ECDC Management Board

MB6/Minutes
20 June 2006

Minutes of the sixth meeting of the ECDC Management Board, Stockholm 20-21 March 2006

(approved by the 7th meeting of the Management Board. Athens, 20-21 June 2006)

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Summary of decisions

The Management Board:

- approved the draft minutes of the 5th meeting of the Management Board with the request to include under para 45 the comment made on the coordinating function of national focal points;

- adopted, in accordance with Article 14 (5) (d) of the Founding regulation, the Director's annual report on the activities of the centre in 2005 ;

- agreed that, in addition to the full report of the Director's annual report, an executive summary of approx. 20 pages should also be prepared in English only and placed on the web, with a limited distribution in hard copies to selected audience;

- agreed that a brief brochure on the activities of the Centre for the media and the general public should be prepared in all the Community languages;

- endorsed the risk communication procedures on the basis that its comments are incorporated and that the modalities for the Centre's communication procedures are evaluated after one year of operation;

- endorsed the Director's proposal for follow-up and updating of the list of competent authorities by April 2006, with subsequent updates once or twice a year;

- approved the terms of reference and rules of procedure for ad hoc scientific panels with the amendment to be made to Article 3;

- approved the minor revisions to the budget and establishment table for 2006;

- endorsed the revised budget estimate and establishment plan for 2007;

- endorsed further discussions on International Health Regulations on the understanding that the Board would be kept fully informed of progress;

The Management Board also:

- took note of the Director's briefing on progress made by the Centre and thanked the Director and her staff for the extensive and positive progress report;

- took note of the draft annual accounts for 2005 and of the audit process and noted that the Board needs to formulate an opinion on the accounts at its next meeting (subject to receipt in sufficient time of the observations of the Court of Auditors);

- took note of the proposal for new rules of reimbursement for experts attending ECDC meetings in Stockholm and agreed that final approval by the Board should be requested thru written procedure once the current negotiations on the budget had been concluded;

- strongly supported the Director’s position regarding budget requirements for 2007-2013;

- took note of the report on influenza preparedness and response reflecting ongoing and planned activities in the Centre.

- took note of the outcome of the third meeting of the Audit Committee.

Opening and welcome by the chair

1. The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all participants. A special welcome was extended to Dr Maria da Graca Gregorio de Freitas, alternate from Portugal, who was attending the Management Board for the first time. A nomination for a new alternate for Slovakia, replacing Ms Zuzana Kristufkova had also been received for attendance at future meetings of the Board.

2. Before moving on to the agenda, the Chair referred to 3 important events which had arisen since the Board's last meeting: first and foremost was the emergence of avian influenza in Europe; secondly, the important discussions which had been initiated between the European Council, the Parliament and the Commission on the Financial Perspective for the community for the period 2007 – 2013. He thanked members of the Board for their support in the communication which he had dispatched in that regard. Thirdly, a new perspective had recently also been introduced on the issue of the term of office of Agency Directors. While the practice so far had been for an overall term of office of 5 years x 2, it appeared that the Council was considering changing this to 5 + 2 years. It also appeared that the authority to extend the term of office would no longer be for the Board to decide, but rather that of the Commission. It was the Chair's view that it was inappropriate to change the rules in this regard during a Director's incumbency, and he intended to take the matter up with the relevant authorities. He hoped he could count on the Board's support, and would draft a letter on the subject for the members' review and consideration.

Adoption of the agenda *(document MB/62/1)*

3. The agenda was adopted without change. The Board decided however to bring forward discussions on audit and budget issues, in view of the fact that budgetary oversight is a key aspect of the Board's remit and should not be left until the second day of the meeting. The Board also agreed to consider agenda items 11 and 12 together, as both covered the budget projections for 2007. In connection with agenda item 14, the Board was informed that a video would be screened on a research project on influenza sponsored by DG Research.

