Minutes of the 36th meeting held on 11 June 1997


* part time

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2. Adoption of the agenda
3. News from the CERN Management
4. Minutes of the previous meeting
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DRAFT Agenda for the meeting to be held on Wednesday, 17 September 1997

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7. Travelling Exhibitions
8. Research Sector Restructuration
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ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF CERN USERS

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1. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS
Opening the meeting, P. Bagnaia, the Chairman welcomed B.Nielsen, R.Lietava and P. Jarry replacing the Danish, Slovak and IN2P3 delegates respectively, and presented the apologies of those unable to attend. He briefly discussed a series of recent incidents — the fire in BA3 of the SPS, the falling ceiling in B40, and the sad death on the CERN site of D. Therville from natural causes. The condolences of ACCU were expressed to the family.

2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA
The agenda was adopted as announced with some changes to the order.

3. NEWS FROM THE CERN MANAGEMENT
C.H. Llewellyn Smith, Director-General, describing the fire in BA3 of the SPS on 13 May, indicated that a firm of specialists are working round the clock to clean up the area which is severely damaged by toxic smoke. Much structural work has to be done on the building itself as well as cleaning the electronics and replacing the equipment destroyed. Detailed planning for restarting the machine is in hand, and the Research Board will discuss rescheduling of running on 12 June. It is proposed to cancel the 4 weeks of heavy ion running originally proposed for 1997, and add 3 weeks to the 5 weeks scheduled for 1998. This would allow 6 additional weeks of proton running in 1997, bringing the total to 20 compared to 23.5 originally scheduled. It is proposed to add 2 weeks of LEP running in 1997, bringing the total to 11 compared to 16 originally scheduled, and add 4 weeks in 1998, bringing the total to 20 compared to 16 originally scheduled. A Fact Finding Commission has reported to the DG, and an Accident Board will be set up as required by CERN's safety rules.

Concerning negotiations with the United States, the National Science Board endorsed on 8 May the Agreement and Protocols initialled on 3 February with the Department of Energy and the National Science Foundation. Approval of the necessary funding is now in the hands of the US Congress, where many questions had been raised which indicate the desirability of changing the texts and making implicit understandings explicit. This had been done, and the CERN Council would now be asked to approve the changes and confirm approval of the complete Agreement and Protocols.

Council would also be asked at its forthcoming meeting to approve the Management's plans for the years 1998-2001. The background of severe budget reductions should be recalled, and in particular the large reduction in staff numbers which is occurring just as the LHC is being launched and staff motivation, and adaptability to change, is of vital importance. Cuts in services will be inevitable, but the main victim is the ability to provide a good scientific programme in the gap between the end of LEP operation and the start-up of the LHC. External funding has been found for the anti-proton decelerator, and is expected for COMPASS. At this time funding is being urgently sought to run LEP in the year 2000, for which the very strong scientific case is enhanced by the fact that bringing forward the upgrade of the LEP refrigeration plants, needed for the LHC, would allow LEP to run at higher energies from early 1999. An
extended (short and long baseline) neutrino programme, which would have to rely on external funding, is also under consideration. A Council Resolution urges Member States to consider providing additional funds for these projects.

J.-P. Matheys, representing the Staff Association, reiterated the proposals made by the Association in 1996 concerning the progressive retirement programme etc., and requested a clear message from the Management.

Replying the DG said that there was large agreement between the Management and the Staff Association on what should be done.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING
The Minutes of the 35th meeting were approved.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES
a) CERN Services: A. Kirk raised the question of the reduction in services, particularly the availability of transport to the airport after 4.30 p.m. He suggested that a navette could be made available at 5, 5.30 and 6 p.m., and supported this by saying that 70% of UK Users returning to the UK left CERN during this critical time.

Replying, M. Robin, Director of Administration, said that clearly budget cuts, resulting in a new contract for transport, have an adverse effect on services, but stressed that the 'Bons de Taxis' should not cost more than the normal taxi fare (ie. the cost shown on the meter), and not the oft quoted CHF 40. Admitting a reluctance on some taxi drivers to enter the site, he said that the proposed idea of shuttles would be investigated, but stressed that more resources would be required.

