

Robert Arnkil and Timo Spangar

Does Information Communicate?

**Evaluation of the European Agency
for Safety and Health at Work**

Final Report

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- Evaluation of the European Agency for Safety and health at Work

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Does Information Communicate?

- Evaluation of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work

Foreword

This evaluation has been conducted by Social Development Company (Sosiaalikehitys Oy) from Hämeenlinna, Finland. The team in the company responsible for the evaluation has been evaluation leader Robert Arnkil, Dr. Timo Spangar, MA Riitta Kinnunen and MA Kalevi Kekki. Dr. Tuomo Alasoini, Programme Manager of the Finnish Worklife Development Programme, Ministry of Labour, acted as special advisor for the evaluation team, and joined us in the Bilbao Workshop in January 2001.

The German case study was conducted by Dr. Friedrich Hauss, from Brain Tools, Berlin and Dr. Maria Oppen from Berlin Science Centre. The Italian case study was conducted by Dr. Elena Battaglini from IRES (A non profit institute, founded in 1979 by the CGIL (the main Italian Trade Union)). We want to thank our partners for seminal input in the evaluation.

The liaison group for the evaluation consisted of Mr. Winfried Kleinegris, CEC-DG Empl. Evaluation Unit, as Chair, Mr. Richard Clifton, Chairman of the Administrative Board (Governments' representative), Mr. Marcel Wilders, Vice-Chairman of the Administrative Board (Trade Unions' representative), Mr. Torben Jepsen, Vice-Chairman of the Administrative Board (Employers' representative), Mr. Hans-Horst Konkolewsky, Director of OSHA and Mr. Joan Pijuan, Resource Manager of OSHA. We want to thank the liaison group for several important and fruitful meetings and assisting us in our complex task.

We also want to thank all the people we interviewed for candid discussions and invaluable input. Likewise, we thank the respondents to the questionnaires.

Hämeenlinna, Finland

February 25th, 2001

The evaluators

1. Introduction

The evaluation task has not been easy for two main reasons: The evaluation subject, the Agency, is a complex entity both in terms of structure and tasks, and secondly because of extreme time-constraints. The gross time devoted for the evaluation task was five months, but in practice it was much less, barely four, which is an extremely short time to address a Europe-wide institution in a reasonable way.

In order to secure a reasonable coverage of the evaluation issues and perspectives, several databases were used in the evaluation, namely interviews, questionnaires, country-case studies, workshops and material analysis. All these data could be gathered to a reasonable degree of success, the most difficulties occurring with the Europe-wide questionnaire, but despite the very short time for response, even it could reach an acceptable level of coverage and yield interesting results. The interviews and country case studies could be conducted in a satisfactory way, although not all viewpoints in such a complex and multi-stakeholder environment could be covered in full. The weaknesses in details could be compensated by cross-checking the message coming from different data, and thus arriving, we feel, at a saturation point on the themes and opinions relevant for the evaluation. It is of course up to the reader to judge how we have succeeded in this.

Judging cost-effectiveness and value added is difficult at this early stage of the Agency development. The main message from the evaluation is, that positive results in terms of building an infrastructure for information has been reached, but content and impact (effects) need improvement. The result being this, judging cost-effectiveness, and also value-added, becomes relative.

The evaluation report answers the key questions of evaluation in Chapters 4 and 5, and in chapter 6 some tentative recommendations are spelled out for future discussions concerning the Agency.

Definitions:

By the concept 'Agency' and the acronym 'OSHA' we refer to the European Agency for Safety and Health as a whole, together with its decentralised network (Focal Points, Topic Centres, etc.) By the concept 'Bilbao Office', we refer to the Agency Office in Bilbao. By the concept 'Agency Network' we refer to the decentralised Network (without the Bilbao Office). By the acronym 'OSH' we refer to 'Occupational safety and health'. Other key concepts are 'Board' referring to the Administrative Board of the Agency and 'Bureau', referring to the Executive Board of the Agency.

2. Executive summary

Key discoveries

The title of our evaluation - *Does Information Communicate?* - points to the main conclusion of our evaluation. For an information Agency like the European Agency for Safety and health at Work, operating in an emerging information or knowledge society, and facing fierce competition for audiences and an overflow of information, the key point is to be able to communicate, to reach the audiences and customers.

In the context of safety and health at work, the key question is to be able to support and induce practical activity among the key audiences, stakeholders and customers. In other words, the key question is not whether good techniques, structures or databases are in place and information is connected and flowing. These are of course vital infrastructure elements to enter the tough information competition, and unless they are the state of the art, you are out of business. The key question is what is the outcome, the *impact* of providing information, is it *useful* for the intended users.

The evaluation of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work comes at an early stage to make strong judgements about the impact in this sense. After quite a difficult delivery process, with a lot of ambivalence about the need, role and set-up of the Agency, finally, Council Regulation 2062/94 established the Agency in July 1994. It started work in September 1996, becoming fully operational by 1999. So in all, the Agency is into its fifth year, and only into its third year fully operational. Certainly, this is a short time for any organisation to establish itself and a very early stage to make conclusions of performance and impact. All the more because the Agency is a Network, a complex structure operating in a complex and changing societal, work, policy and decision making environment.

The evaluation comes to the conclusion that the Agency has been reasonably successful in establishing an infrastructure for providing information in the field of OSH, both in terms of techniques and media for information, and a network structure.

In reaching impact, meeting customer needs, the Agency has been partially successful. Providing the Agency takes decisive steps to address some key issues, it has good potential to reach better impact in the future.

This conclusion is backed up by a robust result from extensive interviews (altogether 90, covering all key stakeholders and partners), country case studies (Finland, Germany, Italy and Portugal), a Europe-wide survey (with 160 respondents, an estimated return rate of about 30%), plus a questionnaire for the Administrative Board, a workshop with the entire Bilbao staff in January 2001, and comparison with two other European agency evaluations (EEA and EMCDDA) ¹,

Whether such a "first wave" result constitutes a sufficient success for the Agency in meeting its objectives spelled out particularly in Articles 2, 3 and 4, is of course a matter for the Council and the Board to judge.

The most successful feature of the first phase has been establishing the Websites, which can be considered to be the state of the art. This achievement is positively regarded by all stakeholders and is

¹ European Environment Agency and European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction

reflected in all data. In this regard the Agency was quick in grasping the need and opportunity to tap into the information society at a time, when nobody could predict the rapid implications of Internet. If this would not have been launched at the time, we would be looking at quite a different situation right now.

Establishing the other key infrastructure element, a Network of co-operation and communication (Focal Points and others), has been successful for the most part, but with lots of room for improvement. The Agency is in essence a multi-stakeholder Network, and in a strategic sense dependent on reaching a sustainable level of co-operation and trust within it. One needs to find a more proactive and natural way for the Focal Points to engage in the Network effort, and in general strengthen the Focal Points and their own national networks and engagement. The diversity of national situations and also possibilities needs to be addressed better.

In terms of impact and utility of the information provided, a robust result from our data is that this has been reached only partially. The information provided at the moment is deemed, by all stakeholders, whether from the Commission, social partners, researchers, companies or others, to be useful in a general sense at best, but lacking in real practical problem solving usability. The value added to the national level is still modest, mostly related to the Internet effects. The achievements in the European dimension relate likewise to the Internet through providing useful links. Also the Agency has succeeded in rising the awareness of OSH-questions and contributing towards rising the OSH-questions on the European strategic agenda, particularly through campaigns and meetings.

A unanimous wish across customers and stakeholders is that the information should be developed particularly in two aspects: providing more reliable database and encyclopaedia-type information and good practices/problem-solving/OSH-checklists -type information. Both should be accompanied with flexible search possibilities. There are different ways of dealing with these challenges, and the Agency is already working on several aspects of these, and we will point out a couple in our recommendations.

It is also clear from the data, that there is no reason to underestimate the importance of human contact based message delivery and campaigns, because in terms of impact, the European Week and the conferences and meetings of the Agency were rated favourably by all stakeholders. The campaigns have been useful in two ways: rising the awareness of OSH-matters in Europe and on the national level, and also in providing a possibility to form both transnational and national networks and co-operation. This kind of work will be one of the key success factors in the future.

The way ahead

As it was pointed out above, this is an early stage to make strong judgements on impact, so it is also necessary to consider the potential to reach the audiences and better impact in the future. In other words, has the development so far been adequate and sufficient to provide a platform for reaching the impact needed in the future? And further, can such impact be reached by following the same developmental trajectory as so far?

Our conclusion is, that the platform established in this first wave of development has potential to reach an adequate and sustainable level of impact, provided some key issues are addressed in a decisive way.

Looking at the big picture, however, our impression is that the Agency might be arriving at a bifurcation point, a crossroads, where following the same trajectory in an incremental way is not enough.

The Agency has already successfully passed one bifurcation point, namely pondering in 1996-1997, whether and how to invest in launching Websites, at a time when it was not obvious, what the implications would be, and how useful it would prove to be.

The new (possible) crossroads constitutes, in our understanding, from five main elements, which have to be dealt with in a decisive way, to secure the realisation of the build-up phase potential:

1. Communicating decisively better with customers to meet their information needs
2. Developing the OSH-concept to deal with the changing world of work
3. Reaching a new level of development in the Agency Network (especially Focal Points) to deal with national diversity and find fruitful roles and co-operation
4. Developing strategic management and the management structure (Board) and Agency strategy to deal with 1 - 3, and secure the evolution of the Agency
5. Securing adequate capability of the Bilbao office.

Further robustness for our conclusion is rendered by the fact, that the evaluation of the European Environment Agency (EEA) (Andersen 2000) comes in many points to similar conclusions on the developmental path of EEA. The EEA acted in many ways as a model for OSHA, has a similar structure and is also a young agency.

1) Communicating decisively better with customers

The data points to a rather critical situation in terms of reaching better communication with customers and to build the Agency Network a decisive step further. We suggest that very decisive measures are needed to address, assess and meet customer needs.

We suggest that addressing this question is more than just continuing incrementally the same path as so far. Many measures to address these questions are already being done or are in the pipeline: feedback from customers, targeting information better according to needs, establishing a good practice databank, the SME-project, etc. What we suggest is that a very decisive effort here is needed: To find out about the practical needs of the different target groups, co-operating with them in an intensive problem-solving and communicative way, so that a shift from a supply oriented information provision to a communication and demand driven paradigm is reached. The SME-project is here a case in point. It is probably important to concentrate efforts, to reach a real contact with SME-intermediaries and a real SME network, listen to their needs, and work with them to reach a practical breakthrough, and then use it as a platform for disseminating good practice.

2) Developing the Occupational safety and health concept to deal with the changing world of work

A second important aspect is the need to continue to build a comprehensive concept, connection and strategy in relation to the changing world of work in Europe and the world. The Agency is aware of this, and has tentatively addressed this in conferences and publications. We suggest a keen eye should be kept on this issue.

The work environment and OSH-problematics are in themselves bifurcated: old structures, institutions and problems retain their importance (albeit being transformed) and at the same time new ones are emerging. There is a reasonable level of satisfaction with the programmes, projects and themes of the Agency so far, like MSD and Stress, but also a strong wish among stakeholders exists to lift others more strongly on the agenda, like engaging more with the educational field, communicating better the benefits of OSH in terms of competitiveness and economy, addressing the psycho-social dimension of work in a more comprehensive way. Again, most these have been initially dealt with, and one should build on this.

The recent adoption of a new Social Agenda and Employment Strategy, and a proposal to adopt a new Communication on a Community Strategy on Health and Safety at Work provide a favourable backdrop to take the understanding of the importance and meaning of OSH-activities to a new, more integrated level. We suggest it is vital for an information agency to be well connected to this development.

3) Reaching a new level of development in the Agency Network to deal with diversity and find fruitful roles and co-operation

The future of the Agency lies decisively on its Network, the Focal Points, Topic Centres and other Network partners and connections. The future success depends on the ability of the Agency to foster co-operation and the use of the Network resources as a whole.

The first phase of Agency development succeeded in setting up a Network structure, and this is quite a remarkable achievement, taking into account the hesitance of many countries to launch Focal Points, and provide them with adequate resources. But the achievement remains very uneven, and far from secured.

Bringing the Network to a new level of functioning constitutes clearly one of the core challenges for the near future, and many improvements, most importantly the first key challenge, practical customer orientation, depends on solving the Network co-operation better. The key point to be addressed here is to find meaningful and fruitful ways to address the national diversity of OSH-problems and priorities, which is further emphasised by the imminent enlargement. This could mean, for example, that one should look for different challenging and natural tasks for different countries and Focal Points, building on their needs, strengths, histories and present agendas. Issues, where a fruitful division of labour could yield good results and engagement could be, for example, the enlargement, ageing, immigration, globalisation and third world.

4) Developing the Agency strategy and management structure

The scope of audiences and customers of the Agency is formidable; it is facing nothing less than the whole complexity of the European integration process. The rapid development of the Internet puts also the global challenge on the table, for example: What is the role of Europe and its OSH-information in the global network, especially in relation to the third world?

For any information business, a complexity of audiences poses a challenge of focus, priorities and reaching real impact.

The Agency itself is a complex entity, in fact quite a new "information age" type of an organisation, calling for new, more advanced concepts of management. In short, there is a high level of agreement among the present management discourse that in the face of such complexity, old manage-

ment paradigms are not enough. There is also a high level of agreement in this discourse on the key to success: rise the level of strategic debate, dialogue and utilise diversity and polyphony and use effective experimentation, with good feedback mechanisms, to feel your way.² The Internet itself, constituting continuous experimentation, with a high level of unpredictability, is a case in point here.

The evaluation data points to a degree of dissatisfaction with the structures and content of strategic management in the Agency. There is a widely shared view, across stakeholders and interview and survey data, that the present steering structures need improvement. As much as the tripartite structure in itself is valued from the point of providing contact to key stakeholders and social partners, the potential of this is not realised to the full and it does not function optimally. With the imminent enlargement it only becomes more apparent that new solutions must be sought to improve strategic steering.

A way forward could be to strengthen the role and functionality of the Board as a strategic social dialogue forum, and strengthen the role of the Bureau as the actual Executive Board. This development should be coupled with adding new voices and contacts, to secure openness to new developments. Giving a voice for SME-representation, and the educational field could be examples of this. Developing the role of the Focal Points and countries, addressed in point 3, also builds possibilities for strategic management.

The present Agency strategy mainly addresses the Website aspects, which can be seen as justified at the time. There is a mention (in the mission and vision) to the *productivity* aspect of OSH and some treatment on network partnership, but our suggestion is that the strategy needs elaboration in the five key challenge areas we have outlined here.

5) Securing the capability of the Bilbao Office

The Bilbao Office staff displays quite a good coverage and qualifications in relation to its tasks, especially in the engineering, ICT and information questions. The data also indicates a reasonably positive level of trust in capabilities of the Office staff, although concerns about developing them further were also taken up quite strongly. Our impression is that the staff is motivated and dedicated to its work. The office operates with complex tasks, with a rather skeleton staff and with a considerable workload. There is no evidence of a "growth crisis" identified in the evaluation of the European Environment Agency, equally a young network agency.

Sharing and developing the vision and mission of the Agency and more flexible cross-functional communication and co-operation are needed. Engagement with, and the position of assistant (secretary) staff needs to be improved.

Looking at future challenges we feel that expertise in the fields of work sociology, psychology and health should be strengthened. Also legal advice was called for. We also suggest that a higher human resources profile is needed, to secure capabilities and recruitment to meet future challenges.

² Kickert, JM., Klijn, E-H. and Koppenjan, Joop (1997): *Managing Complex Networks - Strategies for the Public Sector*. SAGE. London. Government of the Future. OECD 2000., Stacey, R.(1996) *Strategic Management and Organisational Dynamics*. Pitman Publishing. London.

Key recommendations:

1. **Communicating decisively better with customers:** Put in place more effective and communicative feedback mechanisms, focus groups and co-operation with different customers and stakeholders both on the strategic level (tripartite dialogue) and operational level; aim for breakthrough in SME-network with focused effort in the SME-project
2. **Developing the Occupational Safety and Health concept** to deal with the changing world of work: Align strategy with new EU-strategies, increase co-operation with Network partners to enhance database utility and reliability
3. **Reaching a new level of development in the Agency Network:** Deal better with national diversity and needs, strengthen Focal Points and their national networks, and find fruitful and natural roles, especially for the Focal Points, in a challenging and interesting division of labour and co-operation on OSH-themes
4. **Developing the Agency management structure and strategy:** Improve possibilities of strategic dialogue, utilise better the tripartite possibilities and include new voices (f.ex. SME, Education), develop the Board - Bureau roles, elaborate Agency Strategy to address key challenges more comprehensively and align strategy with new EU-strategies, address the globality of Internet development
5. **Securing the capability of the Bilbao Office:** Increase internal communication on the vision and mission, and the nature of the "Network Agency", put in place more flexible internal cross-functional communication, secure diversity and high level of capabilities, invigorate human resources management, secure engagement of assistant staff

3. Evaluation task

3.1. The evaluation questions

The evaluation task set in the tender specification for the external evaluation of the Agency was closely tied to the founding regulations of the Agency. The evaluation answers, following its terms of reference, the following key questions:

1. What progress has the Agency made so far?
2. How does the Agency fulfil its role defined in the regulations, particularly Article 2, 3 and 4)?
3. How do its working programmes meet the role envisioned?
4. How satisfied the customers are with Agency operations?
5. What added value has the Agency introduced in the field of safety and health at work?

In the terms of reference of the evaluation it is also stated that the evaluator may formulate any comments and suggestions deemed appropriate and elaborate technical conclusions that can support future development. So we have also answered the questions of

6. Has the progress so far provided a platform to reach good results in the future?
7. What key recommendations to improve performance can be drawn from the evaluation data?

3.2. Evaluation methodology and evaluation data

The subject of the evaluation, The Agency, with its many layers and network structure, a wide range of audiences, stakeholders and target groups, is extremely complex entity to evaluate, especially in the short time at the evaluator's disposal. The methodology used by the evaluator was designed to treat such complexity, at least to a reasonable degree, and to reach a holistic and multi-stakeholder perspective on the Agency's performance.

The main feature of the evaluation methodology adopted by Social Development Co. for the evaluation of the Agency was to see the evaluation effort as a cumulative process aiming at a saturation point regarding the empirical observations and conceptualisations made during the process.

The 'saturation point perspective' indicates a multi-perspective approach to gathering observations and information from the different levels of the Agency operations, networks, processes, and products. As a result of a triangulation process between empirical observations and conceptualisations, and cross-checking and validating observations over different data, the understanding of the subject of the evaluation grows more and more covering, and, ideally, reaching a holistic picture of the subject, based on an adequately thick description.

Social Development Co's evaluation team has used several methods in order to reach the saturation point and as thick as possible description of Agency. The evaluation study has been *user-oriented*. Different evaluation methods have been targeted to experts in the field of occupational safety and health, and who also have been aware or actually *used* the services of the Agency as the users have the needed knowledge and experience of the Agency in order to give their informed opinion about it.

Country case studies

Finland, Germany, Portugal, and Italy were chosen as exemplary countries for closer examination. The Social Development Co's evaluation team carried out the case studies of Finland and Portugal. The German case study was prepared by Dr. Hauss of Brain Tools, Berlin together with Dr. Maria Oppen from Berlin Science Centre. The Italian country study was delivered by Dr Battaglini, coordinator of the research area of environment/territory and safety of the research institute IRES. (The thematic summaries of the country cases are included in Annex II).

Semi-structured thematic interviews

Semi-structured thematic interviews were carried out in all the exemplary case countries, with experts involved in the safety and health issues and the Agency in the EU institutions in Brussels and Luxembourg as well as with the staff of the Bilbao Office. Furthermore, the other interview target groups were the people involved directly with the Agency or the Agency network its network, ILO, research institutions, other interest groups, the employer and the labour union organisations, the policy makers and the government representatives. (The detailed description of the interviewees is included in Annex III).

Strategic workshop

A strategic workshop was held by the evaluators with all the Agency staff in Bilbao in January 2001. The goal of the workshop was to gain knowledge of the strategic themes present in developing the Agency. The workshop applied the method of “Anticipation Dialogues”, developed by Social Development Co and the National Research and development Centre for Welfare and Health in Finland³, where the staff were asked by working units to imagine the good future of the Agency. The interaction setting and the perspective on the future allows the participants to engage in a constructive way in a dialogue where they get their voice heard. In addition to the detection of the strategic themes the workshop allowed the evaluator to observe the internal communication at the Bilbao Office.

Questionnaires and surveys

Two *questionnaires* have been conducted during the evaluation process. The first, the preliminary one, was presented to the Board in November 2000. The second one, elaborated on the first one and targeted now to six different target groups was gathered in January 2001. The number of the Europe-wide survey respondents was 160, constituting approximately a 30% response rate, covering all the target groups. Also the Board was approached with the survey in January, to give an opportunity for also those, who were not present in the November meeting to respond, and others to give feedback to an improved version. (Detailed outcomes of the surveys are presented in Annex I).

Informant panel

In order to judge the usability and technical level of the Agency’s Website an informant panel in Finland was organised. The panel members were health professionals, experts in Internet solutions and computer science students.

Literature analysis

All through the evaluation process the evaluation team has evaluated the Agency’s working programmes, reports, publications, and other written material.

³ Arnkil, E., Eriksson, E. and Arnkil, R (1999): Anticipation Dialogues - Vertical and Horizontal Networking methods for Strategic management and Smart Networking. STAKES Themes 3/99

The Agency in a comparative perspective

At the same time as the current evaluation also evaluations of the European Environment Agency (EEA) and of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs & Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) have been underway. The present report contains a condensed description of the Agency in comparison to the other two agencies.

4. Evaluation of the Agency

4.1. Putting the Agency into Context

Organisations can be operating in more or less complex environments and under more or less definite boundary conditions. Also the organisations themselves can be more or less complex. For evaluation purposes it is important to explore these questions to appreciate better the possible success or failure conditions. This will be mapped out in this chapter.

4.1.1. Several parallel changes and complex structures

The Evaluation of OSHA occurs at a time of many transformations and transitions. This holds for all key aspects to consider as the context of evaluation: society, work, institutions, life-careers, technologies, strategies, policies, management, and others. The Agency is an information agency, with a task to both provide information on OSH-matters and to foster a network of exchange and co-operation in these matters. The most dramatic change is in fact occurring in the core business of the agency: information technologies and provision.

In assessing achievements of an organisation, one needs some kind of a global yardstick from contextual and boundary considerations, in order to understand in what kind of an environment and situation the organisation operates and what might be a fruitful way of dealing with it.

Low, or medium performance with clear-cut tasks and a rather low-complexity environment must certainly be treated more stringently, than medium performance under more indefinite and turbulent conditions.

To put it simply, at extremes we can have on the one hand an organisation operating under clear strategic priorities, clear management structures, established traditions, simple structures, definite boundaries and a rather stable, low-complexity environment. On the other extreme we can have an organisation operating with an indefinite, ambiguous, or emerging strategy, complex management and organisation structures, pioneering situation, indefinite boundaries and a turbulent, high com-

plexity environment. Low achievement in the first case could be regarded with a more stringently. In the latter case more contextual considerations are probably needed.

This is relevant because presently management paradigms are changing more and more from a linear and rational planning mode more into appreciating management of complex networks and navigating in uncertain conditions.⁴

Even at first glance it is obvious that the subject of evaluation, the Agency, falls more into the complexity end of organisations and their environments.

What, then are the key contextual and boundary aspects to consider in embarking on evaluating the Agency?

4.1.2.Changing world of work

An obvious question to start with is to ask what is happening in society and working life in Europe, and what are the implications to OSH-matters, institutions and activities. It is immediately apparent that there are no simple answers to this, particularly because despite differences in viewpoint, everybody agrees that these changes are presently rapid and largely unpredictable.

Whether one prefers to call the emerging society a knowledge-society, a network society, post-industrial, post-modern or second modern, or other, the fact is that society, work, technologies and life-careers are changing rapidly⁵. There is a considerable agreement on some fundamental aspects of this change, albeit difference in interpreting their meaning and implications. Economy and the functioning of companies is becoming more and more global, and in relative terms the importance of national structures and regulation is on the decline, and the importance of international and regional and local levels is on the rise. A "new economy" is emerging, although not as a linear success story, but full of unpredictable turns. Nevertheless, the rise of new technologies, particularly

⁴ Kickert, JM., Klijn, E-H. and Koppenjan, Joop (1997): Managing Complex Networks - Strategies for the Public Sector. SAGE. London. Government of the Future. OECD 2000.,Stacey, R.(1996) Strategic Management and Organisational Dynamics. Pitman Publishing. London. Stacey, R.(1994) Managing the Unknowable. Strategic Boundaries between Order and Chaos in Organizations. Jossey-Bass Management.

⁵ Castells, M. (1997) The Rise of the Network Society. Blackwell. Oxford. Beck, U. (2000). The Brave New World of Work. Polity Press. Cambridge., Robertson, R: Globalization – Social theory and Global Change. Sage, London.1992.

ICT, are transforming the possibilities for information exchange, communication and networking. The challenge of sustainable development, both in the social and environmental sense, is on the rise.

Many old questions concerning working life and OSH-themes retain their importance (albeit being transformed, too), and new ones, defying old concepts, methods and institutions, are emerging rapidly. This means that the big societal and working life context is characterised by a complex and often ambiguous transition from something old to something new.

4.1.3. Changing world of work and changing safety and health themes

In the field of safety and health at work the founding of the Agency coincides interestingly with a transition stage of working life development. In the field of occupational safety and health the new characteristics of the new economy carry in themselves pivotal changes that inevitably affect also the Agency as an information provider in the field. Most importantly, the information provision always contains interpretations what is important in the present working life. Thus, it may be seen that there is no 'pure' information without ideas of what is going 'out there', in working life and its organisations.

In its publication the Agency itself has identified several working life trends affecting the work of the Agency. The change into new working structures and organisations, new psycho-social stress factors, telework, digitalisation, the scattering and falling out of big industrial companies, temporary and part-time employment, women's growing participation in working life call for the need to identify the emerging themes in the field of safety and health. Alone the fact that there are about 20 million enterprises in the EU with the average of six employees creates a real challenge also to the Agency as one player in the field.

The Agency, however, acts in the EU where the national differences in the working life layout are remarkable. Thus, there are also 'old themes' continuously present. The studies show convincingly that also the industrial risks have retained their significance in the context of 'second modern'. The third aspect is that the 'old risks', like work stress or accidents, change their character in the new circumstances. Employees and citizens live a holistic life where new working environment affects the other spheres of their lives.

