

Minutes of the fourteenth Meeting of the EPA-RPII Merger Working Group (MWG)

Location: DECLG, Custom House

Date: Friday, 2 May 2014(10:30pm – 12:45pm)

In attendance: Mr David Walsh, Assistant Secretary, Environment Division, DECLG (DW) (Chair)
Ms Laura Burke, Director General, EPA (LB)
Dr Ann McGarry, Chief Executive, RPII (AMG)
Mr Paul McDonald, Principal Officer, DECLG (PMD)
Mr Micheál Ó Cinnéide, EPA (MOC) (Item 2, via conference call)
Ms Majella Byrne, EPA (MB) (Item 2, via conference call)
Mr Jim Hurley, EPA (JH) (Item 3.iii, via conference call)
Ms Stella Mc Kervey, DECLG (Secretariat)

Apologies: Ms Emer Connolly, Principal Officer, DECLG

1. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the thirteenth meeting of the MWG were approved and the MPG was asked to publish them on the websites of both organisations.

2. Feedback and Update from Merger Project Group Chair and Project Manager

The Chair invited MOC to update members on the progress of the MPG on the High Level Implementation Plan and the Risks to the merger.

i. High Level Implementation Plan

MOC reported that a lot of work was being done across all thematic areas and MOC pointed out that 32 of the 53 HL Actions were on track and 14 were complete at this stage of the process. MB added that the revised actions (following the MWG Directions from their last meeting) had been highlighted in red for their attention.

ICT – MOC informed the MWG that the Department of Public Expenditure has confirmed that it can provide the infrastructure for the second WAN connection (by connecting the RPII to the Government Network) required for ICT HL Action 1 (Expansion and Integration of WAN links).

Finance – MOC informed the MWG that David Pollard had submitted a paper on the system as detailed in Finance HL Action 1 (Financial System post-merger) and this will be discussed at the next Finance meeting and the paper will then be submitted to the EPA Board/ RPII CEO for their consideration. The MWG recommended amending the wording in the action to reflect the agreement and implementation of an interim solution, selection and approval of a long term enduring solution and for the fully merged system to be in place.

The MWG asked the MPG to review the High Level Implementation Plan with regard to critical deadline dates and also directed that the deadlines of some of the actions were to be amended.

ii. Risks to the Merger

It was agreed by all that the progression of the merger legislation was paramount to the entire process and that any delays would have significant effects on the advancement of some of the HL Actions (such as Finance – Payroll and HR – Roles of Staff). Given the update on the status of the legislation, it was agreed that the MPG was to continue to work towards the deadline of the 1 July 2014 at this time.

MOC further informed the MWG that the status of the other identified risks has not changed since the last MWG meeting and that mitigation on all the risks was being maintained, especially with regard to Risk 4 (Increased Work Pressure on Staff).

3. Updates

i. Legislation

PMD gave an update on the current status of the legislation and confirmed that a draft Bill had been sent by OPC the previous evening. The Department thanked the two organisations for their quick turnaround of extensive queries and requests for clarification from OPC, especially in the last couple of weeks. The Department is examining the proposed text and preparing responses to the remaining CPPNM queries which will involve some further consultation with both organisations. Once the remaining queries have been resolved OPC will complete their internal review process and provide DECLG with a stamped copy of the Bill. The Memorandum for Government will then be submitted to the Minister and then circulated for comments via E-Cabinet. The Department stated that the legislation is still on track for finalisation and enactment by July 2014.

The MWG discussed whether a new merger deadline date should be scheduled given the tight timeframe; it was agreed that work was to continue on the merger as scheduled and that DECLG will give further consider to the progression of the Bill and then update AMG and LB accordingly.

ii. Accommodation – Single Reception

The MWG noted the paper on Accommodation HL Action 3.b (Single Reception) and the next steps in progressing this matter further.

iii. HR

JH joined the meeting to brief the MWG on HR HL Action 4 (Grading Structures). He provided the MWG with details of current structures in the EPA and RPII and the proposed next steps to finalising the grading structures post-merger.

The MWG agreed that briefing was useful in order to frame the discussion on this matter; that the Haddington Road Agreement needed to be taken into consideration; that the Department and the Department of Public Expenditure needed to be kept informed of developments and that it was important to agree on a grading structure as soon as possible so as to aid staff integration post-merger.

The MWG agreed on the next steps in advancing this matter further.

iv. Finance

The MWG noted the Merger Implementation Costs Statement (as of 23 April 2014) and MOC pointed out that almost 50% of the budget has now been spent or committed which is an indication of the high level of activity.

4. Directions to the MPG

It was agreed to ask the MPG to:

- Publish the minutes of the thirteenth MWG meeting on the websites of both organisations.
- Review the High Level Implementation Plan with regard to critical actions required for the merger date.
- Amend the High Level Implementation Plan with regard to the deadline dates for ICT HL Action 1.b. (Expansion of wireless solution) and Accommodation HL Action 2 (Analysis of options for integrating staff), and amend the wording in Finance HL Actions 1.a. and 1.b. (Finance System) to reflect the agreement and implementation of the interim solution, selection and approval of a long term enduring solution and for the fully merged system to be in place. The action should note that the Finance Paper will also be submitted to the EPA Board/ RPII CEO.

The MWG requested that JH and Barbara Rafferty (RPII) revise the “Next Steps” table in relation to HR HL Action 4 (Grading Structures) and circulate the updated table to the MWG on Wednesday, 7 May 2014; with return of written comments from MWG members to the MWG Chair for sign-off on Friday, 9 May 2014.

The MWG directed the MPG/ HR Thematic Sub Group to submit a paper on HR HL Action 4 (Grading Structures) for the next MWG meeting on Monday, 9 June 2014 with the intent of harmonising the merging organisations to the EPA’s grading structure, including clarification regarding job titles and grades and assessment of the implications (for the merged organisation and individual staff) of adopting the EPA integrated grading structure.

The MWG noted the paper on Accommodation HL Action 3.b (Single Reception) and that the aim should be to have a single reception as soon as possible.

5. AOB

No matters were raised under this item.

6. Future meetings of the MWG

- 15th Meeting – Monday, 9th June 2014 (2 – 4:30pm), Custom House, DECLG
- 16th Meeting - DECLG to revert with proposed date for a meeting in July