



## ETF GOVERNING BOARD 29 NOVEMBER 2005

### MINUTES

CHAIRMAN: MR NIKOLAUS VAN DER PAS, DIRECTOR GENERAL DG EDUCATION AND CULTURE

Participants:

#### Introduction

**The Chairman** opened the meeting and welcomed all participants especially the new Members and Observers: Ms All Kuelli from Estonia, Ms Agnès Leclerc from France, Mr Stefan Schneider from Germany and the new Observer from Turkey Prof. Ozdemir and Ms Aviana Bulgarelli from Cedefop.

#### 1. Adoption of the agenda

**The Chairman** proposed to include under any other business:

- A letter sent to Members from the Union Syndacale
- The observations from the European Court of Auditors on ETF annual accounts 2004

**Ms Ord** proposed that Item 8 on the Council Regulation should be considered as an oral briefing under Item 4.

The Board adopted the agenda.

#### 2. Follow-up to previous meeting and report on action Items and written procedures

##### i: Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 June 2005 were adopted.

##### ii: Oral report on open action points and written procedures

**Peter Greenwood (ETF)** reported that:

- The GB Agenda had been restructured according to points for adoption, discussion and information together with a number of other changes to make the agenda and documentation more user-friendly.
- The Commission had agreed to brief the GB on Tempus under Item 4
- ETF had revised the report on EC requests as proposed by the GB
- GB Rules of Procedures would be tackled under Item 5
- ETF had arranged a meeting on Aid co-operation. The GB would be briefed under Item 4
- The 2002 External Evaluation report had been circulated to Members in July 2005
- The ETF had revised its approach to Advisory Forum languages. This would be discussed under Item 5
- As regards written procedures held since June 2004, the GB had approved the 2004 accounts and an amendment to ETF 2005 budget.

### 3. **Introductory remarks by the Chairman of the meeting**

The European Union's Lisbon strategy represents a huge challenge for the Community. Education and training is a key field for the achievement of the ambition to become the most competitive region of the world by 2010. The Second Draft report which is being prepared for next spring's 2006 Council Meeting shows that progress is being made and countries are more aware of the importance of education and training in their national strategies for achieving the Lisbon goals. However, a lot more needs to be done. The lack of Financial Perspectives 2007-2013 will further complicate the situation and make it difficult to start the EU's Education and Training programmes on 1 January 2007.

The EU is also working hard in the development of its external policies. Neighbouring countries need support on education and training and this also implies an enhanced role for ETF as a centre of expertise.

### 4. **Oral reports**

#### i: **Trends and developments in ETF and its activities during second semester 2005**

**ETF Director** opened her report by expressing a warm welcome to Ms Bulgarelli, the new Director of Cedefop. Ms Dunbar underlined the importance that ETF gives to its co-operation with Cedefop.

#### **1 Key developments in ETF**

The Director briefed the Board on the follow up to the two reservations in the 2004 Annual Activity Report:

- As regards improving financial management capacity, ETF had launched an audit on the its framework contracts to ensure correct financial management and value for money. The ETF had also launched an exercise to bring the procurement for national observatories in line with the financial regulation. Some contracts have already been signed and others are on progress. Finally, ETF was working on the documentation of all financial procedures which will be completed in due course.
- Concerning staff development issues, ETF had launched a competence mapping initiative for ETF staff which is due to be completed across the organisation by early 2006. A training program on recruitment is underway

The Director also informed the Board on progress in compliance with the Internal Control Standards (ICS). In October, the Commission's Internal Audit Service had provided a draft Report to ETF. The Final Report and ETF's proposed Action Plan will be presented to the Board in the next meeting. In addition, ETF is carrying out an internal self assessment of its compliance with the ICS. The ETF had appointed Mr Delli Paoli as internal auditor; he should take up his post in January 2006.

