



MINUTES OF THE 102ND MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING

3 AND 4 OCTOBER 2024

THESSALONIKI

Thursday 3 October 2024

1. WELCOME AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Welcome

The Chairperson opened the meeting at 15.00 and welcomed the participants to the 102nd meeting of Cedefop's Management Board (MB).

He informed members that discussions would be recorded for the purpose of 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 approved the text.

He addressed a special welcome to the new MB members and alternates, the expert appointed by the European Parliament, Mr Dimovski, and Mr Nava, the Director-General of DG EMPL who replaced Mr Korte.

Note: The names of members excused, new members and alternate members were displayed on screen.

The Chairperson invited the Executive Director to present Cedefop staff attending the meeting.

Mr Siebel introduced Cedefop management and staff present in the meeting: Ms Mara Brugia – Deputy Director; Mr Maurizio Roncaccia – Head of Department for communication (DCM); Mr Loukas Zahilas – Head of Department for VET and qualifications (DVQ); Mr Antonio Ranieri – Head of Department for VET and skills (DVS); Ms Pascaline Descy – Head of Department for resources and support (DRS); Mr Pier Paolo Angelini – Chair of Cedefop's Staff Committee; Mr Adriano Graziosi – Senior assistant in the Executive Director's office; and Ms Christina Koufa – rapporteur.

The Chairperson said that 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, 55 were present (including 7 alternates) and 13 had given a proxy. Thus, the quorum was met. The total number of votes in the current meeting was 68.

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 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.

Draft agenda of the MB

The Chairperson congratulated the Executive Director, the Deputy Director, the Heads of Department and Cedefop's staff on finalising all MB documents in time and to a high-quality standard. This was a lot of work which should be praised. On behalf of the MB, he thanked Cedefop for the excellent preparation.

He asked members if there were any comments or proposals to the draft agenda.

No comments were received.

The Chairperson concluded that the agenda was adopted.

He informed members that on Friday 4 October at 9.30, before the plenary, MB members would meet in camera.

- 1 **Welcome and adoption of the agenda** (*decision*)
- 2 **Minutes of the Management Board meeting of 5 and 6 October 2023**
(*adopted by written procedure on 15 November 2023*)
- 3 **Implementation of the 2024 Work Programme and budget** (*information*)
- 4 **Strategy, portfolio review, and financing** (*discussion/decision*)
- 5 **Revised draft Programming Document 2025-27**, including opinion of the European Commission (*discussion/adoption*)
- 6 **Elections of the Chairperson and Deputy Chairpersons of the MB and composition of the (Extended) Executive Board** (*decision*)
- 7 **Final report of the external evaluation of the Agencies falling under the remit of DG EMPL – Cedefop's draft action plan (pending the Commission's Staff Working Document)** (*discussion*)
- 8 **Reporting from the Executive to the Management Board** (*information*)
- 9 **Administrative issues**
 - (a) Highlights of communication (*information*)
 - (b) Reporting on Internal Control (ICC) activities (*information*)
 - (c) HR-related issues (*information*)
 - (d) General implementing provisions (*if any – decision*)
 - (e) Transfers of commitment and payment appropriations in 2024 (*information*)
 - (f) Annual report of the Chair of Cedefop's Appeals Committee for the year 2023 and follow-up (*information/discussion*)

10 Any other business

- (a) Dates of Executive Board and Management Board meetings in 2025 (*decision*)
- (b) Outcomes of the briefing meeting of 14 May 2024 with (new) MB members and alternates (*information*)
- (c) Compatibility of the functions of Management Board members/alternate members and ReferNet coordinators/representatives (*information*)

2. MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING OF 5 AND 6 OCTOBER 2023

The Chairperson reminded members that the minutes had been adopted by the Management Board on 15 November 2023, by written procedure.

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

Members took note of the information.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2024 WORK PROGRAMME AND BUDGET (INFORMATION)

The Chairperson invited the Executive Director to present the item.

Mr Siebel said that at the end of August 2024 the budget commitment rate was 82%. As was the case in previous years, the commitment appropriations rate was expected to reach 100% by the end of 2024. The yearly salary adjustments, which would have a retrospective effect from 1 January, were expected towards the end of October. The payment appropriations forecast indicated a need for additional funding. An amendment of the budget would be sent for adoption to the MB members in October.

Ms Descy said that in the core business activities, commitments made in a given year could be disbursed up to 3 years later. As a result, there might be a discrepancy in the budget between commitment and payment appropriations. This was the case in the current year, with a number of multiannual studies coming to an end, for which the final instalment would have to be paid. Thus, the payment appropriations received in the beginning of 2024 would not suffice for Cedefop to meet its payment obligations, due in November and December. The Commission had been informed that an additional EUR 1 million would be needed. The MB would have to approve this amendment by written procedure, which would be launched in October.

In addition, a second amendment of the budget might be required due to additional payments needed to be made before the end of the year. Cedefop was carefully following payment forecasts and would reassess needs in early November. The Commission had foreseen the need to reinforce Cedefop's budget and a decision for an additional amount of payment appropriations for EUR 1 million in 2024 was expected in October. A second written procedure for this budget amendment should be launched in November, if ultimately needed. Moreover, in light of the planned end-2024 salary adjustments, the Commission had also anticipated an increase of Cedefop's 2024 budget by EUR 250 000 and of the draft 2025 budget by approximately EUR 300 000. This information was not yet included in the draft 2025-27 SPD, as it came recently. As this would be a structural change, the budgets of 2026 and 2027 would also be increased accordingly. These additional amounts would help

Cedefop cope with salary increases following inflation, without further squeeze of its core business.

Mr Siebel reminded members that the report which reviewed the work progress from January to June of each year had been replaced by cumulative tables providing an overview of substantial changes only. These were: (a) cumulated changes to the global budgetary envelope in the work programme exceeding 20%; (b) changes affecting the nature of activities already agreed in the work programme, regardless of the amount; (c) activities that were cancelled or postponed. He listed the following changes in the 2024 work programme:

2.4: Publication on *Teachers' and trainers' professional development*; the publication had been cancelled due to team turnover;

2.11: Event on *Policy learning and ILAs*; the event had changed format and was merged with the event on *Training funds*, planned in 2025, due to budgetary constraints;

3.7: Event on *Learning for an AI workplace? First insights from Cedefop's first AI skills survey*; this was a new event which took place on 24 June 2024, in collaboration with the Belgian Presidency;

4.8: *Social media: shaping a strategy to define, structure and disseminate Cedefop's content on social media*; this was a new activity, aiming to reassess Cedefop's strategy on social media communication.

The Chairperson invited members to comment.

Comments from Employees

Ms Roman thanked the Commission for providing the additional budget to cover the salary adjustments. She requested further information on why the increase of the budget would not cover the full staff expenditure, but only a part of it. The group noted the merging of the *Policy learning event on ILAs* with the *Training funds* (2.11) and asked when the conference would take place. As part of the tripartite advisory group on ILAs, Ms Roman was looking forward to its findings. The conference on *Learning for an AI workplace* (3.7) had been very successful. She requested more information on the topic of the seminar to be organised with the Hungarian Presidency. The group welcomed the tripartite *Policy learning forum (PLF) on apprenticeships*, which was organised back-to-back with the MB meeting. The focus on social dialogue in VET and adult learning was very important and should continue.

Comments from Employers

Mr Donohoe requested further information on the first amendment of the budget, EUR 1 million, which seemed a big amount for an Agency with a total budget of EUR 20 million. He asked if there was a way to anticipate it and if this shortfall would create operational implications. The PLF organised on 2 October, back-to-back with the MB had indeed been very welcome. The group noted the changes in the work programme. The cancellation of the teachers and trainers' publication (2.4), especially in view of the new EU survey on VET teachers, and the combination of ILA and training funds conferences (2.11) were well-justified changes. The group welcomed the new activity on social media strategy (4.8) and the organisation of the event on *Learning for an AI workplace* (3.7) with the Belgian Presidency, which clearly showed Cedefop's capacity.

Ms Dorn requested information on the percentages of the salary increase in the course of 2024.

Comments from Governments

Ms Lindén congratulated the Agency on the budget execution. The group took note of the need for additional payment appropriations due to the lifecycle of core business projects. It would indeed be interesting to know if the shortfall of EUR 1 million would have any consequences on the operations. The group welcomed the Commission's initiative for the increase of the budget to cover the staff expenditure. She asked how Cedefop planned to cover the rest of the staff costs. The cancellation of the teachers and trainers' publication (2.4), due to the new EU survey seemed very reasonable. However, the turnover in the team did not appear relevant. The group welcomed the combination of the event on ILAs with that on training funds (2.11) and even proposed to expand it further to include other training schemes in the Member States (MS). The social media strategy (4.8) was very welcome but any reference on social media should have a clear link to Cedefop's home page, as the main channel for information.

Comments from the Commission

Ms Geleng thanked Cedefop's staff for its hard work and the clear presentation of substantial changes. The Commission welcomed the implementation of the work programme so far, as well as the foreseen 100% budget implementation rate. This confirmed the quality of the budgetary management of the Agency in the past years. The Commission noted with concern the merging of the conference on ILAs with that on training funds (2.11). In principle, this might be a good idea. However, the ILA was a flagship initiative of the EU Skills Agenda, and the implementation of the ILA Council Recommendation remained a priority, with ILA being piloted in several Member States. The EMPL Committee would soon review the progress made. The Draghi report highlighted the importance of ensuring a workforce which was responsive, competitive and skilled, and ILAs would contribute to this. Training funds were valuable, including as a means to fund ILAs, as Member States alone could not afford to fund reskilling and upskilling. The co-funding ensured the labour market relevance of the training. If the merging of the two events was necessary, then this event should be structured around ILAs, clearly indicating that training funds were one way to support them.

Cedefop responses

Mr Siebel thanked members for the comments. He noted the positive feedback on the PLF organised back-to-back with the MB and assured members that this practice would continue.

Ms Descy said that, in theory, the payment appropriations could be anticipated knowing the cycle of studies. However, in practice, the budget requested and received in the beginning of a given year, had to have the same amounts for commitment and payment appropriations, as if payments would take place in the same year. In reality this was not the case, as Title 3 included differentiated appropriations, and the disjunction between commitment and payment appropriations was bigger than in other Titles. The amount of EUR 1 million might appear high but it was linked to the cycle of many projects that were coming to an end in 2024.