In conclusion, the Agency has to have a working life conception containing all the three set of themes simultaneously: the 'old themes', the 'new themes' as well as the 'old and new themes'.

For example, in the German country study the working life strategy need was recognised by stating that OSHA should develop "an idea, if not a theory, of the changing world of work". They stated that at the moment the 'new themes' appear on the Agency's agenda as only "additional issues that can be taken up or omitted."

So the first contextual fact is that the environment for OSH-matters is complex, under considerable change and in a way torn between old and new. In other words, in terms of tuning to the OSH-environment, an information Agency needs to address both traditional and emerging issues.

4.1.4. EU-strategy

A second question is what is done in Europe in terms of strategy to cope with these changes, particularly in OSH-matters. What is the strategy and what are the priorities, to provide a backdrop and guidelines for priorities and focus in information provision and network building? Certainly, in comparison to an average private business, which devises a strategy, vision and mission to deal with its (competitive) environment, there does not exist a clear-cut strategy in these terms to provide a guideline for information focus and priorities for the Agency. This is of course a case in general concerning the public sector, which in terms of strategy and customer relations operates under more complex and ambiguous circumstances than the private sector. This is only risen to the power of two in a European Union context, with national and complex transnational structures and decision making processes and bodies.

Looking at the strategy and policy scene in Europe, it is apparent that European strategies and policies, whether concerning work, social policy, employment, European institutions, or others, are presently under considerable reformulation, and many initiatives, also concerning OSH-matters are either quite recently agreed, or in the pipeline.

A new European Social Agenda and a European Employment Strategy were approved in the Nice Summit in December 2000. Together with the Framework Directive, specific directives and the 1996 - 2000 Community Programme on Safety and Health at Work, and others, like the Commission proposal to adopt a Communication on a Community strategy on Health and Safety at work,

they provide, and will provide, a strategic framework, with which the Agency needs to align and re-align itself in terms of an information strategy and priorities.

Europe wants to become "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion".⁶ At the heart of the Agenda is the modernisation of the European social model, investing in people and combating social exclusion. A key point is to strengthen the role of social policy as a *productive* factor.

The Agenda describes the challenge as an interaction of economic policy (dynamic competitiveness), employment policy (quality of work and full employment) and social policy (social cohesion and quality). All this puts the OSH-themes in a more integrated environment, and has the potential of opening up new possibilities also for constructive tripartite dialogue and other co-operation.

So a second contextual fact is that the strategic scene, guidelines, boundary conditions, focus and priorities are under reformulation and offer new challenges for alignment and dialogue in the future.

4.1.5. EU-Agency Strategy

A third important question is what is done in Europe and the Commission in particular in terms of organisations and capabilities to deal with these changes and complexities. Clearly, modernising governance is on the agenda.⁷ One part of such coping is to use agencies as an actor and to deliver services. The use of agencies is a special case of introducing orderer-producer structures into organisations with the intention to get more quality, customer and citizen orientation and cost-effectiveness out of such arrangements.

There are different kinds of agencies within the EU, and one can probably say that the OSHA, with its Network and decentralised structure, is one of the more complex ones. To a great degree it is a social experiment, like EEA, pioneering a new structure to deal with the new challenges posed by the societal and information environment.

⁶ Social Policy Agenda 2000

⁷ Reforming the Commission. White Paper. 2000, Communication to the Commission on the Reform of External Assistance. 2000

What, then, is the EU strategy behind such organisational change? Again, there does not seem to be a clear-cut answer to this. Agencies have emerged along the way, the policy ebbing and flowing over time. Just quite recently the internal reform process of the Commission, also addressing an Agency strategy, has been embarked, and this will, as the policy development on the strategic questions (New Social Agenda, etc.), provide a backdrop also for the future of the OSHA. This points to a need to reflect on the experiences of OSHA, and other agencies to make conclusions on what works, and what does not. It points to a need of proactive input from the OSHA to interpret good avenues for further improvement of the Agency development in the EU.

So, the strategy and policy context dealing with organisational change, including agency strategy, is under reformulation, and this calls also for proactive input in interpreting the OSHA-experience, with its very modern, or indeed information age organisation structure.

4.1.6. Transformation of information exchange

The Agency business is information. And it is precisely the information business that is changing the most of all. The ICT-change transforms the way information can be acquired and used. When the Internet was launched, nobody could predict the speed and profoundness of this transformation, and some have grasped this better than others. In any case, it is obvious that this transformation has important implications for the Agency, and evaluating its performance.

The evaluation data indicates that at least campaigns, Internet, and the practical publications have induced networking, joint action through which the communication, based on the power of the differences, has led to better awareness of things. 'Information' has turned into 'knowledge'. The concepts of 'information' and 'knowledge' are not the same. Originally in Latin 'information' meant 'giving a shape to something/ putting into a form, 'in-formare'. The etymology of 'knowledge' comes from 'knowing the road' originating from Latin word also behind the concept of 'cognition'. At least three conditions on which 'information' develops into 'knowledge' have been detected in the literature.⁸

⁸ Karvonen, E. (...). Elämmekö tieto- vai informaatioyhteiskunnassa (Do we live in a knowledge or in an information society?, In Finnish) p.88, In: Vuorensyrjä, M. & Savolainen, R (eds.) (2000): Tieto ja tietoyhteiskunta. Gaudeamus.Helsinki. See also FRISCO-report. A Framework of Information System Concepts (1998). <http://www.wi.leideuniv.nl/~verrynst/frisco>.

First, 'Knowing/knowledge' means becoming familiar with something through one's own experience, *there is no knowledge without action*. Second, information is effective only when there are 'bifurcation points' in the system. Bifurcation points are crossroads at which the organisation has come in its developmental path, arriving at a point where it has to act differently from what it has done so far. The organisation has to halt to consider and reflect on choosing between the different future options to act on. If no bifurcation points or crossroads exist, any information coming from the outside does not have any effect on it. The organisation goes on "the old way". Third, 'knowledge' is not primarily a reflection of the world 'out there', but the actor's personal relationship with it. 'Information' becomes 'knowledge' if it has links with the actor's everyday needs, if it has *personal meaning* to him or her.

4.1.7. Ambiguities and transformations facing the Agency

Finally, the Agency is quite young. The founding of the Agency was a seven-year project starting from different proposals⁹. It was seen that directives and laws are not anymore sufficient ways of promoting safety and health issues in Europe as the different member states live in very different societal conditions, and the question is not only, or mainly about directives or laws, but implementing them. While it was seen that there were already many players in the field, they interacted mostly on a bilateral basis and there was no regular exchange of information through any established joint structures. Thus, the exchange of information was seen as a means of bringing the actors together and as an alternative and complement to directives – based regulation.

Differing ideas about the nature of the Agency were debated on whether the new Agency should limit itself to pure information provider function or should it also contain a training task, what is its relation to the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions in Dublin, etc. All through different interviews conducted by the evaluators, quite frequently an expression of "nobody really wanted and agency", was used, indicating a high level of ambiguity in establishing it. At the end of the day, setting up the Agency was very much a political forceps delivery.

Council regulation 2062/94 established the Agency in July 1994, and it started work in September 1996, becoming fully operational by 1999. So in all, the Agency is into its fifth year, and only into

its third year fully operational. Certainly, this is a short time for any organisation to establish itself and a very early stage to make conclusions of performance and impact. All the more because it has had to overcome the ambiguity of the start and to navigate in a multi-stakeholder environment.

Further, because the Agency in its essence is a Network the reactions of the Member states played a role, and continue to do so. In the beginning the implications of the regulations for setting up Focal Points were not fully appreciated. This posed problems in launching the Focal Points and providing them with adequate resources. Strengthening Focal points is, in fact, a key success factor for the future.

So, the developmental path of the Agency is far from clear-cut and unambiguous, and the structure of it is very modern, or more precisely post-modern, with its complex network structure, advanced information system and multi-stakeholder environment.

4.1.8. Summary from the contextual considerations

Figure 2: Summary from Contextual Considerations

1. Working life and OSH-themes: Both old and new, complexity, rising level of unpredictability
2. Strategy: European strategy relevant for OSH: recently reformulated and emerging, complex steering environment. National level important, national differences
3. EU Agency Policy relevant for OSHA: Emerging
4. Information as business and means: Vigorously transformed
5. Agency developmental path: Short time of full operation, ambiguities among stakeholders, complex structure

All in all: We can conclude that on all accounts in this contextual assessment the Agency operates in a complex and ambiguous, changing environment and boundary conditions.

⁹ The evaluators were told that for instance, the Danish Minister of Labour, during the Danish Presidency, initiated the idea in 1987.

4.2. Providing information for key audiences and customers

The analysis of the information provision system and the user satisfaction in Chapter 4.2.1. gives a perspective on how successfully the Agency has met its objective defined in the Council Regulation 2062/94 and its Articles 2 and 3. The analysis of the network and its suitability in Chapter 4.2.2. evaluates how the Agency has met the objective of Article 4 .

4.2.1. Internet and other information media in the light of the evaluation

4.2.1.1. The Internet

At the end of 1996 the Agency made its basic decision to use Internet as its key method for delivering information in the field.

The key interviewees at the Bilbao Office described the starting points by stating that “all of a sudden” the Agency was established after the long preparation phase. Regarding the tasks set for it the founding pioneers concluded that the information provision task could not be performed by the traditional methods, publishing documents or establishing a new library that was regarded and debated on as one option. After consulting the experts on Internet and after several planning seminars it was decided that the Agency would develop its Internet Site as the key method in fulfilling its information provision task. Although there were differences in the Member States’ readiness to adopt Internet as the key solution none of the Member States opposed to the decision.

From the initial strategic decision on the Agency’s Web Site has sustained its status as the main information provision method. By Internet solution the Agency has linked itself with the most up-to-date technical information system that has also enhanced the Agency in becoming more known and recognised in the field. Currently the Agency has close co-operation on the Internet solutions with Canada and Australia, Japan, and the EU candidate countries as well as the EFTA countries. Through the Web Site the Agency also has established links to other international organisations like ILO.

By choosing Internet as its main information provision method the Agency has also faced controversies regarding the differing prerequisites of the Member States to make the full use of it. The

rates of the Internet connections in the Member States vary extensively. The following table is illustrative in this respect:

Figure 1. Number of computers connected to Internet (per 1000 inhabitants) in the member states.¹⁰

Country	XII/1996	XII/1998	I/2000
Finland	62	86	90
Denmark	21	38	63
The Netherlands	18	35	61
Sweden	27	42	59
Belgium	7	18	33
Austria	11	19	32
United Kingdom	12	23	29
Luxembourg	9	16	22
France	4	8	12
Germany	9	16	20
Ireland	8	14	18
Spain	3	7	12
Portugal	2	5	8
Greece	2	4	7
Italy	3	6	5
EU average	13	22	32

Thus, the Agency bases its information strategy on a solution where in the relatively densest country Internet connections (Finland) are about ten times that of the lowest density country (Italy). The technological diversity creates an obvious challenge for the Agency to be taken into account in its operations.

It should be noted, however, that the Member States' readiness for using the Web Site did not originally coincide with their Internet penetration rates. For example, Greece was ready to accept the Internet solution quite willingly while France, for instance, was only beginning to adopt Internet

¹⁰ <http://www.tieke.fi/>. The figures may be slightly biased as they do not include computers behind the "fire walls". Nevertheless, the table illustrates the general context where the Agency has to operate.

instead of her previous national network, Minitel and was much more hesitant about the Agency's decision.

The success of the Internet?

At the moment the second version of the Web Site is in use and the Agency is going to launch the third version later this year. The history of the Web Site indicates a fast development of user sessions. According to the statistics of the second Web the number of user sessions have grown from 21 000 in October 1999 to 75 000 in January 2001. The most popular section visited by the users is 'Legislation' with some 2400 page views. 'Directives' comes to the second place with about 1500 page views and Good Practices, Topics, and Publications have about 1300 page views. (<http://europe.test.osha.eu.int/statistics/web/ppt/index.htm>).

The statistics of the Agency Web Site constitute only a part of the whole network sites. Illustrative in this respect is that in Finland alone there were about 43 000 user sessions during the year 2000. The structure of the most popular pages is analogous to the Agency Web Site.

The evaluation of the Agency Web Site by the Finnish user and *informant panel* indicated that the structures and operations of the Web Site as well as the general layout were regarded positively. The health professionals included in the panel were critical about the Web Site putting too much emphasis on the safety, and not on health issues. They regarded the Site more as a catalogue, or as a phonebook, not so useful in their own work. In searching for information they saw the Websites of other Finnish institutions more useful.

The researcher included in the panel saw also the Agency Web Site as a catalogue of things not useful enough for her purposes. She prefers in her work the universities' Websites and regarded the sites of WHO and ILO being more advanced. The researcher, like also the information specialists hoped the Agency Web Site to develop in a more interactive direction where the clients could ask, for example, questions about the safety and health issues. In all, the informants saw the Web Site functioning well and clearly enough although some technical solutions were criticised.

Also the *country studies* confirm the general usefulness and organising power of the Internet solution. Finland has been very active in developing the Agency's web Site as well as its own national site. All the German interviewees unambiguously saw the Agency's Internet performance as good.

The Agency's role regarding its Internet activities is clearly defined and progress is visible. The Italian interviewees suggested that the Agency Web Site should include country comparisons. They also criticised the Internet solution because it does not reach the company level well enough.

The interviews carried out confirmed the significance of the Agency's Web Site. The Web Site has made the occupational safety and health issues more visible and the site has developed into a joint forum for the field. The Agency is mostly recognised by its Web Site.

The survey results indicate that there is quite a lot of satisfaction with the Agency's Web Site. The general usefulness of the Agency's as well as the respondents' national sites were regarded relatively high. The quality, user friendliness, and the availability of links to other information sources of the Sites were regarded as more satisfactory than the overall average satisfaction rate in all the survey. (See the survey results, Annex I, Sum Scales, Figure 1)

Analysed from the different *stakeholder perspectives* the survey distributed to the different target groups and the interviews carried with the EU and international Institutions lead to the following overall conclusions.

Drawing on the interviews of Commission representatives and a ILO representative, there is a unanimous assessment that the Websites have been a success in terms of providing links and an infrastructure for exchange, and it has good potential for the future, and that it is of an international standard. The Commission representatives were not yet equally happy with the content of the information provided particularly in terms of giving information for practical problem solving. Also the reliability of information was criticised, especially the Pilot study, State of OSH.

The '*Government Group*' in the survey, including also OSH professionals rate the usefulness, quality, and user friendliness lower than the other stakeholders (together with Employers) on the average, although they regard it important. The Government Group regards the usefulness of the National Websites like the other stakeholders on the average, being however a little less satisfied with them than the other respondent groups. (Annex I).

The employers rate the usefulness of the Agency Web Site consistently lower than the other stakeholders on the average. In the SWOT analysis they also regard the Agency site as not so important as the other stakeholders do. The same picture applies to the employers' evaluation of the

National Websites although they regard them fairly user-friendly. In the SWOT analysis the employers neither see the importance of the National Websites as important as the others.

The Trade Unions rate the Agency's Web Site as useful or more useful as most other stakeholders. In the SWOT analysis it turns out that the Trade Unions generally rank the Agency Web Site satisfaction lower than the others on the average but they regard it as more important than the other groups. The Trade Unions are generally more critical about the National Websites and their usefulness than the other stakeholders except that they also regard the Sites' user-friendliness as positively as the other stakeholders.

The researchers (the group 'Others') and other experts involved regard the Agency Web Site generally like the stakeholders on the average. In the SWOT analysis the group sees the Agency Web Site as more important than the other stakeholders, being simultaneously a little more critical about it. Regarding the usefulness and importance of the National Websites the group again constitutes a kind of 'mean group'. In the SWOT analysis the group is very close to the mean of the other stakeholders.

The companies (their OSH responsables) that replied to the survey, being mostly big companies (250 - 500 employees, ranging from industries to services, media companies, transport, auto-industry, mines, etc), judge the importance and usefulness of the Agency Web Site mostly at the same level as the other stakeholders regarding it, however, being of good quality more than the other respondent groups. In the SWOT analysis it turns out that companies see the Agency site as more important than the others but they are also more critical about it. It is noteworthy that companies are pretty consistently more satisfied than the other stakeholders with the National Websites. In the SWOT analysis they are the most satisfied group with the National Sites.

The Focal Points rank the usefulness of the Agency Site the highest of all the stakeholders. In the SWOT analysis the Focal Points see the Agency Site most positively and more important than the stakeholders on the average. They also regard the National Sites generally the second highest after the companies. In the SWOT analysis the Focal Points regard the importance of the National Sites more important than the others on the average but not more useful as the others in general.

In all, regarding the survey results, the country studies, the interviews, and the informant panel as well as the development of the Agency's and the National Sites' user statistics the general conclu-

sion is that the Internet strategy adopted by the Agency has been a successful endeavour. In a relatively short time the Agency has managed to establish a joint platform in the field. The Agency Web Network as a whole has become the basic information channel of the Agency. The added value produced by the Agency in the field has been establishing the network providing links for interaction both within EU and worldwide. The Internet solution may be regarded positively also in the sense that it has been a cost-effective way of providing information and thus fulfilling the Agency's basic task.

However, while the Internet solution may be regarded as a positive basic structure, as 'putting a shape to something' ('information') it should, in the light of the criticism mainly about the content and practical usefulness of the Websites, be asked if the solution has led to increased capability of turning 'information' into 'knowledge' instructing the different users to "know the road" they should take in their daily work. The following analyses of the other information provision methods and the structures of the Agency reveal themes relevant also to the Internet solution itself as there cannot be information provision system or strategy of the Agency based alone on the Internet.

4.2.1.2. Publications

Currently the main information channels in addition to the Internet are *the Agency Reports (Research booklets)*, *Magazines* concentrating on specific themes in each issue and published twice a year, *Fact Sheets* describing in a practical way the research outcomes published as the Agency reports, *News* containing sections for the Agency information, international news, legislation, policy and programmes, research and technology, reporting and statistics, and a notice-board. Furthermore, a pilot version of a newsletter on the Web, *Oshmail*, has been launched.¹¹

During January 2000 and January 2001 some 12 000 'State of OSHA' –reports, 10 000 WRULD Reports, and Stress Reports were downloaded from the Agency Web Site. About 2000 – 4000 downloads of News, Facts, and Magazines took place during the same period of time (<http://europe.test.osha.eu.int/statistics/web/ppt/index.htm>).

According to the *interviews* carried out with the different stakeholders and the experts the general evaluation of the Agency's publications is fairly good. Especially the Newsletter, Fact Sheets, and Magazines are carefully edited, well-written, and easy to read and comprehend while some of the

interviewees are a little critical about the too 'beautiful' layout regarding them possibly too expensive. The views differ regarding the Agency Reports. People of more practical perspective and 'down-to-earth' attitude regard them often too difficult to read while researchers mostly regard them as of good quality. Again, however, regarding the different reports the judgements also differed. Most critical views were given regarding the reliability of the State of OSHA Report. Most positive evaluations were usually given to the Stress Report. The general picture of the interviews regarding the publications is that practical publications, like Fact Sheets in particular, are appreciated mostly amongst the different user groups of the Agency.

In the *country studies* the Italians suggested that any form of Information produced by the Agency should be more targeted to the workplace level, not so much to the experts or policy makers. From the Italian perspective Fact Sheets have been a real success. Its successfulness could be used also in the future developing the Agency's publications. The Portuguese interviewees stressed also the practicality of the information material and regretted, like the Italians, the language problem. The German interviewees also emphasised the importance of the language. In some respects they wanted to have translations into English (in the legislative issues) and in some respects into German (research results, work hazards, for example). In the Finnish interviews no complaints of the language appeared and, more generally, the Finnish interviewees seemed content with the publications by the Agency.

In the *survey* carried out the publications are evaluated positively (Annex I). The general satisfaction with them goes beyond the average satisfaction mean present in all the survey data. The satisfaction scores regarding the publications go as high as the satisfaction with the Web Site(s). Fact Sheets and Agency Reports are appreciated highest.

In the survey the different target groups were asked to give an overall evaluation of the Agency publications. The *Focal Points*, not unexpectedly, rated the publications most positively regarding them also more important than the other stakeholders did. The *Trade Unions* and *researchers and other experts* (the group 'others') were most unsatisfied with them. The former saw the publications more important than the stakeholders on the average; the latter, for its part, agreeing with what was the average rate of the respondents. *The companies* did not see the publications so important from

¹¹ Except Internet and paper publication the Agency has also published some videos and CD-R's. While important in giving snapshots or basic introduction to safety and health and information provision themes their significance seem to very limited and they are not included in the evaluation.

their perspective but rated them more positively than the average of the respondents. *The employers* also were rather positive about the publications seeing them more important than the companies did. The government group was more critical and less satisfied with publications than the mean of all the respondents was.

In all, the publications seem too regarded positively in the light of the evaluation data. It also seems that there is a fairly good co-ordination between the different publications. For example, Factsheets ‘explain’ what is published in the series of the Agency Reports, the News has its own functions, and so forth. This reflects the consciousness by which the different functions of the different publications have been considered.

The analysis emphasises the significance of the Factsheets – type publications. It is obvious that well-edited and practically written information material is needed. The practicality calls for, in the light of the country studies, developing solutions

While positively judged in the evaluation data the publishing policy of the Agency However, it should be again noted that the Agency is still a very young organisation. The first publications mapping out the context of the Agency (‘Priorities ...’, ‘Economic Impact ..’ and the Pilot study) were published 1997 – 1998. The conclusion is that the Agency has become ‘fully operational’ regarding its information provision system only in 1999 – 2000 when its series of research publications were published.

In the interviews at the Bilbao Office the Agency’s information policy development, reflecting also the general evolution of Agency, was divided into three phases: I. *The preliminary and establishment phase* taking about two years when there were some individual achievements but no firm structures; II: *The project phase* taking about 1 ½ years; III. From 2000 on: *the publication phase*. IV. The present and forthcoming phase: *enhancing the use of the publications*.

4.2.1.3. Conferences and meetings

The conferences and meetings organised by the Agency were evaluated by the *interviewees* mostly of good quality regarding their content. The conference publications were regarded good enough quality levelling the good practices of other conference organisers. The researchers interviewed, used to attending international conferences reviewed the Agency conferences as being relevant in

terms of the content themes stating usually, however, that the Agency conferences do not outperform the other organisations' conferences.

The interviewed experts participating in the Agency's network and different working group meetings were satisfied with the new emerged opportunities to exchange ideas coming from the other Member States. It seems that the significance of the mere existence of the Agency has been bringing the experts in the field together. The meetings have provided new fora for mutual communication. The increased and enhanced communication has helped the experts to get to know each other better. Knowing each other better has, for its part, led to increased contacts and better awareness of the state of affairs in the other Member States. The meetings have enhanced communication.

Some of the interviewees having participated in network meetings criticised that the time-tables were often too tight not allowing them to get themselves properly prepared for the meetings. The critical point in this respect has been that on many occasions the needed documents come too late.

In the *survey* carried out the general satisfaction with the meetings was most favourable among the *companies*. The *Focal Points* come next to the companies while the groups '*Others*' (researchers and other experts) rank the lowest in this respect. The *employers*, the *Trade Unions*, and the *Government Group* are all close to the average satisfaction rate of all the respondents.

In the SWOT analysis it appears that the *Trade Unions* see the conferences organised by the Agency as more important than the other stakeholders on the average did but they are most critical about them. The *companies* are most satisfied with the Agency conferences and but see the conferences as most important of all the stakeholders. The *Focal Points* come next to the companies regarding their satisfaction with the conferences and seeing them as more important than the mean importance rate of all the respondents was. The group '*Others*' rated the importance and the satisfaction of the conferences clearly the lowest of all. The *employers* were somewhat less satisfied with the conferences and they did not see them as important as the other stakeholders. The *government* respondents were in both their satisfaction and importance ratings on the average level.

4.2.1.4. Campaigns

The clear message from the *interviews* and the survey is that, in addition to Internet as a basic information provision structure, campaigns have been the most successful part of Agency's activities.

What the interviewees tell is that campaigns have brought *more focus* to the Agency activities. By implication, campaigns have managed to organise people in joint effort and action. Campaigns thus have had the capacity of *inducing networks*.

The *country studies* point also in the same direction. The campaigns seem to have been powerful in countries where the occupational safety and health structures, at the workplace level in particular, are in the phase of construction like in Portugal, or like in Italy where preventive structures still need improvement. The campaigns have proved also powerful in countries that are usually considered ‘old players’ in the field of safety and health. The European week campaigns were positively regarded also in the German country study. In Germany it seems that the campaigns have managed to unite the different players in the field. For Finland, having a long national tradition of ‘Occupational safety weeks’ the campaigns organised by the Agency has indicated a new, European-wide perspective.

In the *survey’s* free answers the *European Week* was mentioned as one of the most valuable effort carried out by the Agency, as an effort that has really brought added value to the national level. The European Week was also emphasised by the *Trade Unions*, the *Government* respondents, and the *Focal Points*.

The clear success of the European Week is an important finding in the present evaluation effort. It seems to indicate that efforts that are thematically focused, efforts that have clear goals and clear time span up till an “empowering” ending have constituted a Good Practice in the Agency’s operations. The campaigns seem to have inspired the government experts in the Member States and the Focal Points in organising the campaigns. The campaigns seem also to have reached the workplace level and even the SMEs, the difficult but vitally important target group to reach.

4.2.2. Meeting customer needs

Regarding the different user groups and stakeholders in the field, a certain ambivalence seems to be obvious. In the *interviews* carried out it turned out that, for example, for researchers the Agency Website or the National Websites and the other Agency information material are only one of the many possibilities. The researchers have been connected to each other already prior to the Agency. The same applies to employers’ organisations, as well as to the trade unions and government bod-

ies. The future development of the Agency Website Network will develop on how successfully it will be capable of serving its different target groups.

There is a strong wish amongst the interviewees, and in the perspectives of employers, companies, and workers to use the Website and also other information material more as a *problem-solving tool*. This is crucial especially at the workplace level. At the workplace level there is urgent need to find information on how to solve the practical safety and health problems at hand. In this context the Website(s) got quite a lot of criticism. It was suggested that the structure of the Site should be revised to include more the problem-solving logic, thus meeting more fully the needs of the workplaces.

