



CHANGES TO THE WAY SUPPORT PROGRAMME TASKS ARE MANAGED IN THE IAEA'S DEPARTMENT OF SAFEGUARDS

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INTRODUCTION

The Department of Safeguards and the 16 Member State Support Programmes jointly manage about 250 tasks. Recently, in response to a number of events, the Department has reorganized the manner in which these tasks are proposed and managed.

The presentation and paper will document the following:

THE NEED TO CHANGE

Although there have been a number of significant successes it has been recognised that both the way in which tasks are proposed and the management of tasks could be better performed. In particular the Report of the External Auditor 1999 stated the following:

- With respect to the R&D Programme the Agency “has had difficulty in defining and prioritising tasks.”
- “Ideas for tasks have come from operational units but not always in a coordinated manner”
- “I support the Agency’s consideration of a move towards more centralised planning of task priorities” and the application of the “general principles of good programme or project management”

The tone of these comments was generally repeated by Member State Support Programme Co-ordinators at their meeting in November 1999 and by the Programme Performance Assessment System Report on Equipment Development. Of course the Department already knew that improvements could be made.

THE “OLD” SYSTEM

Prior to the changes three structures dominated the organisation. Firstly, a task approval process that did not allow for the application of the Department’s priorities in a coordinated manner. Each task proposal was judged on its individual merits. Secondly, the distribution of task management responsibilities throughout the Department again did not allow easy coordination. Finally the focus on Member State task review meetings which did not allow the coordination of tasks in a particular subject area.

The consequences of this were almost certainly the duplication of tasks, the performance of the wrong tasks and poor prioritisation of work. All at a time when the Department was generally short of resources.

THE NEW SYSTEM

The Department has responded in a number of ways.

- Strategic objectives have been formulated that allow prioritization.
- A number of “projects” have been defined and each Support Programme task has been assigned to a project. Project managers have also been appointed who are managerially responsible for all the work in the areas defined by the project, including the development of project plans, the coordination of new task proposals and the reporting of progress within the project
- A new process for the authorization of task proposals utilizing an existing Department-wide committee structure has been installed. All project managers will have their plans endorsed by these committees on behalf of the Department.
- Member State Support Programmes have been briefed on the Department’s plans. No longer will the coordinators have to rely on educated guesswork to make their own plans.

These measures will improve prioritization and coordination of tasks. They will also clarify responsibilities and ensure the best possible use of expertise within the Department.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The new system is installed and being used. One of the problems with the old system was that it did not objectively measure performance. Therefore any noticeable improvement will be subjective. However, a key component of the new system will be the installation of a number of performance criteria enabling the Department to measure the current system and of course the impact of future improvements.