Declaration of interest

4. The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare an interest if anybody had a particular association with any of the items on the agenda. No declarations of interest were made. In accordance with Article 3.2 of the Rules of Procedure, the representative of Germany submitted a proxy statement to transfer his voting right to Austria for the second day of the meeting when he would not be able to attend.

Director's briefing on progress made in the work of ECDC

5. The Director briefed the Board on the main activities of the Centre since the last meeting, as well as on the outcome of the 5th meeting of the Advisory Forum, held in Stockholm on 21 February 2006.

6. Of key concern to the Centre since the last meeting of the Management Board had obviously been the evolving avian influenza situation in Europe, - a matter with which all Board Members were fully familiar and which had also been discussed extensively by the 5th meeting of the Advisory Forum. In that regard, the Director had on 24 February attended an informal meeting of EU Health Ministers in Vienna on the Impact on Avian Influenza on Public Health, at the invitation of the Minister of Health of Austria.

7. The Advisory Forum had also discussed the International Health Regulations, and their comments were incorporated in the document which the Board would consider at the present meeting. Another important item on the Forum's agenda had been a review of the surveillance strategy, both as concerns case definitions and the forthcoming evaluation of the networks. The scientific panels had also been on the agenda, and the final legal text would now be considered by the Board. The Advisory Forum had heard an update on the Early Warning and Response System, but that discussion was not yet completed.

8. For the first time, a scientific seminar had been included in the Forum's agenda, focusing on "Frontlines in infection biology at the Karolinska Institute."

9. Two visits from the Court of Auditors had taken place in late December 2005 and January 2006, with overall satisfactory results.

10. The Director had paid official visits to Cyprus and Greece to consolidate collaboration with the ECDC. Country visits had also been made to France, Italy and Lithuania to assess plans for pandemic preparedness, and more such visits were in the pipeline.

11. There had been an extensive series of meetings held since the last Board meeting, both in the EU context as well as visits to ECDC from key individuals on the communicable disease scene in Europe.

12. A lot of work had been carried out internally at the Centre during the 3 months since the Board's last meeting, and in concluding her introduction, the Director provided an overview of the main highlights and key events which had taken place in each of the Centre's units in that regard.

13. The Board thanked the Director and her staff for the extensive and positive progress report. In reply to a specific question regarding distribution of reports from country visits, it was explained that drafts would in all cases be sent to the respective Ministry of Health for accuracy and verification of facts, prior to finalization.

14. On the issue of collaboration with the pharmaceutical industry, ECDC had established good working relations with EMEA and other relevant international partners, but had so far not had the capacity to engage directly with the industry on issues of common concern.

15. A question was raised regarding ECDC's position in case of outbreaks and pandemics, and the closing of national borders. The issue had been acknowledged by the Centre, and work was progressing internally on it.

Minutes of the 5th meeting of the Management Board, 13-14 December 2005 *(document MB6/4/4)*

16. The minutes and list of decisions of the Board's 5th meeting had already been circulated to the members through written procedure on 22 December 2005, and comments made had been incorporated into the version now in front of the Board.

17. A further comment regarding the coordinating function of national focal points under para 45 of the report would be incorporated. On that basis, and since no further observations were made, the Board approved the minutes of the 5th meeting.

Director's Annual Report of the Centre's activities in 2005 *(document MB6/5/5 and MB6/5/6)*

18. In accordance with Article 14 (5) (d) of Regulation 851/2004, the Board shall adopt by 30th March the general report on the Centre's activities for the previous year. Following the Board's adoption, the Director shall, in accordance with Article 16 (4), forward the annual report by 15th June to the Parliament, the Council, the Commission, the Court of Auditors, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.

19. At its 5th meeting, the Board had been presented with a draft outline of the annual report for 2005 for its guidance and advice. Two documents were now in front of the Board for its review and consideration: a long report in line with the requirements of the above-referenced Articles of the Regulation, and a shorter version in the form of an Executive Summary.