All the interviewee groups saw information on *good practices* vitally important. The existence of Good Practices net section and publications were welcomed. On the other hand, the current state of affairs was criticised as the examples of good practices are presented in a kind of ‘context-free’ manner. The *contextualisation of presenting good practices* creates a real challenge for the further development of Good Practices information. It seems that the users need more information on the legislative, workplace level information, as well as ‘reflective stories’ about the reasons and manners a specific Good Practice was developed. If done so the users will become more capable of applying the information in their own context. The information *resonates* with the users.

In search for a greater resonance is also the users’ wish for *more targeted information* of which the Web Site(s) were criticised. This criticism is clearly present with the *company level* responses and interviews. The need seems to be for more specific way of presenting information. One of suggestions in this direction was the Italian proposal of re-organising the Website structure according to the production process and in a branch-like manner. It is obvious that this might be difficult to undertake but the basic question of re-organising the information structure still remains as a fruitful opening for the discussion.

From the Finnish perspective one of the most crucial issues to be developed is the problem of how to reach the SMEs. The Finnish interviewees also wanted to include more *health issues* on the agenda of the Agency. The core message from Italy was that the main target group of the Agency should be the workplace level, both employers and employees. In this context the Agency could play a significant role in Italy. The Agency does not currently reach the problems of the immigrants that the Italians saw a big problem group in all Europe regarding safety and health problems. The

main message from Portugal was likewise that the Agency should reach the workplace level and especially SMEs that in Portugal are often in merchandise or tourism business. In Germany the scientific partners wanted the Agency to open up new ideas of health and safety development in relation to working life development. They also wanted the Agency to develop its own comparative data banks in order to promote the European integration. The employers and the workers wanted the Agency to concentrate on its information provision task.

According to the *survey* carried out the *Focal Points* are generally the most satisfied group. They are especially satisfied with the Agency's capacity of organising and integrating the activities in their own countries and with their national Websites. The '*Others*' are most satisfied with the Agency's role in enhancing mutual co-operation and less satisfied with the Websites. The *employers* are generally ranking the average level regarding their satisfaction. The employers are more critical about the Agency's capacity of assisting the national employer organisations in their work. The same applies to the *Trade Unions*. The *government group* is less satisfied than the other target groups in general to with the Agency's capability of enhancing co-operation between the Member States, the Trade Unions, engaging research institutions in the Agency network as well as with the Agency's capacity of assisting the government bodies in their own work. This points again to a need to address the national situations better.

One of the key messages stemming from the different target groups and stakeholders is the doubt whether the Agency information system as a whole will be able to reach the *small and mid-size enterprises* or *individual citizens*. One of the reasons for this doubt is the fact that they have generally a low access rate to Internet. On the other hand, the situation varies a lot in the different Member States as was visible in the table on the Internet penetration rates. And, contrary to this criticism lies the question of what else media could be as efficient as Internet in reaching the SMEs or individual citizens. After all, the development has been very fast and there seems no reason to doubt that it will go on also in the future. Thus, in the long run the Internet will possibly be available to all the European citizens if the necessary political measures will be taken. The incentive for those measures are the EU's goal to become the most competitive 'Internet Community' in the world.

The language issue seems still an unsolved problem in the Agency. The interviews and the country studies of Germany, Portugal, and Italy emphasised the significance of solving the language problem. The language is not only a matter of language skills but also a matter of cultural knowledge. It was emphasised in the especially in the country studies that giving more resources to the translation

work, putting the emphasis on the national level, the Agency's policy could develop in a direction where the existing *diversity* can be better taken into account while at the same time act in a co-ordinated manner for the improvement of safety and health at work.

4.2.3. Building and developing the Agency Network

4.2.3.1. Topic Centres

Topic Centres operate on a contractual basis with the Agency as expert network focusing on producing focusing on producing examples of good practices, surveys and studies prioritised by the Agency. Each Topic Centre includes several research and other expert institutions in specific safety and health fields. Currently there are four Topic Centres: TC on Musculo-Skeletal Disorders, Stress, Dangerous Substances, and Research. Each Topic Centre create a network of research and studies aiming at producing Finland and United Kingdom are present in more than one Topic Centres. On the other hand, six countries (Austria, Greece, Italy, Ireland, Luxembourg, and Portugal) are not involved in any of the Topic Centres.

The structure of Topic Centres and the bases for selecting them meet clear criticism in the country studies. The Portuguese interviewees regretted the fact that no Portuguese research institute has been chosen for any Topic Centres. The Italians saw the main problem with Topic Centres to be that now they are selected solely on the basis "excellence". This does not promote synergy within EU, the Italians argue. They suggest that also 'cultural experience' should be taken into account allowing thus a wider scope of candidates for the Topic Centres.

Seen from the perspective of the Topic Centres themselves this criticism seems to cause some puzzlement. It is argued that in fact no Italian or Portuguese institution applied any post in any Topic Centres. The Topic Centres interviewed maintained that in fact they have been themselves looking for establishing contacts with Italian and Portuguese institutions facing difficulties in identifying possible candidates. At least one of the Topic Centres, Topic Centre on Research – Work and Health, has tried to overcome the problem by inviting institutions from the 'outside countries' to participate in the Topic Centre work as *observers*.

The Italians also criticised the Topic Centres of being currently too isolated from the national structures. The Italians proposed that instead of having Topic Centres organised centrally by the

Agency, they should be organised in the context of Focal Points. Furthermore, they saw that instead centralised themes studied within Topic Centres “National TCs” gathered around FPs should create and carry out joint research projects whereby more nationally applicable results could be achieved. They ground their proposal on the argument that the thematic choices made by the Agency do not meet the real needs on the national and workplace level.

Again the Italian position seems to be somewhat confusing regarding the history and development of the Topic Centres. Originally, it is argued, the Focal Points wanted that the Topic Centres should have no links to the national level. Currently the Agency has, however, started an experiment with some Focal Points regarding their co-operation with the Topic Centres.

From the Finnish perspective there seems to be no big argument going on regarding Topic Centres. The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health is involved in all Topic Centres, being the co-ordinator of the TC – Dangerous Substances. The main positive motive has been being involved in the development of “growing European”. The experiences have been good as the Agency has developed its steering mechanisms and working culture regarding Topic Centres. The Finnish people involved in the Topic Centres stated that also the Topic Centre activities are relatively young and the real work has now been undergoing two years. This general picture of the Topic Centre developmental path was confirmed also by the French Topic Centre co-ordinator.

According to the Agency structure the Thematic Groups s integrate and supervise the Topic Centres into the Agency by controlling their working structure and the quality of their outcomes. They give continuous feedback to the Topic Centres. From the Topic Centres point of view the feedback has mainly been relevant and done by expertise.

In all, from the evaluation point of view there is a certain ambivalence regarding Topic Centres, their institutional structures and thematic choices. This is confirmed also by the survey carried out where the satisfaction rates regarding the ‘clarity of role of Topic Centres’ and ‘Relation of Topic Centres to Thematic Groups’ are, together with ‘customer engagement’, amongst the lowest of all the themes present in the questionnaire.

From the customer and stakeholder perspective the survey indicates that *the Trade Unions* are most dissatisfied with Topic Centres as well as Thematic Networks. The *Focal Points* seem to be the

most satisfied group in this respect. Regarding the employers, Government Group, 'Others', and companies no big differences can be detected.

In all, especially the interview data and the two country studies as well as the survey indicated that there is some unclarity regarding the position of the Topic Centres and their relationship with the Thematic Groups. This indicates that the positions and roles of the Topic Centres should be made more transparent as it seems that for the Topic Centres themselves as well as to the Thematic Networks and the Bilbao Office the structures are relatively clear unlike to those who look at the Agency structures from the stakeholder or customer perspective.

4.2.3.2. The relationship between the Bilbao Office and Focal Points

The Focal Points' basic message is that they are under-resourced. This really seems to be the case as Focal Points don't in some cases have even one full-time person for the FP effort. On the other hand, this fact reflects the state of affairs, problematic from the beginning of the Agency, that the governments had not been prepared to fund the Focal Points, and that they should do it came as a surprise to them.

The feeling of being under-resourced may also reflect the workload coming from the Bilbao Office, and naturally, commitment and motivation factors, too. A case in point is translation tasks, frequently taken up in interviews. The FPs feel that translation of different material should be mainly their own responsibility if they only got the means to do that. It seems that the 'language problem' may be resolved mainly by empowering the Focal Points in this respect. This, in turn is a key factor to secure success in building a good practice databank, or reaching SME's and citizens.

It seems in the light of the interviews that while there are quite satisfied Focal Points (like Finland), there are also FPs that are organised in a rather fragmented way, and not so involved, committed or motivated in the Agency's work. However, from the Agency's point of view its strength lies on the national level. By implication, the Agency should in the future take a decisive step forward in re-thinking and possibly re-organising the Bilbao Office's and the FPs' relationship as well as reconsider the roles, tasks and resources allocated to them.

The key point to be addressed here is to find meaningful and fruitful ways to address the national diversity of OSH-problems and priorities, which is further emphasised by the imminent enlarge-

ment. This could mean, for example, that one should look for different challenging and natural tasks for different countries and Focal Points, building on their needs, strengths, histories and present agendas. Issues, where a fruitful division of labour could yield good results and engagement could be, for example, the enlargement, ageing, immigration, globalisation and third world. This would mean reaching a level of a "network proper", where each node has a need based role and can give a contribution to others. The initiative to take on tasks should to a maximum amount come from the network partners themselves, instead of "performing tasks", which can be felt to be alienating or artificial.

The network structure of the Agency and its Internet solutions create quite a ('second') modern structure, meeting potentially the challenges of the unpredictable future. The power of the Agency as a whole will depend on its capacity to engage the different voices through the Focal Points. The relationships between the different level actors should now, from the evaluation data perspective, be re-considered and made more transparent as it is now.

Analysed from the different levels of the Agency network and from the different stakeholders' perspectives the evaluation message may be summarised as follows:

In all, it may be stated that it is only about two years that the Agency has been fully operational in its full meaning. Today the Agency has established its basic structures and functions in the form Internet, publication, National Focal Points, Topic Centres and Thematic Networks. The basic conclusion for the evaluation of the Agency is to see it in the light of its development facing now new challenges after having now built up the basic network for its information provision role in the European Community.

4.2.4. Cost-effectiveness

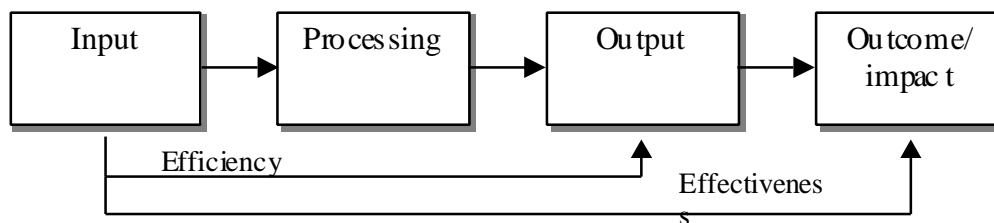
Judging cost-effectiveness at this stage of the Agency development is difficult. Cost-effectiveness is judging input against outcome/ impact, and it is precisely the latter that is difficult to discern at this early stage of operation (figure 2).

The evaluation data points to a rather low impact as yet, but on the other hand, quite a success story in building the portals, rising awareness of OSH-matters in Europe and establishing the Network with Focal Points and others.

No information from any source (interviews, survey, case studies) points to a complaint or a major problem in this. The survey (Annex I) shows that the different stakeholders see the Bilbao-office cost-effectiveness is deemed average, and the cost-effectiveness of Focal Points as clearly above average. Neither do the interviews of Commission officials point to actual problems in cost-effectiveness or efficiency.

The Court of Auditors Reports over the years point to problems in spending all the money allocated to the Agency, but that has been stabilised better as the full functioning level has been reached. In terms of cost-efficiency, input-output ratio, the productivity of publications has until 2000 been rather low, but has picked up considerably since then. Again, one has to consider positioning the Websites in this judgement. The visit and download rates are quite impressive, but because this is pioneer work, it is difficult to judge in a meaningful way whether that is high, medium or low.

Figure 2



4.2.5. Value added

Has the Agency's work added value to the OSH-work on a European level and/or to national efforts, and is it relevant and complementary to them in an appropriate way? Answering this question reiterates the message coming from this chapter: In terms of launching the Websites, providing links, rising the level of awareness of OSH-matters through this and campaigns and meetings, yes, to a reasonable degree the Agency has added value to the European scene, and this is a view shared across stakeholders ranging from the political steering of the EU, Commission officials, and the other interviews. The social partners don't seem particularly happy about the role the Agency has played in promoting transnational cooperation.

In terms of adding value to national efforts, the message is more mixed, and is connected to the different situations and levels of development and positions of OSH-institutions in different countries. Some countries, like Germany, complain that the value added is rather limited, mostly concerning the development of the Website, but not the contents. Some other countries, with likewise long and well established OSH-traditions and institutions, like Finland and Denmark, seem to be relatively happy with the Agency work, although experiencing themselves more as providers, not beneficiaries. The interviews point to a degree of fatigue here, and there might be a point of dis-motivation approaching, unless adequately tackled. The message coming from Italy and Portugal seem to point to a rather high significance of the Agency work, and to a rather high level of interest in engaging with it. The message coming from Great-Britain seems to point to a rather limited experience of value-added, where, like in Germany, Nordic countries, and others, the other national and international networks play a superior, or equal role.

The limited time of the evaluation made it impossible to get a detailed picture of the situations in all countries, and that was not required in the terms of reference, either. We regret the limited scope we have been able to sound the French-speaking countries, but the few interviews in this direction seem to corroborate the picture described above.

The overall picture, then, about the value added is that in terms of helping the European dimension there has been a valuable input, but the value added to national efforts is uneven, and has to be addressed better in the future, to secure cooperation, interest and motivation. This is only the more relevant with the imminent enlargement. We have suggested that this could be solved by devoting special tasks for countries, on the basis of their own agendas. Finland, or the Nordic countries as a group, might have a special interest to work with the ageing question, Germany with the enlargement, Great-Britain with a Global perspective (take India for instance as an active country in ICT), Portugal with Brasil and South-America, etc.

4.3. Capability of the Agency

It is also important to evaluate the ability of the Agency and the Network to cope with their tasks so far and how they are prepared for the future. In Chapter 4.3. we evaluate some key aspects of steering the Agency and the Network (strategic management via the Board and Bureau) and the capability of the Bilbao Office and the Network.

4.3.1. Building Strategy and Strategic Management

The scope of audiences and customers of the Agency is formidable; it is facing nothing less than the whole complexity of the European integration process. The European work, employment, social and OSH-strategies are recently reformed or under reformulation. The reform of the Commission itself, together with an Agency strategy, is on its way. The rapid development of the Internet, and aiming for a Global portal in OSH, puts also the global challenge on the table.

For any information business, a complexity of audiences and change poses a challenge of focus, priorities and reaching real impact.

The Agency itself is a complex entity, in fact quite a new "information age" type of an organisation, calling for new, more advanced concepts of management.

The evaluation data points to a degree of dissatisfaction with the structures and content of strategic management in the Agency. There is a widely shared view, across stakeholders and interview and survey data, that the present steering structures need improvement. As much as the tripartite structure in itself is valued from the point of providing contact to key stakeholders and social partners, the potential of this is not realised to the full and it does not function optimally. With the imminent enlargement it only becomes more apparent that new solutions must be sought to improve strategic steering.

There is a high level of agreement among the present management discourse that in the face of complexity and unpredictability, old management paradigms are not enough. There is also a high level of agreement in this discourse on the key to success: rise the level of strategic debate, dialogue and utilise diversity and polyphony and use effective experimentation, with good feedback mecha-

nisms, especially extremely good contacts to your customers, to feel your way (consider figure 3).¹² The Internet itself, constituting continuous experimentation, with a high level of unpredictability, is a case in point here.

A way forward could be to strengthen the role and functionality of the Board as a strategic social dialogue forum, and strengthen the role of the Bureau as the actual Executive Board. Whether this means also introducing rotation, or other ways of dealing with size, is a matter for the Commission to decide. More important than size in itself is certainly improving the possibilities of the Board, with its tripartite structure, to represent in a strategic way the views and experiences and unique contacts they represent. The role of the Board could be developed more clearly to a strategic steering body, with developing further the good tradition of workshops, but with more possibilities for preparation and engagement and meeting less frequently. Another element would be to take more out of the tripartite connections in terms of interpreting customer needs, which could be coupled with other measures working in this direction on the more operational level.

The challenges probably differ within the different groups. What could be a favourable backdrop for the social dialogue, is the development of the new Social Agenda of the EU. If and when Europe wants to become "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion".¹³ When at the heart of the Agenda is the modernisation of the European social model, investing in people and combating social exclusion, with a key point is to strengthen the role of social policy as a *productive* factor, this surely can provide possibilities to position the meaning of OSH-activities in a way that could be attractive to all stakeholders.

This development should be coupled with adding new voices and contacts, to secure openness to new developments. Giving a voice for SME-representation, and the educational field could be examples of this. Developing the role of the Focal Points and countries, mentioned in the previous chapter, also builds possibilities for strategic management.

¹² Kickert, JM., Klijn, E-H. and Koppenjan, Joop (1997): *Managing Complex Networks - Strategies for the Public Sector*. SAGE. London. Government of the Future. OECD 2000., Stacey, R.(1996) *Strategic Management and Organisational Dynamics*. Pitman Publishing. London.

¹³ Social Policy Agenda 2000

Figure 3 Rationalistic Strategic Management and Management of Complex Networks and Uncertainty

Rationalistic Strategic Management	Management of Complexity and Uncertainty
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definite Vision and Mission statement • Strong top-down, "cascading" steering • Long-term planning • Key Result Areas and Indicators • Strategic Milestones • Monitoring Achievement • Building Unified Culture • Incentive and Control systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No definite Vision and Mission but more Framing and Reframing problem and topic areas • Using Interests and Power as a Pluralistic Political Dialogue System • Establishing Self-organising Teams with Power and Group dynamics • Developing and Fostering Multiple Cultures and Diversity • Discovering Challenges, Generating New Perspectives, Experimenting and Taking Risks • Creating Resource Slacks • Building, Creating and Supporting Multi-faceted Feedback Systems

Adopted from Stacey, ibid and Naschold, F. (1996): New Frontiers in Public Sector Management. Walter de Gruyter. Berlin.

This is of course an idealised dichotomy and in practice real-life organisations have to different degrees incorporated elements of both "modes" into their management.

*The Agency strategy*¹⁴

The Agency has rather recently adopted a strategy (see summary below), mainly addresses the Website aspects, which can be seen as justified at the time. There is a mention (in the mission and vision) to the *productivity* aspect of OSH and some treatment on network partnership. Our suggestion is that the strategy needs elaboration particularly in relation to the New Social Agenda aspects (OSH in terms of productivity, competition, investment in people and human resources, workplace quality, etc.), the emerging globality of the portals and finding more meaningful roles for national efforts and strengthening Focal Points, putting in place more effective feedback and cooperation with customers and strengthening the Agency's own human resources strategy

1. Communicating decisively better with customers: Putting in place effective and communicative feedback mechanisms and co-operation with different customers and stakeholders
2. Developing the Occupational safety and health concept to deal with the changing world of work: Aligning strategy with new EU-strategies, increase co-operation with Topic Centres and the Dublin Foundation

¹⁴ Strategy Paper, December 1999

3. Reaching a new level of development in the Agency Network to deal with national diversity and find fruitful roles and co-operation
4. Adopting a human resources strategy: a) Securing the capability of the Bilbao office: More flexible internal communication, secure diversity and high level of capabilities, invigorate human resources management, secure engagement of assistant staff

Summary: Main contents of Agency strategy

<p>OSHA-strategy</p> <p>Vision and mission</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Providing information on OSH: The Agency is the European Union organisation responsible for the <i>collection and dissemination of information</i> that can <i>serve the needs</i> of people with an interest in safety and health at work 2) Promote workplace development: It is the vision of the Agency, through its information activities, to <i>promote high levels of safety and health</i> and to support the goal of <i>making European workplaces safe, healthy and productive</i> <p>Strategic goals</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Principal source of information: The Agency shall create the <i>principal source of safety and health information in Europe</i> and the <i>most comprehensive and user-friendly resource on the Internet</i> 2) Support policy formulation: The Agency shall <i>actively support the formulation and implementation of safety and health policies</i>, and the organisations involved in this process. 3) Promote good practices at workplace level: The Agency shall promote the <i>identification and sharing of information on good practice solutions at the workplace level</i>. 4) Promote cooperation: The Agency shall promote Member State <i>co-operation on information collection</i> and research and thus make the best use of resources. <p>Providing OSH information on the Internet</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Providing knowledge through web site information links <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide access to an ever increasing encyclopaedic stock of validated OSH-information 6. Improving web-facilities, ensuring quality and users needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing further the user friendliness and possibilities for users 7. Extending network partnership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Securing cooperation with national and international information providers and candidate countries 8. Complementary information services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improving also the traditional media means 9. User needs: ensuring the Agency is on the right track <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assessing periodically user needs <p>Supporting OSH policy making and implementation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Developing a European OSH-monitoring system for structural information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing further the State of OSH-monitoring, cooperating with Member States, Dublin, EUROSTAT 11. Collecting strategic information on specific topics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Summarising and assessing data from the Network, filling gaps, looking for innovative ways of cooperation <p>Developing a flexible and accountable network partnership</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Optimising Agency and Network resources and co-operation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flexible information projects with different levels of involvement, clarifying working relationships 2. Setting and implementing the Work Programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improving input to the Programme, continue with external consultants 3. Improving network communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing extranet facilities

4.3.2. Internal capability of the Bilbao Office

The Bilbao Office operates in a complex and high-work load environment, together with many indefinite boundary conditions, time-pressures, high negotiation and communication density. All these spell challenges and risks for the internal capability of Bilbao to negotiate these.

The survey points to a reasonable level of satisfaction to the qualifications of the Bilbao staff (all stakeholders regard it as above the average point (see Annex I). In the interviews there seemed to be in general a confidence in the capabilities of the management and the staff of Bilbao, but also concerns about developing it were taken up quite strongly.

In order to get some further insight into the capabilities of the Bilbao staff, the evaluators conducted a workshop for the entire Bilbao Office staff 12.1.2001, with a method devised by our company called *Anticipation Dialogues*. The entire staff was invited to a workshop, and each work unit (Work Environment, Network Secretariat, Information and Communication, Administration) was asked to reflect on what could be a good achievement by the Agency in the next two years, while the others listened. The participants were asked to imagine they were in 12.1.2003, and then the evaluators interviewed the work units, one at the time, while others listened, on what have been the key achievements. Finally the management group of the Agency was asked to reflect on what they had heard.

In terms of content, the key points taken up by the participants were a) Achieving a breakthrough in reaching customers (the SME-project being a case in point b) Achieving a new step in co-operation with the Focal Points c) Moving ahead with developing the Websites to a more dynamic and interactive stage and d) Improving internal flexibility, co-operation and human resources.

In terms of dynamics, the workshop proved that the overall work culture in the office is positive and the work community could take a strategic planning exercise quite well. The fact that this was quite a unique experience for the staff in terms of openness and a possibility as a whole to communicate and share visions, including assistant staff, points to a need to take these kinds of modes more into operation in the office. The investment in human resources seemed low profile. Promotion policies and development discussions are in place, but need improvement.

The themes emerging from the data suggest that overall the internal capability of Bilbao is rather satisfactory, but there are quite strong pressures to improve and secure qualifications, and also to improve the internal and external communication, working structures and culture and human resources management.

The Agency has navigated through a rather difficult start and build-up period, and the role of the director and a core group of managers has been important to secure the first achievements. Now is the time to reach more delegation and sharing of management and vision.

4.3.2.1. Management and organisation

In the feedback from the external and internal interviews one gets the impression that the strong point of management, and the work of the Director in particular, has been managing the external relations of the Agency, negotiating the leeway and possibilities for the Agency in the complex steering environment. This is probably a justified emphasis in the first establishment phase of the Agency. Now, while maintaining the good work here, more attention to internal delegation of management, human resources management, cross-functional communication and co-operation is needed.

The Bilbao Office has adopted a new organisation from January 2000 (Working Environment Unit, Information and Communication, Network Secretariat and Administration) and it seems to be operating in a satisfactory way. Overall, more sharing of the vision how to develop, delegating management responsibility and increasing internal communication within this organisational framework seems to be the right track.

4.3.2.2. Staff relations

On the top level (managers, specialists/experts) there is quite a high degree of job satisfaction, in terms of work culture and engagement, but the assistant (secretary) level seems rather unhappy both in terms of job security and engagement. Due attention should be paid to this to avoid alienation.

4.3.2.3. Qualifications and human resources

The Bilbao office staff displays quite a good coverage and a high level of qualifications in relation to its tasks, especially in the engineering, ICT and information questions. Looking at particularly the future challenges we feel that expertise in the fields of work sociology, psychology and health should be strengthened. Also legal advice was called for.

Human resources management is rather low-profile in the Bilbao office. Not that any major problems have surfaced yet, but we suggest that a higher human resources profile is rather urgently needed, to secure capabilities in future challenges. Perhaps a specialist in human resources could contribute both internally and externally.

Figure 5: Summary: The challenge of developing OSHA capability

The message coming from management debate is that in the face of complexity, increase your dialogue, divergence, informed experimentation and put in place effective feedback mechanisms.

It is of key importance that the potential of the tripartite steering system is developed further. We suggest that the Administrative Board could build further on its tradition of pre-Board meetings, invest even more in them and their preparation, and also open up new voices in the discussions. Everything possible should be done to foster cross-partite discussion.

In the face of the complexity the challenge for the management and capability of the Bilbao Office is in essence the same on a smaller scale as for the strategic management of the whole OSHA: increase sharing and building of vision and cross-unit discussion. The same applies naturally for the Network partners. Especially the possibilities for exchange with and between Focal Points should be fostered.

5. Conclusions

In this chapter we summarise the main conclusions how the Agency has performed in meeting its objectives, spelled out in the Council Regulation 2062/94, especially Articles 2,3, and 4. First we summarise the results across the key stakeholders (Chapter 5.1)., then across the different items of the Articles 2, 3, and 4 (Chapter 5.2.). Finally, we provide a comparative perspective, by comparing key results of evaluations of two other information Agencies, namely the European Environmental Agency and the Drug Agency (Chapter 5.3.). Finally, the overall conclusion is given in Chapter 5.4.