Finally, the Director briefed the Board on ETF support to other EU institutions. ETF has made a number of presentations and meetings. In particular a presentation has been done at European Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee on VET in the Barcelona Process last July. The agency has also made a presentation to the European Parliament meeting for Education and Culture and another to the Permanent Representatives Education Committee. ETF also participated in the UK Presidency conference on European Qualification Framework last month. Finally, Mrs Dunbar informed the Board on the important ETF's support to the Commission's programming in Neighbourhood and Central Asia countries. ETF had provided a key product: country analyses on Human Resources Development situation in each of the countries. These analyses had been very positively received by Relex and demonstrate a moving towards a higher level of policy advice assistance ETF can provide to Relex in the future.

## 2 Presentation of examples of ETF's activities

The Director also presented three projects to show the type of work which ETF was carrying out in its partner regions.

1. Skills development for poverty reduction. This project is exploring policy approaches to link skills development with poverty reduction in Central Asia.
2. National qualifications frameworks in Western Balkans. This project is assessing the capacity of qualifications frameworks to act as levers for reform, and is also assessing the readiness of the Western Balkans countries to take part in the European Qualifications Framework. .
3. Study on functioning of labour markets in Meda countries.  
This project explores methodologies to assess labour markets in countries with large informal sectors.

**Ms Ord** expressed appreciation for the presentations and underlined that the spread of the examples showed that ETF was already adapting its thematic activities to the broader context of reform in the regions in line with the proposed revision to the Council Regulation that would be discussed later. She also highlighted the importance of maintaining some flexibility in ETF's geographic remit so the agency could continue working in Central Asia.

### ii: **Progress on Commission policies and programs that have an impact on the ETF**

**Mr Lipman** began by reminding the GB of the effort to simplify the EU's external relations interventions that lay behind Commission's proposal for the new Instruments. This would reduce the current forty instruments down to six.

ETF's work would focus on the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) and the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). The Commission had proposed some 15 billion Euro for each of the two instruments over the period 2007-2013. However, although the two Instruments had been welcomed by the European Parliament, the final adoption of the Instruments was dependent on the definition of the EU's Financial Perspectives.

The European Neighbourhood Policy represented a high priority for the EU, and education and training would be a key investment area to achieve its objectives. The importance of education and training can be seen through the inclusion of a new scholarship programme; a revised Tempus programme to be launched from 2006 and the emphasis on capacity building for partner countries.

Mr Lipman announced that seven ENP action plans had already been adopted and advanced negotiations were taking place with the remaining countries.

**Mr Meganck** then reported on progress in the preparation of the IPA which will become the main Instrument for supporting candidate and potential candidate countries. The IPA will replace Phare, Ispa, Sapard and Cards. It is a very flexible policy-driven Instrument which is adapted to the needs of partner countries and has been well received by the European Parliament. IPA will combine strategic planning approaches with more detailed programming at project level.

Support from ETF will be sought for the strategic planning phase. Input from ETF in terms of country plans and analyses is expected in early 2006. The strategic planning phase can be completed before summer or at the latest in autumn.

**Mr Coyne** then briefed the GB on developments in DG EAC's initiatives that were relevant to the activities of ETF.

As regards the Integrated Programme, he informed the Board that the Commission's proposal had been welcomed by the European Parliament, which had supported the principle of increasing the budget for Community level actions in education and training, and had welcomed the drive to simplify procedures. The Council had also adopted the programme in principle, but would have to be consulted again on the details when the financial envelope was defined. If the consultation processes go smoothly, the programme could be adopted in September-October 2006.

The Commission has agreed to launch a successor to the Tempus programme. The new programme will build on the spirit of the current programme, but would be more responsive to partner country priorities. The new programme can be adopted directly by a comitology process. Adoption should be efficient as a new Council Decision would not be required.

Mr Coyne informed the Board on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) consultation that was open until the end of 2005. The comments received through this process would be assessed in a meeting in Hungary next February which would be followed by a draft report to the European Parliament. The EQF would become a reference structure of interest also for neighbouring countries.