20. In her introduction of the item, the Director recalled the earlier discussion in the Board, and the agreement that there could in fact be 3 different reports serving different target audiences: (a) a long version as per the requirements of the Regulation; (b) an Executive Summary to be used for limited distribution among Ministry of Health officials and health professionals; and (c) an extract of that summary (yet to be developed) intended for the media, journalists and the general public.

21. An internal assessment of editing, translation and publishing costs had been carried out and the Board was briefed on the various options in that regard. Due consideration also had to be taken of the time-line, and the significant variations in lead time in case of multi- versus mono-lingual versions.

22. In reviewing the two reports, the Board noted that the chapters were divided by organizational units, whereas it was felt to be more appropriate to structure the documents by mandate and functions, as derived from the Regulation. In the long report, under the chapter on crisis operations (p 33), it was also suggested that the respective roles of the Centre, the Management Board, the Commission, and possibly even the Parliament should be clarified. There was furthermore a need to review the terminology and abbreviations used in the Executive Summary.

23. An extensive discussion followed on the pros and cons of two versus three reports, the related language requirements, costs, and distribution policy with regard to hard copies versus the Web. In conclusion, and after an informal vote on the matter, the Chair summed up the majority view of the Board, as follows:

- The long report, which responded to the formal requirements of Articles 14 and 16 of the founding Regulation, should be edited and printed in English only, and put on the Web;

- An Executive Summary of around 20 pages, targeted specifically on health professionals, should also be in English only, and put on the Web with limited number of hard copies for distribution;

- A brief, attractive brochure should be prepared for the media and the general public. This brochure should have longer-term validity and was thus not directly linked to the annual report. It should be translated into all the Community languages and printed in hard copies.

It was so decided**.**

Draft annual accounts 2005 and audit process *(document MB6/6/7)*

24. The budget 2005 had been closed by the accountant on 31 December 2005, and the draft balance sheet and statement of accounts had been prepared accordingly, as set out in the document and its attachment. In line with Article 82 of the Financial Regulation, the draft accounts had also been forwarded to the accountant of the Commission.

25. The Board was informed that an audit by the European Court of Auditors (the external auditor of the ECDC) has taken place in January 2006, with overall positive results. The draft observations from the Court would in all likelihood to be ready for presentation to the next Board meeting in June 2006.

26. At this stage, the accounts for 2005 were presented to the Board for information only. At its next meeting in June 2006, it would be requested to formulate an opinion on the accounts of ECDC, based on the final accounts as they would be presented by the Director, the observation of the Court of Auditors thereon, and the declaration of assurance by the Director. Subsequently, the accounts would be forwarded to the European Parliament which acts as the Discharge Authority for the Agencies.

27. The Board was informed that € 2.603.000 out of the total budget of € 4.853.000 had been fully committed and paid in 2005, with an additional amount of € 1.437.000 carried over as payment credits to 2006. The remainder of some € 800.000 had been cancelled, mainly due to lack of organizational capacity in the start-up phase of the Centre.

28. The Board took note of the report and the draft annual accounts for 2005.

External communication strategy *(document MB6/7/8)*

29. During its 5th meeting in December 2005, the Board had discussed procedures for making major announcements to the media, based on a document presented to it at the time. The Board had concluded that the matter was of such importance that more time would be required, and that a revised document should as a consequence be prepared for its consideration at its 6th meeting.

30. The document now in front of the Board aimed at addressing the concerns earlier expressed in relation to risk communication, and proposed a set of procedures for the Board's consideration and comments.

31. In her introduction, the Director recalled the provisions of Article 12 of the Regulation, which were specific on the obligations of the Centre. In fact, those obligations were twofold: (a) to provide Member States with prior information about the Centre's communication activities, and (b) collaborate closely with them on risk communication.

32. In reviewing the Centre's proposals, the Board welcomed the establishment of contact points in each Member State in order to better coordinate risk communication issues. It was suggested that the representatives of Parliament on the Management Board could act as contact points with Parliament in this regard.

