

Tauro-Scatology and New Directives (Part 2)

In this issue of *In Practice*, Basil O'Saurus, our very own Professor of Tauro-Scatology continues to explain the implications of the EU's Piss-Up in a Brewery Directive for IEEM members.

That's right. In the last issue, I explained about the delicate negotiations that took place before the Directive was completed. Now I want to tell you how the UK's government departments and agencies will be implementing the Directive once it has been transposed into national legislation.

A challenge, obviously, as most of us believe that the average government department or agency is completely incapable of organising a piss-up in a brewery. So what is the Government planning to do?

Obviously, the topic touches on the responsibilities of many different stakeholders and the Government recognise that a co-ordinated response is needed. So the first thing that they do is set up a technical advisory group, with members drawn from all those stakeholders with an interest in the Directive. They, then, sit around for ages discussing suitable acronyms.

Is this necessary?

But of course. One of the oldest rules of public administration is that any new initiative must generate an opaque vocabulary so that only initiates know what is going on. Acronyms are one of the quickest ways of achieving this. In this case, they decided that Piss-Up in a Brewery lent itself to the acronym PUB, so we now have PUB TAG.

What happens next?

PUB TAG then have a few meetings without getting anywhere. No-one, obviously, is prepared to admit this publicly. However, eventually someone will make the bright observation that the UK shares a land border with the Republic of Ireland and, therefore, the Piss-Up in a Brewery Directive has some transboundary issues. This means that they can invite representatives from Ireland along too. As the Irish are

renowned for their conviviality and craic, PUB TAG suddenly generates its own momentum plus the ideal excuse to spend a couple of nights in Dublin. PUB TAG is still not getting anywhere, but everyone is having too good a time to mind.

How long does this state last?

As long as possible. Eventually, however, PUB TAG will produce the Piss-Up Implementation Strategy which will then go out for public consultation. However, we must not forget that, like all EU Directives, the Piss-Up in a Brewery Directive has a strict timetable. The UK has to demonstrate that it has implemented the Directive in time, otherwise it will be hauled in front of the European Court. So, each organisation now has to appoint some individuals to handle day-to-day aspects of implementation.

Let me guess, each organisation appoints someone who is an expert on the technical aspects of piss-ups in breweries?

Wrong. Utterly and completely wrong. Have you ever noticed how the middle management of all public bodies is stuffed with people who seem to flit from one desk job to the next, who have grandiose titles and who litter presentations with flow charts and phrases such as 'delivered on budget and on time'?

I can think of many examples.

One beneficial side-effect of Directives like this is that it provides another slot in the organisation for people like these, all of whom need to be kept well away from hands-on work. We let them think that they are 'getting experience' prior to an inevitable rise to senior management but, in truth, they are in the middle management vortex. We decide on an impressive title: Piss-up Implementation Strategy Support Officer, for example, then advertise internally and ... bingo.

... someone, somewhere is about to be known as PISS OFF.

Exactly. A job title which matches exactly what their colleagues think they should do. Their first job, then, is to invent enough activities to keep themselves busy until the next game

of middle management musical chairs. Their second job is to find and justify appointing an assistant.

Why is that?

Mainly so that they can add 'team leader' to their CVs, but also because they will become so tied up with the health and safety aspects of piss-ups that they won't have time to do anything else ...

You're not going to start one of your rants about the excessive zeal of health and safety officers are you?

Not at all. The prospect of breweries full of outrageously drunk people careering around dangerous machinery fills me with a sense of dread and horror. I think that this is one case where careful attention to trip hazards, safety barriers and the like is a good thing.

I think that you've just about convinced us all that organising a piss up in a brewery is more difficult than it may seem.

That's not to say, of course, that a government department or agency couldn't organise a piss-up in a brewery. They would just need a lot of time and effort to make sure that it is done properly. And when they've done this, they'll adopt a supercilious attitude to the half-hearted attempts of other EU Member States to implement the Directive and make bold pronouncements about the UK leading the world in piss-up facilitation.

Undoubtedly. But then it takes a tauro-scatologist to know a tauro-scatologist. Thanks, again, for your time.