The Community was also making some progress in the development of an EU credit system for VET. This has been an extremely complicated exercise. A consultation process is foreseen for mid 2006 to identify a number of initiatives, and a report should be submitted to a meeting at Ministerial level at the end of 2006 under the Finnish presidency.

### **iii Forthcoming review of ETF Council Regulation**

**Mr Coyne** opened his statement by saying that there was not yet a formal Commission position on the revision of ETF's Council Regulation. He argued that some change to the regulation was necessary because of the new Instruments that had been presented to the Board. Firstly, the Instruments which are mentioned in ETF's current regulation (Cards, Meda, Phare, Tacis) will no longer exist from 2007. Secondly, as the new Instruments are based on policy level action plans rather than on project level interventions, there may need to be changes to the type of services ETF provides.

He emphasised that the Commission considers ETF to be an important centre of excellence. Indeed, the Commission intends to support ETF in furthering its core business of providing expertise. There were three key considerations for the revised mandate:

- VET can no longer be unbundled from general education; so it makes no sense to have a mandate limited to VET. ETF's field of work should be defined in terms of human resources development (HRD) including labour market related activities. ETF will not be asked to focus on primary or higher education. It should, however, link VET reform to other education and training levels in a lifelong learning perspective. Indeed, ETF was already considering its expertise from that perspective, and the revised regulation would simply be closer to the reality of ETF's work.
- As regards the geographic scope, the main issue was whether the ETF should support the IPA and ENPI countries. This would lead to a marginally different scope to the current one. In principle, the Commission favoured a certain flexibility in scope.
- Concerning the ETF's objectives and functions, the current definition of objectives is rather lengthy. In addition, the Advisory Forum should not be a statutory body, but should remain a network.

In terms of timeframe, it would be desirable for the Council to adopt the new regulation by the end of 2006 after an opinion from the European Parliament. The Commission's proposal would be expected in early 2006. GB Members would be informed about the Commission's proposals so they could liaise with relevant stakeholders at home.

The basic schedule appeared feasible. However, even if there were some delay in the process, Mr Coyne reassured the Board that ETF could still be funded from the Community budget for 2007.

**Ms Ord** thanked Mr Coyne and acknowledged the Commission's continued support to ETF. In her role as representative of the Presidency, she reported that, GB members agreed to include HRD, labour market and life-long learning in the new regulation. GB members also agreed that ETF should focus on IPA and ENPI, but some flexibility was needed so ETF could at least continue to support Central Asia and perhaps other areas. Finally, GB members would be in favour of the Advisory Forum as an advisory network, but it did not perform adequately its statutory function of delivering an opinion on the Work Programme.

**Mr Perugini** supported Ms Ord's summary of the GB members' position and went on to ask the Commission to define more clearly the principle of flexibility. Would ETF be able to work outside IPA and ENPI?

**Mr Wisniewski** stated that the revision to the mandate represented an opportunity not just to adapt the Regulation to current reality, but to envisage new challenges. He asked if the emerging use of country action plans could give ETF a platform to evolve from being simply responsive to Commission requests to being more of a direct support for partner countries. He agreed that the current Advisory Forum does not perform adequately. However, ETF should look for mechanisms to make the partner countries more active in its work. He admitted he had no immediate solutions to propose. He proposed that the concept of social capital might be a more fitting term to define ETF's thematic remit. Social inclusion should also be considered in ETF's work in the labour market.

**Ms Serban** agreed that the ETF's legal basis should be brought in line with the reality of ETF's work. She appreciated the term social inclusion as it was based on the principle of partnerships. She proposed that partner countries could be encouraged to set up an integrated 'think tank' or network to co-operate with ETF. This had been the approach in Romania. This could also include the nomination of a 'Mr/Ms Lisbon' in each country. She asked how the current competency mapping in ETF would fit with the extended mandate.