33. On the other hand, it would not be necessary for ECDC to always involve the Commission on all issues, as the current proposals seemed to indicate. Sometimes, the Centre would be working on risk communication issues which only affected one country, and in those instances a bilateral collaboration between ECDC and the country concerned would be sufficient.

34. As a general rule, it was essential that risk communication messages from WHO and ECDC be consistent and fully aligned. It was recalled that messages e.g. on avian influenza from WHO/Geneva had on occasion been too alarmist. There was therefore an important need to develop some joint mechanisms with WHO for risk assessment and risk communication and some more precision on how this could be achieved would be required.

35. Some Board members questioned whether the ECDC had a role to play in the case of objections of a political nature from Member States. Other Board Members insisted on the need to safeguard ECDC's communication against political interference. There was agreement that the Centre's risk communications must not be politicised. Political consensus building would be too time consuming, and was also outside the remit of the Centre. ECDC should concentrate on scientific validation in its risk communication: once the scientific evidence was clear, the Centre should issue its recommendations.

36. During the conclusion of the discussion, the Board was informed by the Director that she also intended to incorporate a communications component for key activities in the 2007 work plans. This would be shared with the Board in due course.

37. The Board requested the Director to take the recommendations on board and with this the external communication strategy was approved. The modalities for the Centre's communication procedures could then be evaluated after one year of operation, and adjustments made accordingly. It was so agreed**.**

Country strategy: list of counterparts *(document MB6/8/9)*

38. At its previous discussion of this issue in December 2005, the Board had made the point that when considering counterparts in Member States, a distinction had to be made between 'competent bodies' (i.e. legal entities with clear mandates in and recognized by Member States), and functional contact points (i.e. key contacts points on scientific and technical issues).

39. The document presented to the Board comprised both: a suggested list of competent bodies in Member States; and a proposal for functional contact points within the competent bodies.

40. Some Members of the Board pointed out the difficulty with lists of 'competent bodies' for countries with a federal structure. Others suggested that one focal point per country ought to be sufficient, e.g. within the Ministry of Health. That focal point would then be able to provide authoritative feed-back to ECDC from the country concerned, and could also ensure further coordination on specific issues, as and when required.

41. In reply, it was pointed out that the Management Board had a clear obligation in this area, derived from Article 14 of the founding Regulation which states: "The Management Board shall compile a list of competent bodies referred to in Article 5 and make it public". Furthermore, Article 5 (4) states that "The Centre shall cooperate with competent bodies recognized by Member States, particularly on preparatory work for scientific opinions, scientific and technical assistance, collection of data and identification of emerging threats". ECDC and the Board were thus duty-bound to establish such lists.

42. The lists proposed in the document were at this stage quite generic. Members of the Board were requested to review the lists and check them for appropriateness in their particular national setting. Feedback to ECDC was requested by 1 April 2006. Updated lists would then be submitted to the Board once or twice per year in the future, for continuous verification and feedback to the Centre.

43. The Board endorsed the Director's request for follow-up as indicated.

Rules of procedure of ad hoc scientific panels *(document MB6/9/10)*

44. At its 5th meeting, the Board had endorsed the procedures for scientific advice and support, subject to the required legal text to be incorporated.

45. Document MB6/9/10 included the necessary input from the Commission services as well as the Legal Adviser of the EEA, and had been circulated to members through written procedure on 15 February 2006. Comments received had been incorporated in the version now in front of the Board.

46. The underlying process for the establishment of panels was explained: A roster of experts had been compiled in full transparency and in accordance with the Commission's rules of procedure. A call for expression of interest had so far generated a roster of 320 experts. All experts who had expressed an interest were included on the roster, and individual panels were drawn from the roster on the advice of the Advisory Forum, - in the case of avian influenza 11 experts had been selected by the Forum.

47. In reply to a specific question, it was confirmed that the Centre would publish the names of panel members on ECDC's web-site, and likewise the scientific questions put to the panels. It was not, however, felt appropriate to disseminate the names of all experts on the full roster to the Board. That could lead to unnecessary discussion and debate.