As long as DG EMPL was informed in advance and could provide the funds, there would be no implications for Cedefop operations. This was part of the normal budgetary management process that Cedefop should abide by. The salary adjustment was composed of two factors: (a) the inflation based on the cost of living; (b) the weighting factor, which ensured that EU officials had the same purchase parity, regardless of their place of employment. The final inflation rate and weighting factor for Greece would only be known after 30 October 2024, when Eurostat would publish its report. Cedefop's budget increased every year by 2%. Over the past several years the inflation was much higher. As a result, Title 1 (staff expenditure) systematically increased due to inflation. This had a knock-on effect on Title 3. The EB and MB were alerted in every meeting. The Commission had now acknowledged the situation for a number of agencies. Residual funds in the MFF would be used to help agencies cope. Following the decision of the Commission to increase the budget in 2025 by approximately EUR 300 000, the estimated residual impact should be approximately EUR 50 000.

Mr Ranieri said that although ILAs and training funds were connected, they were two different issues. It would have been preferable to have two different events. However, due to Cedefop's commitment to reducing carbon emissions related to missions and meetings, the policy learning event on ILAs (2.11) had to be postponed. In addition, to avoid a domino effect on other meetings in 2025, the format was changed, and the event was merged with the one on training funds. The decision to cancel the publication on *Teachers' and trainers' professional development* (2.4) was based on the turnover of the team, which had gradually diminished to one person before the arrival of new colleagues in the course of the year. At the same time, in view of the new and demanding survey on VET teachers and the development of a new innovative big project on the digital skills in VET curricula using machine learning and AI, Mr Ranieri had decided to cancel this publication to ease the staff workload.

Mr Zahilas said that the event with the Hungarian Presidency would take place on 14 November 2024 in Brussels. The theme would be 'VET and higher education partnerships,' with the subtitle 'Towards excellence and inclusive growth'. Members would receive more information in due time.

The Chairperson congratulated Cedefop management and staff on their work. Management Board members would be asked to adopt the amendments to the 2024 budget by written procedure. The practice of organising tripartite conferences on social dialogue in VET would continue.

4. STRATEGY, PORTFOLIO REVIEW AND FINANCING (DECISION)

The Chairperson informed members that the aim of this discussion would be to endorse the strategy and portfolio review to allow Cedefop's management to develop them further in the next months.

He invited the Executive Director to present the item.

Mr Siebel said that members had received two parts of this item: (a) strategic initiative; and (b) portfolio review. The presentation would focus on the strategy and financing (Item 4a), as the portfolio review was reflected in the draft 2025-27 SPD (Item 5 of the agenda).

(a) Strategic initiative

(PPT presentation by the Executive Director)

The document presented a proposal for a stakeholder-led strategic initiative. Although this initiative fell within the remit of the Executive Director, as it concerned the internal organisation of day-to-day work, Mr Siebel would welcome its endorsement by the MB, in order to ensure that the initiative went in the right direction.

Cedefop and its stakeholders were affected by megatrends, e.g. demography, digitalisation, greening and geopolitics. This created more demands by Cedefop's stakeholders. The Agency should remain relevant, renew its unique value proposition, and find additional resources to meet its stakeholder's expectations. Cedefop reacted to these trends with a stakeholder-led strategic initiative. This initiative had three pillars: (a) stakeholder engagement; (b) research and development; (c) financing toolbox. To utilise these, Cedefop would have to improve its outreach and advocacy, including a new concept for the Brussels Liaison Office, turn data into actionable insights for stakeholders via a platform strategy, and – to address the financial constraints – experiment with product lifecycle management (PLM). The Agency was currently pursuing two ad hoc projects, endorsed by the EEB in July: (a) the 'European Skills and VET Week' with DG EMPL; and (b) the contribution agreement with DG REFORM on 'Skills governance in Estonia'. The stakeholder-led initiative was expected to evolve over a period of 18 to 24 months, and would affect operational, administrative and financial processes. An adjustment of the organisation might be necessary in the future. While all the proposed actions were within the remit of the Executive Director, advice and guidance from the MB was welcome. The basis for this initiative was Cedefop's Founding Regulation and the tasks deriving from it, which would not change. Although Cedefop's work programme had some flexibility, the link between prioritised activities deriving from the EU policy agenda and budget was fixed. Although the projects were not included in the agreed work programme, they were fully compatible with the Agency's Founding Regulation. Such ad hoc activities driven by demand would be financed outside the agreed budget and might create synergies with Cedefop's general work. The stakeholder engagement would have a positive effect on the way the Agency operated. To reformulate the interaction with the stakeholders, maintain the lead in the research and development field and find the necessary resources, a rebranding of the Agency was necessary. The *Cedefop@50* initiative with its three pillars would not touch the Founding Regulation, the portfolio and work programme. It would not change *what* Cedefop does, but *how* it does it. However, building these capabilities would allow Cedefop to meet the needs of its stakeholders better. Progress would be regularly reported to the EB and MB. Cedefop's staff and the Staff Committee would be involved in the process. A more detailed project plan would be presented at the December EB meeting.

The Chairperson invited members to comment.

Comments from the Governments

Ms Lindén said that the group welcomed the innovative proposal. However, there were some risks, such as changing Cedefop's relation with the Member States, which should be handled carefully. The focus on finance and resources, as well as research and development were very welcome. However, it was important to choose ad hoc projects wisely in order to produce added value for the core business and remain within the remit of the Founding Regulation. The Management Board should receive transparent information for all ad hoc projects. The group requested more information on how the staff workload would be affected. Cedefop should ensure that knowledge created by short-term contract staff would feed back into the core business. She requested more information on the rebranding of Cedefop as the proposal was rather general. The MB should monitor the process closely.

Comments from the Employers

Mr Donohoe said that the group welcomed the initiative, which was a tangible example of an entrepreneurial approach. However, several specific questions remained unanswered. The group requested the view of the staff towards this initiative. Coherence with the Founding Regulation and the core work programme was very important. The branding exercise was much more fundamental than changing a logo. The group welcomed this as a major opportunity to stress Cedefop's longevity as a well-respected organisation. The MB should be regularly consulted – especially the Employers' group – as members had a lot of experience in rebranding exercises. The group welcomed the two ad hoc projects, the financing of ReferNet and the project with Eurostat and requested information on other potential projects, especially in relation to real-time labour market.

Comments from the Employees

Ms Babrauskiene thanked the Executive Director for the proposal. However, to ensure a smooth and transparent transition, several issues should be clarified, such as: (a) the overall impact of the proposed strategy on the work programme, the current priorities and the Agency's resources; (b) the role of the Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and the ad hoc projects in the process; (c) the protection of staff, which was very important for the Employees' group. The Staff Committee should be involved in the process of rebranding and the planning of a potential reorganisation. The input of the Staff Committee would be essential, particularly concerning a potential need for staff training and the additional workload. Job stability was of paramount importance and short-term employment contracts should be avoided. At the June EEB, members had requested a detailed business plan, including the impact of this initiative on the work programme. Most of the comments received at the time had not been fully addressed. The transition period foreseen of 18 to 24 months did not appear sufficient for the major changes proposed. The document stated that these changes would have operational, administrative, and financial implications, as well as an impact on the required staff skills. In addition, they might lead to a reorganisation of Cedefop and the change of the Agency's brand. The MB should have a clear picture of all risks involved, including the impact on the various processes, the skills required for staff and the training related. It was also important to clarify who the stakeholders were. Contrary to what the document stated, the Employees' group did not formally endorse the

ad hoc projects. As stated in the EEB minutes, all groups had requested information on the impact these projects would have on Cedefop's work programme and the staff workload. The two proposed SLAs should be separated from the broader discussion on the strategy and portfolio. According to the Founding Regulation the MB had AIPN powers, and also decided on Cedefop's work programme. However, there was no clarity on how the EB and MB would be involved in the changing process. The group was thus not able to endorse the initiative and invited the Executive Director to prepare a clear financial plan, and impact and risk assessments on the implementation of the proposed initiative for further discussion. For a well-informed and inclusive strategy, it was necessary to have a continued, constructive dialogue with the EB and MB. Concerning the celebration of the *Cedefop@50* jubilee, the group supported the organisation of a flagship event on the eve of the next MB and the series of dedicated events at national and EU levels.

Ms Roman clarified that the two ad hoc projects were endorsed in the EEB as test cases. These should be separated from the discussion on the endorsement of the strategic initiative and the portfolio review.

Comments from the Commission

Ms Riondino congratulated Cedefop on the initiative. The document correctly recalled Cedefop's mission to support the promotion, development and implementation of EU policies on VET, skills and qualifications. The main role of the MB was to provide strategic orientation for the Agency's activities, adopt its annual work programme and budget, monitor the implementation and ensure oversight on the legality and regularity of activities. Defining *how* the Agency operated was within the remit of the Executive Director, together with the management team and the staff. In the Commission's opinion the background document laid out the 'how'. To remain efficient, effective and relevant, organisations should regularly reassess how they operated and whether their processes and organisational structures were still fit for purpose. The Commission therefore welcomed the initiative as a matter of principle. In a changing world with many constraints, these reflections were necessary. They also welcomed the transparent approach and the request for the MB endorsement, even though the latter was not required, given the respective responsibilities of the MB and the Executive Director. Ms Riondino stressed the importance of the following elements in the document: (a) turning labour market and skills data, and policy analysis on VET and qualifications into actionable insights for policy-making; (b) the intention to reach out to 'unusual suspects', such as sectors and regions that had emerged in the wake of the European Year of Skills; (c) the fact that stakeholder needs were put centre stage.