5.1. The overall summary of the Agency's performance across key stakeholders

EU-institutions: There seems to be a positive assessment from the political steering perspective on the role of the Agency in adding value to the European scene in terms of Networking and rising awareness. Also Commission OSH-unit regards these as aspects as positive, but is critical of the database substance.

National governments, OSH-professionals: There is a quite lot of criticism about the value added to national efforts or other existing networks, but the national scene is quite diversified, and also positive developments are noted.

Employers: The employers tend to be the most critical group assessing the Agency work, especially in regard to reaching the target groups and promoting co-operation between the employers, but regard the Websites as links, and the campaigns as a positive contribution

Trade Unions: The trade unions are most pleased with the contribution to rising the awareness of OSH-matters on the European scene, especially through campaigns. The Websites are seen as a positive development. Better engagement with social partners is called for.

Companies : (mostly 250-500 size) have overall a positive view of the Agency, but are still critical about actually reaching the target groups

Focal points: Focal points give the most positive feedback on the Agency, but also agree that the weakest point still is reaching the target groups.

International and outside EU: The Global aspect of the Agency work is presently moving ahead. There seems to be a positive assessment on the Agency's role in general and the Website in particular. More efforts to find complementary roles and have regular meetings is called for

Figure 6: Summary 1: Meeting the Objectives across different stakeholders

Stakeholder perspectives	Meeting the Objectives (Regulation Articles 2, 3 & 4). Information provision and setting up a Network
EU-institutions	<p>Positive assessment from the political steering perspective on the role of the Agency in adding value to the European scene in terms of Networking and rising awareness. Also Commission OSH-unit regards these as positive, but is critical of the database substance.</p> <p>Good: Website development, networking in general, rising awareness of OSH, campaigns To be improved: Database substance, best practices, check-lists</p>
National governments, OSH professionals	<p>There is a quite lot of criticism about the value added to national efforts or other existing networks, but the national scene is quite diversified, and also positive developments are noted.</p> <p><i>Good:</i> The usefulness and quality of the Agency Web Site; <i>To be improved:</i> National Sites; Publications; the co-operation between the Member States;</p>
Employers	<p>The employers tend to be the most critical group assessing the Agency work, especially in regard to reaching the target groups and promoting co-operation between the employers, but regard the Websites as links, and the campaigns as a positive contribution</p> <p>Good: Publications; campaigns, linking through Internet; <i>To be improved:</i> The Website contents; conferences; the language problem;</p>
Trade Unions	<p>The trade unions are most pleased with the contribution to rising the awareness of OSH-matters on the European scene, especially through campaigns. The Websites are seen as a positive development. Better engagement with social partners is called for.</p> <p><i>Good:</i> Rising awareness, The Agency Website fairly satisfactory; campaigns; <i>To be improved:</i> Engagement, adding value to national efforts, National Sites; the publications; the language problem;</p>
Companies	<p>Companies (mostly 250-500 size) have overall a positive view of the Agency, but are still critical about actually reaching the target groups</p> <p><i>Good:</i> The Agency Site of good quality; relative satisfaction with the National Sites; meetings; campaigns; <i>To be improved:</i> The Agency Site in other respects; the language problem;</p>
Research and others	<p>The OSH-field research and other institutions represent very much the average of the overall outcome. The Agency is useful as a link and awareness raiser, but not so much in adding value to already existing national or international contents</p> <p>Good: The Agency's capacity of organising co-operation; To be improved: The Agency Website; the publications; meetings; conferences;</p>
Focal Points	<p>Focal points give the most positive feedback on the Agency, but also agree that the weakest point still is reaching the target groups.</p>

	<p><i>Good:</i> FPs satisfied with the Websites; FPs relatively satisfied with publications; meetings; Fact Sheets; Campaigns; Good Practice Site; most satisfied ‘customer’; <i>To be improved:</i> the language problem;</p>
International and outside EU	<p>The Global aspect of the Agency work is presently moving ahead. There seems to be a positive assessment on the Agency's role in general and the Website in particular. More efforts to find complementary roles and have regular meetings is called for</p> <p><i>Good:</i> Website development, providing contacts, rising OSH visibility, <i>To be improved:</i> Global strategy, substance, priorities</p>
Overall	<p>The overall picture seems to be telling the same message across stakeholders: In meeting the Objectives of Article 2, 3. & 4 <i>Good is:</i> The Websites as basic information provision structure; Factsheets; Campaigns; rising European awareness <i>To be improved:</i> Information more targeted; contextual, problem-solving type; reaching SMEs</p>

5.2. Summary of performance across Regulation 2062/94 Articles 2.3. and 4

Summary 2: Regulation Article Checklist

Overview of Objectives in Regulations, Article 2, 3, and 4	Summary of findings in the evaluation
Article 2:	
	<p>In terms of building an infrastructure and links and publishing material, there is a high level of agreement across stakeholders that the Agency has here played a fruitful role.</p> <p>In terms of the content, improvement is called for the targeting, meeting the needs, problem solving and reliability of the information</p>
Article 3	
a) Collect and disseminate information, identify and give input for priorities	<p>The success here is more in building the infrastructure and there is room for improvement for giving input for priorities. This is a challenge dependent on the many developments, however, ranging from the emerging European strategy priorities, developing the work of the Board, addressing national diversity, etc.</p>
b) Collect info on research and disseminate	<p>Linking and disseminating information has been addressed both through the Internet development and the Network partners, especially the Topic Centres. There is still a lot of room for improvement in this area, however.</p>
c) Promote co-operation and exchange amongst MS, including info on education	<p>The conferences, campaigns and meetings, and also the links through Internet have played a positive role here, but exchange among and between the Member States is still more potential than actual. The development here depends very much in finding more natural and fruitful roles for the different countries.</p>
d) Organise conferences and seminars	<p>The conferences, seminars and campaigns are regarded positively across all stakeholders, with room for im-</p>

	provement in the logistics and technicalities, for instance.
e) Supply CB and MS with info for policy & legislation, particularly SME's	Again, the first phase of Agency development is here more in providing an infrastructure, links, some interesting theme input (like the campaigns) and there is considerable room for improvement in providing data and reaching the SME's)
f) Establish a Network (Article 4)	The Agency has succeeded in establishing a Network, but a lot needs to be done to secure this achievement, especially in terms of the position and role of Focal Points both in regard to the national level and in relation to network
g) Collect and make info available to and from third countries & WHO, ILO, etc.	The global connections on the Website are presently being established. More work is needed to find an appropriate and mutually fruitful complementary network
h) Provide info on preventive tools and activities, esp. SME	The work here is still in the beginning. There is a clear wish to develop information in terms of practical problem-solving and databases
i) Contribute to the future development of Community Programmes	Also here the Agency has contributed in a general sense by rising the OSH on the European agenda

5.3. The Agency in a comparative perspective

Further robustness for our conclusions is rendered by the fact that the evaluation of EEA, (and to some extent also EMCDDA) , comes in many points to similar conclusions on the developmental path of EEA. EEA acted in many ways as a model for OSHA, has a similar structure and is also a young agency. Some constraints must be recognised, however: The evaluations of EEA and EMCDDA pay very little attention to the context and boundary conditions of the Agencies, which was also pointed out by the reactions of the EEA Board. This means that the evaluation has a largely internal process emphasis, and should not be taken to reflect quite adequately the challenges of OSHA. Nevertheless the comparison gives important insight to some aspects that might be relevant more generally in the Agencies of EU.

The key finding in this comparison is that customer contact (called marketing in the EEA evaluation) and human resources need more attention

Comparison of evaluations of EEA, EMCDDA and OSHA evaluation findings and recommendations

0=normally relevant for the Agency, maintain present course

+ = relevant to improve

++ = highly relevant to improve

?= Meaning unclear in the OSHA-context
 x = Taken up in the EMCDDA evaluation

Key finding and recommendation for EEA	EM-CDDA	Relevance for OSHA	Observations from OSHA evaluation
General recommendations			
Maintain EEA and EIONET	x	+	Maintain OSHA
Promote simplification in all areas		0	
Develop operational issues using a more realistic approach		0	
Allocate enough time and resources to consolidate on the present to face the future better		+	Especially the Focal points important
Mission and strategy			
The Agency should align its strategy with its vision and its mission	x	+	In OSHA the question is to elaborate the strategy
The Agency should develop and implement a realistic strategy	x	+	In OSHA the question is to elaborate the strategy
The Agency should evolve from report publisher to information provider		+	Meeting the customer needs, addressing practical problem solving
Marketing			
The Agency should consider the user as its central priority		++	This area is likewise highly relevant for OSHA
The Agency should better identify its target users and understand their use of information	x	++	
The Agency should better identify its target users and understand their use of information		++	
The Agency should serve its key clients first		+	
The Agency should determine key products or services from the user's perspective		++	
The Agency should translate users' wants and needs into products and/or service requirements		++	
The Agency should monitor changes in user expectations		++	
Products and Services			
The Agency should organise its Product and Service offering in an integrated manner	x	0	
The Agency should industrialise its report production process	x	0	
The Agency should improve quality concerns	x	0	
The Agency should develop services		0	
The Agency should expand the possibilities of the internet		0	
EIONET			
The Agency should improve and expand the co-ordination of NFPs	x	++	Especially relevant to reach a new level with the Focal Points
The Agency should keep a balanced expertise level among ETCs		+	
The Agency should reconsider the resource level and the allocation between "basic support" and "assessment and reporting" to be able to obtain	x	?	

what it is expecting			
The Agency should clarify the role of the ETC and its own co-ordinating role and communicate it to other working partners	x	++	Especially relevant to reach a new level with the Focal Points
The Agency should provide common tools and procedures, and provide a single contact point that would answer non-topic-related questions.		?	The Agency might explore the question of one point information services
The Agency should provide direct input and guidance to help the new ETCs to managing the transition process		?	Relevant in the context of the Enlargement
Network and Partnerships			
The Agency should set clear goals for each new joint project	x	+	
In key partnerships (e.g. with Eurostat), the Agency should refine its management style to ensure a high level of trust and communication		+	
The EEA's organisation			
The Agency should re-design its organisational structure	x	0	Not re-desingn, but improve internal communication
If possible, the Agency should try to outsource non-critical functions	x	0	
Management			
The Agency should pay heed to the symptoms of the current growth crisis		0	
The Agency should improve delegation of tasks and responsibilities		++	Sharing management and vision
The Agency should create the information flows necessary to monitor, control and link organisational units		0	
The Agency should apply the client satisfaction philosophy to internal clients and cross-functional relationships	x	0	
The Agency should invest in communications tools that greatly enhance co-ordination	x	+	
Whenever possible, the Agency should designate one individual or group to oversee joint tasks.		+	
People			
The Agency should create and manage a human resources strategy		++	This area is likewise relevant for the OSHA, especially the Bilbao Office
The Agency should set up a cross-functional team to develop the human resources strategy	x	++	
The Agency should determine how the human resources department will support strategic goals and impact organisational performance		+	
The Agency should ensure that employees implementing and managing human resources strategies have the necessary means and skills to do so		++	
The Agency should cultivate an environment that enables all employees to give their best		+	
If the Agency expands it staff, it should first bring in new skills but no additional scientific expertise		0	

The Agency should develop and train its staff and management		+	
Finance			
The Agency should expand its Finance competencies		0	
The Agency should not decentralise the Finance function within the operational units		0	
Information system			
The Agency should be more proactive in the management of the EIONET information		+	
The Agency should ensure that key information users understand the strengths and weaknesses of the managed information		+	
The Agency should ensure IT system security, at both Agency and ETC level.		0	

5.4.Overall conclusion

Conclusion on the performance of the Agency so far:

The evaluation comes to the conclusion that the Agency has been reasonably successful in establishing an infrastructure for providing information in the field of OSH, both in terms of techniques and media for information, and a network structure.

In reaching impact, meeting customer needs, the Agency has been partially successful.

Overall, the conclusion is that the Agency has met to a reasonable degree the Objectives spelled out in the Council Regulation 2062/94 , especially in taking into account both the short time-span and the complexity of its tasks

Providing the Agency takes decisive steps to address some key issues, it has good potential to reach better impact in the future.

6. Reflections and Recommendations

After answering the main questions of the evaluation in chapters 4 and 5, we now move on to reflecting on the overall the message and to give some recommendations. This part of the report is more tentative, and intended to foster the dialogue over the future of the Agency.

In chapter 6.1. we reflect on the developmental path of the Agency and a possible *bifurcation point* , a crossroads, approaching in terms of the future of the Agency.

In chapter 6.2. we give some recommendations to improve the performance of the Agency in the future

6.1. Reflections

While studying the basic message present in the current evaluation data one cannot but notice that the areas of criticism and themes that need further development repeat the themes present in all the developmental path of the Agency so far. The Agency's annual reports, progress reports, working programmes and strategy papers during the years 1996 – 2000 contain also themes like: how to develop the network structures, especially the relationship between the Agency Focal Points; how to reach the target groups or how to identify them; the problem of reaching the SMEs has been mentioned already in founding regulation; how to develop the Website more 'user-friendly', and so forth.

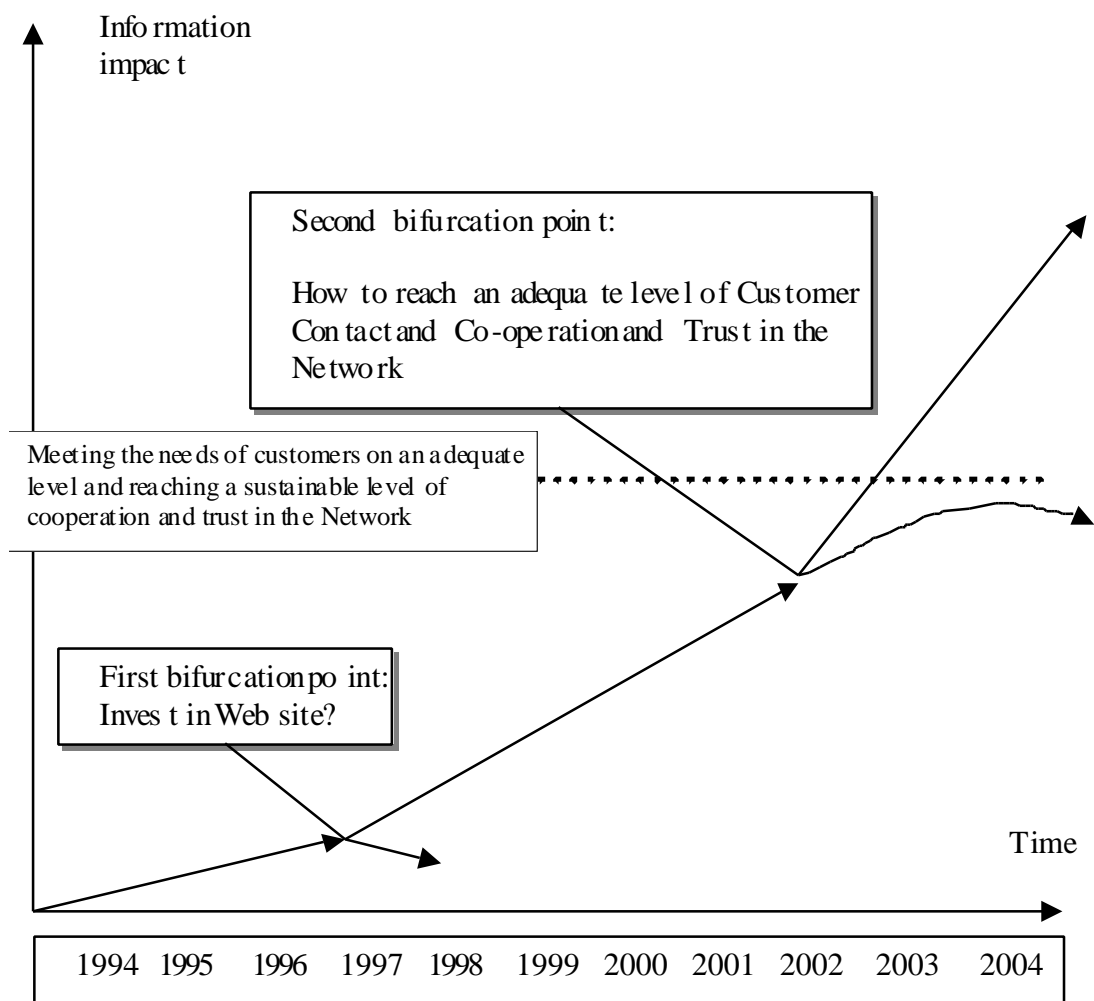
The most obvious conclusion might be that the problem areas have been mostly identified already at the beginning or at a very early stage of the Agency's development (for example, studies mapping working life development, the strategic priorities in the Member States). Thus, it seems that although the areas in need of development have been identified, there have been some obstacles for preventing the Agency from resolving them.

For some part of the problem areas one could argue that they are 'eternal' or 'non-Agency problems' that could not be expected to be solved in such a short time. The interviewees and respondents were either active Agency people, involved in the Focal Points, the companies, Employers' or

Workers' organisations. The satisfaction was the greatest amongst people closest to the OSHA and dissatisfaction grew with the distance from OSHA. Could it be possible that the relative dissatisfaction, ambivalence and even irritation present in some interviewees, in some replies, and even in respect to the evaluation effort itself, reflects the great expectations and growing frustration regarding the Agency? If the reasoning is valid, what does it tell about the Agency? And, does it not contain a possible threat to the interest and motivation of the different players to be involved and committed to developing the Agency also in the future?

It seems that the Agency might be arriving at a 'bifurcation point', a crossroads. 'Bifurcation point' is a point of development in the organisation's development where there are simultaneously several options open to be taken. For rational planning of the organisations 'bifurcation' is a 'double-edged sword'. It leaves the organisation in the state of uncertainty about its future and there might be a feeling of isolation. On the other hand, the organisation can and may find solution whereby it can reach out for the future, make experiments on the 'world out there'. Thus, instead of long-term planning the organisational development calls now for continuous shorter-term exploration and experimentation, to feel the way, get rapid feedback especially from target groups, and learn about positive avenues to pursue. The agency has already been at a bifurcation point when considering whether to invest in launching Websites. The conditions to consider this were far from certain, because at the time nobody could predict the implications and speed of the Internet. Afterwards it might look as an obvious path to pursue. Now we think that especially in two aspects there is an important point approaching: reaching adequate customer contact and building co-operation and trust in the network. Unless these are addressed in a decisive way, the Agency performance falls short of customer impact and sustaining trust in the network.

Figure 7: Bifurcation points of the Agency



Regarding the Agency, the message from the evaluation data is, that Internet and campaigns have been the most successful parts of its activities. Also the network structure as such is seen as a real potential. Internet has a characteristic that it is pretty much unpredictable and ‘Internet governance’ is a very ambiguous effort in public organisations that are used to rationally planned actions that usually are easily measured and assessed. Internet is very much invisible for the rational planning. The organisation cannot certainly know who the clients of the Web-site are, where they come from and how the amount of them will develop. The only way to handle this is to make for example client surveys whereby the organisation can *estimate* what is going on with the Web-site.

The other ‘success story’ has been the campaigns organised by OSHA. What the respondents tell is that campaigns have brought *more focus* to the Agency activities. By implication, campaigns have managed to organise people in joint effort and action. Campaigns thus have had the capacity of *inducing networks*. Especially important this seems to have been in countries where the OSH struc-

tures are dispersed or underdeveloped (Portugal, Italy) but also in more developed but dispersed system (Germany) and in countries with more centralised and unified system (Finland). Despite the differences in country conditions the conclusion is that successful operations *enable networking*. Thus, information turns into something else, into better awareness of the safety and health themes, into better knowledge through joint networking.

But, what is typical of a network? It has been argued that organisations or people get motivated in network activities if they find that they do not have the necessary resources to manage the challenges themselves. The value added by a network is the value gained through it to one's own effort. If that is a valid reasoning, the *Agency's added value lies in its capacity to create extra resources to the national efforts by enhancing networks*. The power of any network does not, however, rest on the joint actions as such. Rather, it lies in its capacity to *promote and enhance communication* between the participants. The human communication is inevitably indeterminate by its nature. If there could be total consensus between the participants there would be no need for interaction, each participant could not learn anything new as they would only get from the network what they already know. *Thus we can conclude that the fruitfulness of networking is that it allows the differences between the partners come forth*. Communicating the differences between the participants' ideas, contexts where they come from or where they live in empower the participants *to act on those differences* and 'apply' the differences into their own contexts.

The discourse about networks and information may now perhaps allow the following conclusion:

The successful and wise information dissemination is a focused effort, based on the acknowledgement of the differences in the participants' mind-sets and (cultural) contexts. Building on those differences the dissemination process enables the interaction and communication between the partners. The dissemination process is based on the respect of the participants' autonomy. The relationship between the information provider and the 'target' is that of interaction and equal negotiations. Information becomes knowledge through communication.

The information methods and structures in OSHA are largely 'second modern', i.e. of the *network society age*, but the steering structures, the Agency's position in decision making structures, and its own self-consciousness are still perhaps to a great degree 'first modern', i.e. reflecting mainly the industrial society. This discrepancy, unless successfully dealt with will hamper future performance. We will now turn to some tentative recommendations how to meet this challenge.

6.2 Recommendations: Improving the Performance of the Agency in the Future

In the terms of reference of the evaluation it is stated that the evaluator may formulate any comments and suggestions deemed appropriate and elaborate technical conclusions that can support future development.

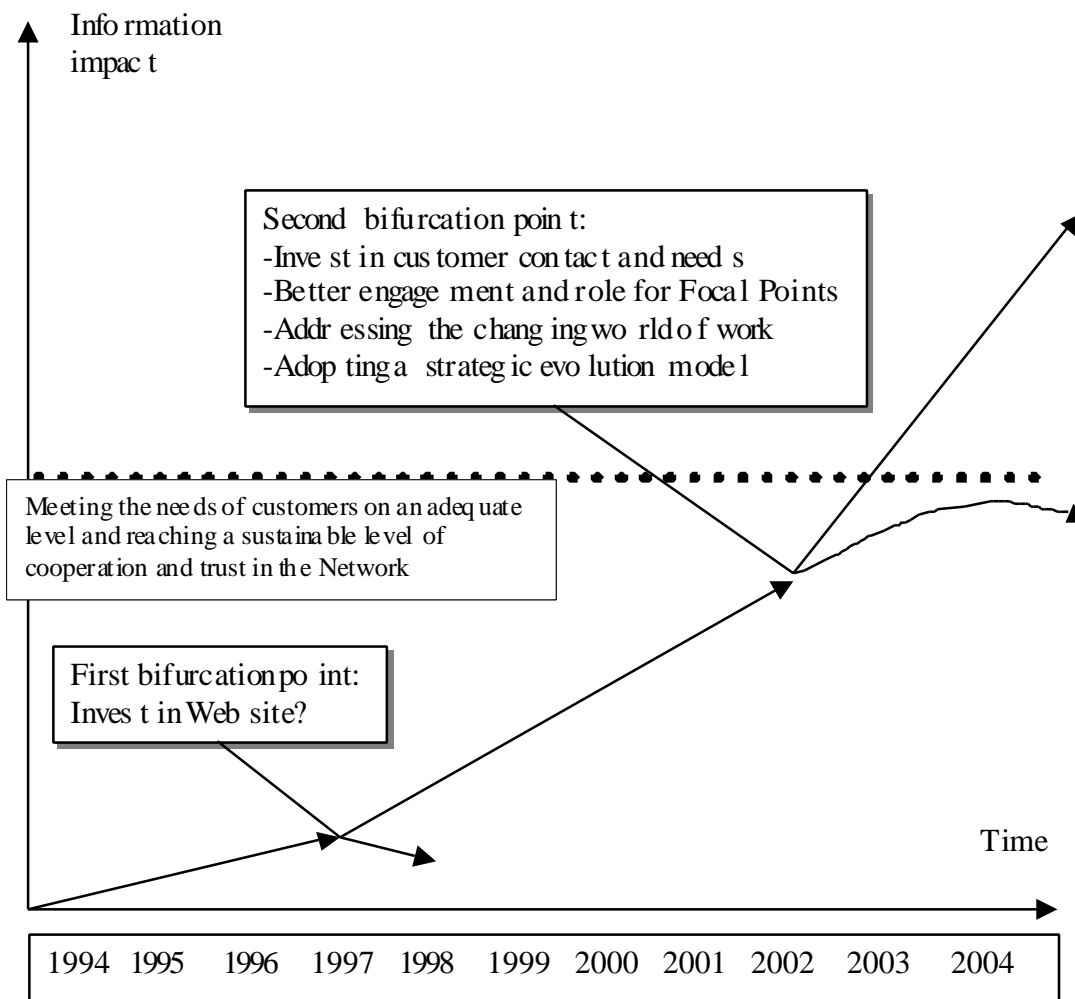
Looking at the big picture our impression is that the Agency might be arriving at a bifurcation point, a crossroads, where following the same trajectory in an incremental way is not enough.

The Agency has already successfully passed one bifurcation point, namely pondering in 1996-1997, whether and how to invest in launching Websites, at a time when it was not obvious, what the implications would be, and how useful it would prove to be.

The new (possible) crossroads constitutes, in our understanding, from five main elements, roughly in an order of priority, which have to be dealt with in a decisive way, to secure the realisation of the build-up phase potential:

1. Communicating decisively better with customers to meet their information needs
2. Developing the OSH-concept to deal with the changing world of work
3. Reaching a new level of development in the Agency Network (especially Focal Points) to deal with national diversity and find fruitful roles and co-operation
4. Developing strategic management and the management structure (Board) and Agency strategy to deal with 1 - 3, and secure the evolution of the Agency
5. Securing adequate capability of the Bilbao office.

Figure 8: Key recommendations and the bifurcation point



1) Communicating decisively better with customers

This is the most important challenge. We suggest that addressing this question is more than just continuing incrementally the same path as so far. Many measures to address these questions are already being done or are in the pipeline: feedback from customers, targeting information better according to needs, establishing a good practice databank, the SME-project, etc. What we suggest is that a very decisive effort here is needed: To find out about the practical needs of the different target groups, co-operating with them in an intensive problem-solving and communicative way, so that a shift from a supply oriented information provision to a communication and demand driven paradigm is reached. The SME-project is here a case in point. It is probably important to concentrate efforts, to reach a real contact with SME-intermediaries and a real SME network, listen to their needs, and work with them to reach a practical breakthrough, and then use it as a platform for disseminating good practice.

2) Developing the Occupational Safety and Health concept to deal with the changing world of work

A second important aspect is the need to continue to build a comprehensive concept, connection and strategy in relation to the changing world of work in Europe and the world. The Agency is aware of this, and has tentatively addressed this in conferences and publications. We suggest a keen eye should be kept on this issue.