In conclusion, it was noted that this was yet another example of a severe change affecting Users without proper consultation of the Users through ACCU.

b) Library: K.J. Peach announced that cancelling most multiple copies of journals will save 100 KCHF, only 30% of the savings required. Single copies of journals would therefore have to remain in the main library. A one day workshop was held to discuss electronic journals and their potential contribution to long term savings. However, subscriptions to electronic versions will only be available with a subscription to the paper version, and access to the former may be domain regulated.

c) GSM Service: It was agreed to postpone this discussion to the next meeting when more information will be available. G. Walzel requested a review of the pager service at the next meeting.

6. SOFTWARE STANDARDS
Z. Hajduk reminded the meeting of his request at the previous ACCU meeting to discuss the guidelines and future plans for introducing new standard software at CERN and the possible implications for institutes. He acknowledged that the adoption of Framemaker by an LHC collaboration turned out to be not representative of the problem, as it was a collaboration decision and not as initially thought to be CERN imposed. However, he considered that the matter deserves attention.

It is clear that large collaborations will have to use the services of professional software companies rather than writing software inside the collaboration. This calls for standardisation and will cost money in future. CERN is still rich enough to buy and exhaustively test even expensive software products. Institutes are willing to follow the recommendations of CERN, but certain
considerations must be fulfilled. The cost of products should not be prohibitive, and CERN must help institutes to obtain maximum discounts, using perhaps the arguments that many institutes are educational. Adopted standards should be kept standard long enough to make investments painless.

Replying, J. May, IT Division Leader, agreed that one has to study the economics, but expressed the hope that tools do not have to be approved by everybody before being used. CERN might in some cases be able to arrange for a global contract, but that does not mean that CERN pays the licence for an outside institute. The more established software firms are very reluctant to agree to global contracts, although some smaller firms will. He noted that in the Desk Top Forum (DTF), that whilst CERN's engineering staff resist change, PPE and ECP Divisions push in the direction of needing the newest software. Outside groups have the responsibility of curbing such enthusiasm. Changes should certainly not be made too frequently, and Users must be consulted.

Continuing, J. May pointed out that LHC++ will lead to a new CERN Library, and will make use of commercial software for which licences will have to be bought. CERN will certainly assist outside groups in the purchase of these licences, but he stressed that outside groups must now get used to the idea of budgetting for software.

K.J. Peach added that the need to take into account the potential needs of CERN's Users over a whole range of issues should be brought to the attention of the CERN Staff.

The Chairman, thanking the speakers, said that the most important aspect to be determined is the decision making process. Costs, useability and efficiency play a key role in this process. It is up to the Users to insist on full consultation.

7. VIDEO CONFERENCING

H. Brodmann reviewed the video conferencing facilities currently available at CERN in buildings 40 and 58, in which either Point-Point or Multi-Point conferences may be set up. The average costs for the calling participant are CHF 117, 180 and 383 for conferences within Europe, to the USA and Japan respectively. He pointed out the relevant information required by the service when conference bookings are made.

The LHC Computing Board (LCB) has set up a 'LCB Video Conferencing Working Group' whose main objectives are to introduce video conferencing oriented towards workstations and packet transmission networks on agreed standards, to set up a 'service' combining 'packet and codec' systems, to improve the CODEC oriented service by a European based multi-point conference switched service, as well as to install two further facilities in B40, including one in one of the B40 auditoria.

B. Jean-Marie noted that the quality of transmission is not good to Orsay and Saclay who frequently use the service. He considers that a co-ordinator should be appointed to solve such problems. G. Wilquet expressed disappointment at the results seen in his institute, and stressed the need for more discipline by speakers in their presentations.

Concluding the discussion, the Chairman said that ACCU appreciates the efforts made by CERN as video conferencing will become more important in future. Both CERN and Users should strive to improve the quality of the service which must be reliable.
8. REPORT FROM THE HOUSING FUND
E. Roebuck, Head of the Housing Service, reviewed the history of CERN furnished apartments. This activity dates from some 30 years ago when the state of the market in Geneva was such that newcomers had to wait many months before suitable accommodation became available. That situation has now been reversed with offer far exceeding demand resulting in considerable reductions in rents, particularly in the 'Pays de Gex'.

The Housing Fund Committee (HFC) took measures in the past to avoid pricing itself out of the local market, and has not passed on the cost variation index since 1994. Nonetheless, the HFC finds itself in the situation where its rents in both France and Switzerland are higher than those on the open market due to various legal and contractual requirements as well as fixed overheads.