Responses by the Executive Director

Mr Siebel thanked members for their comments. The initiative would not affect Cedefop's governance structure. It would help understand what the Member States needed, i.e. the project for Estonia. The main stakeholders were the MB members. However, there might be other stakeholders that may want to make use of Cedefop's outputs or projects. The initiative did not propose work outside the remit of the Founding Regulation, i.e. work with private companies or third countries. Certain sectors or regions could be approached but this would not affect the governance. One of the main reasons for pursuing the two

projects was to create added value for the core business, and this would not affect Cedefop's work programme. Annex XII of the SPD transparently listed the service-level or cooperation agreements, to inform the MB in advance. Workload was an issue in Cedefop, as was the case in other institutions. The management did not intend to engage in activities that would overburden staff, as the additional budget for the projects would be spent on additional short-term contract staff. These contract agents were covered by the Staff Regulations, so they would not be working under precarious conditions. The duration of the contracts would be defined by the duration of the projects. This might have an impact on their attractiveness, but there might be persons who would be interested to work on these short-term projects. This was part of the risks when organising ad hoc projects. It would be a difficult exercise and some of the questions would only be answered during the process. For some projects, certain qualifications might be required. If these were not available in Cedefop, the solution would be to hire additional or train existing staff. At the moment there were no signed agreements for the two projects already endorsed. Potential efficiency gains would have to be assessed during the process. For Cedefop's jubilee a number of events were already planned: (a) one for staff and the hosting country; (b) a high-level flagship conference on 27 May 2025, highlighting Cedefop's activities with the participation of the relevant communities and combined with reporting on policy developments, in Brussels; (c) a celebration at the next MB meeting in October; (d) an interinstitutional event with Eurofound, which also turned 50 in 2025, highlighting the key role of decentralised agencies more generally. The new Cedefop logo marking the 50 years was being prepared by DCM. Mr Siebel welcomed the offer of the Employers' group to assist the Agency with rebranding. ReferNet was a crucial element for Cedefop's work. Its governance and financing might have to be reformed in the next 3 years as grants were an administratively heavy process. However, this was a separate discussion, not related to the strategic initiative. The best example for OVATE was Estonia's case. Other Member States might be interested in a similar project. The Draghi report focused on skills intelligence and highlighted the need for an industrial strategy for Europe. Cedefop might need to step up to assist certain sectoral approaches with skills intelligence. Through the stakeholder engagement, further synergies with Cedefop's work could be identified. The comments and questions from the Employees' group were very reasonable. However, at the moment there could be no concrete answers concerning the timeline of the initiative, as the current plan of 18 to 24 months was a rough estimate. The workload for the test projects could not yet be estimated. In general, there might be extra (peak) tasks for certain staff, however, the management team would closely monitor the workload involved. A more detailed project plan, including a risk assessment, would be provided at the December EB. Certain financial processes might need to be explored, but Cedefop already had experience with SLAs, such as sharing accountancy services with EIGE. The technical process would have no strategic impact. The risks, in principle, would only concern the financing toolbox and were not yet known. The June EEB had endorsed the two projects under certain conditions. The role of the MB was to provide strategic guidance and advice. The initiative aimed to shift the organisation towards more relevance and to reinforce Cedefop's unique value proposition. The brand, the stakeholder engagement, research and development and the financing toolbox were strategic elements

that would support this shift. Turning data into actionable insights was indeed a central element of the strategy. The processes and re-organisation were technical necessities. The MB was invited to approve the direction of the project.

Mr Roncaccia said that indeed branding was not just about a logo. There were tangible and intangible elements in it. The latter were more important, i.e. the stakeholders' experience, Cedefop's reputation and how the Agency was perceived. The exercise would not be limited to the logo but would concern strategic thinking of how Cedefop was positioned, and stakeholders perceived it. The MB would definitely be involved in the rebranding exercise, at different stages of the project, as they were the key stakeholders of the Agency. The Staff Committee would be fully involved, as well as all staff members since this would be a corporate exercise. An external contractor would guide the process. Rebranding was driven by the need of addressing changes in a certain ecosystem and/or the strategy. In this case, this would be the stakeholder-led strategic initiative. The preparations for Cedefop's jubilee had already started. The Agency would 'keep shaping learning and skills in Europe', as per the slogan to be used.

The Chairperson invited the Chair of the Staff Committee to comment.

Comments by the Staff Committee

Mr Angelini thanked the Executive Director and the members of the Board for inviting the Staff Committee to express its considerations. It appeared that Cedefop was planning to pursue several SLAs in order to reinforce the budget and a new logo would be produced in order to get a number of intangible benefits regarding its corporate identity. However, he was not aware of an analysis concerning Cedefop's reputation that indicated the need to change the Agency's brand. Regarding the use of SLAs, Article 6(3) of the Founding Regulation provided that the work programme '*...set out overall strategic programming including objectives, expected results and performance indicators avoiding programming overlaps with other agencies. It shall also set out resource programming including multiannual budget and staff.*' Thus, staff resources were proportional to the work programme. SLAs were outside the work programme. Therefore, the Agency would hire contract staff to do the extra work. A vacancy notice had been published for contract agents, function group IV, in order to create a reserve list for future hiring. The duration of the contract depended on the duration of the project. A contract agent post for 1 year, in Thessaloniki, would most likely not be very attractive, especially for candidates in the EU labour market. The Staff Committee was thus worried that most of the work deriving from SLAs would fall on the shoulders of current staff. Training was foreseen for Cedefop staff, which indicated that certain staff would be involved in the activities. Training a contract agent, hired for 1 year would not make much sense as, by the time the training would be concluded, the contract would come to an end. The job descriptions of Cedefop's experts were in line with the work programme and clearly listed the activities that each staff member would work on. He asked if these job descriptions would have to be revised to reflect the new activities. In conclusion, as long as there was no clarity on processes, skill development and organisation changes, the Staff Committee's opinion on the strategic initiative could not be final.

The Chairperson invited members to comment.

Comments from the Governments

Mr Thiele welcomed the enthusiastic presentation of the new initiative and thanked the Executive Director. The business plan was not clear and rather appeared like a trip to the unknown. Many conceptual ideas would have to be worked out. It was evident that budget cuts had been applied for a long time. To be present and visible in the political scene, additional resources and funding was necessary for the Agency. However, the group expressed its concern for the independence and neutrality of Cedefop's work, if funding was provided by third parties. The proposed duration of the initiative of 18 to 24 months appeared very short. A clear testing phase with a step-by-step approach, including an evaluation, was necessary, as this should not be a self-fulfilling prophecy process. Cedefop was currently working full-time on the work programme. The two ad hoc projects only represented one quarter of the new proposal and their funding would have limited duration. They should, therefore, not be related to the new branding *Cedefop@50*. Conceptually it was not clear how the opening to new clients and the offer of services for additional funds could be achieved without the expertise of new staff. The new initiative seemed like a completely new approach compared to the Agency's regular work. It seemed like a merger that would indeed affect the work programme, the staff, and, in this context, also the role of the MB which was responsible for the work programme and the staff development decisions. The idea of organising projects like the European VET and skills week was not new. In the past, Cedefop ran the Study Visits Programme and Europass for the Commission. This was not a new business model but the traditional way of operating. The pilot of the European VET and skills week with the Commission would need a lot of resources. He requested information on the additional resources that the Commission would provide. Although the reasons behind this initiative and the general idea were in the right direction, the concept and the plan for its realisation required further discussions and involvement of the MB.

Comments from the Employees

Mr Roman said that the budgetary constraints were clear. However, these should not be mixed with Cedefop's visibility and rebranding. The group expressed its concern about the organisational shift proposed. Changes should be well planned and implemented in sufficient time, with respect to the institutional structure, the Founding Regulation, the roles of the EB and MB and the mandate of the Agency. The stakeholder engagement survey presented to the EEB in June clearly focused on communication. This stakeholder-led initiative should be called MB-led initiative, clearly distinguishing other stakeholders such as the Commission DGs and other agencies. More clarity was necessary on the financial and operational issues as well as the role of the MB. The EB, MB and the Staff Committee should be involved in the planning and implementation of the initiative. The timetable was not clear and did not indicate any consultation of the MB or the Staff Committee. An impact and risk assessment as well as a clear business plan were necessary, in cooperation with the MB to ensure that the process would not affect Cedefop's Founding Regulation and mandate. The group noted with concern that although the Executive Director assured members that the initiative would not affect the work programme and staff workload, at the same

time it appeared that both would be affected as some staff members might need to work in different shifts or over weekends, as the Executive Director said. This clearly created more workload and could not be part of a business plan that aimed to solve financial and staff resources issues. The expertise of Cedefop staff would be required for the organisation of the European VET and skills week. This would come on top of their regular work on the work programme. Hiring short-term contract staff would have a negative impact on the quality of the work, and the continuation and maintaining of knowledge in Cedefop. In conclusion, the Employees' group endorsed the two ad hoc projects and the celebrations of *Cedefop@50*, which would enhance Cedefop's visibility but could not endorse the initiative as a whole, as many questions remained unanswered. 2025 should be dedicated to the celebration of the tripartite nature of Cedefop. The rest of the initiative could only be endorsed in a step-by-step process, based on a detailed business plan, including a risk assessment concerning the operational changes.

Comments from the Employers

Mr Riemer said that this would be his last MB meeting, so Cedefop's future would be in the hands of the rest of the MB. The concerns expressed were reasonable, but they were not new. Similar discussions had taken place in the past whenever changes had been proposed. The MB should always support initiatives that would reinforce Cedefop in the future. Change was always difficult and required time, but it was necessary in order to explore new ways to success.

Comments from the Employees

Ms Babrauskiene said that the Founding Regulation, adopted by the Parliament and the Council provided that *'In order to ensure its full autonomy and independence and to enable it properly to carry out its objectives and tasks in accordance with this Regulation, Cedefop should be granted an adequate and autonomous budget...'* (recital 17). Thus, instead of lobbying and requesting additional funds by putting more workload on staff, the MB and the Agency should focus on the provision of the Founding Regulation for adequate and autonomous budget. The new Commission should ensure that the Agency had the necessary funds to fulfil its work programme.

Mr Vaughan said that Cedefop should be proactive and dynamic as no organisation could remain static in the face of a changing environment. The PLF organised back-to-back with the MB clearly indicated the need to promote social dialogue. The visibility, relevance and importance of Cedefop's work needed to be enhanced, but to accomplish its mission, the Agency should have adequate resources and not look for extra activities. The name *Cedefop@50* might give the wrong impression. The Agency should remain open and look for innovation, but the risks involved, and the concerns expressed by the members should be carefully considered.

Comments from the Employers

Mr Donohoe said that it appeared that all members agreed to the endorsement of the two ad hoc projects and the need for rebranding. This should suffice for the time being. Cedefop should indeed remain open to innovation and the pursuit of additional funding, as the ongoing discussions on the budgetary constraints had not produced results so far. The financing toolbox should be

managed very carefully in order not to affect the core functions of the Agency. There was a need to change but more information was necessary on the process required. The Draghi report was very relevant and included a range of recommendations on skills that could affect Cedefop's agenda. As part of the process for this initiative, he urged the Executive Director to provide an assessment on the impact of the Draghi report on the stakeholder engagement, Cedefop's research and development and the financing toolbox. This would allow the MB to respond in a structured way.