The recent adoption of a new Social Agenda and Employment Strategy, and a proposal to adopt a new Communication on a Community Strategy on Health and Safety at Work provide a favourable backdrop to take the understanding of the importance and meaning of OSH-activities to a new, more integrated level. We suggest it is vital for an information agency to be well connected to this development.

3) Reaching a new level of development in the Agency Network to deal with diversity and find fruitful roles and co-operation

The future of the Agency lies decisively on its Network, the Focal Points, Topic Centres and other Network partners and connections. The future success depends on the ability of the Agency to foster co-operation and the use of the Network resources as a whole.

Bringing the Network to a new level of functioning constitutes clearly one of the core challenges for the near future, and many improvements, most importantly the first key challenge, practical customer orientation, depends on solving the Network co-operation better. The key point to be addressed here is to find meaningful and fruitful ways to address the national diversity of OSH-problems and priorities, which is further emphasised by the imminent enlargement. This could mean, for example, that one should look for different challenging and natural tasks for different countries and Focal Points, building on their needs, strengths, histories and present agendas. Issues, where a fruitful division of labour could yield good results and engagement could be, for example, the enlargement, ageing, immigration, globalisation and third world.

4) Developing the Agency strategy and management structure

The scope of audiences and customers of the Agency is formidable; it is facing nothing less than the whole complexity of the European integration process. The rapid development of the Internet puts also the global challenge on the table, for example: What is the role of Europe and its OSH-information in the global network, especially in relation to the third world?

For any information business, a complexity of audiences poses a challenge of focus, priorities and reaching real impact.

The Agency itself is a complex entity, in fact quite a new "information age" type of an organisation, calling for new, more advanced concepts of management. In short, there is a high level of agreement among the present management discourse that in the face of such complexity, old management paradigms are not enough. There is also a high level of agreement in this discourse on the key to success: rise the level of strategic debate, dialogue and utilise diversity and polyphony and use effective experimentation, with good feedback mechanisms, to feel your way. The Internet itself, constituting continuous experimentation, with a high level of unpredictability, is a case in point here.

A way forward could be to strengthen the role and functionality of the Board as a strategic social dialogue forum, and strengthen the role of the Bureau as the actual Executive Board. This development should be coupled with adding new voices and contacts, to secure openness to new developments. Giving a voice for SME-representation, and the educational field could be examples of this. Developing the role of the Focal Points and countries, addressed in point 3, also builds possibilities for strategic management.

The present Agency strategy mainly addresses the Website aspects, which can be seen as justified at the time. There is a mention (in the mission and vision) to the *productivity* aspect of OSH and some treatment on network partnership, but our suggestion is that the strategy needs elaboration in the five key challenge areas we have outlined here.

5) Securing the capability of the Bilbao Office

Sharing and developing the vision and mission of the Agency and more flexible cross-functional communication and co-operation are needed. Engagement with, and the position of assistant (secretary) staff needs to be improved.

Looking at future challenges we feel that expertise in the fields of work sociology, psychology and health should be strengthened. Also legal advice was called for. We also suggest that a higher human resources profile is needed, to secure capabilities and recruitment to meet future challenges.

End of report

Annex I : Survey

1. The survey and its purpose

An EU-wide survey was executed in January 2001, with 160 respondents, and an estimated return rate of 30%. The questionnaire topics covered customer/stakeholder satisfaction on the Agency and National Websites, publications, conferences and meetings, Agency's functions and target groups, programmes, management and structures. The survey was intended to give a picture of user satisfaction in the Agency's work, both on an overall level, and by key target groups. The results were plotted against findings from other data, namely interviews and country case studies to rise the level of validity and reliability of conclusions.

The response time was very short, only just over two weeks, due to very confined time-frames of the whole evaluation.

Also a questionnaire for the Administrative Board was used in connection to the Board meeting in November 2000, and parallel to the EU-wide survey in January 2001, containing to the most part the question areas as in the EU-wide survey.

The questionnaires were available in all EU-languages.

In the survey, the following six respondent groups were identified:

Focal Point Officials, Government Officials, Employer's Organisation Representatives, Trade Union Representatives, Company (Enterprise) Representatives and Other Representatives (Scientific and other institutes operating in the OSH-field). Each target group had its own questionnaire, containing both common questions for everyone, and a set of tailored questions for the target group.

2. Distribution of the survey

The questionnaire was distributed through Focal Point correspondents, who were notified twice beforehand by the Agency of the exercise and supplied by detailed guidelines by the evaluator.

The Focal Point correspondents were asked to pick 5 (minimum) - 10 (maximum) representatives from each group, who have, according to their knowledge, experience of OSHA and/or its network. We were thus looking for USER EXPERIENCES. Within each group the correspondents were asked to look for some divergence, according to the description below.

The Focal Points were asked, when appropriate, to use an informed intermediary to help to pick out the sample.

Because there are differences in structures and responsibilities in different countries the correspondents were asked to use their best judgement to pick out representatives from the groups we have described, so that a reasonable coverage of the key stakeholders in each country can be achieved.

Target group description:

Focal Point Officials

5 - 10 Focal Point Officials who are working for your National Focal Point and Thematic Groups.

Government Officials

5 - 10 National Government Officials involved with safety and health issues, covering representatives from central government (ministries, authorities) and representatives regional/local level (if you think appropriate)

Employer's Organisation Representatives

5 - 10 Employers Organisation Representatives involved with safety and health issues, covering different fields of industry, services and commerce and regional/local level

Trade Union Representatives

5 - 10 Trade Union Representatives involved with safety and health issues, covering different fields of industry, services and commerce and regional/local level

Company (Enterprise) Representatives

5 - 10 Company Representatives, involved with safety and health issues (like company work safety committee representative), from different fields of industry, services and commerce, from different sizes (under 50, 50 - 249, 250 - 500 and over 500 employees). We understand that this is probably the most difficult target group both to define and reach, but nevertheless very important. Please use your best judgement here, and use informed intermediaries, if appropriate.

Other Organisations operating in the field of Safety and Health at work

5 - 10 Other organisations, which can include Scientific community representatives and other OSH-organisations, covering institutes involved with safety and health issues like university units, private institutes, insurance bodies, multi-disciplinary services and others. Again, use your best judgement to cover key institutes in your country.

3. Results

The survey got 160 respondents. The coverage of target groups was satisfactory but the response levels in different countries differed quite considerably. This reflects probably mostly the very tight time-tables for the response, but may also reflect other matters in terms of commitment and motivation to perform tasks for the Agency.

Regarding the target groups, the response from the company group mainly reflects rather big companies (250 - 500 employees) and the opinions of OSH-responsible in them. The fields of companies range from industries to services, media companies,

transport, auto-industry, mines, medical companies, and others, so qualitatively there is a divergence. The survey reached only 5 companies under 50 employees, so the opinion of SME's is not reflected adequately in the survey. The SME-question is treated, however, in the interviews and country case-studies.

The terms of reference for the evaluation did not require a country or focal point comparison as such, so in this respect, an uneven distribution is not a major question. The most important thing was to get an overall picture and cover the target groups in a reasonable way.

Austria, Denmark, Finland, Great-Britain, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands and Portugal (9 countries) had a reasonable response, also across stakeholders. France and Sweden had rather low response rates. The German Focal Point wanted to substitute the response to the survey by the special country study executed by the evaluator. From Belgium and Luxembourg there were responses only to the Board questionnaire, which will be treated separately. Finally, there was no response from Greece and Spain. The evaluator approached Greece on the matter, and a response later was promised, but to date (25.2.2001), none has arrived (the questionnaire was available also in Greek). The Spanish Focal Point had something to comment on the questionnaire, and when approached by the evaluator, promised an explanation why no response was given, but to date (25.2.2001) the evaluator has not received such an explanation in writing.

The theoretical maximum number of answers ranges from 450 to 900 (450 with 5 respondents for each target group in each country, and 900 with 10).

Omitting the countries, which did not respond in the survey at all (Germany giving its response through the country case study), Spain not responding apparently because of some problems with the questionnaire and Greece apparently for time-table reasons, we can conclude that the theoretical maximum range for response lies between 360 - 720.

The Focal Point correspondents were asked to supply the evaluator with a list (without names) of whom they sent the questionnaire to. In practice, only 5 Focal Points supplied such a list. From them it can be extrapolated that in practice the questionnaire has been sent on the average probably to 6-7 respondents in each target group, yielding a theoretical maximum of about 500.

As it is, the number of respondents were 160, which gives a response rate of about 30%, which is considered to be a normal response rate in surveys, depending on the loss in the sub groups in relation to evaluation questions, of course. As it is, the coverage across the target groups (see figure 1) is reasonably even and satisfactory, and can afford further analysis. As it was mentioned, the terms of reference for the evaluation did not require a country or Focal point comparison as such, so in this respect, an uneven distribution is not a major question. The most important thing was to get an overall picture and cover the target groups in a reasonable way, which the survey does. It must be also noted that the results of the survey are also plotted against the information coming from almost a hundred interviews, and four special country studies, likewise covering all target groups, so the validity and reliability of the conclusions is raised by cross validating the findings.

3.1. Basic Statistics

Figure 1: Respondent groups by countries by six target groups

	Company	Employer	Focal Point	Government	Other	Trade Union	ALL OVER
Austria	3	2	4	3	3	4	19
Denmark	2	2	3	3	7	3	20
Finland	4	3	7	3	4	3	24
France		3	1		1	3	8
Great-Britain		4	5		5	4	18
Ireland	3	2	1	2	3	3	12
Italy	2	1	6	2		3	14
Netherlands	3	2	3	1	6	2	19
Portugal	5	2	4	1	2	2	16
Sweden		2	1	2	3	2	10
ALL OVER	22	23	35	17	34	29	160

Board

In the survey, 17 Board members responded, mostly government representatives (14) and three from the trade union group. The employers responded collectively in the questionnaire presented for the Board in November 2000. The Board response will be treated separately in chapter 5, where the different Board responses will be summarised.

Figure 2: Board response in the survey by country

	Board
Austria	1
Belgium	3
Denmark	2
Finland	1
France	
Germany	1
Great-Britain	1
Ireland	
Italy	2
Luxemburg	3
Netherlands	2
Portugal	
Sweden	1
ALL OVER	17

3.2. Usage and familiarity with OSHA products: Websites and publications

The familiarity and usage of OSHA Websites and publications seems reasonable among the respondents (figures 1 - 4), so the response can be, to a reasonable degree,

be regarded to reflect real usage experiences. Not all respondents answered the question, so the total number is below 156 (target groups) + 17 (board) = 173, as for instance in figure 1, where 132 responded to the question.

Figure 1: I have used the Agency Website									
	Board	Company	Employer	Focal Point	Government	Other	Trade Union	Un-	OVER ALL
Daily				2					2
Weekly	4	3		15	1	6	1		30
Monthly	12	5	6	12	3	17	3		58
Yearly	1	7	3	3	4	8	2		28
Never		5	4		4		1		14
OVER ALL	17	20	13	32	12	31	7		132

Figure 2: I have used the National OSHA Website of my own country									
	Board	Company	Employer	Focal Point	Government	Other	Trade Union	Un-	OVER ALL
Daily				5		2			7
Weekly	6	4	3	13	1	11			38
Monthly	7	7	5	9	5	14	4		51
Yearly	2	4	2	4	2	4	2		20
Never	2	5	2		4		1		14
OVER ALL	17	20	12	31	12	31	7		130

Figure 3: I'm familiar with the corporate information (Agency Brochure, Work Programmes, Annual Report etc.)									
	Board	Company	Employer	Focal Point	Government	Other	Trade Union	Un-	OVER ALL
All	16	1	4	18		13	3		55
Some	1	11	7	16	8	17	3		63
None		7	2		4	1			14
OVER ALL	17	19	13	34	12	31	6		132

Figure 4: I'm familiar with the news information (Newsletter, Magazine, OSH@mail, Press releases)									
	Board	Company	Employer	Focal Point	Government	Other	Trade Union	Un-	OVER ALL
All	9	2	2	19	2	10	1		45
Some	6	10	9	15	4	20	5		69
None	1	8	1		6	1			17
OVER ALL	16	20	12	34	12	31	6		131

Figure 5: I'm familiar with the strategical and structural OSH information (Agency reports, Fact Sheets)									
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

	Board	Company	Employer	Focal Point	Government	Other	Trade Union	OVER ALL
All	14	3	1	18		10	3	49
Some	2	8	10	16	6	16	1	59
None		9	1		6	5	2	23
OVER ALL	16	20	12	34	12	31	6	131

3.3.Sum Scales

In order to get an overall picture on the response on the main evaluation questions, the questions from the questionnaire were reduced from 50 to 10 by constructing sum scales, where the scores of sets of questions were summed. The Cronbach's alpha analysis indicates that the constructs function well.

Name	Content of Sum Scale
Agency Website	Five variables measuring the satisfaction with the information provided by the Agency Website and its quality
National Website	Five variables measuring the satisfaction with the information provided by the National Website of each country and its quality
Publications	Four variables measuring the usefulness of the Agency publications
Meetings	Four variables measuring the usefulness and quality of meetings and conferences arranged by the Agency
Target Groups	Six variables measuring meeting the needs of and covering different target groups, and assisting them
Thematic Network	Five variables measuring the clarity of role and functioning of Thematic Network Groups
Topic Centres	Five variables measuring the clarity of role and functioning of Topic Centres
Agency Qualifications and Cost-effectiveness	Two variables measuring the qualifications of the Bilbao Staff and the cost-effectiveness of the operations
Resources	Three variables measuring the sufficiency of resources of the entire Agency network
Focal Points Qualifications and Cost-effectiveness	Two variables measuring the qualifications of the Focal Points and the cost-effectiveness of their operations

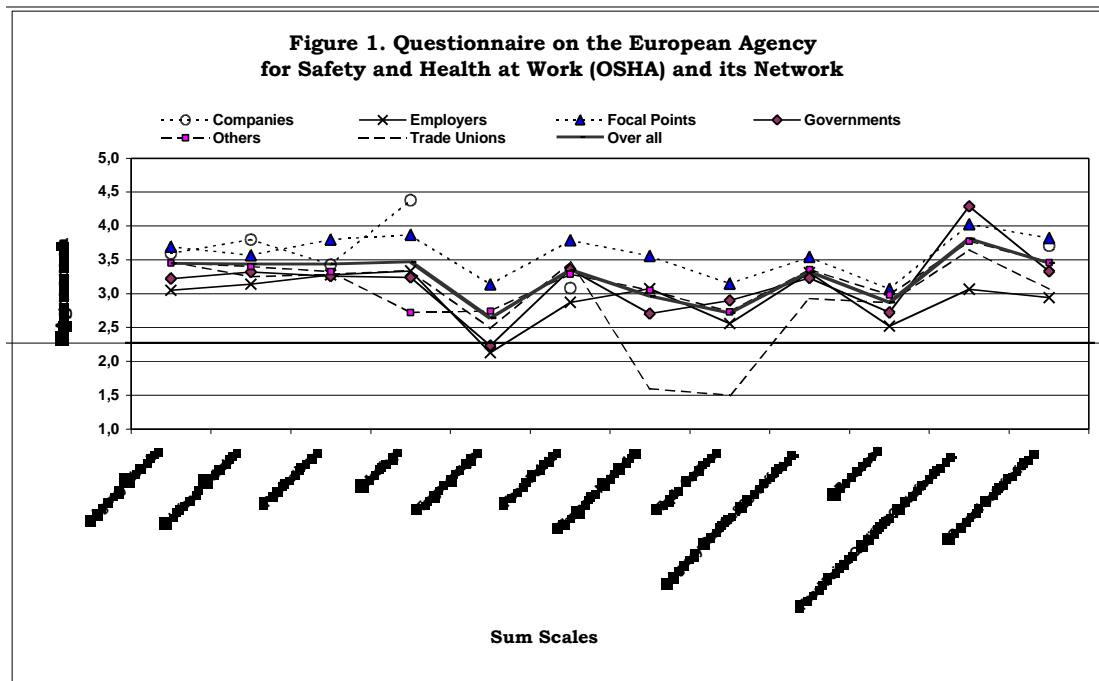
3.3.1. Sum Scale results

Sum Scales and Cronbach's alpha

Name	Number of variables	Cronbach's alpha
Agency Website	5	0,842
National Website	5	0,861
Publications	4	0,766
Meetings	4	0,868
Target Groups	6	0,859

Thematic Network	5	0,921
Topic Centres	5	0,932
Agency Qualifications and Cost-effectiveness	2	- (only two used)
Resources	3	0,710
Focal Points Qualifications and Cost-effectiveness	2	- (only two used)

Figure 1: Results by groups in Sum Scales



Results in figure 1: The overall satisfaction level with the Agency work seems to be on the positive side, but it must be noted that on the most critical point, reaching and serving the target groups, the satisfaction level is lowest.

The overall picture across sum scales indicates clearly that the satisfaction with Websites, publications and meetings and the functioning of the Focal points is above average in all groups. There is also an agreement across the groups that reaching the target groups is not yet satisfactory. The overall satisfaction is on the positive side, with the Social Partners being most critical, but still just on the average of the rating scale.

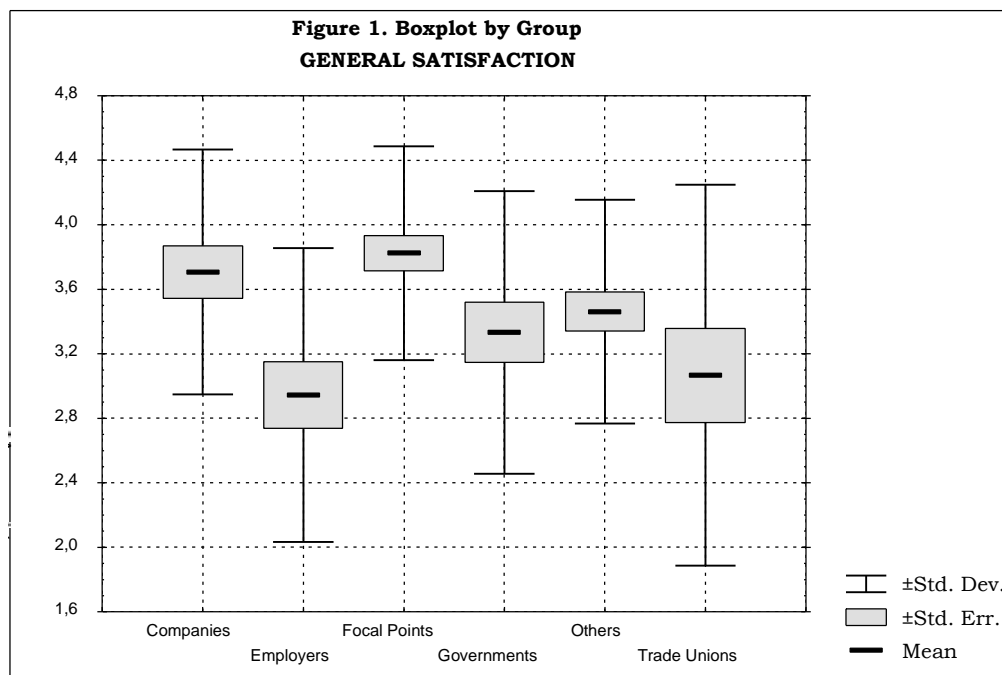
The variation between the groups is greatest on the questions of rating meetings, Thematic networks and Topic Centres and the qualifications and cost-effectiveness of the Focal Points. The trade unions seem to be unhappy with the engagement with the Thematic groups and Topic Centres. The Focal points tend to rate the Agency work systematically higher than other respondents, and the employers tend to be systematically most critical. Satisfaction with cost-effectiveness seems to be quite positive. These differences are statistically significant (see analysis of variance below).

The overall result from the survey is very well in line with the message coming from the interviews and country case studies.

3.3.2. Analysis of variance by groups in Sum Scales by Box-Plot

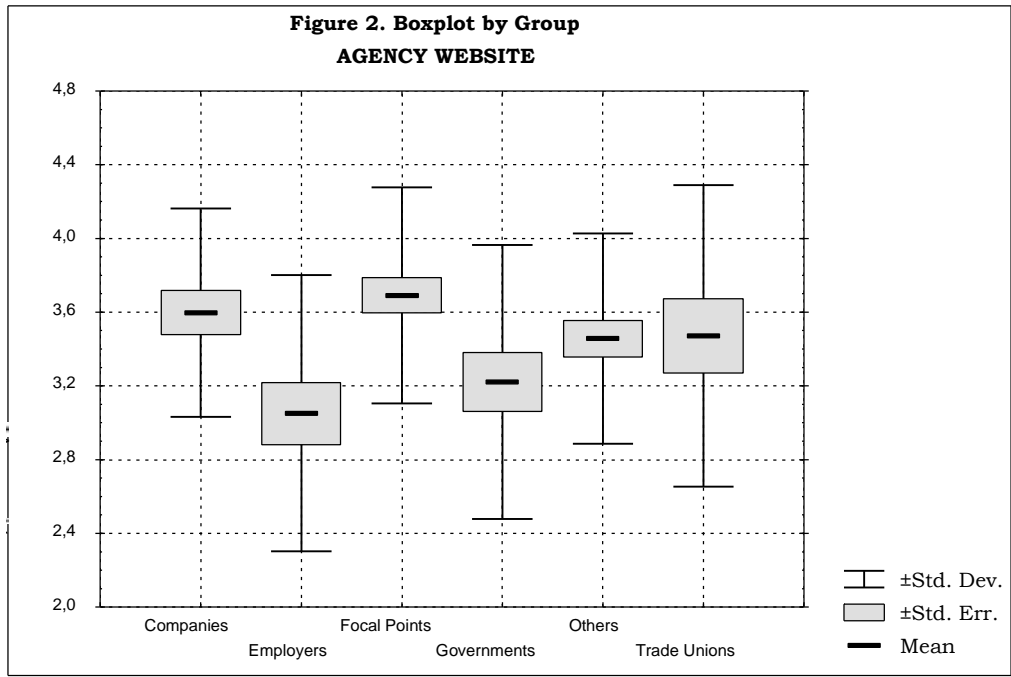
Analysis of variance was conducted, in order to analyse the statistical significance of the variation of satisfaction across the groups.¹

The figures can be read as follows: The mean shows the mean of the respondent group, the box shows the "size" standard error, and if the boxes don't meet, it means that on a 5% confidence level the difference cannot be due to chance. If the "whiskers" (one standard deviation measure) don't meet, it means that the difference is on a 1% confidence level.

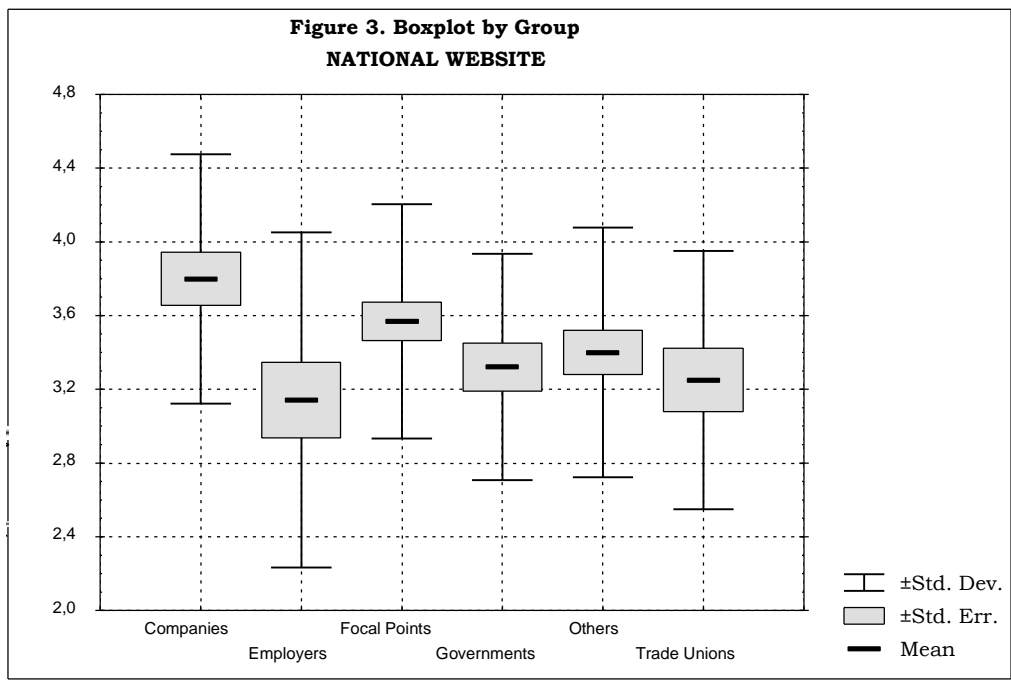


Result in figure 1: Social Partners are 5% level significantly more dissatisfied than Companies (250 - 500 size) and Focal Points.

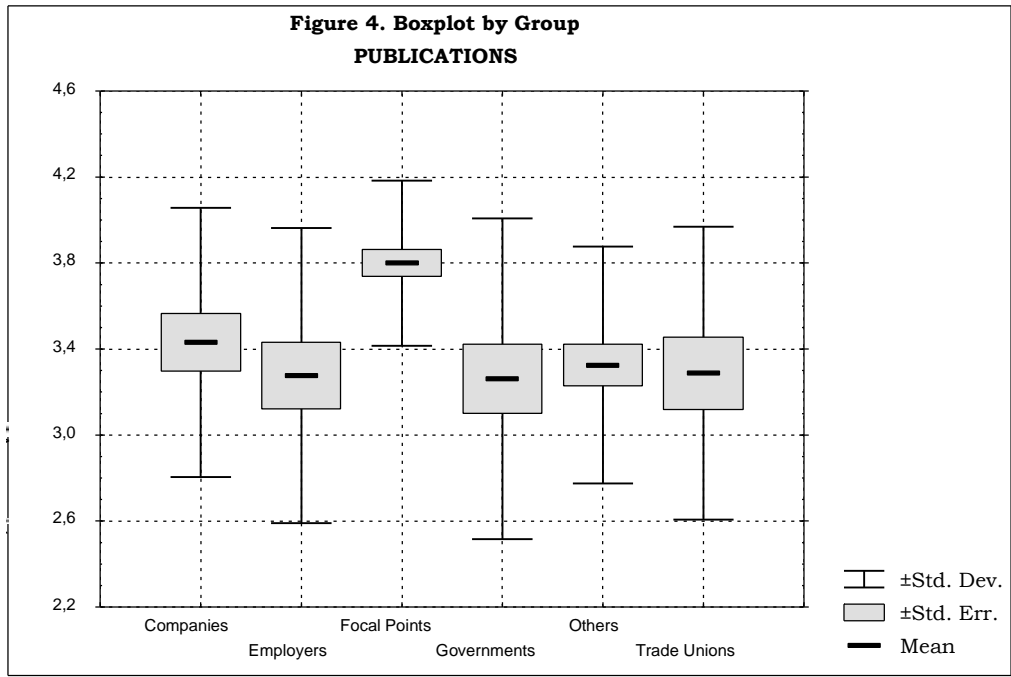
¹ The evaluator is aware that the questionnaire is based on an ordinal scale, where analysis of variance is for instance Kruskal-Wallis. In statistical surveys it is nevertheless normal practice to construct sum-scales and treat them as parametrical scales and use a parametrical analysis of variance, the results of which also can be presented in an illustrative way, as intended here.