48. As far as the final text in document MB6/9/10 was concerned, it was pointed out that Article 3 should be slightly modified. All references to 'political' considerations or

implications should be deleted. With that amendment, the Board approved the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure applicable to ad hoc scientific panels.

Rules for reimbursement of experts attending ECDC meetings *(document MB6/10/11)*

49. The Director had brought the issue of reimbursement of experts to the attention of the Board at its 5th meeting, which in turn requested a paper suggesting remedies for its 6th meeting. That paper was now in front of the Board, recommending a replacement of the current practice of reimbursing 'by analogy' with Commission guidelines, with a more realistic per diem rate.

50. Based on a careful review of actual costs in Stockholm of hotel accommodation, transportation charges, meal costs and other miscellaneous items like exchange rate losses and bank charges, the Director's proposal was to increase the 'per diem' rate from the present €149 to €260 per day.

51. The Commission felt that changing the reimbursement rules at this juncture might be sending the wrong signal, since the whole Community was faced with serious budgetary constraints linked to the financial perspectives 2007 – 2013.

52. A solution to the issue was nevertheless urgent, and the Director therefore suggested that the matter could be settled through written procedure, as soon as the current negotiations on the budget had been concluded, - hopefully by end April 2006. The Board approved that course of action.

Budget 2006: minor revisions (*document MB6/11/12)*

53. Two minor revisions to the budget and establishment table for 2006 were proposed to the Board: (a) a reduction of € 54.000 due to lower than expected contributions from the EEA/EFTA Member States, and (b) an upgrading of 5 posts in the establishment table, as made possible by the Financial Regulation of the Centre. The Board approved the proposed action.

Financial Perspective 2007 – 2013 *(document MB6/12/14)*

54. Since the last meeting of the Board, crucial discussions had been initiated on the overall Financial Perspective 2007 – 2013 for the European Union, within the framework of the Trilogue between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission.

55. The Director expressed her appreciation to the Chair and all Members of the Board who had contributed so positively to the recent efforts to sensitize key members involved in those discussions. A comprehensive letter from the Chair had been shared with all Members in draft form prior to despatch. The Chair's letter had been sent to the President of the Commission, the President of the Parliament, the Presidents of ENVI and the Budget Committees, as well as to all Member States' Permanent Representatives in Brussels.

56. She recalled that ECDC had in January 2006 been requested by DG SANCO to provide its input to the financial perspective debate, and the Centre's note in that regard was

attached to document MB6/12/14 for the Board's information. In brief, the Centre's position could be summarized as follows:

- The minimum required resources needed to implement the mandate as set out in the founding Regulation had been estimated at € 60 million per annum;
- € 40 million was judged as the minimal critical mass, at which level the Centre could fulfil a part of its obligations;
- Any funding below € 40 million would result in a non-viable Centre, unable to play a significant public health role in Europe.

57. She was pleased to be able to report that a consensus position between the Centre and DG SANCO had been negotiated for the 2007 budget, and that prospects looked good also for a reasonable solution to the longer-term perspective 2008 – 2013. The point was made that the ECDC was working together with the Commission on these difficult issues, and that the Centre was not trying to lobby for its own case against the needs of the Commission.

58. In the ensuing discussion the Commission cautioned that, while prospects for ECDC looked fairly promising, firm and final figures could not yet be provided, and that the inter-dependence between DG SANCO and the Agencies had to be kept in mind. Nevertheless, the whole rationale behind the establishment of ECDC was to improve on the public health situation in Europe. It would therefore not be in anybody's interest to severely restrict funding to a European-wide, collaborative effort which had just got under way.