Response from the Executive Director

Mr Siebel said that the ad hoc projects were linked to the financing toolbox, but not only that. Cedefop had to adjust its processes in a changing environment. The organisation of the Agency might also need to adjust, in order to meet the needs of the stakeholders better and anticipate where to invest in the future. Ad hoc projects should not affect the work programme, but this would be a test phase. Risks might go beyond a risk analysis. Late shifts were sometimes required to achieve an objective, but this was not a new element. The initiative intended to equip Cedefop to meet future demands. One of the problems were the budget constraints and the squeeze of Title 3. Mr Siebel fully agreed that Cedefop needed a more adequate budget. This issue was regularly raised on every possible occasion. The Draghi reports quoted Cedefop's relevance several times. If skills were central, then Cedefop should indeed get more budget. However, chances were that Cedefop would remain a 'cruising-speed' agency. Branding did not refer to the change of corporate identity. It was more about intangible aspects and the way stakeholders perceived the Agency. The work programme was proportionate to the resources, but additional expertise was required. The administrative HR processes might have to be adjusted, as training and hiring staff was not only linked to the ad hoc projects. These were just one element for solving financing issues. The job descriptions would need to change but not only because of the ad hoc projects. Cedefop should be converted into an institution capable to cope with changes in the future. If job descriptions needed to evolve, training would be provided to staff. There was no guarantee that staff hired at Cedefop would work on the same tasks until the end of their career. Indeed, there was no adequate clarity in the proposal, but the Executive Director strongly believed that this was the right direction for the Agency. It would be a learning process, which would be complemented with the necessary risk assessments during a gradual approach. However, this should not lead to excessive planning and reporting that would create more workload for staff and would not have added value in terms of the objective. The management should be allowed a certain degree of freedom to proceed. He invited members to endorse the initiative and trust Cedefop on the direction of the project. The initiative would touch on many aspects and could not be considered as a merger. The VET and skills week was estimated to approximately EUR 1 million. A risk assessment would be conducted but the alternatives should also be considered in view of the constant squeeze of Title 3. The biggest risk for the Agency would be not to find a solution to this. Even if more budget was provided in the MFF for 2027, the two other pillars, i.e. the stakeholder engagement and research and development should be addressed. A detailed plan would be presented at the December EB.

The Chairperson concluded that the Management Board endorsed the two ad hoc projects and the branding exercise. While everyone agreed on the general direction, the endorsement of the rest of the initiative would follow a step-by-step process. To secure Cedefop's mission and added value, as well as for transparency reasons, the Executive and Management Boards should be involved in the development of the initiative, including risk assessments and evaluations with focus on staff issues, stakeholder engagement and the financing toolbox. The Staff Committee and staff would be involved in the process. A concrete project plan should be presented at the Executive Board in December 2024. This was a learning process that would be done in different stages aiming to develop further the proposed strategic initiative.

Break from 17.55 to 18.10.

Note: Due to time constraints the next items discussed were Items 6, 9a, 9c and 9d.

6. ELECTIONS OF THE CHAIRPERSON AND DEPUTY CHAIRPERSONS OF THE MB AND COMPOSITION OF THE (EXTENDED) EXECUTIVE BOARD (DECISION)

The Chairperson said that, as provided for in Article 10(4) of Regulation (EU)2019/128, each group would designate up to two alternate members to attend the meetings of the EB if a member was absent. The EB had agreed on the arrangements concerning participation in the Extended Executive Board meetings.

Usually, the Commission did not take a turn holding the chairpersonship, which should rotate among the groups in the order applied until now, i.e. next Chairpersonships: Employers, Governments, Employees. He asked the Commission to confirm.

Ms Geleng confirmed.

Ms Roman said that the Employees' group supported the continuation of the current chairpersonship of the MB. Mr Carlo Frising would continue as the spokesperson to the EB. Ms Tatjana Babrauskiene and Mr Georgios Christopoulos would be the alternate members for EB meetings. The group would announce the names of three additional participants for Extended Executive Board meetings when a decision on the extension of the EB was taken by the MB.

Ms Lindén said that Mr Eduard Staudecker would remain the coordinator of the Governments' group. The Deputy Chairperson would be Ms Marta Stará. The alternates for EB meetings would be Ms Lindén and Mr Peter Szovics. The group would nominate three additional members when a decision on the extension of the EB was taken by the MB.

Mr Plummer said that Mr Tony Donohoe would continue as Deputy Chairperson. The alternate members for EB meetings would be Ms Siham Saidi and Mr Pär Lundström. The group would announce three additional members, when a decision for the extension of the EB was taken.

Ms Riondino said that Ms Manuela Geleng would continue as Deputy Chairperson. Ms Chiara Riondino would remain as the second Commission representative.

The Chairperson asked if all groups agreed on nominations.

Members confirmed.

The Chairperson thanked members for their trust and concluded that the Management Board took note of the Executive Board composition and the designated alternates for its meetings. Members also took note of the arrangements for the participation in Extended Executive Board meetings.

9. ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

(a) Highlights of communication (information)

The Chairperson invited Mr Roncaccia to present the item.

Mr Roncaccia informed members that DCM was working on a new social media communication strategy. This was part of Cedefop's efforts to adapt to a changing environment. Cedefop's internal communication strategy had been presented to the EB at its meeting in March 2024. The satisfaction rate of staff with the new internal communication strategy, particularly with the 'weekly communication highlights' and the narrative of the weekly management team meetings was quite high (80%). DCM would continue developing the products to raise the bar even higher. The next edition of the Executive Director's video blog, which informed staff of the EB and MB discussions, would be available at the end of October. Many events were planned for the celebration of Cedefop's 50-year jubilee. Internal staff working groups would be established to oversee the organisation of these events. Cedefop's branding would fully develop over the next 2 years, but some products would be released in the course of 2025, particularly concerning the visual identity, as they would be connected to the jubilee. In view of the forthcoming social media communication strategy, DCM started experimenting with LinkedIn by publishing a weekly summary of Cedefop's publications. Users could easily access the main findings of these publications and be re-directed to Cedefop's website for more information. In a few months, Cedefop's LinkedIn followers had substantially increased. In close cooperation with the experts, DCM intended to shape communication in a campaign format that would allow better planning and life cycle for each product.

No comments were received.

The Chairperson concluded that Management Board members took note of the information.

(c) HR-related issues (information)

The Chairperson invited Ms Descy to present the item.

Ms Descy said that the implementation of the HR strategy, which consisted of three pillars, was ongoing. The first pillar, on talent acquisition and matching, focused on systematic workforce planning, the improvement of effectiveness and efficiency of selection procedures, and the smooth and swift onboarding of newcomers. The occupation rate of the establishment plan was expected to exceed 95% by the end of 2024. Cedefop worked in close cooperation with the ETF and EUAN to develop synergies in the field of selection procedures and achieve the best talent acquisition and matching. The second pillar focused on talent management and development. Learning opportunities were offered to

staff to address individual, team and organisational needs. The HR strategy included a learning and development roadmap. A group of staff volunteers was currently developing the first learning week, called *@CedefopWeLearn*. Staff were not only offered external training but also in-house training from colleagues. The third pillar focused on staff wellbeing. HR in cooperation with the Health and Wellbeing Committee, offered a comprehensive programme under the motto 'Mind your body'. An employee assistance programme was available to staff and their families 24/7. Cedefop had also created a blood bank for its staff members and their families. Efforts were made to raise awareness of green and energy-saving habits. The pool of confidential counsellors had been renewed and constructive social dialogue with the Staff Committee continued. In the context of the Agencies' network initiative on diversity and inclusion, several activities were organised to mainstream the topic, raise awareness and ensure that the right practices would be applied. The document members had received included detailed statistics on staff distribution and planned selections.

Comments from the Employers

Mr Donohoe said that a lot of progress had been made. However, the Commission's report on the external evaluation noted the imbalance in the nationalities of Cedefop staff. The Dutch colleague from the Employers' group would give some feedback from her experience in trying to encourage applications.

Ms Hanneke said that the percentage of Greek staff was indeed very high. The text of the recent vacancy notice that was published for the profile of a data analyst was not considered attractive by potential candidates in the Netherlands, as the tasks were not clearly defined, there was no information on the team, etc. Based on this text, candidates did not appear willing to apply. It could perhaps be revised to attract more candidates from Europe.

Comments from the Commission

Ms Geleng thanked Cedefop for the focus on diversity and inclusion. The Commission invited the Agency to develop a strategy that would attract candidates from other nationalities that were not well represented among its staff.

Comments from the Governments

Ms Lindén said that the group welcomed Cedefop's efforts on efficiency gains through synergies with other agencies in recruitments. More measures should be taken to achieve a better geographical balance.

Comments from the Employees

Ms Roman congratulated the Chair of the Staff Committee on the constructive social dialogue in Cedefop. She requested further information concerning the cuts in staff training. She asked the management to consult the Staff Committee on the development of the next staff engagement survey, planned for 2025, and to include additional questions concerning not only the workload but also the work intensity, particularly concerning the ad hoc projects and the changes in the work programme.

Cedefop's responses

Ms Descy said that the geographical balance was indeed a concern. Efforts were being made to address the issue. She took note of the comments concerning the text of the vacancy notices. Cedefop followed a broader dissemination approach and cooperated with other agencies to broaden the pool of candidates. She took note on the Commission's request to work on a strategy to improve geographical and gender balance. The cuts in staff training were compensated at the end of 2023 and throughout 2024. The funds dedicated to training were fully restored in the 2025 budget. Cedefop usually ran the same staff engagement survey with other agencies so that results would be comparable. Additional questions might be considered or, alternatively, Cedefop could run a parallel non-survey in cooperation with the Staff Committee, focusing on workload and work intensity.

The Chairperson concluded that Management Board members took note of the information.

(d) General implementing provisions (if any-decision)

The Chairperson invited Ms Descy to present the item.

Ms Descy informed members that Cedefop had to adopt by analogy the implementing provisions of the Commission on the transfer of pension rights (Cedefop/DGE/48/2024). As this was an obligation for the Agency, there would be no need for a decision by the Management Board.

The Chairperson concluded that Management Board members took note of the information.

The Chairperson informed members that this would be the last MB meeting for two long-standing members, Mr Thiele and Mr Riemer. A farewell celebration would take place at the reception. He thanked members and closed the meeting at 18.40.

Friday 4 October 2024

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

5. DRAFT SINGLE PROGRAMMING DOCUMENT 2025-27, INCLUDING OPINION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION (DISCUSSION/ADOPTION)

The Chairperson thanked Cedefop management and staff for preparing the document and sending it to members 2 weeks ahead of the meeting. He reminded members that the draft 2025-27 SPD had been endorsed by the MB by written procedure, which terminated on 24 January 2024 and, in compliance with Article 6(2) of Regulation (EU) 2019/128, has been sent to the European Commission, the Parliament and the Council on 25 January 2024. The Commission's formal opinion had been received on 27 June 2024 and sent to MB members together with the MB documents for this meeting.

