
28TH CONFERENCE OF DIRECTORS OF EU PAYING AGENCIES

Namur, 27 - 29 October 2010

Claude Delbeuck, The General Director of the Directorate General for Agriculture, Natural Resources and the Environment

We shall now get to the heart of the subject and commence the work on the issues that this Conference seeks to address. Before providing a brief description of the programme, the Wallonia Paying Agency would like to sincerely thank the various delegations who have contributed to the organisation of this conference, both in terms of the presentations and their contribution to the workshops. I would also like to thank the delegates in advance who will be contributing to the organisation of the discussions due to be held in these workshops this afternoon.

I must also thank all of our employees, as well as the employees of our federal Paying Agency for their valuable contribution to the organisation of this event.

This opening session will end shortly. During the first plenary session, we will begin by opening the floor to the Commission, represented by Mrs Patricia Bugnot, Director of Directorate J – Audit of Agricultural Expenditure. We shall then hear a speech from Mr Wolfgang Stoltz, from the Court of Auditors, who will address the issue of the account-settling procedure. Lastly we shall hear from Mrs Frida Blockx, representative of the Belgian Coordination Body.

Following a coffee break, during the second plenary session, we shall initially be addressed by our esteemed Spanish colleague, Mr Fernando Miranda, who will present the conclusions of the 27th Conference in Oviedo. We would like to take this opportunity to further congratulate our Spanish colleagues for their organisational quality. In accordance with tradition, Mrs Christina Huhtasaari, the Panta Rhei conference secretary, will present the conclusions of the 37th Conference of Porto and the 38th Conference of Ghent.

Once this information has been delivered, in the second part of this session, we shall begin the preparation of the two scheduled workshops, which cover two very different subject areas.

The first chosen subject area is the financial management of the Paying Agencies. This will specifically cover issues relating to pre-financing, the payment systems put in place, the management of debtors, and their relationship with the national budget. This subject area was requested by the Wallonia region and selected due to the infrequency of which the issue of financial techniques is addressed, which is surprising given the nature of the institutions that are brought together on this

occasion. It is useful to compare the practices of member states in terms of financial management at this level. A questionnaire has been sent to all of the member states in order to obtain information to support the discussions. This workshop has been organised by the Paying Agency of Wallonia.

The second selected subject area aims to evaluate the monitoring workload burden that the Paying Agencies are required to carry, firstly as regards their own monitoring obligations and then the internal audit and the external audit of the Commission, the European Court of Auditors and the Member State Court of Auditors, as well as other issues. This significant workload monopolises national resources and could perhaps be streamlined. Although surveys have already been conducted by the Commission departments relating to monitoring workloads, it doesn't appear that the study of the entire monitoring workload, including audits and surveys, had been considered up until now, which is why it is of interest to us. This subject area is also supported by a survey and a work group discussion. This workshop itself has been organised by the Belgian Intervention and Restitution Office, the federal Paying Agency for Belgium.

In anticipation of this work, Mrs Mélanie Lepage, from the Paying Agency of Wallonia, will present the Belgian organisation and introduce workshop 1.

On the same subject area, Mr Owen Jones, from the Commission, head of unit I.4, will then speak to us about the financial management of the EAGF.

This session will be closed by Mrs Catherine Lecoq, auditor at the Belgian Intervention and Restitution Office, who will introduce workshop 2.

It will then be time for lunch, but don't forget our traditional family photo, which will of course be taken before we sit down to eat.

During the first part of this afternoon, 2 workshops will be held. The first, relating to the financial system, will be held here. The second relating to the monitoring workloads will be held in the annex area. In this area, only French/English interpreting will be provided. The first workshop will be chaired by Mrs Mélanie Lepage with the kind collaboration of Mr Owen Jones. The second workshop will be chaired by Mrs Catherine Lecoq, assisted by Mr Marcin Wardal, member of the Polish delegation.

Following the afternoon coffee break, during the third plenary session, issues surrounding direct aid eligibility will be addressed, firstly by Mr Andreas Lillig, from the Commission (unit D.1), and then by Mr Charles Langhendries, from the Paying Agency of Wallonia.

This session will end with a presentation by Mr Bernard Hennuy, our colleague and Director General of the Belgian Intervention and Restitution Office, relating to useful monitoring instruments in the context of the statement of assurance.

Day one of this packed conference programme will then come to a close. As regards the evening, the gala dinner will take place at Château de Franc-Waret. We will be meeting at the venue at 8:30 p.m. For anyone staying at the hotels, the coach will

depart at 8 p.m. It would be appreciated if everyone could make sure they arrive on time.

Tomorrow morning work will begin at 9 a.m. The fourth plenary session will be dedicated to the conclusions of the workshop discussions, under the leadership of the two Presidents. As we have already seen the answers to the questionnaire, I have a feeling that this will make for a lively discussion.

Following the coffee break, the sixth session will be dedicated to the implementation of the land parcel block identification system. We will be given the opportunity to find out about three use examples presented by Mr Ahti Bleive for Estonia, Mr Traian Crainic for Romania and Mr Georgios Kormentzas for Greece.

Following these presentations, Ms Béatrice Leteinturier and Ms Aberdeen Renkin, from the Paying Agency of Wallonia will present an evaluation of the potential of this type of land parcel identification.

Our discussions will then come to a close around midday. We will then hand over to our colleagues from Hungary, the latest member of the trio presidency, for the announcement of the 29th Conference.

In drawing this introductory speech to a close, I would like to remind everyone again that it is impossible for us to work without the assistance of the interpreters. We understand that their work is difficult and we must therefore take the necessary precautions to ensure that they are able to work in the best conditions possible. It is therefore crucial that all speakers adhere to their speech times and take care to articulate well and not to speak too quickly. Many thanks in advance for your understanding and cooperation on this point.

I shall now hand over to Mr Alain Istasse, Inspector General of our Aid Department, who will chair the discussions. Mr José Renard, Inspector general of our European Policy and International Agreements Department, will represent me throughout the gala dinner. I apologise that I cannot be present throughout this entire event but I can be contacted at any time in the event of any problems. Mr Istasse and Mr Renard are both more than capable of deputising on my behalf.

Many thanks again and my best wishes for a productive conference.