuring VET teachers’ CPD needs, a main objective of the EVTS would be to gain insights into the underlying drivers, motives and incentives that may influence participation in non-formal and informal learning activities. The EVTS would also seek to collect information on the extent to which ongoing CPD activities improved VET teachers’ skill development and overall job performance. To carry out the survey, Cedefop had recently launched a public call for tenders for the delivery of a representative survey of teachers in initial VET schools (ISCED level 3) in all EU-27 Member States. In view of the significant difficulty in obtaining random samples of VET teachers (either directly or via VET schools), Cedefop had undertaken several steps to facilitate the process, including the provision of a specific survey campaign, the use of monetary and non-monetary incentives, as well as setting up an extensive coordination network comprising national VET experts, national fieldwork agencies and a reputable international survey company accountable to Cedefop. The survey would abide by the highest ethical and data privacy standards. While all financial costs and related resources were provided by Cedefop, Management Board members and relevant national ministries had a crucial role in the survey's success. For instance, they could act as EVTS catalysts by allowing the survey to be carried out in VET schools, legitimising it, and contributing to stakeholder awareness. Management Board members were therefore invited to express an interest to be part of the EVTS by 1 November 2023, in order to facilitate Cedefop's planning and initial survey development steps. The EVTS timetable foresaw that all survey preparation and pre-testing procedures would be carried out in 2024/early 2025, so as to launch the fieldwork at the beginning of the 2025/26 academic year. First results of the EVTS would be expected by the end of 2026, with full EU comparative analysis and country-specific reports available by mid-2027.

Mr Donohoe said that the Employers' group supported the principle of the survey. An important contextual factor was the curriculum. Education and skills policy were inextricably linked. The TALIS survey of OECD appeared to be quite similar and the group was concerned about possible duplications.

Ms Roman said that according to the Commission's mid-term review and progress report, the two biggest challenges for VET in Europe were equal access to education and teachers' shortages. Teachers' trade unions were currently campaigning to increase the attractiveness of their profession by improving the status and working conditions for teachers. The Employees' group welcomed the setup of the tripartite working group and fully supported Cedefop's survey. The pilot survey had produced very interesting outcomes on CVET, including the obstacles teachers faced. The group urged the Management Board members to engage in the EVTS, which – in contrast to TALIS – was free. Independent comparative surveys at EU level were very important and fully in line with the VET Recommendation and Osnabrück Declaration. Ministries of the Members States could provide valuable input.

Ms Lindén said that the Governments' group welcomed the survey. She asked what the optimal number of participating countries would be to reflect the different systems in the EU and be cost-efficient. She also enquired whether it would be more cost-efficient to obtain qualitative evidence from Cedefop's ReferNet or other similar networks.

Ms Riondino invited Cedefop to take into account the OECD 'Education at a glance' from 2023, which would have a strong focus on VET, including teachers.

Mr Pouliakas thanked members for their comments. In designing the survey, TALIS was used as the main inspiration. However, TALIS was a general teachers' survey. When focusing on VET teachers, the challenges and issues to be examined could deviate substantially. The EVTS would be designed to focus exclusively on understanding what could stimulate the participation of VET teachers in CPD activities. Cedefop was in constant communication with OECD colleagues to avoid duplications and offer a unique insight. The extent to which teacher curricula were updated or altered and their speed of change could be considered in the development of the modules for the survey. In relation to whether qualitative evidence could be more cost-efficient, Mr Pouliakas noted that in recent years Cedefop had carried out in-depth qualitative studies on CPD practices across Europe, with a comprehensive coverage of countries, which was available on the Agency's website. The thematic collection was done through ReferNet and was used as inspiration for the design of the EVTS as well. One of the main lessons was that the CPD landscape across European countries was very diverse. It had many forms and could be achieved by different activities; in some countries it was mandatory while in others it was not. ReferNet would continue providing qualitative information but the EVTS aimed to dig deeper into these activities using a random sample of teachers, which could only be achieved via a well-designed representative survey. The resulting statistics would thus represent an unbiased view of the CPD landscape of VET teachers in Europe.

The Chairperson concluded that members supported Cedefop's EU VET teachers survey.

Ms Nerguisian thanked members for the cooperation in the past 2 years and congratulated the new Chairperson, Mr Patuzzi.

She also thanked Cedefop's management and staff for the excellent cooperation and the smooth organisation of the meetings.

The Chairperson closed the meeting at 13.00.

Signed on 28 November 2023

Mario Patuzzi	Jürgen Siebel
Chairperson of the Management Board	Executive Director