MB members would be invited to adopt the general orientations of the draft 2025-27 SPD at this meeting. The formal adoption could only take place after the adoption of the EU general budget, the salary indexation, and the weighting factor, which were expected in November/December. Potential adjustments (in

budget and content) would be reflected in the revised draft, which would be discussed with the EB at its meeting of 2 December and then submitted to the MB for adoption by written procedure.

The Chairperson invited Ms Geleng to present the Commission's formal opinion on the draft SPD.

Ms Geleng said that, once again, the Commission in its Opinion commended the quality of the draft SPD and highlighted its alignment with the objectives, activities and priorities defined in the policy framework set out in the 2020 Council Recommendation on VET, the Osnabrück Declaration, the Skills Agenda and the Digital Education Action Plan. Cedefop, as the centre of expertise for VET, skills, and qualifications, had been a key contributor to the European Year of Skills (EYS). The Agency was expected to play an important role in taking the legacy of the EYS forward. The political guidelines that the President of the Commission had issued in July, after the Commission's Opinion was released, set out an EU strategy for VET in the framework of a Union of Skills, clearly highlighting the importance of skills for the EU economy and society. In this context, it was evident that Cedefop's work would continue to be very important. In its Opinion, the Commission also commended the importance given by the Agency to the monitoring and analysing of VET policy developments, together with the ETF, of the implementation of the Council Recommendation on VET and the Osnabrück Declaration. This work was used by the Commission for the European Semester, as well as the Education and Training Monitor. While Cedefop's activities paid due attention to skills shortages and mismatches already, the Agency was invited to consider how best to contribute to the implementation of the action plan to tackle labour and skill shortages, adopted by the Commission on 20 March 2024, and to adapt its SPD accordingly. The Opinion also highlighted a need to improve skills intelligence and data gathering in close coordination with other relevant EU agencies, in order to achieve more harmonised and comparable information on labour and skills shortages at EU level. Regarding the Council Recommendation on 'Europe on the move', adopted in May 2024, Cedefop was invited to contribute to its effective implementation. Particularly, in cooperation with the Commission and ReferNet, Cedefop would need to adapt its initial VET mobility scoreboard to enable measuring the progress made in the cross-border learning mobility of VET learners and apprentices. The Commission commended the efforts Cedefop had made over the past years to address its resource constraints by seeking efficiency gains, and strongly supported the Agency's further actions in this respect. These included: further reinforcing the alignment of activities between Cedefop and the Commission, the structured cooperation with the other agencies under the remit of DG Employment, as well as within the broader agency network, ensuring synergies with other actors in the policy field, including the OECD and the ILO, maximising the benefits of digitalisation, and further reviewing and streamlining internal procedures. It also stressed the need for synergies and exploring further possibilities of sharing services and pooling resources within the network of EU agencies and with the Commission. It also welcomed Cedefop's commitment to implement its climate neutrality strategy. The evaluation of the four agencies under the remit of DG EMPL (excluding the ELA at this stage), both individually and from a cross-cutting perspective, provided further input for synergies. The Commission urged the Agency to develop a comprehensive targeted strategy to improve the gender balance and reduce the imbalance

between nationalities among its staff, and keep the EB and MB informed of the progress.

The Chairperson invited the Executive Director to present the revised draft SPD focusing on changes.

Mr Siebel said that the preparation of the draft 2025-27 SPD had started with the portfolio review and discussions on the financial strategy at the EEB meeting of July 2023. The first draft SPD had been discussed at the EB of December 2023, endorsed by written procedure by the MB in early January 2024, and submitted to the EU institutions on 25 January 2024. He thanked the Commission for sending its Opinion in time. At the EEB of June 2024, members had discussed the portfolio review, which would give some orientation for the draft 2026-28 SPD, to be discussed at the EB of December 2024. The main changes in the draft 2025-27 SPD were marked in track changes and reflected the Commission's Opinion and other necessary updates. He presented a summary of the main changes: page 3 (Foreword), reference to Cedefop's golden jubilee and the strategic initiative, *Cedefop@50*; pages 13-23 (Section I – General context), updated to reflect the new EU policy initiatives and developments since January 2024, including the Letta and Draghi reports, Val Duchesse Social Partner summit, etc. These updates were also included in fiches and other parts of the document; pages 41-51 (Human and financial resources) updated with the latest data and figures. Further adjustments would be required later in the year, when all information on the budget was available; pages 52 and 53 (Table 2: Prioritisation exercise – portfolio review) updated after the workshop at the EEB of June 2024; pages 54-55 (negative priorities) highlighting the reduced scope of two new studies: *Citizenship competence and critical thinking* and *Quality assurance in VET* (paragraph 120), as well as the cancellation/postponement of new study on *CVET and the potential of network structures*; page 56 (Section III – Work Programme 2025), the revision of Cedefop's corporate identity was deleted (paragraph 122) as the Agency would focus on its rebranding; pages 56-90 (Section III – Work Programme 2025), highlighting the fiches on page 63: under shaping VET, the quality assurance on CVET and the workshop on recognition. The fiches on page 73: under valuing VET, extending lifelong guidance to diverse settings and sectors and making ILAs more explicit. The fiches on page 81: under informing VET, deletion of workshop on EU skills and jobs survey. The fiches on page 86, under Communication and dissemination, introducing the new element of social media. Mr Siebel highlighted the box on page 131 (Annex XII), which presented information to the MB on work done outside the work programme under a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with DG EMPL on the 'European skills and VET week' and the contribution agreement with DG REFORM on 'Skills governance in Estonia'.

The Chairperson thanked Cedefop for the slide presenting the yearly cycle of the SPD. He invited members to comment.

Comments from the Employees

Ms Babrauskiene welcomed the Commission's Opinion, which highlighted Cedefop's crucial role in implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights, the VET Recommendation, and the Osnabrück Declaration. The emphasis placed on directing the Agency's resources towards priority work was particularly important and appreciated. However, further emphasis should be given to the role of social partners and social dialogue in VET, especially in

areas like training, guidance, qualifications, and validation of skills. Strengthening partnerships was vital for the long-term success of Cedefop's initiatives. The fact that the budget for 2025 had not yet been adopted raised concerns about the potential impact on Cedefop's operations. The group requested more clarity on how this uncertainty might affect ongoing and planned activities. The new Commission had not yet been fully established. While some priorities of President von der Leyen had been outlined, at this stage they were not sufficiently concrete to be considered in the SPD. The group welcomed the focus on AI and CVET, as well as the attention to lifelong learning and young people's employability, particularly concerning financing, guidance and validation. The group also welcomed the increase of the budget for staff missions (page 100), which addressed previous concerns about mission cuts in relation to the carbon-neutrality strategy. However, Cedefop should ensure a fairer allocation of participation in missions, as it often appeared to involve the same small group of staff members in events taking place in Brussels under the EU Presidency. This would strengthen the Agency's visibility. On page 22, it appeared that Cedefop's partners had broadened significantly, stating that *'Cedefop is in a unique position to support its partners through its dedicated focus on VET, skills, and qualifications, and a Europe-wide pool of experts and researchers, policy-makers, skills systems and ecosystems stakeholders, and social partners'*. Previously, these partners included only Member States and social partners. The group requested clarifications on how these new partnerships would be managed and whether this broader approach would dilute the focus on traditional key stakeholders. On page 88, the document stated that *'in early 2025, the Agency will also run the next staff engagement survey'*. The group strongly recommended to include questions on workload and work intensity, including the Staff Committee's contribution to the survey. It was essential to motivate all staff to participate in the survey, as their feedback would lead to tangible improvements in working conditions and professional development. The group looked forward to continuing this discussion and seeing these points reflected in the upcoming strategy and implementation plans.

Ms Roman said that while the work programme should have some flexibility, at the same time it should also be respected. The group looked forward to further discussing the SPD at the EB meeting of December, when the salary indexation would be known. The title of the Commission Vice-President-Designate included skills but no reference to education and employment. The group considered this regretful, as focus should not be limited to skills but also include access to education and lifelong learning for workers and jobseekers, as well as guidance and counselling. Key competences were crucial for the labour market, but to ensure quality jobs it was necessary to obtain the required qualifications. The group would like to see this broader approach in the prioritisation exercise concerning Cedefop's work programme. Ms Roman welcomed the organisation of the 5th Peer learning forum (PLF) on apprenticeship as a back-to-back event with the MB. The event for the 50th anniversary and the next PLF should also focus on the tripartite nature of Cedefop. The next PLF should be a MB tripartite policy event focusing on social partnership and social dialogue in VET systems, to explore how to build and improve VET quality and inclusiveness. The group noted with regret the cancellation of the study on citizenship competence in VET. The European Parliament elections showed that far-right movements were increasing. This was a clear alert for the Employees' group. Citizenship key competences in

VET should be motivated and improved, especially concerning apprenticeships. Ms Roman congratulated Cedefop on the EU VET teachers and trainers survey and the very good cooperation, which had resulted in the participation of 22 countries. Despite the success, it was identified as a negative priority. While budget constraints were understandable, some flexibility was necessary to guarantee that these 22 countries would be covered by the survey. The launching event planned in June might be a good opportunity to attract the bigger EU countries to join the survey. The group also noted with regret the cancellation of the new study on CVET and the potential of network structures. It was important to support the low-skilled adults, especially those with limited digital or literacy skills; thus, this issue should somehow be covered in future studies. The organisation of the 9th annual CareersNet meeting was very welcome, but it appeared that social partners were again not involved. Social partners could contribute immensely and should always be invited to events dealing with lifelong guidance. The MB members from the social partners' side had the required expertise on lifelong guidance and should be considered primary stakeholders. The Employees' group requested Cedefop to organise staff training in 2025, on social partnership and social dialogue. This would help clarify the role of social partners in the MB. Ms Roman welcomed the increased budget for missions, but Cedefop should indeed ensure the fair allocation of participation in missions and avoid sending the same small group of staff members in events taking place in Brussels. She asked if candidate countries could participate in future PLFs as observers, even without reimbursement.

Ms Coenen said that the organisation of tripartite advisory groups (AGs) was very welcome. She asked if Cedefop planned to follow the same approach for *'the development of a systematic approach to lifelong learning through upskilling/reskilling pathways and through the development of coordinated CVET systems based on strong stakeholder partnerships, including the role of social partners'* (paragraph 143). She also asked what the status of the AG on ILAs was (paragraph 157).