59. In reply to a question from the Board, it was explained that the Centre would be unable to take over the operations of the designated surveillance networks if future funding was restricted too much. In reply to another question, the Board was informed of the Centre's activity–based planning and budgeting framework. According to the 2006 work plans, it could be concluded with some certainty that 80% of ECDC's overall budget was attributed to specific projects linked to provisions in the Regulation, with only 20% as 'overheads' in terms of administrative costs, rent, telecom/postal charges, furniture, etc.

60. In conclusion, the Board strongly supported the Director's position regarding ECDC's budget requirement of €26,5 million for 2007, with an increase to €60 million per year over the medium term, in order to be able to deliver the mandate and functions set out in the founding Regulation.

61. Nevertheless, the Board also requested a paper for its next meeting, outlining options on what would have to be dropped from the Centre's mandate and key functions, if the final decision on funding for the 2008-2013 period were to settle on €40 million, rather than the €60 million hoped for.

2007 budget estimate and draft establishment plan *(document MB6/11/13)*

62. The draft Establishment Plan and Budget for ECDC for 2007 had initially been presented to the Management Board at its 5th meeting. The Board had endorsed the Director's proposals for € 29 million and a staff complement of 100 for 2007.

63. Since then, and as referred to above, a consensus position between DG SANCO and ECDC had settled on € 26,5 million for the Centre in 2007. It was pointed out that the document in front of the Board highlighted precisely in which areas the increase of €10 million from 2006 would be allocated, including a revised establishment table for 2007.

64. The reduction of € 2,5 million from the initial budget estimate would be absorbed by a somewhat delayed rate of recruitment of experts to the Centre, and by deferring some 'non-critical activities' to the first half of 2008.

65. The Board felt that terms such as 'non-critical activities' should be avoided if the document was to be distributed to external partners, since the issue was more one of planned delays of selected activities.

66. The Board took note and endorsed the revised budget estimate and establishment plan for 2007.

International Health Regulations *(document MB6/13/15)*

67. As referred to in the Director's introduction, the Advisory Forum had discussed the question of roles and responsibilities under the new International Health Regulations at its 5th meeting in February 2006. The matter was now in front of the Management Board for its review and guidance.

68. To facilitate the discussion by the Board, document MB6/13/15 reflected the Advisory Forum's comments and opinions under each main section of the document. The main suggestions were:

- that EWRS should be used for notification under IHR;
- that Member states should preferably have the same focal point for both EWRS and IHR;
- that ECDC could act as the common EU focal point in multi-state outbreaks; and
- that Member States should report surveillance data to ECDC for further transmission to WHO.

69. The Board welcomed the document presented to it, but pointed out that there were several legal and political issues which could not be answered at the present time, and which would require discussion in other fora, including the Health Council. It was pointed out that legally speaking, ECDC could not represent the Community in its interactions with WHO and with third countries. IHR would also in many cases necessitate amendments to national legislations: that was an issue for each respective government to deal with. In some cases additional problems would arise due to the federal nature of some Member States. Questions were also raised as to whether ECDC could in fact be legally mandated to conclude a Memorandum of Understanding with WHO on behalf of the Community regarding representation on emergency committees.

70. From a technical point of view, it was pointed out that the IHR covered a broader scope of notifications than the EWRS, including biological and nuclear threats. Using the EWRS as the reporting tool might therefore not always work.

71. In reply, it was stressed that the purpose of the document was one of consultation and brainstorming, in order to explore which role the various institutions in the Community could play in the IHR, and whether opportunities existed for joint action. It was clearly recognized that the IHR was a set of International Regulations of WHO, negotiated with all of its 192 member States. The question was therefore not one of taking over WHO's functions in Europe, but rather to explore how ECDC could best support the process.

72. The Board endorsed further discussions on the matter, on the understanding that it would be kept fully informed of progress.

Update on influenza preparedness and response *(document MB6/14/16)*

73. The Board was of course fully aware of the tremendous efforts undertaken at both national and Community levels in tackling the challenges represented by the emergence of highly pathogenic avian influenza strains in Europe.

74. The purpose of putting the issue on the Board's agenda was for information only, in order to brief members on ECDC's ongoing and planned influenza preparedness activities.