**Mr Coyne** replied that ETF's focus would be on the enlargement and neighbouring countries. Some flexibility would be considered to allow ETF to work in Central Asia and perhaps other countries. He appreciated the terms proposed by GB for ETF's thematic mandate. The important issue was that ETF should be able to support the countries in the broad area of skills acquisition and employment. He appreciated the idea of nominating a Mr/Ms Lisbon. He stated that ETF would not be asked to provide technical assistance to the successor of the current Tempus programme. The Commission would soon start discussing with ETF how to transfer technical assistance to the executive agency in Brussels.

**Ms Ord** appreciated the clarification on Tempus.

**Mr Vantuch** asked why the Commission had reached this decision.

**Mr Coyne** replied that Technical assistance was not consistent with ETF's mandate as a centre of expertise. The original decision to give Tempus technical assistance to ETF had been political rather than technical. Finally, this decision would free up resources in ETF which could be transferred to support ETF's core business of providing expertise.

**Mr Schneider** asked which particular executive agency is referred to and if it is the one that would implement the lifelong learning programme.

**Mr Coyne** replied there was only one executive agency in education and it is the one in charge of implementing the Integrated Programme. Tempus had similar mechanisms to the Integrated programme, so it would fit well in the activities of the Executive Agency.

**Mr Perugini** asked for a clarification on the impact of this decision on the ETF's budget.

**Mr Coyne** reminded the GB that the current Tempus programme would last until 2006. The last Call for Applications was foreseen at the end of 2006. The processing of this Call, which would last at least until summer 2007, would be carried out by ETF. The transfer would take place only after that process had been completed, possibly in 2008. It was too early to discuss precise figures at this stage. It will then be the responsibility of the ETF Director to decide about the deployment of resources.

#### **iv Cooperation with Member States, including feedback from the seminar 28 November**

**Mr Migliorisi** reported on Trends, Issues and Suggested activities resulting from the previous day's seminar. After shortly summarising the information from the mapping exercise carried out by ETF, he presented four main areas of work which the ETF could pursue:

- Mapping of VET-related donor activities in ETF partner countries
- Capacity building for partner countries in donor co-ordination
- Policy support for donors
- In-country co-ordination actions

**Ms Serban** thanked ETF for the interesting seminar. She recommended caution about the data used in the seminar as there are several ways to define concepts. It was important to concentrate on priorities of the partner countries rather than data.

**Ms Ord's** said that the seminar had been an excellent learning exercise for GB. She then asked how ETF intended to take forward the suggestions from the seminar.

**ETF Director** replied it was early to give a detailed answer. The seminar had been helpful in endorsing ETF's role in supporting aid co-ordination. ETF will analyse the recommendations and formulate an action plan.

**Mr Perugini** expressed his appreciation for a well prepared seminar that had provided a lot of valuable information. It had increased awareness of ETF's expertise and the value-added role it could play in aid co-ordination. This role should be gradually increased, and he expected ETF to allocate more resources to this function. He stated that training was a core component of projects funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. ETF could help design aid projects as it has know-how in policy support and project design. ETF should also increase its focus on policy analysis and impact assessment.

**The Chairman** concluded by asking ETF to report to next GB.

## **5 Rules of Procedure**

### **i Revised GB Rules of Procedure**

**Mr Greenwood** referred to Art 5 of Council Regulation and reminded GB that the current rules dated back to 1999 and did not take into account the changes which had occurred in ETF's Financial and Council Regulations since then. Draft new rules had been presented in June followed by a written consultation with GB Members. ETF had integrated the specific suggestions from Members. Other issues had been raised regarding the composition of the Board which could be taken into consideration in the revision of the Council Regulation.

**Ms Ord** stated that the GB was happy to endorse ETF's proposal. The **Chairman** declared the new rules adopted.

## ii Revised AF Rules of Procedure

**Mr Greenwood** referred to Art 6 of the Council Regulation in which the GB has to adopt Rules of Procedure for Advisory Forum. He referred to the recommendations from the last external evaluation and the agreement with the GB in March 2004 on the revised role of the Advisory Forum. After presenting a draft version to the GB in June 2005, ETF had carried out a consultation with members of the Forum. The consultation had been positive, and ETF had taken into account recommendations, including a suggestion from GB to bring the language regime of the Forum in line with that of the Board.

