

# COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

COM(87) 155 final

Brussels, 3 April 1987

COMMISSION COMMUNICATION

ON VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR WOMEN

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1. Introduction

- 1. Training for women and promotion of equal opportunities for them are two major topics in the Council Resolution of 11 December 1986 on employment growth.

The Council said that it wished to bring about "an increase in the equality of access to, and opportunity within, the labour market for women by :

- the implementation of the Community's medium-term programme 1986-1990,
- the promotion of training for occupations where women are under-represented (notably those connected with new technology)" ...

The Council has thus made a double commitment in this respect, for the Community medium-term programme 1986-1990 likewise stressed this point.

One of the seven fields of action covered by this programme is that of education and training.

Furthermore, the Council Resolution of 26 July 1986 on that programme calls on the Member States to :

"develop comprehensive and coordinated action in the fields of education and training in order to create a better balance between men and women in the various types of teaching establishments and to widen career choices to include sectors and trades of the future, in particular those concerned with new technologies, enterprise creation and self-employed occupations, in accordance with the resolution of 3 June 1985".

- 2. On several occasions, furthermore, whether as part, for example, of action to combat<sup>3</sup> unemployment amongst women<sup>2</sup>, positive actions<sup>4</sup> on behalf of women<sup>3</sup> or vocational training and new technology<sup>4</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> OJ 86/C/203/2.

<sup>2</sup> Council Resolution of 7 June 1984 on action combat unemployment amongst women.

<sup>3</sup> Council Recommendation of 13 December 1984 (OJ L 331, 19.12.1984).

<sup>4</sup> Council Resolution concerning vocational training measures relating to new information technologies (OJ C 166, 25.6.1983).

the Council stressed the need to develop vocational training for women with a view to widening their career choices.

## II. The problems involved

The structural crisis of the labour market has had a major effect throughout the Community on women's prospects of finding employment.

1. If unemployment strikes or threatens to strike women in particular, this is because throughout the Community the labour market is still, to a large extent, a traditional model of distribution by sex : women still account for only a limited proportion of the workers in industry, while they are numerous in the tertiary sector. Here, however, they mainly hold ill-paid and underskilled jobs, which are increasingly being put on a part-time basis or made subject to other forms of flexible working hours.

Because they continue to deal with tasks within the family, women's chances of promotion are likewise limited.

2. While it is true that the proportion of girls is on the increase who leave the education system with a far higher standard of education than in the past, sometimes, even higher than that of boys, we see that women are still under-represented in relation to men in vocational training and that their training is less concerned with the occupations of the future, while at the same time the steady decrease in the number of vacant jobs particularly affects women, i.e. girls entering the labour market or older women returning to it after a lengthy interruption, who are particularly hard hit by long-term unemployment.
3. The introduction of new technology has likewise direct consequences for women's jobs. It is in those areas where most women workers are to be found (the lower levels of the occupational hierarchy and the tertiary sector) that the new technologies are being most widely introduced, thus changing skill profiles.

While these technological changes may provide new opportunities for women, it has been found that the introduction of new technologies threatens to promote even greater discrimination in employment because of the lack of adequate training for women

rarely covering the technical occupations - and the narrow choice of occupations for girls, who continue to opt for traditionally "female" studies and training courses.

- 4. The most specific problems encountered in the majority of Member States as regards vocational training for women have to do with their lack of adequate education and training and their concentration in certain limited sectors of activity.

As far as girls are concerned, except in certain specialties (commerce, hairdressing, office work, etc...), they do not embark upon, or very rarely embark upon, a course of technical training and, even if they are interested in less stereotyped occupations, they do not find, or have difficulty in finding, training places. This means that they are obliged to fall back on conventionally female training courses.

Furthermore, girls receiving high-level training continue to opt mainly for "classical" careers.

The problem is even more serious for adult women, particularly those who interrupted their occupational activities and are now looking for employment, or the female long-term unemployed. These women are far less well-informed about the situation on the labour market and are in greater need of guidance and information, so that they do not embark upon short-term training or training leading to underskilled jobs.

Finally, continuous training appears likewise necessary for women who have been steered into unskilled or traditional jobs, since this would enable them to change to other occupations, particularly where modernization or the introduction of new technology might jeopardize the jobs they have. This situation could likewise apply to women working in their husband's businesses, women engaged in agriculture and women who set up cooperatives or small firms or engage in self-employed activities.

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<sup>1</sup> The summary report on the widening of occupational options (V/1817/84) and the CEDEFOP report on vocational training operations for women in the European Community show that there are fewer women than men undergoing vocational training; the courses which women choose are less demanding and lead to lower qualifications - which means that chances of promotion are smaller.

5. At the same time, we are seeing a steady growth of the rate of activity of women, who thus represent an increasingly important factor in the labour market.

Furthermore, the demographic trend and its impact on the labour market over the next few years and decades means that the skills of all workers will have to be more closely matched to requirements, so that the need for vocational training operations will be even greater.