75. Underlying all ECDC influenza work were 3 distinct issues: (a) seasonal influenza, (b) avian influenza, and (c) pandemic influenza. As far as avian influenza was concerned, ECDC had so far contributed to outbreak investigation teams in Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, Romania, Iraq and China. The Centre's web-site contained weekly updates of the evolving situation. A scientific panel had been established as discussed earlier, and guidelines had been prepared on several issues, with more to come. Regular communication and exchange of information was maintained with the Member States and other partners, including the participation and hosting of meetings. A major workshop on pandemic preparedness was to be hosted by the Centre in May 2006 in Uppsala, Sweden.

76. The Board noted the historic coincidence of the birth of ECDC, and the propagation of avian influenza in Europe, more or less at the same time. The Centre had an important role to play in preparing authoritative, balanced information for dissemination to Member States. Nevertheless, some members of the Board questioned the balance of current efforts: avian influenza was not a human disease, and yet nearly all attention was focused on it, at the neglect of seasonal influenza which represented a much bigger problem in public health terms.

77. In reply, the Director acknowledged that more needed to be done in relation to seasonal influenza, but that did not mean that the focus on avian influenza should be downgraded. A future pandemic was at some stage probable, and the ECDC had been specifically requested to continue its work both by the Commission, as well as by the Council of Ministers during its informal meeting in February 2006. As a potential threat to human health it also fell squarely within the provisions of the founding Regulation.

78. There were still many unanswered question of a scientific nature to be dealt with. Awareness-raising, through balanced and objective information dissemination, would also continue to be a priority.

79. The Board took note of the report and asked to be kept informed at regular intervals, as the situation evolved.

Audit issues *(documents MB6/15/17 and MB6/15/18)*

80. The Audit Committee had had its 3rd meeting in the morning of 20 March, immediately prior to the opening of the Board's 6th meeting.

81. The Committee had reviewed the Commission's Internal Control Standards and their relevance to a still small organization like the ECDC. Some modifications in that regard would be incorporated in the final version. A detailed presentation by the Centre's accountant had also been made to the Committee of the draft accounts for 2005, as discussed above. The third main item on the Audit Committee's agenda had concerned ECDC's financial processes and workflows. In that regard, the Board was informed that a framework for delegation of authority from the Director to Unit Heads would shortly be implemented, following appropriate training in the required workflow mechanisms.

82. The Audit Committee had also been provided feedback from the visits to the Centre by the Court of Auditors, as referred to by the Director in her introduction. Briefly, the Court of Auditors had been satisfied with how the accounts were handled at the Centre, and with past and present recruitment processes of new staff. Some reservations had been expressed in the area of procurement and contracting, but it was expected that current weaknesses would soon be rectified with the ongoing strengthening of the administrative support unit.

83. The Board took note of the report.

Other matters

84. The Director reported that ECDC is introducing a new logo. The company that developed the logo then showed it to the Management Board and gave a brief explanation of the ideas it encapsulates.

85. With the permission of the Chairman, a short film was shown on behalf of the Commission's Research Directorate-General, on recent EU-funded research into influenza vaccine development. (The film can also be viewed on this website: http://www.tvlink.org/vnr.cfm?vidID=170>)..

86. At the 5th meeting, the Member from Greece had extended a provisional invitation for the 7th meeting of the Board. She was now pleased to confirm that invitation for the days 20-21 June 2006. Further information would follow in due course regarding logistics and hotel reservations.

87. The Board noted that the formal 7th meeting of the Board would be preceded, as per the practice established in Budapest, by an informal meeting, focusing mainly on presentations and briefings. Documentation for the meeting should therefore be kept to a minimum.

Closure

88. The Chair expressed his view that the discussions at the 6th meeting had been excellent, with good participation of all Members. On behalf of the whole Board he thanked the Director and her staff for the impressive work of the Centre since its last meeting 3 months ago.

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