**Ms Ord** informed that the GB was happy to endorse ETF's proposal. The **Chairman** declared the new rules adopted.

At this point, the Chair proposed to bring forward Item 10 on the Advisory Forum membership.

## 10 Advisory Forum membership – update of nominations

**Mr Greenwood** reminded the Board of its responsibility under Article 6 of the Council Regulation to approve nominations of new Advisory Forum Members. Since the previous Board meeting, 13 new nominations had been received. The Board approved the nominations.

## 6 Work Programme and Budget

### i ETF Work Programme 2006

**Ms Stefani** presented the general outlines of the 2006 draft Work Programme. She emphasised above all the new elements in the Work Programme. The first pillar of the Work Programme portrayed ETF's support to the Commission, which was a priority for the agency. In this field, 2006 would be a transition year between the current and new Instruments. ETF would make every effort to support the Commission in this transition. Under the second pillar, ETF presents its activities in information and capacity building, in which the national observatories would remain an important partner. Mrs Stefani explained to the Board that the ETF was proposing changes to its action research projects under the third pillar. These were now more substantial corporate projects into key themes and were no longer broken down into smaller regional actions. Mrs Stefani also informed the Board that ETF would continue to make progress in its efforts to improve compliance and governance as described in the draft Work Programme.

At the end of her presentation she invited GB members to express their interest in being involved in ETF 2006 activities by filling in the questionnaire.

### ii ETF Draft Budget 2006

**Mr Ramsayer** reminded the Board that in March 2005 they had adopted the preliminary draft budget for 2006 which amounted to 19.450 M€. The draft budget now under discussion respected the total amount, breakdown and establishment plan adopted by the Board in March. He made specific reference to the additional 450.000 € which had been added to ETF's budget by the Commission to cater for the extra support needed under Tempus technical assistance. He also brought the Board's attention to the ongoing effort in ETF to ensure compliance with the Internal Control Standards as shown by the recruitment of the Internal Auditor and the increased investment in evaluation and audit which would account for some 10% of operational costs.

Finally, Mr Ramsayer informed the Board that the final adoption of the 2006 budget by the Budgetary Authority was expected in mid December.

**Ms Ord** as Presidency representative expressed satisfaction with the WP format and especially the summary charts. She supported the effort to involve GB members in ETF activities. She suggested that it might be an idea to hold GB meetings in partner countries so Members could see what ETF is doing in reality. She encouraged ETF to define indicators to measure the impact of ETF projects rather than on process in implementing activities. She stated that the budget was acceptable but asked for more information on mission costs. While appreciating the efficiency gain from the electronic distribution of documents, ETF was asked to put in place mechanisms to check that all Members received documents.

**Ms Leclerc** supported Mrs Ord's recommendation regarding receipt of GB documents, especially in situations where there are new GB members. She suggested that there should be a specific meeting to discuss the change in ETF's mandate and that the Advisory Forum should help in defining ETF's future.

**Mr Perugini** also asked for a breakdown of mission costs and for further information on the budgeting of the Advisory Forum plenary meeting in 2006 which represented a doubling of the costs foreseen in 2005.

**Mr Lipman** also asked ETF to bring its terminology in line with Commission practice, and to be clear about the geographical distribution of the budget especially as regards regions such as Central Asia which were not considered a priority for the Commission.

**Ms Serban** asked ETF to include a number of technical changes to its activities in the accession and preaccession countries. She agreed to provide written comments. She also asked ETF to provide a project proposal for its future work in donor co-operation.

**ETF Director** said ETF would provide the additional information requested by the Board members and would take into account the specific comments on the Work Programme. She agreed to provide a project proposal for donor co-operation.

**Mr Perugini** asked for a breakdown of costs concerning the missions and for an explanation on the costs of the Advisory Forum before approving the budget.