Comments from the Governments

Ms Lindén said that the group welcomed the revised SPD, which was very relevant and rich. The group had discussed the establishment of the new Commission, the Opinion presented and Section I (pages 13-23), outlining the general context. Discussions on the various initiatives, such as the skills portability initiative, the European degree on learning mobility, the partnerships within the Pact of Skills etc., were ongoing. These initiatives would at some point need to be incorporated in Cedefop's work programme. The group requested information on the adoption process and possible need for identifying further negative priorities. The foreword reflected the changes in the new Commission and its work programme, but these were not yet fully established. In the portfolio review, the mobility scoreboard was reinforced; however, on page 64 there was no output indicated. The group also requested some further elaboration on the social media strategy in paragraphs 86 and 192. Cedefop's work on ILAs, paragraphs 157-158, was limited to one or two countries. It would be better to select cluster of countries or provide a toolbox on how the ILA is seen in the different countries. The first paragraph of the ILA Recommendation defined that the ILA aimed to support Member States' initiatives to enable more working-age adults to engage in training. The group would thus prefer a broader perspective, including various tools used to reach

the overarching aim of the Recommendation. The country-specific guidelines should have a broader scope. Ms Lindén asked if extra financing would be provided by these countries. Joining the training funds with ILAs, and possibly other national financing initiatives, would provide an overarching broader policy aligned with the ILA Recommendation. Table 1 on page 119 indicated figures from 2016. More recent figures, i.e. concerning electricity should be provided. The group noted the budget constraints and the negative priorities, but CVET was an important element of Cedefop's work programme. Skills were indeed important but focus on VET education and qualifications were equally important elements of the work programme. The group supported the continuous structured cooperation with other agencies and international organisations to address further synergies and avoid overlaps. It also welcomed the steering of resources to the core business. The group thanked Cedefop for its work and looked forward to the outputs.

Comments from the Employers

Mr Donohoe thanked Cedefop's management and staff for the revised draft SPD and the slide on its yearly cycle, clearly describing the steps of the process for its adoption. He proposed circulating it to all MB members after the meeting. He also thanked the Commission for its positive Opinion of the SPD. The group strongly believed that Cedefop's activities should focus on skills shortages and mismatches. The Council decision in March flagged the potential for the Agency's work to contribute further on the topic of labour market integration of migrants and third-country nationals. In general, the SPD reflected the changing landscape and addressed some of the issues raised at the preceding EB meeting of 2 October, concerning the stakeholders and their demands. The group noted the specific references to the developments that took place after the Osnabrück Declaration and the Skills Agenda. The changing landscape was also reflected in the Draghi report and the EU political guidelines. He asked Cedefop to prepare a short note highlighting the major changes before the EB meeting of December. He asked when the outputs of the study on training funds (paragraph 156) would be available. The group noted with regret the Commission's response to Cedefop's request for a shared agency resource to meet the demands of the new cybersecurity Regulation, particularly, as the IAS report (Item 9b of the agenda) included some critical comments on Cedefop's IT security. He thanked Cedefop for Annex XII, which brought more clarity to the process concerning the SLA and contribution agreement, and the information the MB should receive. The group welcomed the proposal of the Employees' group for the organisation of an information session for the Agency's staff on social dialogue and the role of social partners.

Comments from the Commission

Ms Geleng thanked Cedefop for taking into account the Commission's Opinion. The revised draft 2025-27 SPD was almost ready for adoption. The Commission welcomed the establishment of cooperation agreements with all agencies falling under the remit of DG EMPL. The survey on VET teachers and trainers (paragraph 145) appeared to focus on professional development only. Its scope should be broadened to include other aspects, such as attractiveness, shortages and the ageing of teachers' and trainers' populations. Including more Member States would be welcome. The Commission noted that the publication of the ILA study was missing from the

outputs on page 74. The title of the new Commissioner-Designate was 'Executive Vice-President for People, Skills and Preparedness'. As was the case with all titles of the Commissioner-Designates, it aimed to be clear for all citizens, even those who did not deal with the specific issues. However, all Commissioners had a clear subtitle, which in this case spoke about employment, social inclusion and protection, as well as education and skills.

The Chairperson invited Cedefop to respond.

Mr Siebel said that the group of stakeholders mentioned in the SPD was indeed broader. Cedefop's work was scientifically independent and a real treasure for all EU actors, including its citizens. It would thus be a pity for only few to benefit from it. Broadening the scope of its stakeholders did not intend by any means to neglect its current ones. The event for Cedefop's 50th anniversary on 27 May in Brussels would be a high-level event, and the role of the social partners and the Agency's tripartite nature would be prominent. The MB members would not only be welcome to participate but could act as multipliers of the invitation. He considered that Cedefop staff were well aware of the role of social partners and the concept of social dialogue. However, as requested by two groups, the management would explore possible ways to raise more awareness. CareersNet operated with experts from the scientific community, not excluding social partners. However, some networks were run by invitation rather than nomination. The establishment of tripartite advisory groups had indeed been very successful and Cedefop would continue following the same approach. The PLF on apprenticeship had basically been organised for MB members. Cedefop could not invite candidate countries, as this would create an overlap with the ETF. However, the agencies might discuss this issue bilaterally. The adoption of the policy agenda of the new Commission would most definitely affect Cedefop. If projects were not included in the work programme, other ways of financing them might need to be explored. A re-prioritisation for identifying further negative priorities might also be required. Indeed, postponement/cancellation of the two studies on CVET was regretful as Cedefop was *the* Agency for skills and qualifications. The management would try to prepare a very brief note highlighting the impact of reports like the one by Mario Draghi, in time for the EB meeting of December.

Mr Ranieri said that the survey on VET teachers and trainers was not a standard one. As it was addressed to schools, the engagement of several institutions was required, as well as the permission of one or, in some cases, two different Ministries. Even if the funds for the survey were unlimited, it might still be impossible to include all countries and get permissions at institutional level. In two cases, Cedefop got a negative answer. In addition, although Cedefop made a commitment for the survey, the share of core business budget which a few years ago was 36% of the total budget, would drop to 22% in 2026. As the total amount of budget in real terms had also decreased, this reduction was dramatic. Cedefop hoped to be able to accommodate all the 22 countries that had formally joined the survey, but this might not be possible. This survey could not produce statistics in the strict sense, and, in the interest of questionnaire economy, Cedefop had decided that questions on work conditions per se could not be currently accommodated. Instead, there would be an in-depth analysis including attractiveness connected with working life, wellbeing, job satisfaction, personnel shortages, and professional development. Social partners were directly involved as members of Advisory Boards in more and more studies, though not all studies were suitable for them.

As there was clear value added for both sides, Cedefop would continue to expand this approach. The study on systematic and coordinated CVET systems was concluded and would be published in 2024. Given the positive feedback on the PLF organised back-to-back with the MB, this practice would continue next year focusing on CVET. The idea for the post-implementation of the country reviews was to have a set of three countries. However, following the latest budget cuts, it might not even be possible to launch a new review for even one country next year. The guidelines would be included in the general study that would be published in early 2025, following the October virtual get-together, where the outcomes would be presented. After the publication, Cedefop would organise a big event on ILAs and training funds. The data collection from eight countries was concluded but the study would be completed in 2025. Social partners were included in this study. Mr Ranieri would check the missing outputs of the ILA study on page 74.

Mr Zahilas said that VET and qualifications remained among the basic pillars of Cedefop's work. A whole department was dedicated to it and work would expand. It was clarified that the studies on citizenship competence and quality assurance in CVET had not been cancelled, but due to budget constraints their scope had to be reduced. Cedefop strongly supported the establishment of tripartite advisory groups, especially after the successful experience with microcredentials. The same approach would be used for the second round of the work on microcredentials, and in future VET projects. The MB would soon be asked to nominate members for the AGs on microcredentials and the future of VET. The Agency would be happy to revamp the mobility scoreboard to support the 'Europe on the move' initiative. To this end, it would welcome more information in 2025. The outputs in this area would be included in the draft 2026-28SPD.

Ms Descy said that in Table 1 of Annex VI on Environment management, 2016 referred to the baseline year used to measure progress in Cedefop's environment management system adopted in 2014, which was currently used to manage the Agency's performance. Cedefop was working for the adoption of the environment management and audit scheme of the Commission (EMAS). This would be EMAS-certified in early 2025. The draft 2026-28 SPD would have a new Annex VI, reflecting the new environment management ambitions.

Ms Brugia said that as the EU budget 2025 had not yet been adopted, Cedefop was not in a position to know the impact on its own budget and work programme. The weighting factor for Greece and the indexation of salaries were also still unknown. Bearing in mind that other changes might come from the Budgetary Authority, the Agency could only know its final budget for 2025 in December. The 2025 work programme would be adjusted accordingly, and a revised 2025-27 SPD would be discussed at the EB meeting of 2 December 2024, before a written procedure for its adoption by the MB was launched. The correct version of the portfolio review was the one attached in the document under Item 4.

Mr Siebel said that the budget for missions had slightly increased as the cut planned in 2024 (minus 70% for missions and minus 50% for missions and meetings combined) had proved very ambitious, especially after the announcement of the EYS. The mission budget was spent according to the

needs of the service. Depending on their job profile, some staff might need to travel frequently while others were not required to go on missions.

Mr Roncaccia said that the aim of the new strategy on social media was engagement, not only dissemination. Until now, Cedefop released posts on social media simply to accompany the release of content. The recent new formats in LinkedIn made one step towards engagement, not only dissemination. However, as the social media framework had drastically changed recently (e.g. the change of the former Twitter to X), it was vital to establish a strategy to get the most out of social media. To reach younger generations too, Cedefop needed to analyse what the most used social media tools were (e.g. TikTok, Instagram). However, it would not be wise to simply 'jump' into any new tool before making a proper analysis to understand whether it would make sense or not for Cedefop to use it, set long-term goals, suitability of Cedefop's content, etc. Finally, Cedefop staff's individual capacity to contribute to social media should be taken into consideration too. All these elements required the preparation of a strategy for social media, which was currently being developed.

The Chairperson invited groups to comment.

Ms Lindén welcomed the explanations provided. The group noted the lack of resources for ILAs. However, the ILA Recommendation defined ILAs as a way to support the MS initiatives to enable work-age workers to engage in training. MS were also invited to take steps to achieve objectives. The ILA was a possible way to do this but not the only one. However, a broader scope should be considered in order to focus on this objective; particularly in relation to the financing of CVET and ILAs, as these would lead to country-specific guidelines.