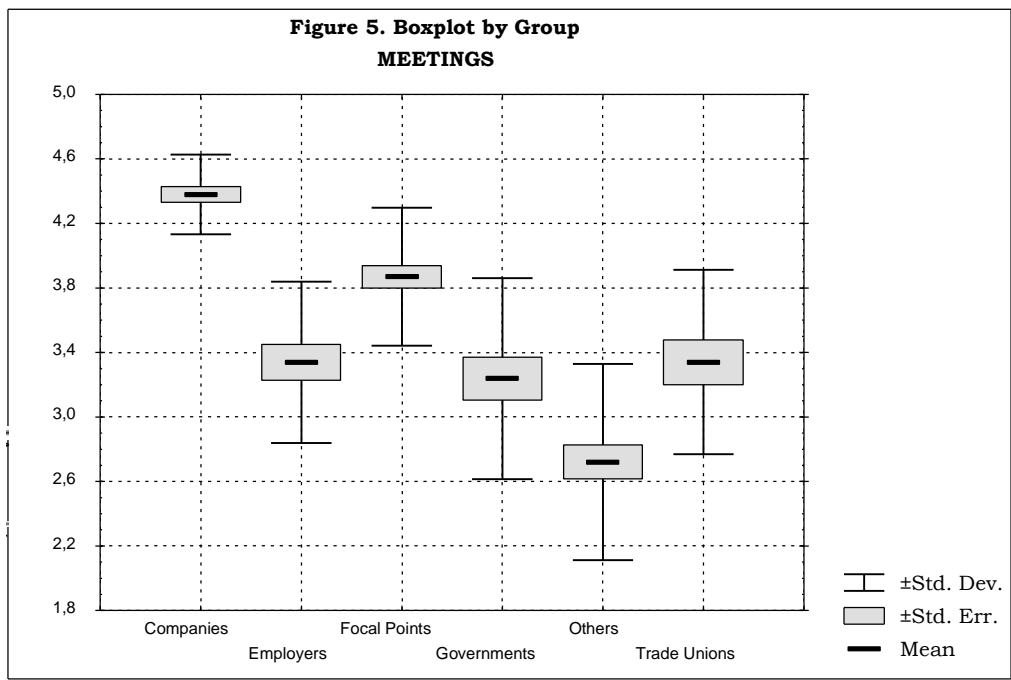
Result in figure 2: Webiste is quite rated rather unanimously favourably. Least satisfied is the employer group.



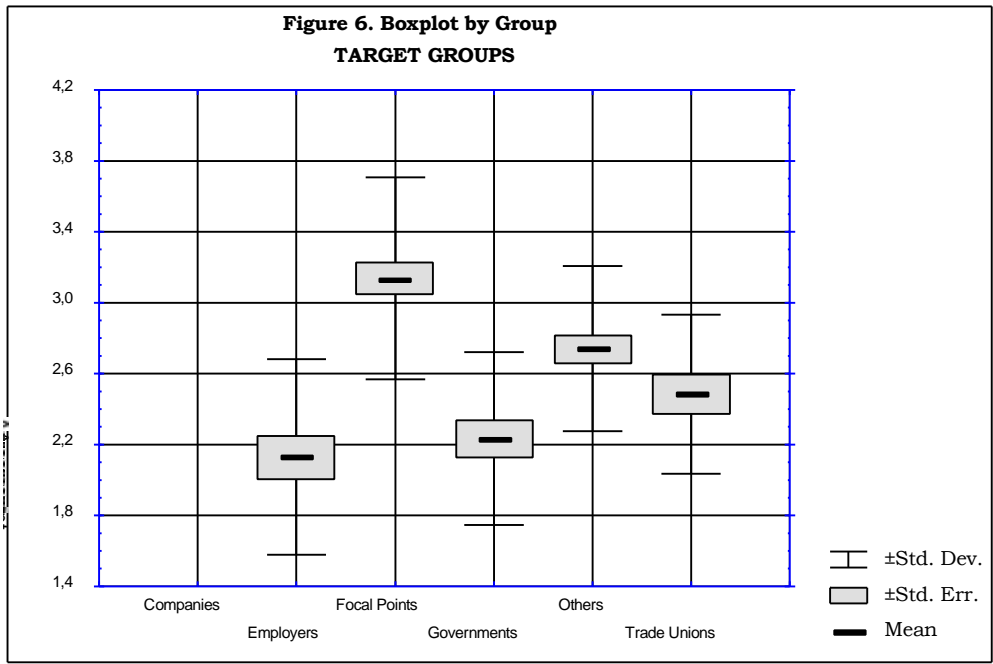
Result in figure 3: National Webiste is rated rather unanimously even more favourably than the Agency Website



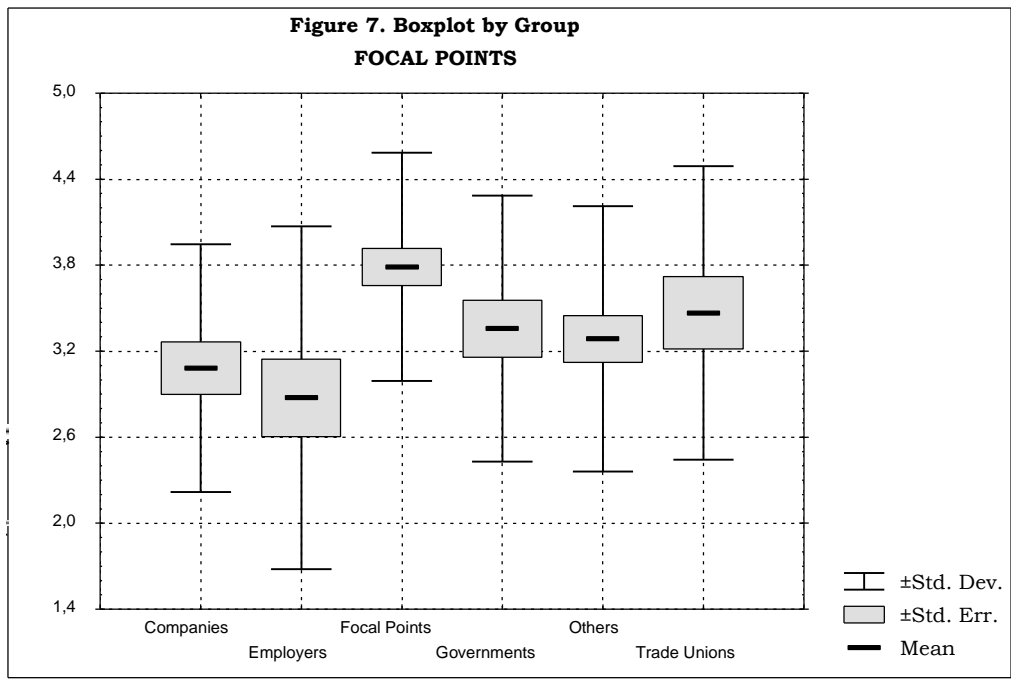
Result in figure 4: All are quite pleased with the publications, Focal points significantly more so than others.



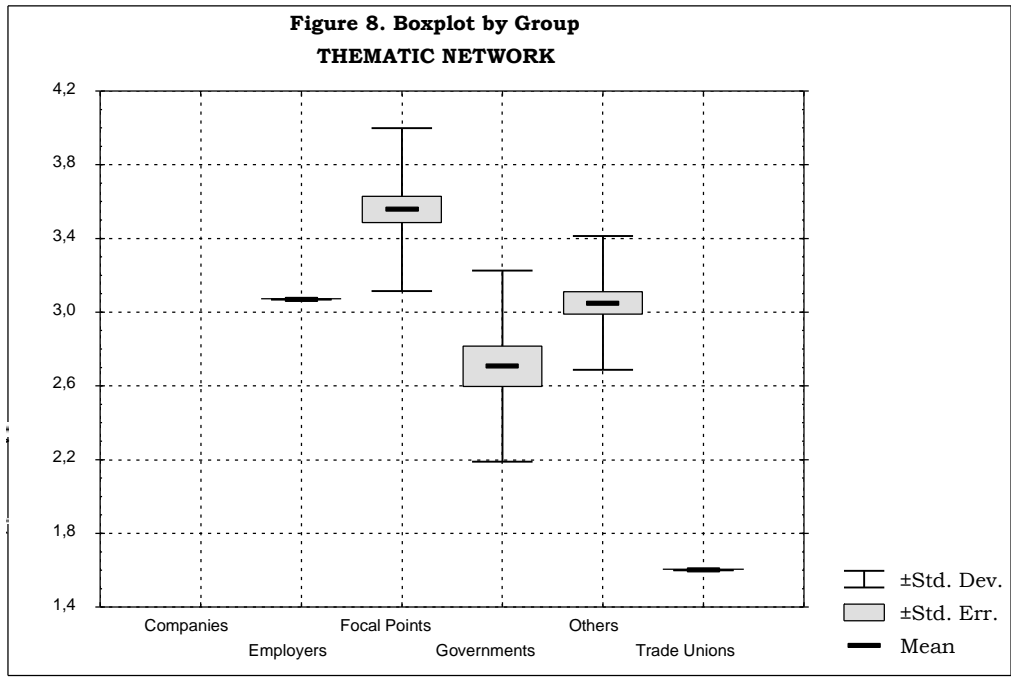
Result in figure 5: Companies and Focal Points are significantly more pleased with meetings and conferences. The Other group is significantly least pleased.



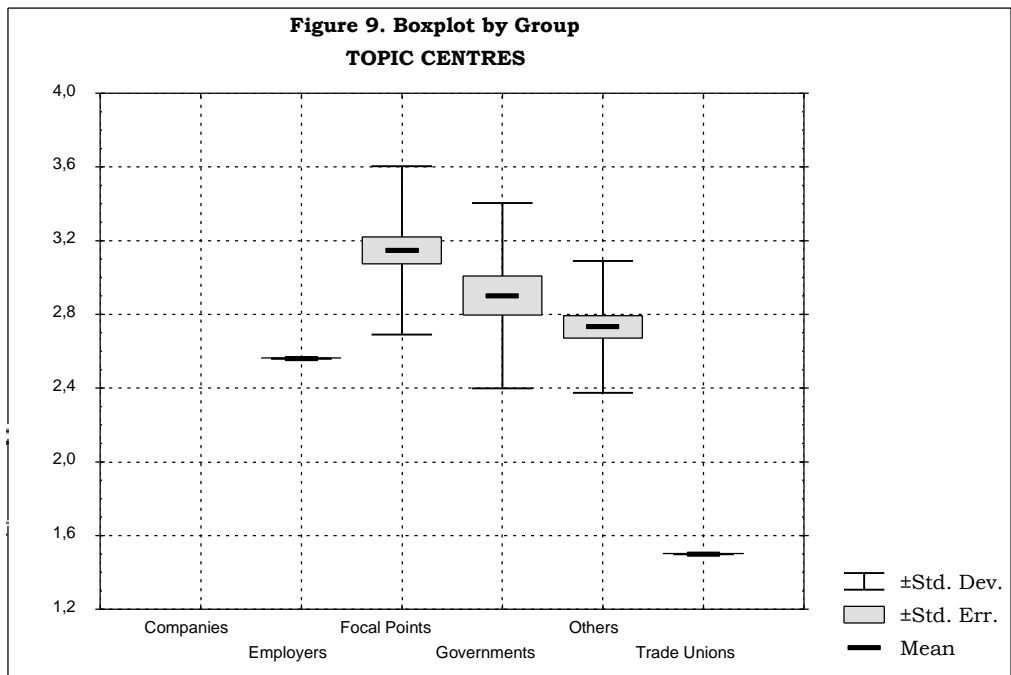
Result in figure 6: All except Focal Points rate reaching target groups below average and differ significantly from Focal Points in this. The Companies did not have this question in their questionnaire, but answered it in different terms.



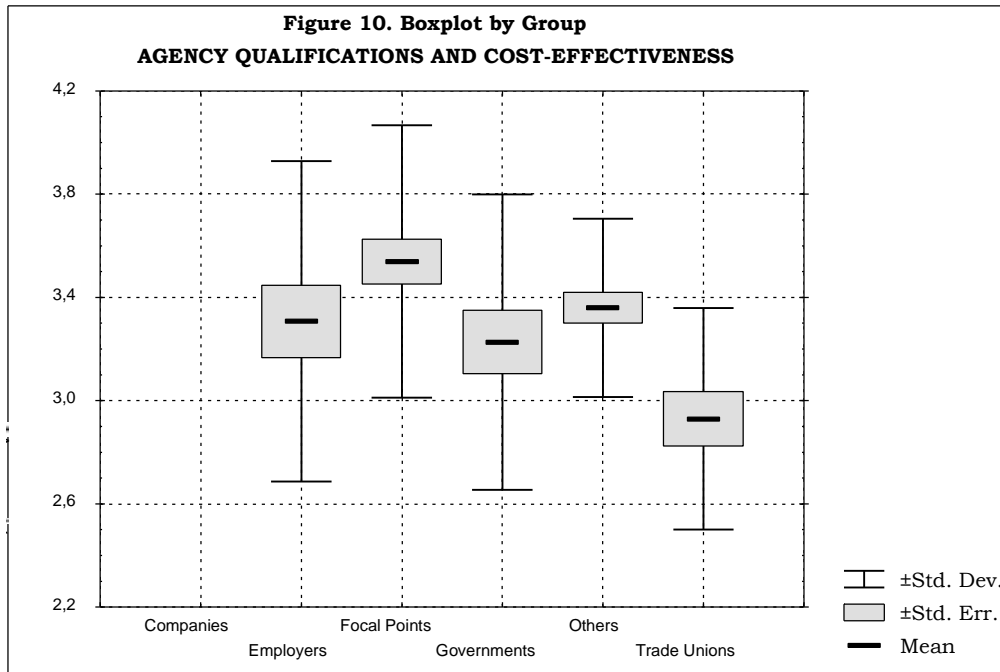
Result in figure 7: The satisfaction with, clarity of role and engagement with Focal Points is rather unanimously seen positive, the most critical being employers and companies.



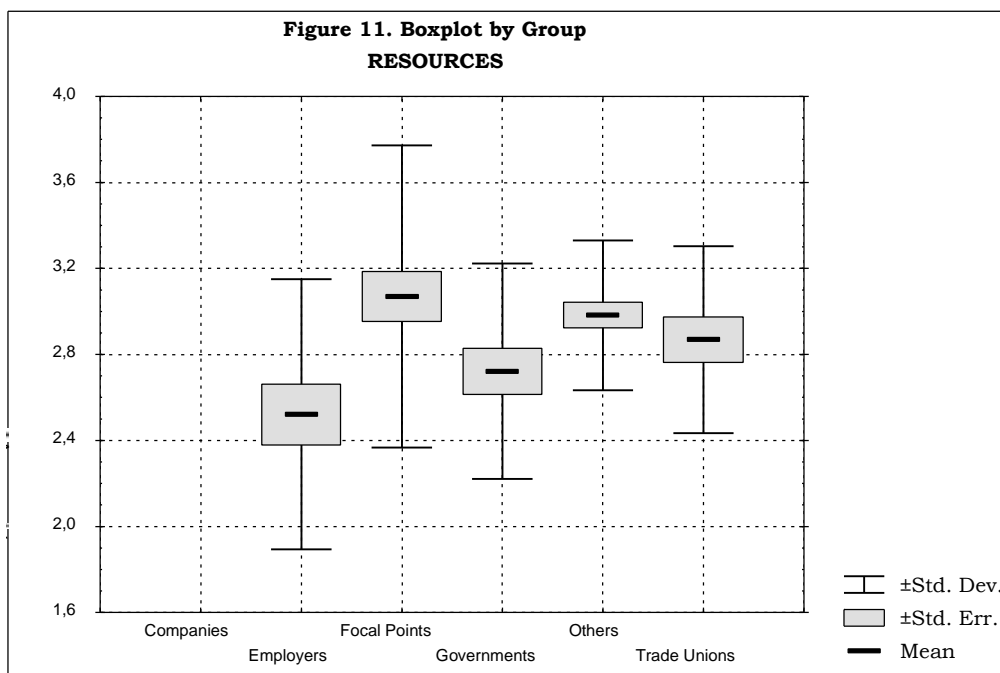
Result in figure 8: The satisfaction with, role and engagement with Thematic network groups seems to be lowest in the Government and Trade Union group. Companies were not asked about this.



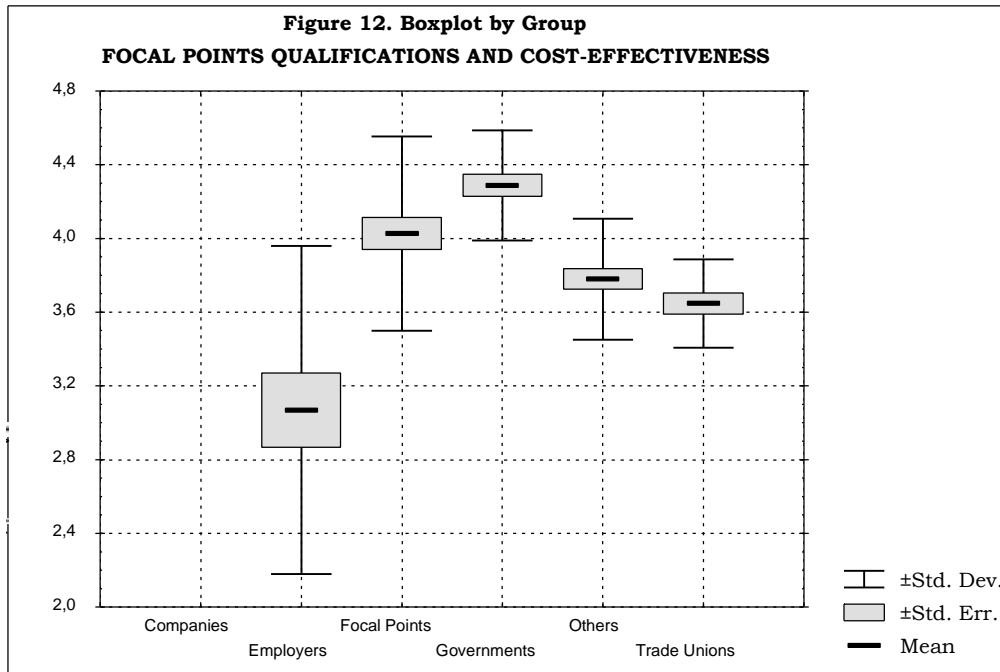
Result in figure 9: The satisfaction with, clarity of role and engagement with Topic centres is lowest among employers and trade unions.



Result in figure 10: All except Trade Unions seem to be happy with the qualifications and cost-effectiveness of the Agency.



Result from figure 11: The sum scale is a combination on the opinion of the sufficiency of resources of the whole Agency network. The opinion seems to be that the resources are barely sufficient, as social partners and governments answer below average on this.



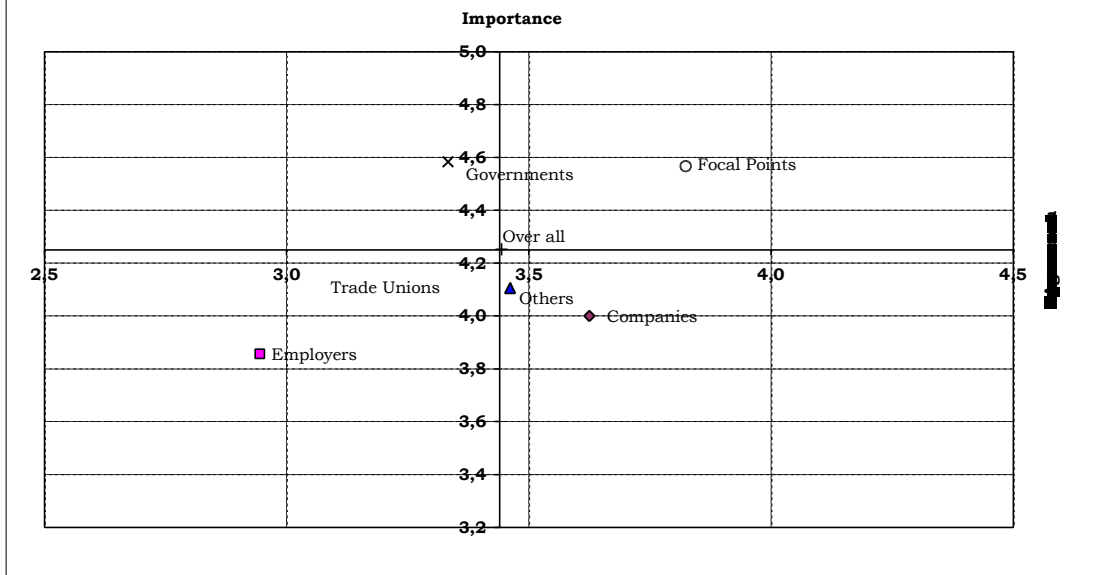
Result in figure 12: There seems to be a high opinion about the qualifications and cost-effectiveness of the Focal Points. The employers rate this significantly lower than others, but they, too, see it as average.

4. SWOT figures: Satisfaction and importance

We call these SWOT-figures (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), because they give an opportunity to plot satisfaction across importance.

In the following figures the result is given by plotting satisfaction against the importance (rated by the respondents in the questionnaire). This treatment makes it possible to see, if the Agency has succeeded in the aspects the target groups see as important or not. The main results of the SWOT-figures have been treated in Chapter 4.

Figure 1. Overall, I am satisfied with the achievements of the Agency and its Network so far



Example: In figure 1 you can see, that the Focal Points are most satisfied with the Agency work, and they also regard it as important. On the other hand, the satisfaction of the Employers is lowest, and they also see the Agency's work as less important. The satisfaction level of Trade Unions is likewise quite low, but they regard the Agency as more important.