**Mr Ramsayer** promised to deliver a breakdown of mission costs before the end of the meeting. He also informed the Board that the increase in Advisory Forum budget was due to the high cost of the plenary meeting which required the hiring of facilities and air travel costs for Members to come to Torino. In 2005, the Forum had met in smaller regional meetings.

**Mr Perugini** accepted the explanation regarding the Forum. He agreed to adopt the budget if the mission costs were provided immediately.

**The Chairman** declared the work programme and budget approved.

### iii Rationale for ETF estimate of Revenue and Expenditure 2007

**ETF Director** presented the assumptions under which the Estimate of Revenue and Expenditure had been prepared in the absence of defined financial perspectives. The ETF proposed an Estimate based on continuity in the level of subsidy from the Commission and in its establishment plan. ETF was proposing a total subsidy of 19.7 million Euro and 105 posts for 2007. The Estimate foresaw a slight broadening of ETF's thematic scope as discussed earlier in the meeting. It was also based on a geographical focus on the countries eligible for support under the neighbourhood and accession instruments, with the exclusion of Bulgaria and Romania which may have acceded to the EU by that time.

**Ms Ord**, speaking on behalf of the GB, agreed with the assumptions outlined by the Director. She agreed that the GB could adopt the Estimate by written procedure before the deadline of 31 March 2006.



The Chairman agreed with the remarks from the Board and confirmed that a written procedure to adopt the preliminary draft budget for 2007 would be launched in due course.

## **7 ETF External evaluation first progress report**

**Mr Felton and Mr Barnett** thanked the GB for the opportunity to address the meeting, and thanked the Commission, GB Members and ETF for the support so far. The presentation outlined the emerging findings from the evaluation regarding the results in terms of effectiveness and impact of ETF work in the period 2002-05. It would be a forward-looking evaluation with recommendations on the future perspectives for ETF. The main body of evidence would be provided through field missions which had taken place in Croatia, Jordan, Tajikistan and Ukraine.

**Ms Ord** thanked the evaluators. On behalf of the Board she encouraged the evaluators to put forward much sharper and more focused suggestions on how to improve the work of the agency in their final report. In particular she looked for recommendations on the Advisory Forum. She stated that GB members accepted the comments on their work, but asked the evaluators to make proposals on how the Board can better contribute to ETF. She noted that as ETF is an EU Agency, Member States should also play a role in its work.

**Mr Wisnieski** thanked for the report and asked if there were any contradiction between strategic role GB is called to play and the more expert role referred to under Item 6. i. He also welcomed suggestions on the role that the Commission, Member States and Partner Countries should play in the ETF. This should include also the expected contribution from the Advisory Forum.

**Mr Coyne** replied by stating that the Commission was not surprised by the overall positive view of the ETF presented in the evaluation. The Commission had already concluded that the ETF represented a valuable resource for the Community. He noted that the initial report argued that more Community resources should be invested in HRD in partner countries, and that there should be better aid co-ordination. However, he suggested that these objectives could not be achieved by ETF alone, but by a concerted effort at Community level. As regards the role of the GB and the broader issue of the revision of the Regulation, Mr Coyne stressed that the GB was a key partner in the debate on the new mandate. The discussion in the meeting so far had shown that the Commission and Member States share fairly similar views on the future thematic and geographical responsibilities of the ETF and a common will to make the best use of ETF valuable expertise.

The **ETF Director** thanked the evaluators for their useful report. She declared that ETF is looking forward to helpful recommendations to take on board and make operational. She also welcomed the emerging consensus on the future direction for ETF.

## **8 Forthcoming review of ETF Council Regulation**

This point was brought forward under item 2 iii.

## **9 Innovation and learning**

### **i Skills for progress: draft agenda for AF 2006**

**Mr McBride and Mr Sorensen** briefed the Board on thematic focus and the organisation of the Advisory Forum plenary meeting which is due to take place in Torino 7-9 June 2006. The meeting will be an opportunity to share the outcomes of ETF's research activities 2004-2006 with stakeholders from partner countries, EU and donor organisations with a view to continuing the HRD reform process under the new external relations Instruments from 2007.