The occupancy rate of the HFC's Swiss apartments is now only 77% compared to over 90% in 1988, whilst that in France is now less than 90% as opposed to 100% until 1991. Therefore the recent policy of the HFC has been to reduce the number of its apartments in Switzerland whenever possible. There are currently 39 compared to 100 in 1988. The HFC considers that it should retain about 10 apartments in Switzerland, primarily for short term lease by newcomers whilst they search for more permanent accommodation.

The long term commitment at La Rivière is being examined by CERN's Legal Service.

The HFC provides help through the World Wide Web to find accommodation on the open market, and some 18000 connections have been made since February 1996.

Concerning the free shuttle bus to and from La Rivière and the hostel in St. Genis, he said that this was only available to residents there, and could not be opened up to other CERN personnel living in the area.

K.J. Peach considers that ACCU should indicate to the HFC the medium to long term requirements for furnished accommodation, and the Chairman thanking E. Roebuck suggested setting up a small ACCU working group.

9. NEWS FROM MEMBER STATES
V. Hedberg, the Swedish Delegate, reviewed the situation of particle physics in Sweden. There are 6 national universities and more than 15 regional universities, together with 6 institutes of technology and 4 national laboratories. Most of the regional universities were created in 1977 and are in general much smaller than the national universities, and receive 280Mkr for research, although up to now they can not issue PhD diplomas.

The Swedish Natural Science Research Council provides funding for physics, biology, chemistry, mathematics and geology, and the Swedish Council for Planning and Co-ordination of Research provides funds for expensive equipment (>2Mkr). Sweden contributed 2.6% to the 1996 CERN budget, and Swedish physicists participate mainly in DELPHI, ATLAS, Heavy Ions, and ISOLDE experiments. In June 1996, there were 37 Staff, 5 Fellows, 1 Paid Associate and 2 Technical Students at CERN from Sweden, together with 59 Users. V. Hedberg said that the cultural difference between the CERN and Swedish environments is one reason why there were relatively few Swedes at CERN since most Swedish women work which was difficult for CERN spouses because of work permit restrictions.

An international evaluation of Swedish research in physics made in 1992 showed that
a) physics was relatively less well supported compared to biology and medicine,
b) Swedish commitments to international facilities did not match the size of the corresponding Swedish research communities, and
c) the number of Swedish particle physicists was too few to fully utilize the available opportunities.

The 1997 budget for research presented to Parliament in November 1996 contained cuts of funding to the Research Council of 16%, and cuts for expensive equipment of 24%. A Commission was set up in January 1997 to find savings of an additional 150Mkr for the 1988 budget. The Commission’s report presented in May 1997 proposed reductions in Swedish contributions to CERN, ESO and JET over the next 5 years.

The Swedish Minister of Education and Science announced on 5 June 1997 that 'at this stage the Swedish Government has no intention to propose leaving CERN, although a reduction of costs for this expensive research is essential'.

10. USERS' OFFICE NEWS
B. Pattison announced that the Swiss authorities will change the current 'Attestation des Fonctions' card to one of credit card size in the very near future. One photograph will be required when contracts are renewed.

K.J. Peach said that following the conclusions of recent Accident Boards, a letter will be circulated to all Team Leaders indicating their rights and responsibilities towards members of their teams, the procedures to be adopted in cases of serious accidents, and the request for Social Services contacts in institutes. He also commented that too many people do not carry their film badges in experimental areas.

A revision of Operation Circular No.2 concerning Site Access will result in a speeding up in issuing CERN cards within 24 hours, and 10 minutes for Temporary cards.

New rules for using the tunnel will come into force when card operated barriers are installed, allowing a notional control of its use by the French authorities.

B. Pattison introduced R. Cailliau who is advising the Users' Office in its current development of the UO Web site. Links are being set up through the UO and ACCU sites to sites available in each Member State where relevant information can be found. ACCU delegates were urged to discuss details about their own countries with P. Pamblanco in the UO.

R. Cailliau then demonstrated of the current situation which is only available on a local web.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS
The distribution of Hostel keys at Entrance B after 4.30pm and during weekends was discussed, and ACCU requested that the waiting time for users should not exceed a few minutes.

Appointments of ACCU delegates to various committees were agreed:

Desk Top Forum: D. Stickland
Housing Fund Committee: F. Barao
Restaurant Committee: D. Vilanova

12. AGENDA FOR THE NEXT MEETING (17 September 1997)
Items for discussion include Travelling Exhibitions, Restructuring of the Research Sector, and a future open meeting of ACCU.

Bryan Pattison