Ms Roman said that reaching out to the new generations might be a good idea. However, it was not clear what kind of information Cedefop needed to provide to teenagers through social media. Ms Roman welcomed the Commission's proposal to broaden the scope of the VET teachers and trainers survey. The group welcomed the work of the tripartite AG in this survey. However, the survey did not cover the wellbeing of teachers.

Ms Geleng said that discussions on ILAs were recurring. It was important to find a common understanding and settle this issue. The VET Recommendation aimed to support MS initiatives to engage more work-age adults in training and MS were invited to take steps to achieve more in the area of adult training. Some countries already had and still maintained a high-level system on upskilling and reskilling. Over 15 MS were piloting and implementing ILAs. Cedefop was involved in ILAs as the Agency had to align with the EU priorities. The question was if the MB considered that Cedefop should help the MS that had no national plans yet to develop ILAs. The last survey showed that at EU level, MS were far from the target of 60% engagement of work-age adults in training. The ILA was a key factor for the EU economy and competitiveness. At the same time, no one should be left behind. The ILA was indeed a system that could bring all onboard.

Ms Lindén said that the ILA was indeed an important initiative. Cedefop should be engaged in the objective of supporting MS initiatives to enable more working-age adults to engage in training, to increase participation rates and reduce skills gaps regardless of the tool. But the broader picture should not exclude other possible tools.

Mr Plummer said that the Employers supported the Governments' views. Several MS were piloting ILAs, but it remained quite difficult for some to follow the model. The training funds approach and other approaches could also play a strong role. However, MS willing to proceed with ILAs could benefit from Cedefop's work. As part of the AG, Mr Plummer believed that Cedefop's study on ILAs was very helpful, but so was the Agency's study on training funds.

Mr Siebel said that a common formulation should be agreed.

Mr Ranieri said that the national landscape was quite diverse, and the virtual get-together planned towards the end of October was an opportunity to appreciate it. Some MS that had not similar schemes in place might want to implement ILAs, other MS which might have similar systems might wish to complement their model introducing ILAs, and some MS with well-established training systems might not want to change. In any case, Cedefop could support and encourage MS in line with the approach proposed by the Recommendation. He invited members to participate actively in the discussions at the get-together event of 22 October.

Ms Lindén said that the matter could be easily resolved. Paragraph 157 described Cedefop's work in the objectives of ILAs, while paragraph 158 described alternative strategies for financing.

The Chairperson thanked members for the discussion and said that Cedefop management would revise the draft 2025-27SPD, taking the comments into consideration.

The Chairperson concluded that the Management Board had adopted the general orientations of the 2025-27 SPD. The SPD would become final after adoption of the Union budget setting the amount of the contribution and the establishment plan (expected in December 2024). Moreover, after the 2024 salary indexation was announced by the Commission services (expected in November), potential adjustments within and between titles might be required. If such adjustments led to changes, particularly concerning the 2025 work programme, the Executive Board would be consulted during its December meeting. The approval of the Management Board would be sought by written procedure.

7. FINAL REPORT OF THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE AGENCIES FALLING UNDER THE REMIT OF DG EMPL – CEDEFOP'S DRAFT ACTION PLAN (DISCUSSION)

The Chairperson invited the Commission to present the outcomes of the external evaluation of the agencies falling under the remit of DG EMPL.

Ms Geleng said that every 5 years the Commission carried out an evaluation of decentralised agencies. The five Agencies falling under the remit of DG EMPL were the ELA, Cedefop, Eurofound, the ETF and EU-OSHA. As the ELA was a new agency, it was not covered by the evaluation and the Staff Working Document (SWD) that members had received together with the Commission's report. The SWD reflected the usual structure of the evaluation, covering effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and complementarity, as well as EU added value. A study conducted by an external contractor, and with the participation of the agencies concerned, underpinned the SWD and the report. Ms Geleng highlighted the main recommendations of the study and lessons learned. Overall, the evaluation of the four agencies was positive, although

there was always room for improvement. The use and quality of the agencies' work was high. However, communication and dissemination could further improve, including better engagement at national level and producing more customised outputs. Agencies should further reduce the administrative burden and simplify processes. Organising more hybrid and online meetings, without compromising the agencies' outreach and presence among stakeholders, could help cut costs and increase cost effectiveness. The Commission invited agencies to prioritise activities and outputs by using transparent criteria agreed with their governance bodies. The control mechanisms were effective and overall efficient. However, agencies could review and improve their monitoring systems, including KPIs, in order to assess properly the scale of success of their interventions. The evaluation stressed that agencies should continue exploring, together with the Commission, the areas where cooperation could bring the most added value to the quality of outputs and stakeholder use. This would include cooperation between Eurofound and Cedefop on the European company survey; Cedefop and the ETF on monitoring VET policy; Eurofound and EU-OSHA at the intersection of working environment, working conditions and occupational health and safety. More importantly, the report highlighted a need for better coordination between Cedefop, the ELA and Eurofound to avoid duplications, and ensure completeness and consistency in skills forecast and labour shortages, while joint products in this domain could be considered. Cedefop-specific lessons learned reflected the overall recommendations. Cedefop should explore how to increase user numbers, for example in academia and VET providers. The working arrangements with the agency's MB could be reviewed to increase efficiency and effectiveness, including a clearer orientation of agenda items towards policy topics, rather than administrative matters. Cedefop could cooperate and align with other agencies on KPIs and introduce an indicator on a quantitative work programme delivery, which would be included in its annual report. Evidence from the stakeholder survey, carried out as part of the evaluation, indicated that Cedefop could provide more possibilities for stakeholders outside the MB to provide input on its activities, e.g. VET providers, and explore how to improve the extent to which its services corresponded to the needs of its stakeholders. The next step would be for Cedefop to develop an action plan to address the recommendations within 6 months from the adoption of the SWD on 27 September 2024.

The Chairperson thanked the Commission and invited the Deputy Director to present the next steps.

Ms Brugia said that Cedefop would develop an action plan which would address both the general and the Agency-specific recommendations. The draft action plan would be discussed with the members before it would be submitted to the Commission for approval. As soon as recommendations were implemented, Cedefop would invite the Commission to close them. An update on the implementation of the recommendations would be given in every MB meeting. She thanked the Commission colleagues for the very good cooperation and the participatory approach, throughout the evaluation. Agencies were allowed to submit their comments, which in their vast majority had been taken into account. In substance, the recommendations were fair, particularly concerning the need to increase further the communication and dissemination activities to broaden the outreach to stakeholders. This was one

of the pillars of Cedefop's strategic initiative, which, although not fully endorsed at this meeting, indicated that it was in the right direction.

The Chairperson invited members to comment.

Comments from the Employees

Ms Babrauskiene said that the public consultation received only 101 responses. This raised concerns about the reliability of the feedback; the more so as the respondents included individuals from Brazil, Nigeria, Turkey, etc. As a result, the survey had to be complemented by Agency staff and a stakeholder survey. The group had concerns about this methodology, which was using external actors and thus, could not be the basis for drafting Cedefop's action plan. The group welcomed the fact that 73% of the stakeholders considered the tripartite composition of the MB appropriate. This underlined the importance of the tripartite nature of the Agency, as reflected in the Founding Regulation. The group also welcomed the fact that the idea of merging Cedefop with another agency was dropped. It was important to ensure that stakeholders were aware of, and actively used, Cedefop's outputs. The new communication strategy appeared to be in the right direction although the group had some reservations for the use of certain social media. The respondents acknowledged the challenges faced by the agencies, particularly regarding the budget. The SWD had rightly pointed out the lack of financial support. Despite the high inflation and the 2% cuts in HR applied in 2018, there had been no budget increase from the Commission to support Cedefop's work. The recommendation on the working arrangements with the MB and the request for a clearer orientation of agenda items towards policy items rather than administrative matters was not realistic. Moreover, this was the role of the ACVT. The role of the MB, as defined in the Founding Regulation, was to manage, including the adoption of the budget and the SPD, but also several administrative responsibilities. The Employees' group had consistently advocated for the organisation of more policy events together with MB meetings, such as the PLF on apprenticeships organised on 2 October. The EB and MB agendas were crucial for decision-making processes. The recommendation for Cedefop to cooperate and align with other agencies on KPIs and introduce a quantitative work programme KPI in its annual report should be discussed. The group had repeatedly stressed that overreliance on quantitative KPIs would be at the expense of qualitative assessment. A discussion on the 'stakeholders outside the MB' should also take place to define who these stakeholders were. VET providers in many countries, public or private were directly linked to social partners, both Employers and Employees. These were adequately represented in the Agency's tripartite MB. Indeed, duplications should be avoided. One of the general recommendations urged Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA to consider balancing research needs with budgetary restrictions, potentially through extra funding, as was done by the ETF. In view of the new strategic initiative, this should be further discussed. The group proposed including this discussion in the agenda of the next EB meeting.

Ms Roman said that both the SWD and the report indicated clearly that the public consultation and the data collected had limitations, even though many MB members had participated in the survey. As these raised concerns about the whole exercise, she asked what Cedefop's legal obligations were, in relation to drafting an action plan and meeting the recommendations. Further

discussion was necessary, particularly on the proposed joint research projects with other agencies, to define which of these recommendations were realistic.

Comments from the Governments

Ms Lindén said that the group did not have time to go through the SWD in detail, as it was adopted on 27 September. In general, they welcomed the positive results and the recommendation to decrease administrative burden and simplify processes, the improvement of the monitoring system and the need for further dissemination of Cedefop's outputs. The group also welcomed the recommendation for a clearer orientation of agenda items towards policy topics rather than administrative matters. She looked forward to Cedefop's action plan.

Comments from the Employers

Mr Donohoe said that the group welcomed the positive results, which highlighted the increased cooperation between agencies and the unrelenting pressure on the budget of all agencies. This indicated that Cedefop was not alone. The most important lesson learned was the need to review the working arrangements with the MB to increase efficiency and effectiveness, including a clearer orientation of agenda items towards policy topics. Most MB members were policy experts, not lawyers or administrators. A good example on the engagement of MB members on policy topics was the PLF on apprenticeship, organised back-to-back with the MB. This recommendation could increase the engagement of more MB members, who came to meetings in order to learn and influence. As currently structured, MB meetings did not give much opportunity in this regard. The introduction of a new KPI on quantitative assessment could be risky, as the measurement should not become more important than the actual output. The group reserved further comments, as Cedefop's very good work on qualitative assessment should not be distorted. Indeed, VET providers were often either social partners themselves, or close to them.