## ii Skills development and poverty reduction: Yearbook 2006

**Mr Grootings** opened his presentation by informing GB members that the issue of poverty reduction was chosen for the 2006 Yearbook because ten ETF partner countries have a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) which is the overarching framework for receiving aid. ETF's research in the field aims at identifying the proper role for HRD in the PRSP framework in the specific context of ETF's partner countries. ETF's partner countries do not share the common characteristics of developing countries in that:

- they are impoverished countries rather than long term poor
- most of them if not all have a high literacy rate
- they need VET reform

The Yearbook will also provide discussion material for the Advisory Forum meeting in 2006.

## Any other Business

### i Letter from Union Syndicale

**The Chairman** stated that institutional HR Strategies require difficult decisions, and it is impossible to satisfy all interests. The objective must be the excellence of the institution, with due regard to social issues that must be respected. According to ETF statute, the director is responsible for HR issues. The ETF Staff Committee was the appropriate consultative body for the Director for corporate HR issues. The Chairman expressed his confidence in and support for the work of the Director.

**Ms Ord** declared there is unanimous agreement in the GB not to comment or intervene in individual staffing cases. The GB sees the Staff Committee as a strong and properly constituted representative body. The GB understands that HR issues would be on the GB agenda in 2006 and hope the Staff Committee will contribute to the discussion on that agenda item.

**The ETF Director** confirmed that ETF was working with Commission services on the new staff regulations for all agencies, but this extremely complex process had been rather delayed. However, the Director confirmed that, as foreseen in the Council Regulation, the implementing rules for the new Staff Regulations would be submitted to the GB for adoption. This would take place probably at the next meeting.

### ii Court of auditors report

**The ETF Director** stressed that the Court of Auditors had confirmed the overall legality and regularity of ETF financial accounts and procedures. The Court had however made an observation on the reference to Tempus in the accounts. The observation concerned the form of the accounts, and not their transparency. The Opinion of the Court had been sent to Parliament and was tabled for GB Members. Given that ETF 2005 accounts would be prepared under the accrual system, this problem will disappear.

## 11 Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place on 6 June 2006, the day before the Advisory Forum plenary meeting.

**The Chairman** closed the meeting by expressing his appreciation for the organisation of the GB and in particular the preparatory work carried out in the informal meeting the day before and the role taken by the Mrs Ord as Presidency spokesperson.

He thanked Ms O Higgins for her contribution to the GB and made reference to her work during the Irish Presidency during which the director had been nominated.

He informed the Board that due to an internal Commission reorganisation, from 1 January 2006 he will take up a new post as Director General for Employment and Equal Opportunities. He regretted leaving his current post. Education and training had become increasingly important political issues over the last five years however there was still a lot to do in this area. He thanked the Board for their contribution and wished them every success in their future work.

**Ms Ord** responded on behalf of the Board. She recognised Mr Van der Pas's personal contribution in making education and in particular training a key policy area for the EU. He had shown great commitment and energy in developing a European Union approach to VET. He had worked closely and successfully with Member States over the years in meetings and networks, including his great contribution to ETF and its GB. She wished him every success in his new DG, and hoped that he would remain a counterpart for ETF in the future.

#### **SUMMARY OF DECISIONS**

1. ETF Work Programme 2006 was approved
2. ETF Draft Budget 2006 was approved
3. Revised GB Rules of Procedure were approved
4. Revised AF Rules of Procedures were approved
5. AF new nominations were approved
6. Next meeting will take place on 6 June 2006

#### **Summary action points**

1. ETF to submit Implementing Rules for the Staff Regulations for adoption by the GB
2. ETF to submit its Estimate of Revenue and Expenditure 2007 for adoption by written procedure before 31 March 2006
3. ETF to introduce a system to ensure receipt of electronic communications by GB members
4. ETF to inform GB members on its follow-up to the Aid Cooperation Seminar
5. Commission to inform GB Members on its proposals for ETF's Council Regulation