Figure 2. The information on the Agency Website has been useful for my practical purposes in safety and health at work issues

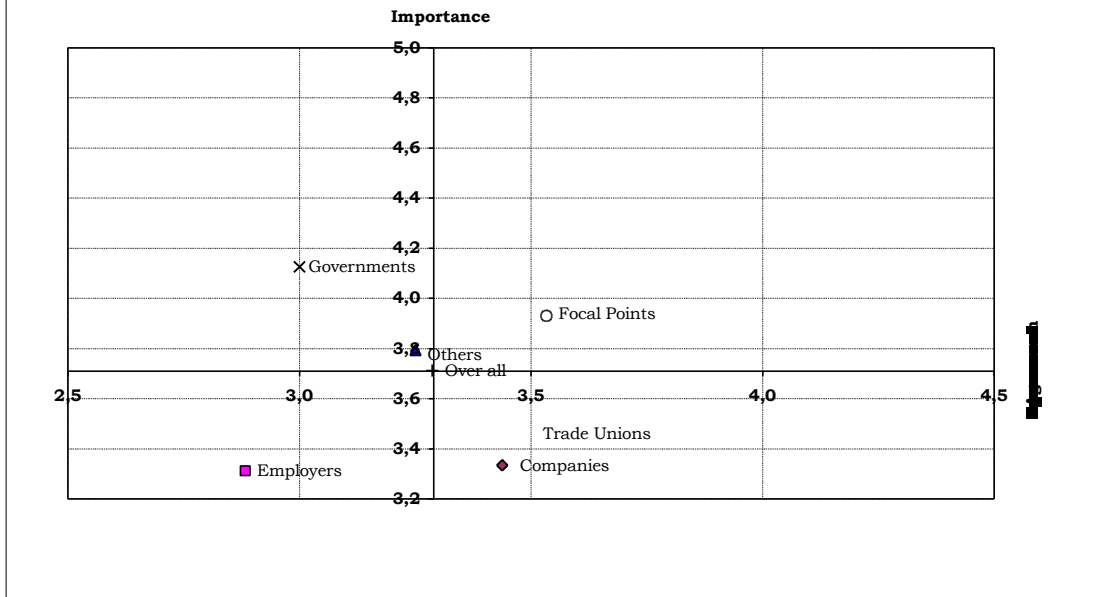


Figure 3. The information on the National OSHA Website has been useful for my practical purposes in safety and health at work issues

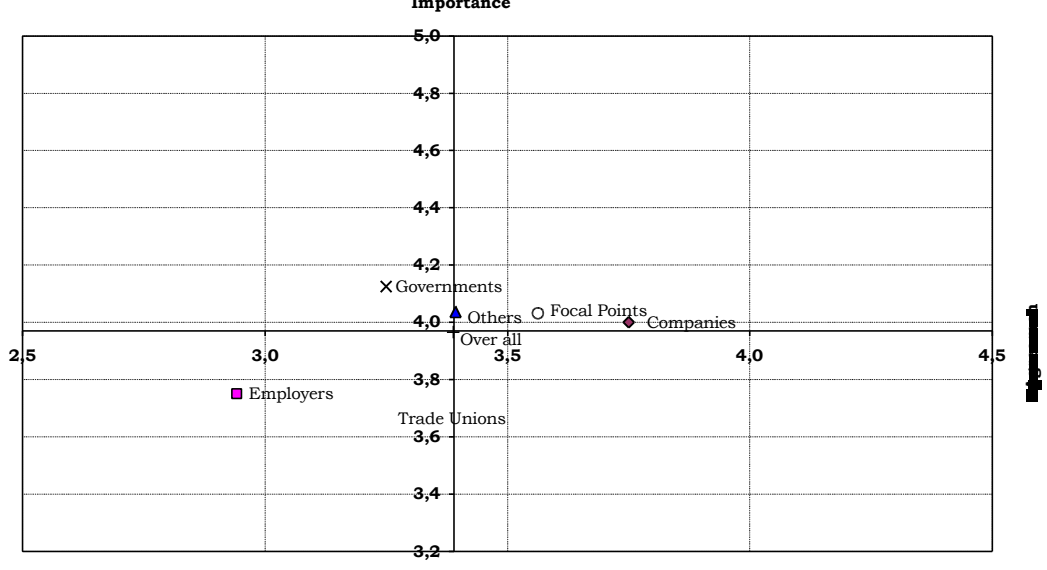


Figure 4. The National OSHA Website is user friendly

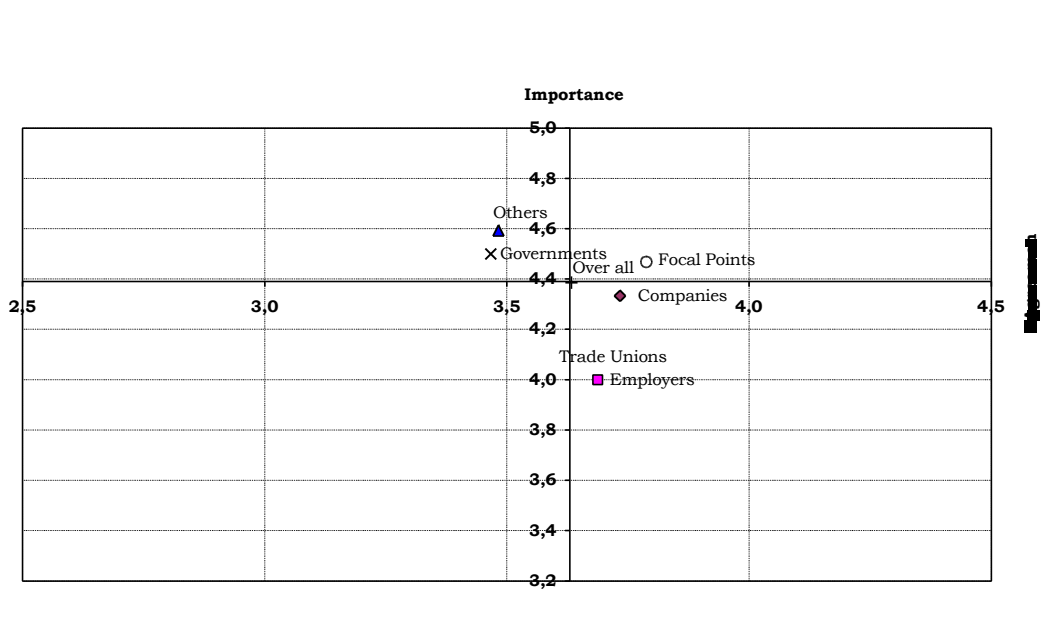


Figure 5. In general these publications have been well edited and published in relevant form

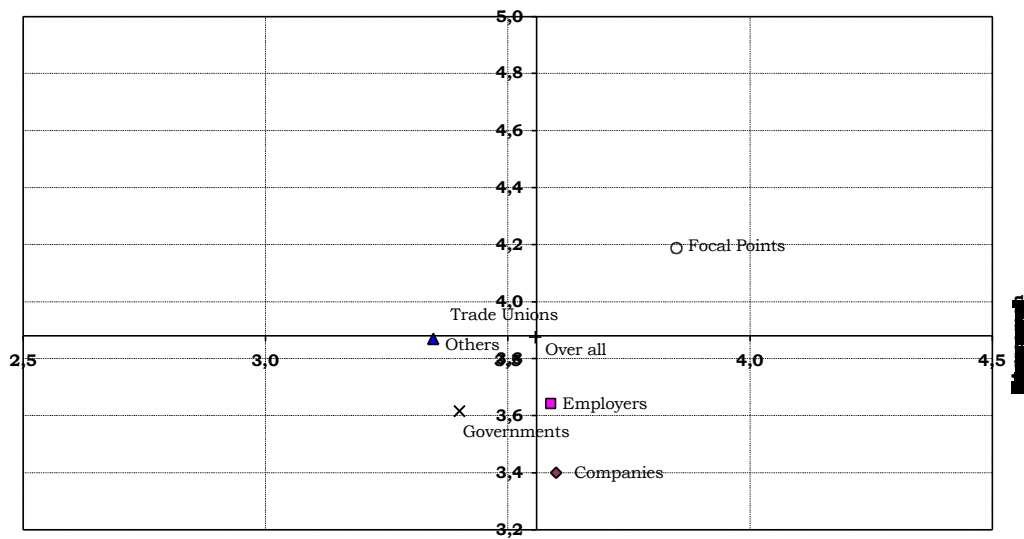


Figure 6. The conferences arranged by the Agency have been useful to me

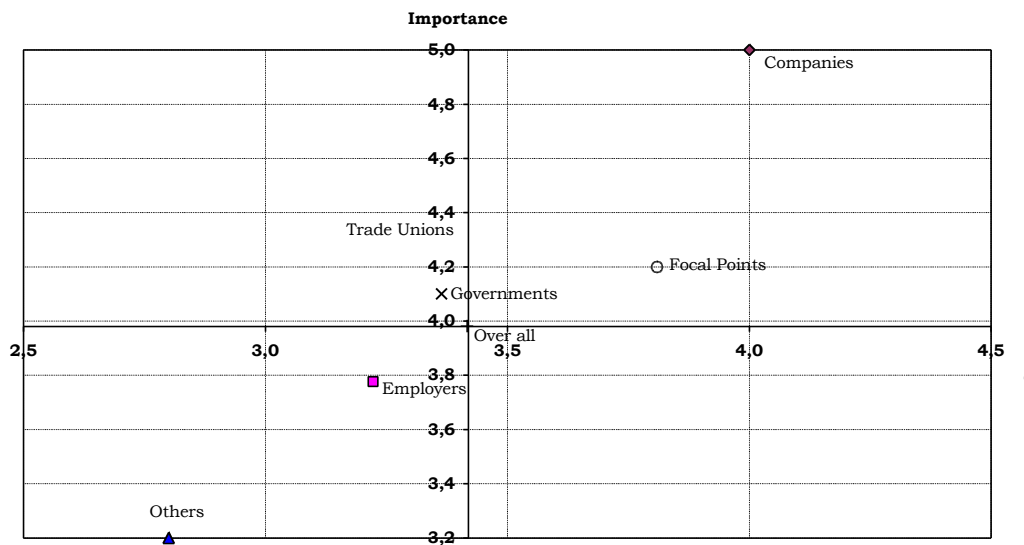


Figure 7. The meetings arranged by the Agency have been useful to me

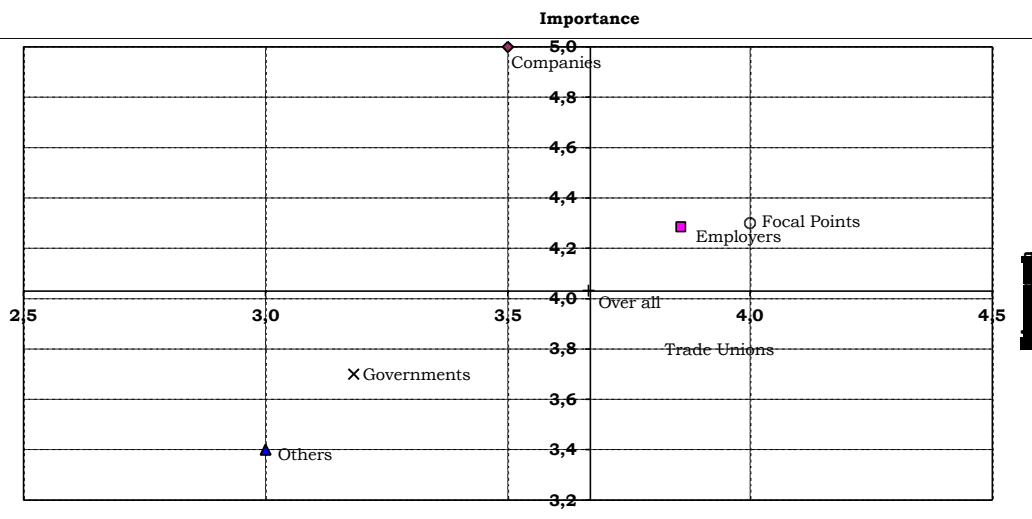
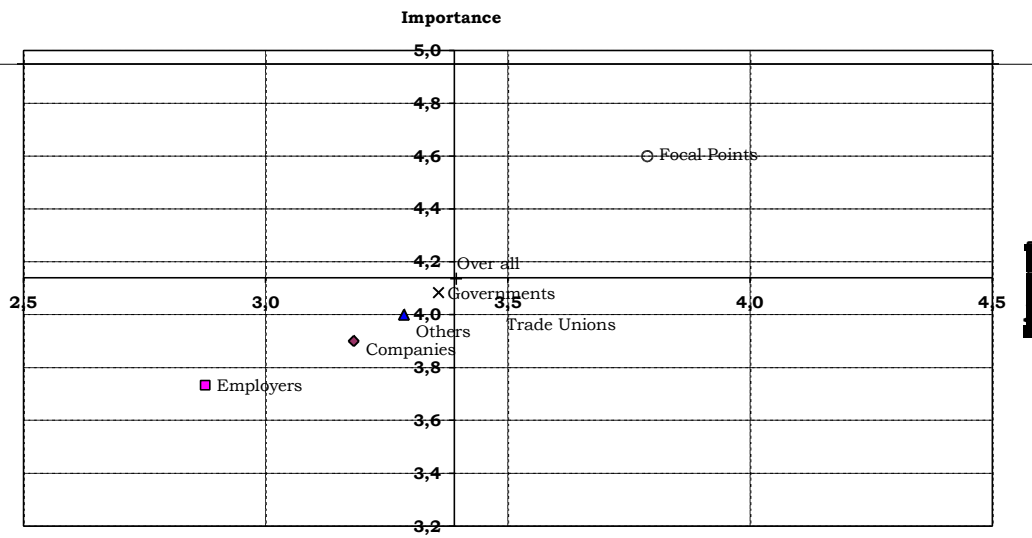


Figure 8. The role of the Focal Point in my own country is clear and functioning well



5. Satisfaction with OSHA/ questions/ by groups

In the following figures, most questions of the questionnaire and the result as averages is given. In some groups some questions have not been asked, and that is why their score is missing from the figure. The results of these figures have been incorporated in the main text.

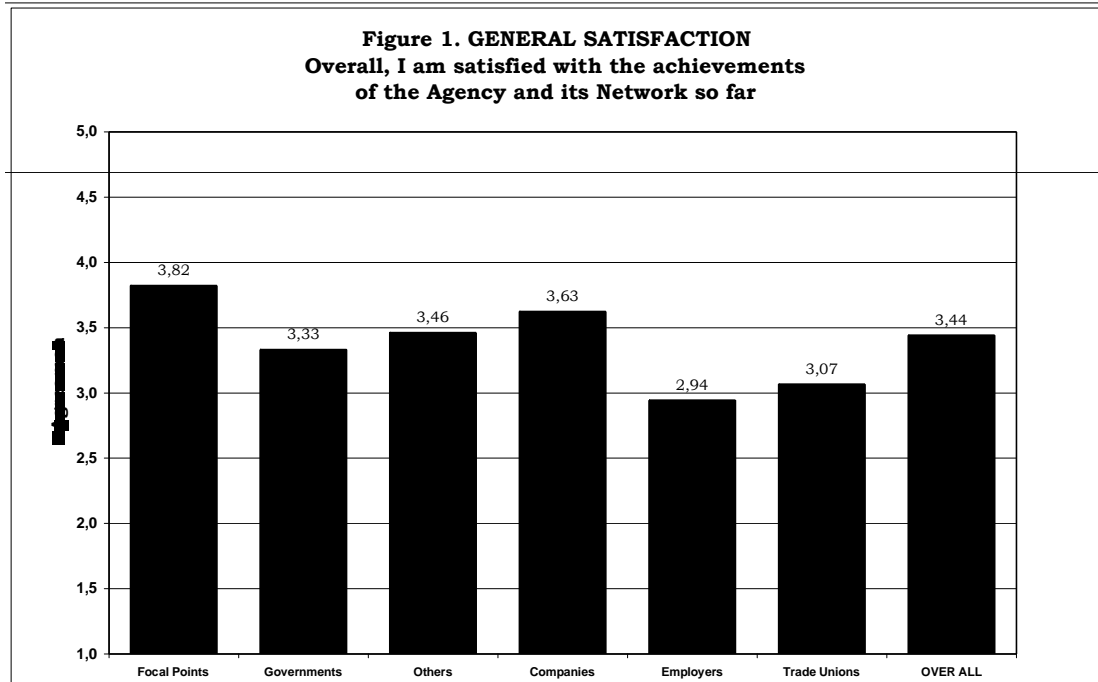


Figure 2. THE AGENCY'S INFORMATION PROVISION
Agency Website

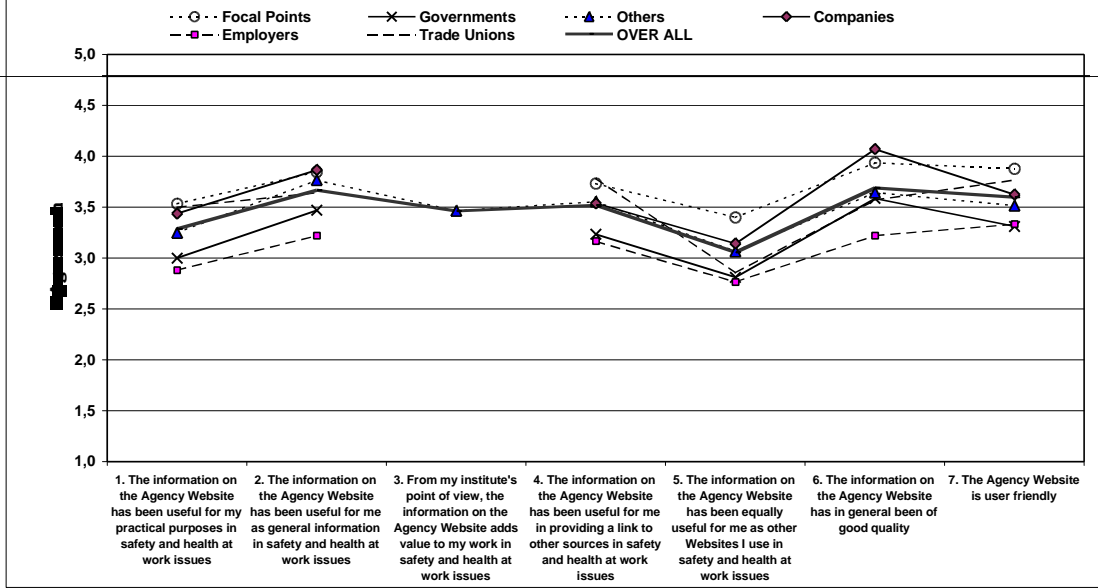


Figure 3. THE AGENCY'S INFORMATION PROVISION
The National OSHA Website

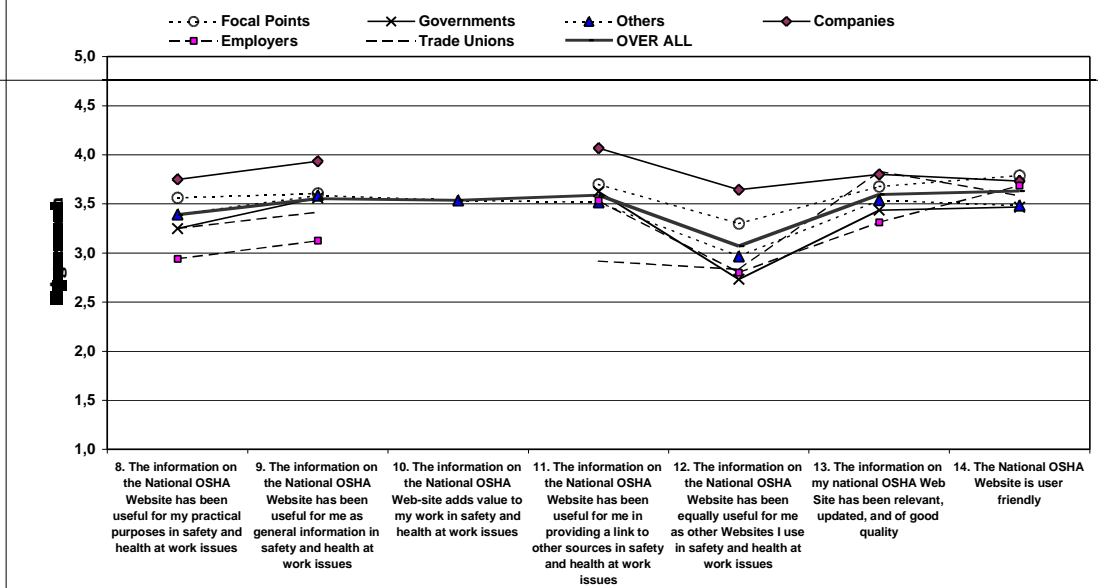


Figure 4. THE AGENCY'S INFORMATION PROVISION
The publications of the Agency

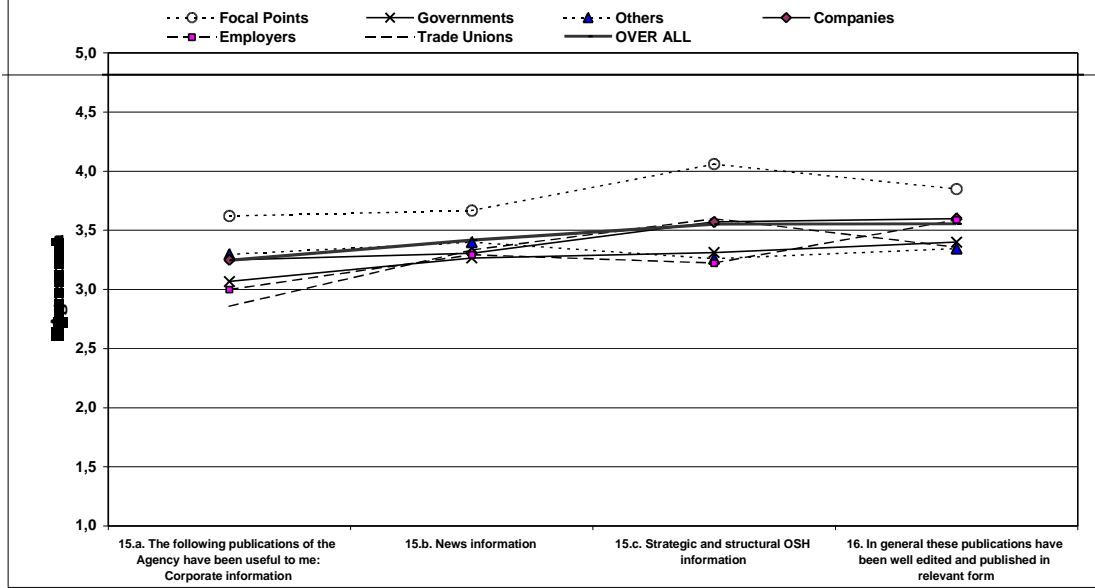
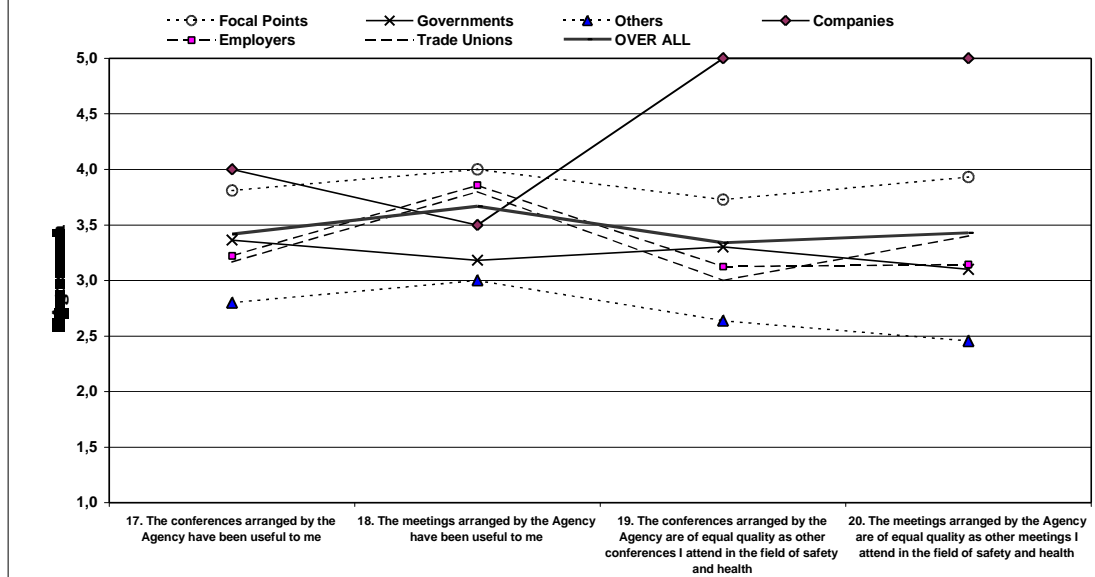


Figure 5. THE AGENCY'S INFORMATION PROVISION
The meetings of the Agency



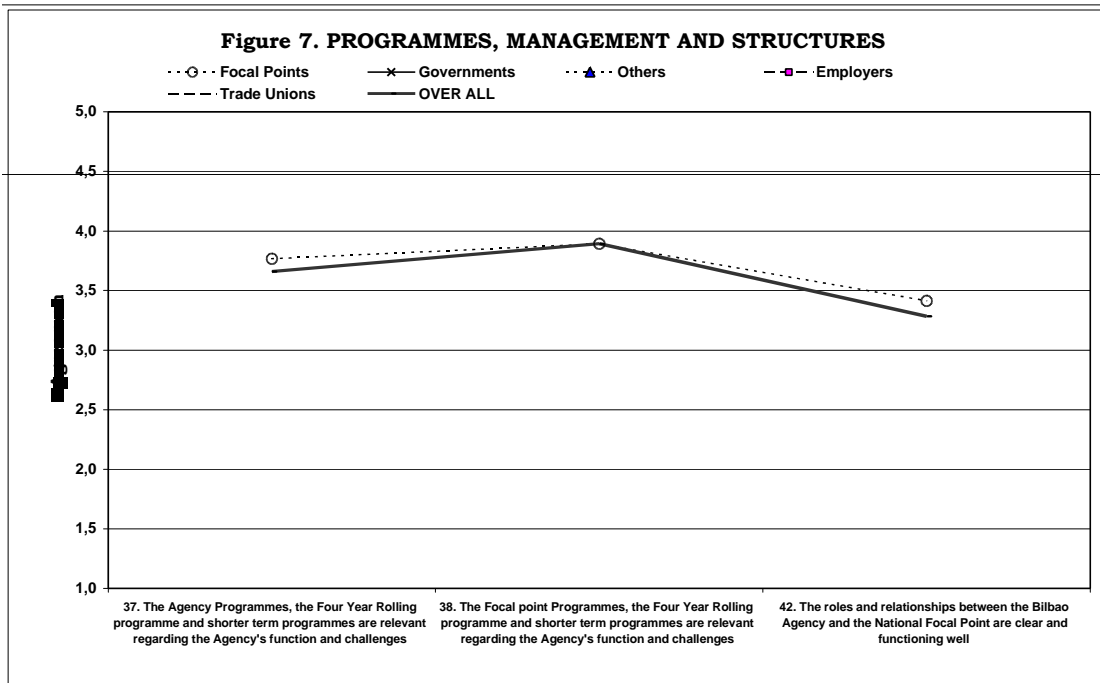
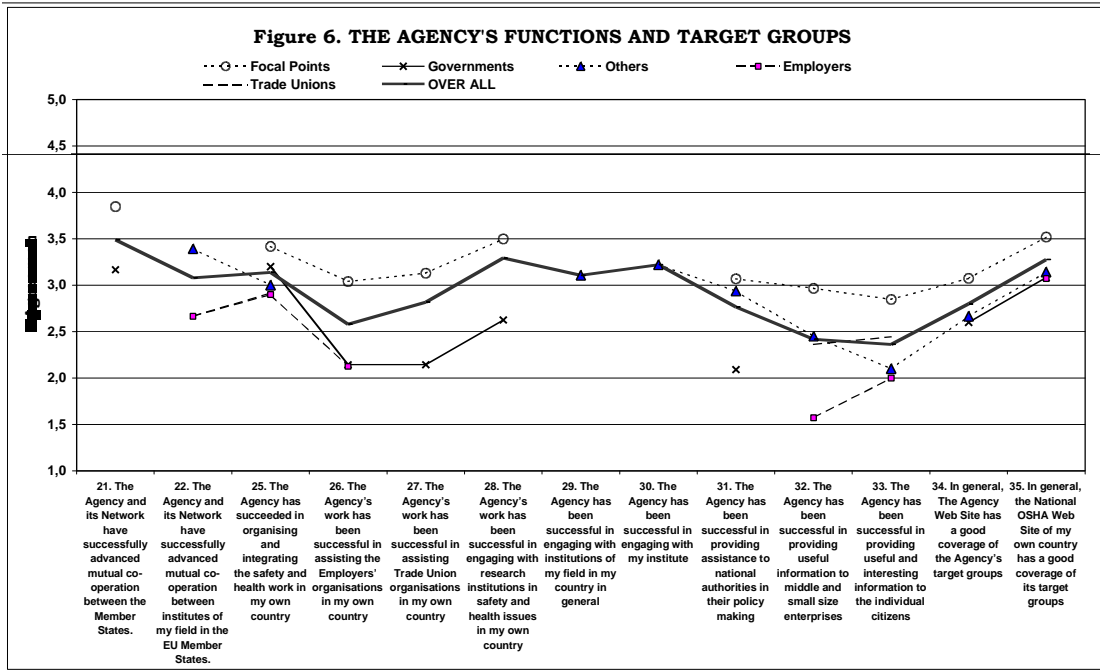