Cedefop's responses

Mr Siebel said that Cedefop welcomed the report and the participatory approach. He considered it a very trustworthy document. The key to unlocking the true power of the MB did not lie with the administration but with those who defined the reporting and planning requirements. Cedefop was obliged to write three reporting documents based on specific templates every year. This could not be changed by the Agency. The volume of reporting and scrutiny from two audit authorities every year does not appear proportionate to the risks inherent to Cedefop's activities. However, like other agencies, Cedefop had to comply and draft an action plan, which would be discussed with the EB and then be submitted to the Commission.

Ms Brugia said that the implementation of certain recommendations would have to be jointly shaped with the MB, i.e. the one referring to the cost-effectiveness of the MB. Cedefop's set of KPIs had been praised by the European Parliament in the discharge for many consecutive years. The recommendation concerned one additional, quantitative indicator to measure the implementation of the work programme. Eurofound already had such an indicator, but Cedefop used other means, i.e. the user satisfaction surveys. The management would consult Eurofound and other agencies and, if possible, try to follow the same approach.

Comments from the Commission

Ms Geleng said that the evaluations had been carried out based on clear guidelines set in the Commission's Better Regulation Guidelines and were applicable to all Commission activities, i.e. new acts, evaluations, impact assessments, etc. This evaluation strictly followed the same requirements. Open consultations involved everybody, as the EU was a group of democratic countries. However, these consultations were not the only source for an evaluation. The terms of reference and methodology were public and available for members to consult them.

Mr Ceuppens said that Article 27 of Cedefop's Founding Regulation (EU) 2019/128 and Article 29 of the Framework Financial Regulation were the legal basis for the evaluation and the subsequent action plan.

The Chairperson concluded that Management Board members took note of the information. Cedefop would prepare an action plan, which would be presented to the Executive Board for discussion, to address the recommendations of the external evaluation.

8. REPORTING FROM THE EXECUTIVE TO THE MANAGEMENT BOARD (INFORMATION)

The Chairperson said that the reporting stated the main issues considered by the Executive Board and Extended Executive Board since the Management Board meeting of 5 and 6 October 2023 and until September 2024.

This was an updated version of the reporting that the MB had received on 5 March 2024.

No comments were received.

The Chairperson concluded that Management Board members took note of the information.

9. ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

(b) Reporting on Internal Control (ICC) activities (information)

The Chairperson invited the Deputy Director to present the item.

(1) European Court of Auditors (ECA)

Ms Brugia said that on 24 May 2024, Cedefop had received the European Court of Auditors' (ECA) draft report on the Agency's 2023 annual accounts, which remained confidential at this stage. In the Court's opinion, Cedefop's accounts were legal and regular in all material aspects. No observations were included. The management was very proud of this achievement. Ms Brugia thanked the members for their support. The final report was expected in autumn 2024.

(2) Internal Audit Service (IAS)

Ms Brugia said that in July 2024, the IAS finalised their audit on IT governance and IT security management. The report concluded that Cedefop managed IT governance and IT security in a good way. However, the IAS identified one

weakness classified as 'very important', concerning the implementation of IT security controls. The report stated that this weakness, if not addressed, might negatively impact the effectiveness and efficiency of Cedefop's IT security practices. The management was preparing an action plan, which would be discussed with the IAS. The IAS was currently carrying out an in-depth risk assessment exercise to identify the topics which would be the subject of IAS audits in the period 2025-27. They had informed Cedefop and the Chairperson that two proposed audit topics would be: (a) ReferNet. The management welcomed this audit, which might contribute to internal ongoing discussions on alternative governance models for ReferNet; (b) communication and dissemination activities.

(3) Discharge 2022

Ms Brugia said that the discharge report on the financial year 2022 had been adopted by the European Parliament on 11 April 2024 and had been published. Members had received a link to the report. In the report, the Parliament once again praised Cedefop's high quality work on its core business, budget and financial management, performance, efficiency gains, the measures in place for the prevention and management of conflicts of interest, cooperation with other agencies, the efforts to become carbon neutral and to streamline administrative process. It also highlighted the need to maintain sufficient financial and human resources for the Agency. The report also included one recommendation for improvement, inviting Cedefop to publish the CVs of all MB members and alternates on its website. At the same time, the Parliament acknowledged that this was not a formal requirement, and it was up to the members to provide their CV.

The Chairperson congratulated Cedefop on the excellent report and invited members to comment.

Comments from the Employers

Mr Donohoe congratulated Cedefop's management and staff on the excellent ECA report. However, the IAS observation on IT security was rather concerning. It referred to incomplete security policy, incomplete internal security standards, weaknesses in access management controls, threats of confidentiality and risk of unauthorised access. IT security breaches could cause damage to individuals and the reputation of an organisation. A certain element was the behaviour of staff, but unless proper resources were in place it would be difficult to address this issue. He asked how the management would proceed, in the absence of additional resources from the Commission.

Comments from the Commission

Ms Riondino congratulated Cedefop's management and staff on the excellent ECA report and the discharge report on 2022. She thanked the Deputy Director for the presentation. The Commission expressed its concern on the observation of the IAS on IT governance and IT security but trusted that the Agency would ensure the appropriate follow-up. The Commission welcomed the use of interinstitutional framework contracts for the Agency's evaluation and control activities and fully supported the practice of sharing services for efficiency gains.

Comments from the Employees

Ms Roman congratulated Cedefop on the positive reports. The group shared the concerns on IT security and proposed sharing resources with other agencies. IT tools could facilitate the work of staff, but this should be done in a way that did not create security risks. The discharge report invited the MB members to publish their CVs, but unlike the requirement concerning the declarations of interest, this was entirely up to the members' discretion.

Comments from the Governments

Ms Lindén congratulated Cedefop on the excellent ECA draft report. The group noted the findings on IT security and invited the Agency to work actively on the action plan to address it.

Cedefop responses

Ms Brugia thanked members for their support. She reassured members that the management was working towards the improvement of IT security. In addition, she reminded members that Cedefop would have to implement the requirements of the Cybersecurity Regulation. These requirements were enormous for the Agency, as the Regulation did not take into consideration the much smaller size of agencies in general, compared to the Commission and other EU institutions. One of the measures taken by Cedefop was the planned recruitment of an IT administrator, who would fulfil the obligations of the Cybersecurity Regulation and help the management address the issues identified by the IAS. Cedefop would prepare an action plan in close cooperation with the IAS.

Mr Siebel said that staff were regularly offered information sessions on cybersecurity. Staff data were the most sensitive data in Cedefop.

Ms Brugia said that the requirements of the Cybersecurity Regulation were so heavy that Cedefop had requested an additional post in its establishment plan to be shared with other agencies. However, as this request was rejected, the post for an IT administrator had to be deducted from the posts in core business.

Mr Siebel said that a centralised shared service solution (i.e. CERT-EU) had been proposed but was also rejected.

The Chairperson congratulated Ms Brugia, Cedefop's internal coordinator on the work and concluded that members took note of the information.

(e) Transfers of commitment and payment appropriations in 2024 (information)

No presentation.

Members took note of the information.

(f) Annual report of the Chair of Cedefop's Appeals Committee for the year 2023 and follow up (information/discussion)

The Chairperson invited the Executive Director to present the item.

Mr Siebel said that the Appeals Committee (AC) had received 13 appeals in 2023. Five of them were upheld. All five concerned AIPN decisions based on the same procedure. Although these decisions had been taken in good faith, and in order to give the opportunity to some contract agents to be promoted,

they lacked a legal basis. The administration would take the necessary measures to avoid similar situations in the future.

The Chairperson concluded that members took note of the information.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(a) Dates of Executive Board and Management Board meetings in 2025 (decision)

The following dates were agreed:

Dates	Meeting location
Management Board meeting 2025 Thursday and Friday 2 and 3 October with an Executive Board meeting on the eve, Wednesday 1 October 2025 (and a policy learning forum in the morning of 1 October, back-to-back with the Management Board)	Thessaloniki

The Chairperson concluded that the next Management Board meeting would take place on Thursday 2 and Friday 3 October 2025, with an Executive Board meeting on the eve, Wednesday 1 October 2025. A policy learning forum would be organised in the morning of 1 October 2025. The dates of the 2025 Executive Board meetings would be agreed via an online survey and communicated to the Management Board in due time. Cedefop's 50-year jubilee would take place on 27 May 2025 and the venue would be communicated to the Management Board the soonest possible.

(b) Outcomes of the briefing meeting of 14 May with (new) MB members and alternates (information)

The Chairperson informed members that 36 participants took part in the online briefing for (new) Management Board members, including two Commission representatives and the EP expert appointed in 2023. Of the 28 main members that attended, eight were new, and of the eight alternates that attended, three were new.

Note: The group participation was displayed on screen.

Ms Brugia invited members to provide feedback on the structure of the briefings, as it appeared that the participation rate was not very high.

Ms Roman said that briefings gave an opportunity for a group meeting before the MB. They should be more content-oriented and not so technical.

Mr Plummer said that briefings could indeed provide an opportunity to inform the MB on key issues to be discussed at the MB.

The Chairperson concluded that members took note of the information. Cedefop would adapt the content of the briefings accordingly.

(c) Compatibility of the functions of Management Board members and alternate members and ReferNet coordinators / representatives (*information*)

The Chairperson informed members that the compatibility of the functions of MB member and national ReferNet coordinator had recently been raised by one member. The issue of a potential (perceived) conflict of interest, concerning Management Board members or alternate members who at the same time also acted as national representatives, coordinators or legal representatives in ReferNet, was discussed at the EEB meeting of 28 June 2024 and at the EB of 2 October. Members had received the legal opinion of Cedefop's legal advisor. As concluded, although it was not – *per se* – incompatible for the same person to hold the position of MB member/alternate and at the same time be a ReferNet representative, this person could not be part of the decision-making on the operation of ReferNet, including its funding. Thus, for any decision concerning ReferNet, the MB member or alternate implicated should either abstain from voting or the alternate should replace the MB member at the meeting. A note would be distributed to the MB members for information.

The Chairperson concluded that members took note of the information.

The Chairperson thanked members for their participation. He also thanked Cedefop's management and staff for the smooth organisation of the meetings and closed this meeting at 13.15.

Signed on 1 December 2024

Mario Patuzzi
Chairperson of the Management Board

Jürgen Siebel
Executive Director