Figure 8. PROGRAMMES, MANAGEMENT AND STRUCTURES

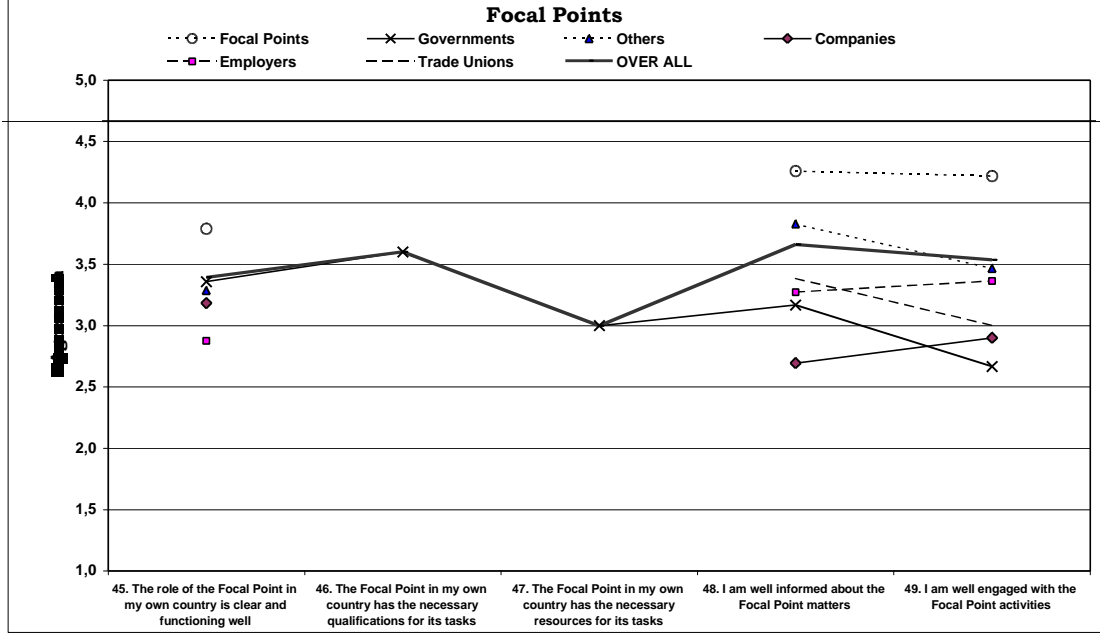


Figure 9. PROGRAMMES, MANAGEMENT AND STRUCTURES

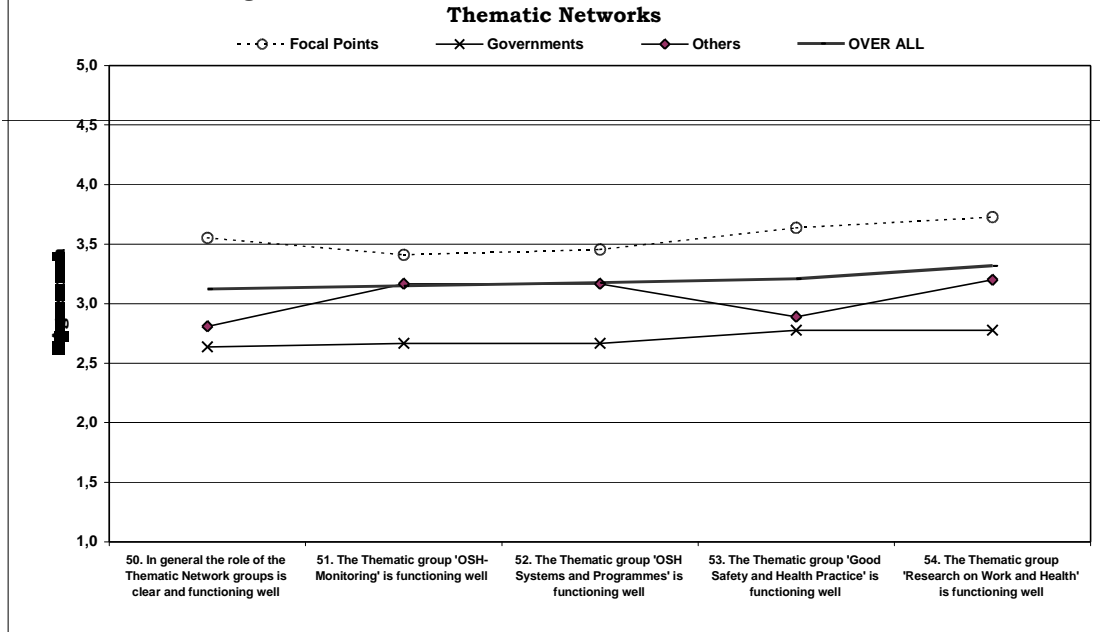


Figure 10. PROGRAMMES, MANAGEMENT AND STRUCTURES

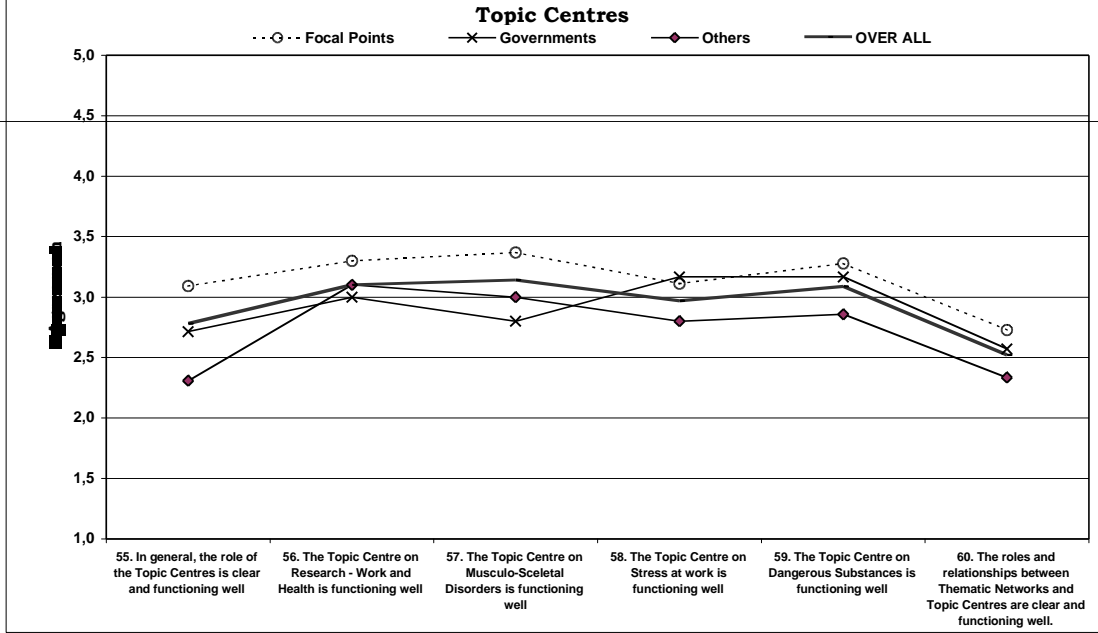
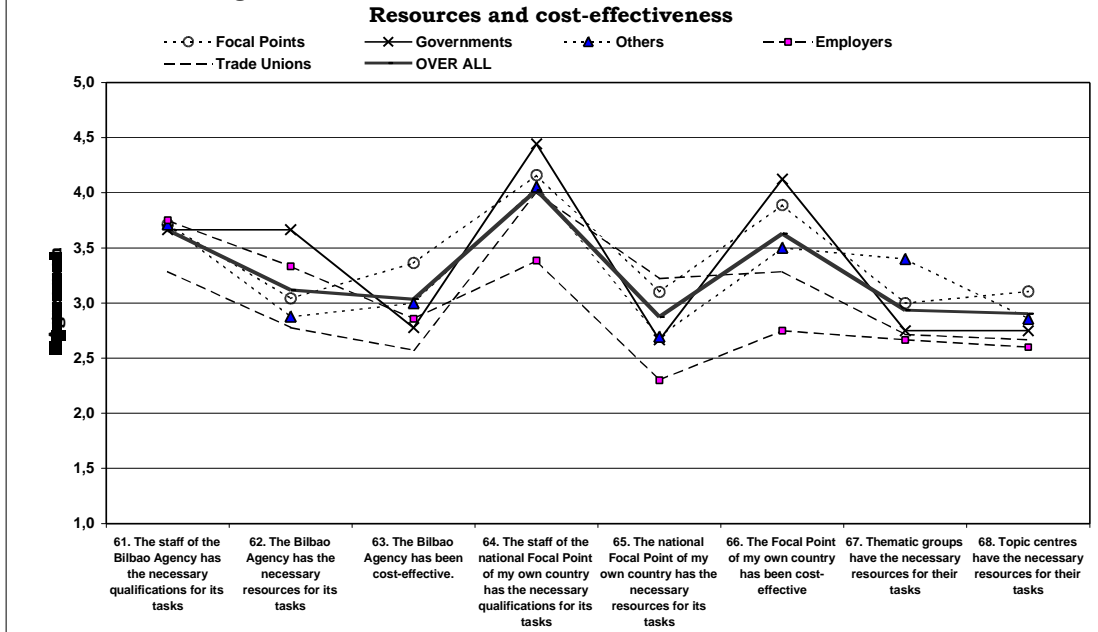


Figure 11. PROGRAMMES, MANAGEMENT AND STRUCTURES



5. Board

The Board response is constructed from two elements: In the Board meeting in November in Bilbao, a questionnaire was circulated, and the employer group responded collectively to this questionnaire. This set of questions has been here used as a reference point, and compared with the response coming from the Government group and Trade union group.

There main result is that the Board agrees that the Web has been a success in terms of infrastructure, but the content needs improvement, and also reaching target impact.

+ = positive rating 0 = middle rating (3 in questionnaire) - = negative rating				
Issue	Employers	Trade Unions	Government	Overall
1) Information in general	Relevance - Quality +	0 +	+	Quality OK, Improve relevance
2) Web	Agency - National +	+ +	+	Web mostly success
3) Publications	Relevance - Quality +	0, Facts +	+	Quality OK, Improve relevance
Cooperation btw.member states	-	+	+	Mixed
Cooperation within national level	--	0	-	Has not promoted
Promoting EU policy	0	0	+	Rather little
Assisting social partners	-	-	0	Not assisting
Assisting research, etc.	?	-	+	Mixed
ILO etc. -	+	+	+	Yes
SME -	--	-	--	No
Citizens	-	0	--	No
Target group coverage	-	-	-	No
Web site covers	-	-/0 (national)	-	No
Programmes, 4-year, relevant	+	0	+	Yes
Cost-effective	?	-	0	Mixed
Meetings	+	0	+	Yes
Board functions well		-	0	Mixed
Bilbao qualifications		-	+	Mixed
Overall		-	0	
Success	-WEB -OSH-events -USA links	-Web -Starting state of OSH mapping -Rising awareness	-Web -Events (European Week)	Web & events
Needs improvement	-Language (translation) -SME	-Add value to national -Target better -Improve TC's	-Language -Focus -Content and reliability of info	Language, target, focus

6. Free answers in the Questionnaire: Most frequently mentioned topics/ over all respondents

In what has the Agency and the Network has added value to safety and health in your country:

- Web-links
- European Week
- Raising awareness and profile of OSH-matters
- Awards
- Promoting exchange, co-operation and comparison

Must be improved:

- Customer orientation, taking heed of needs
- Better focus and priorities
- More practical, good practice, problem solving orientation
- Rising reliability of data
- Selling, promoting yourself better, highlighting the benefits of OSH
- The psycho-social dimension

Other topics of improvement taken up

- Improving strategy, management and the Board
- Involving the educational field
- Improving search possibilities on the Web
- Coordinating better with other OSH activities and bodies
- More fruitful bilateral exchange between countries
- Peer reviews

Most frequently mentioned topics/ according to different stakeholders

Group	Achievements	To be improved
Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comparisons - Contacts - MSD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Practical orientation - Costs and benefits - Training dimension
Employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Website - Eu-dimension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Practical orientation - Clarifying role - Better engagement with social partners - Selling yourself better
Trade Unions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rising awareness of OSH - European Week - MSD and Stress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better engagement with social partners and more genuine tripartite action - Better support for policy de-

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> velopment - Adding value to national - More reliable data, further development of State of OSH
Other institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Website - Awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Practical orientation - More transparency and focus - Clarifying roles and responsibilities
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Website - European Week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interpretation - Specific areas: transport, public sector
Focal Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - European week - Website - Co-operation - Awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More realism and better time tables and preparation of activities - Focus - OSH monitoring - SME - Translation
Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Website - Co-operation - Awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus and transparency - Content of information - reliability

7. Overview to high and low satisfaction Scores

Satisfaction/ Highest scores (3,5>)

Web

1. General usefulness of Agency and National Website (practical 3,3)
2. Quality of the Websites, both Agency and National (3,7)
3. User friendliness, both Agency and National (3,6)
4. Providing a link, both Agency and National

Meetings, publications, programmes

1. Meetings (3,7)
2. Publications well edited (3,6), best score for Fact Sheets and Agency reports
3. Programmes and 4-year rolling programme (3,7), also on Focal Point level (3,9)

Bilbao office qualifications (3,7)

Overall satisfaction with achievements so far (3,5), except in the Employer's group, where it was mediocre (2,9)

Dissatisfaction/ Lowest scores (below 3)

Customer engagement

1. Providing assistance to national authorities (2,7)
2. Engaging SME (2,4)
3. Engaging Citizens (2,4)
4. Coverage of customers (2,8)

Roles within the Network

1. Clarity of role of Topic Centres (2,8)
2. Relation of Topic Centres to Thematic groups (2,5)

Focal Point Resources (2,8)

Other observations

Rather systematically **Focal Points** tend to rate matters more **positively** than others, and the **Employer** respondents more **critically** than others

Web is unanimously positively rated, but it does **not really outperform** other Web-sources (3,1 on the average)

Publications are quite unanimously positively rated

All except the "Other" group (Scientific and other) rate **Conferences and meetings** positively

Social partners don't feel really engaged with the Focal Points, engagement is better with Other institutions

Providing assistance to National authorities is unanimously poor, even according to Focal Points

Customer coverage through the Web is **better nationally** (3,2), than through Bilbao (2,8), also according to Employers (3,2)

The **Board** respondents are not particularly happy with the coherence of strategy (2,9) and with the role of Focal Points in general (2,9), but feel quite well engaged with the Board (3,7) and are happy with the Bureau (3,7)

Respondents are quite happy with the role of their national **Focal Points**, except employers. Also there is a rather high level of satisfaction with being informed about and engaging with Focal Points, except in the Company group.

Cost-effectiveness of the **Bilbao Office** was deemed only medium (3,0), especially the social partners were unhappy with it. **The National Focal Points**, on the other hand were deemed cost-effective, and in fact **under-resourced**.

ANNEX II

Country Case Studies

Abstracts

Finland

Finland is a country where occupational safety and health system is organised centrally by public authorities. Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is responsible for the system. It also organises Finland's Focal Point. The Focal Point is very covering regarding the Finnish research institutions, other safety and health organisations as well as the workers' and employers' organisations.

The significance of the Agency and the activities organised around the Focal Point has been that it has added an extra structure at the national level bringing in the European dimension. The Finnish Focal Point has been actively involved in developing the Agency being participant in many of its working groups, for example. The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health is involved in all the Topic Centres that has been seen as an important gateway to "becoming European" justifying the financial investments in Topic Centre activities.

The Finns look very positively the Agency's achievements regarding especially its Internet solution and the network structure. The Agency Web Site is functioning technically fairly well but it should be developed into more interactive direction. Regarding the Agency's strategy and goals it is hoped that the goal setting and focus in certain activities could be more transparent. This holds also for the decision making structure in Bilbao where it is not always clear who is deciding actually on what. There is widely shared general comment by Finns that the Agency should be as much about health as about safety. Also the idea that the Agency should develop a more conscious.

For Finland the campaigns organised by the Agency have been successful connecting now the Finnish traditions in organising campaigns with a European emphasis. Generally the Agency publications are appreciated. From the Finnish perspective the Agency is one of the co-operation partners worldwide. The others are ILO, UN, and WHO. Comparing to them the Agency has now managed to develop the basic structures but there is a need of improvement in the contents of activities throughout.

Germany

The Germans emphasise the significance of the Agency's own working life concept. Although it acknowledged that the Agency is not, and it should not be, a research institute, it should have a working life concept as supporting its information provision. Currently the Agency has both the 'old' and 'new' themes of safety and health on its agenda and there is no clear prioritising of the themes. There is a relatively strong wish for the Agency to be active in arousing and enhancing debates and discussions relevant for developing European awareness of the safety and health issues.

The Agency's information provision is regarded as of good quality and especially some publications of outstanding quality. It is hoped by the Germans, that the Agency could develop its own databanks and act not only as a link to the other information sources. Databanks that would also allow European comparisons are seen as an important tool for advancing European integration in safety and health.

While basically the Agency's basic information provision methods and its structure are well appreciated there are some controversies about the Agency's added value in Germany. The basic message is that the Agency has not brought much into Germany that would not have taken place also by other means. However, in a closer look, it may be that the mere existence of the Agency, its Web Site and Network altogether, the Agency in fact has had greater impact on Germany than expected.

The Germans see that the Agency should be more focused in its activities. It should develop its own working life concept, and by that, for one part, become a more active player in the field of safety and health.

Italy

Italy is in the field of safety and health country where there is a lack of united legislation and there are various players in the field. Safety and health organisation is operational mostly in big companies. There is a need of preventive policies as, for example, the accident rates are among the highest in Europe. There is also a strong need for better networking of the different players in the field. The Agency's potential added value to Italy is strongly connected with its ability to reach SMEs and organise the different players by its European wide input.

Currently the Agency has not managed to reach the SMEs. The Web does reach that level. For Italy, the most successful part of the Agency projects has been the European Week campaigns where especially the year 2000 campaign was very successful.

The Italians wish that the Agency could in its further development take better into account the diverse conditions in which the Member States are working. The language problem, the immigrants as important target group, , the black labour market, the possibility to participate in the Topic Centres' work were some of the key reactions in this respect.

The Agency information today is more targeted to experts rather than to the practitioners in the field. The Italians suggested amore practical way of organising the information: organising it according to the production branches or according to the production process. About the Agency's publications the Fact-sheets have been clearly the most successful in Italy. Also the Italian hoped that the Agency Web Site(s) could contain comparative data and tables across the Europe. It is also seen that the training aspect should be more involved in the Agency's activities. One of the perspectives on current safety and health issues at work are the psycho-social factors that should also from the Italian perspective stressed more. The Italians also stress that the risk approach, leading to the current safety emphasis should be developed more in the direction of health perspective that could allow a better grasp on the prevention perspective.

The Italians saw that the Agency has still a lot to do in its efforts to encourage the Member States' mutual co-operation. They propose that the Agency would encourage joint research and other projects between the Member States, 'horizontally'. For Italy the tri-partite system is very important.

Italy's overall vision on the Agency is that it should focus in its further activities on prevention, participation, and on SMEs.

Portugal

For Portugal it is vitally important that the Agency reaches the SMEs as most of the businesses are SMEs. At the company level it is emphasised that the Agency information should be practically useful. In order to be that it should be more targeted. The same information should be moulded to suit employers, workers, researchers, or other professionals. The information on Good Practices is seen also very important. The Good Practices should though be presented in a more contextual manner telling, except the practice itself, also the context where it was developed, who developed it and why, the legislative context where it was developed.

The Internet is not yet widely used in Portugal, which emphasises the importance of the more traditional forms of publications. In Portugal also the Fact Sheets were mentioned as good example of the Agency publications.

The company representatives interviewed emphasised that the workplace level should be taken better into account. All the interviewee groups emphasised the importance of getting information in Portuguese. Except that this reflects the fact that foreign languages are not currently spoken in Portugal, Portuguese is the fourth most spoken language in the world. Through the language and the history Portugal has lively contacts with South America and Africa, contacts that could be useful also to the Agency.

The campaigns organised by the Agency have also from the Portuguese point of view been the best part the Agency activities so far. In a country where the occupational safety and health system is starting to develop the campaigns have managed to integrate the different players to joint efforts and given them a focused view on what they

should concentrate on. In this meaning the future SME project of the Agency is seen vitally important.

Portuguese interviewees brought also up in different contexts that they would like the Topic Centres and other expert groups of the Agency include more representatives from Portugal.

The Agency information provision system was seen important from the researchers' and experts' point of view. The Agency Web Sites should however be developed to meet more specifically also their needs as these groups have several other contact routes already existing.

ANNEX III : Interview List

FINLAND

Jorma Rantanen	Director, Finnish Institute of Occupational Health
Suvi Lehtinen	Director of Unit, Finnish Institute of Occupational Health
Tuomo Alasoini	Programme Manager Finnish Work Development Programme, Ministry of Labour
Rauno Vanhanen	Director, Suomen Yrittäjät (Finnish SME Association)
Erkki Yrjänheikki	Special Advisor, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health
Mikko Hurmalainen	Finnish Government Representative on the Agency Board
Erkki Reinikka	Chief Inspector/ Ministry of Social Affairs and Health
Raili Perimäki-Dietrich	Secretary for Working Environment/SAK (Finnish Trade Union)
Leppänen Markku	Laboratory Engineer/ Tampere University of Technology
Mr. Ståhlhammar	Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, European Week Responsible in Finland
The Informant Panel (for testing the Web-site):	Supervising Nurse Raija Heikkinen/ The City of Kouvola Occupational Health Nurse Marja Jäntti/ The Social Institute of Elimäki Executive Chief in Charge Suvi Lehtinen/ FIOH Student of Computer Science Tomi Pakarinen/ University of Jyväskylä Master of Technical Sciences Marko Elo/ Tellabs Master of Technical Sciences Mikko Kiviniemi / Tellabs

GERMANY

Reinhard Gerber	Focal Point Manager
Dr. Neudecker	Focal Point (official) Partner
Dr. Scholemer	Federal Institute of OHS
Martina Schröder	Trade Union Responsible
Dr. Mohr	Focal Point Partner, State Institute of OHS in Brandenburg
Mrs. Osing	Employer Ass. Responsible

ITALY

Roberto Perticaroli	Manager of the Documentation and Training, Department of ISPESL - Focal Point OSHA
Sergio Tavassi	Documentation and Training Department of ISPESL - Focal Point OSHA
Luisa Benedettini	Manager of the Occupational Health and Safety Office, Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (CGIL)
Diego Alaique	Researcher and Expert for the Occupational Health and Safety Office, Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (CGIL)
Senator Carlo Smuraglia	President of the Work Commission of the Italian Senate
Luigi Casano	Managing Director, Occupational Health and Safety Sector of the Confindustria (Entrepreneurs' Organisation)

PORTUGAL

Prof. José Miquel Cabeças	Universidade Nova de Lisboa - Faculdade de Ciências e Tecnologia
Eng ^a . Alice Costa	IDICT
Eng Eduardo Leandro	IDICT
Eng ^a . Maria Santos	IDICT
Dr. Henrique Fernandes	IDICT

Dr. Mota da Silva	IDICT
Dr. José Costa Tavares	AECOPS - Associação de Empresas de Construção e Obras Públicas
Dr. Paulo Abreu	Associação Portuguesa de Fisioterapeutas
Sr. Francisco Silva	CTCV - Centro Tecnológico da Cerâmica e do Vidro
Dra. Ana Curto	Câmara Municipal de Almada, Serviço de Saúde Ocupacional
Dr. Raúl Pronto	Visteon Palmela (Ford Electronica Portuguesa)
Prof ^a . Olga Mayan	INSA
Dra. Dores	FINO's
Dr. José Mesquita	SAGIES
Dra. Margarida Costa	Câmara Municipal de Cascais, Dept. Recursos Humanos e Modernização Administrativa
Sr. João Paulo Brandão	Pioneer Electronica Portugal Produção, SA.
Dra. Manuela Castel-branco	Câmara Municipal de Sesimbra
Sr. Luís Manuel Santos Martins	Cosat - Consultores de H.S.S.T., SA
Dra. Maria de Jesus	Câmara Municipal de Sintra, Serviço de Saúde Ocupacional
Dr. Carlos Fужão	Autoeuropa, Automóveis, Lda., Área de Montagem Final
Prof ^a . Anabela Simões	Faculdade de Motricidade Humana - UTL
Dra. Luisa Barreiros	Faculdade de Motricidade Humana - UTL
Dr. Francisco Rebelo	Faculdade de Motricidade Humana - UTL
Dr. Luís Graça	Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Escola Nacional de Saúde Pública
Prof. Mário Viana Queiróz	Liga Portuguesa Contra as Doenças Reumáticas
Eng. Bráz Costa	CITEVE - Centro Tecnológico das Indústrias Têxtil e do Vestuário de Portugal
Dr. Joaquim Dionísio	CGTP - Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses
Sr. Marcelino Pena Costa	CCP - Confederação do Comércio e Serviços de Portugal
Eng. João Sousa	IDICT
Dra. Ana Maria Amaral	IDICT
Eng ^a . Leonor Figueira	IDICT
Dra. Graça Nunes	IDICT
Eng. António Fonseca	IDICT
Dr. Luís Lopes	UGT - União Geral dos Trabalhadores
AGENCY	
Hans-Horst Konkolewsky	Director
Finn Sheye	Network Manager
Estibaliz Martinez	Secretary
Andrew Smith	Information and Communications Programme Manager
Alun Jones	Information Manager
Ulrich Riese	Work Environment, Programme Manager
Markku Aaltonen	Project Manager
Joan Pijuan	Resource Manager
Ana Dominguez	Dokumentalist
Antoine Sierra	Publication Assistant
Jens Engelhardt	Financial Assistant
Teuvo Uusitalo	Project Manager
Dr. Jean-Claude André	Institut National Recherche et de Sécurité/ TC – Work and Health

Prof. Kai Savolainen

LIAISON GROUP

Winfried Kleinegris

Richard Clifton

Marcel Wilders

Torben Jepsen

EU-OFFICIALS &

International

Eggehard Rother

Gerassimos Zorbas

Alan Hick

Jose Ramon Biosca de

Sagastuy

Andre Lommel

Rony Sabah

Didier Dupre

Jukka Takala

Marc Sapir

(90 participants in in-
terviews)

FIOH/TC – Dangerous Substances

CEC-DG Empl. Evaluation Unit

Chairman of the Administrative Board (Governments' representative)

Vice-Chairman of the Administrative Board (Trade Unions' representa-
tive)

Vice-Chairman of the Administrative Board (Employers' representative)

EMPL DG/6

Member of Cabinet of Commissioner Anna Diamantopoulou

(Secretariat of the) Economic and Social Committee

Head of Unit, EMPL DG/6

EMPL DG/6

Task Force Administrative Reform

Eurostat

Director of Safe Work Programme, ILO, Geneva

ETUC, Director