### III. The operations carried out the conclusions drawn from them

1. This situation has led to the development in the Member States a variety of initiatives aimed at promoting more appropriate skills for women. They were concerned with a variety of persons and fields, for example :
- a widening of occupational choices for women in manual trades (e.g. plumbing, carpentry, painting, tile-laying, etc.);
  - the training of women for occupations related to the introduction of new technologies, not only in fields related to traditionally female occupations (office information, for example), but also to occupations of the future (engineers, computer scientists, etc.);
  - training in business management, particularly in-service training, for women as clerical, supervisory or middle-management staff;
  - training in the setting up of businesses, local initiatives, cooperatives, etc, including training for specific categories (women in the country, female migrant workers, etc);
  - training of spouses of self-employed workers (for example, courses for farmers' wives);
  - training of women wishing to re-enter the labour market after an interruption or women wishing to enter the labour market belatedly;
  - measures aimed at promoting greater participation by women in vocational training (particularly young women);
  - structural measures aimed at providing qualified staff for the fields of education, guidance and training (equal opportunities counsellors, etc);

- awareness-increasing campaigns aimed at a variety of quarters concerned by the widening of occupational choices;
  - backup measures (child-minding, transport, decentralized modules, etc.).
2. These important operations, which were taken to a variety of stages and carried out by a variety of methods, often remained limited (in quantity, duration and scale).

In many cases, they were pilot schemes which did not necessarily lead to full-scale endeavours.

Furthermore, a mismatch was often noted between the aims of those involved (education system, instructors, undertakings, financial backers, national, regional and local authorities).

Finally, they did not always make it possible to meet the size and specificity of the demand.

3. Some campaigns were also carried out at Community level.

It must first of all be stressed that the equal opportunity angle is one aim among others in the implementation of general programmes and training policies.

- 3.1. First of all, the European Social Fund contributes to the financing of vocational training, resettlement, and social and occupational integration operations in the context of geographical mobility. The regulations laying down conditions of eligibility for aid from the Fund make no distinction between men and women. Women thus have access to all operations receiving priority aid from the Fund. In 1985, the share of women in the overall volume of aid provided by the Fund was estimated at 38 % and the number of women receiving aid at some 1 million.

Furthermore, the Fund finances on a priority basis vocational training operations intended to solve certain specific problems of female job seekers. Such operations must prepare women for occupations in which they are under-represented.

Furthermore, the various programmes, resolutions and decisions relating to training stressed the importance which must be attached to equal opportunities. This is true, in particular, of measures relating to vocational training in new information technologies<sup>1</sup>, vocational training in the eighties<sup>2</sup> and the action programmes relating to the transition of young people from school<sup>3</sup> to working life, and, more recently, the Comett programme<sup>3</sup>, the proposals concerning the Erasmus programme, the training of young people and continuing in-service training likewise refer to these aims.

In the educational field, an action programme was adopted on equal opportunities for girls and boys<sup>4</sup>.

The reiteration of this aim in the vocational training policy provides ample illustration of the Council's wish for coherence under the 1986-1990 equal opportunities medium-term programme.

### 3.2.

- 3.2.1. As regards operations coming under the heading of promotional equal opportunities, it must be stressed that Article 4 of Directive 76/207/EEC of 9 February 1976 on implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions imposes obligations on the Member States to ensure implementation of the principle of equal treatment as regards access to all types and to all levels of vocational guidance, advanced vocational training and retraining. A number of positive actions were developed parallel to this legislative action.

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<sup>1</sup>Council Resolution of 2 June 1983; OJ C 166, 25 June 1983.

<sup>2</sup>Council Resolution of 11 July 1983; OJ C 193, 20 July 1983.

<sup>3</sup>Council Decision of 24 July 1986; OJ L 222/77.

<sup>4</sup>Resolution of 5 July 1986; OJ C 166, 5 July 1986.

- 3.2.2. However, it is mainly under the action programmes on equal opportunities for women that the Community has developed operations in the field of vocational training for women.

A network concerned with widening occupational options for women was set up under action B-11 of the 1982-1985 action programme; the work done by this network led to the drawing up in 1984 of a summary report based on ten national reports written by experts in each of the Member States, in which the situation of women in relation to that of men when making their career choices was analyzed.

At the same time, the network drew up specific recommendations based on the information contained in the report. In each Member State a network was set up to monitor the implementation of the recommendations made in the report and initiate positive actions aimed at putting into practice one or more of the recommendations.

Finally, positive actions in the field of education and vocational training were launched in each Member State by the experts of the network. These can be placed under three major headings : increasing the awareness of and training instructors, training in new technologies and new occupations, in-firm training.

- 3.2.3. CEDEFOP carried out studies on innovative vocational training operations for women (and assessed these operations five years later), on equal opportunity counsellors and on training in the setting up of undertakings.
- 3.2.4. In December 1986, an important seminar was held in London on vocational training for women, at which several aspects were underlined, among which the most outstanding (or those in respect of which Community action was requested) were : the importance of the exchange of experience at Community level, the problems presented by the financing of training for women and the need to establish a partnership between the various parties involved in training, education and the labour market so that training is properly integrated in a process of efficiency, promotion of a more even mix of occupations, and participation by women in training operations for the occupations of the future.



4. At both national and Community level, there were specific efforts, a stocktaking and an integration of equality aims in the various vocational training operations and programme.

The purpose of this communication is to deepen and improve the organization of these endeavours and provide support at Community level for operations carried out in the Member States. In close connection with the proposals referred to above, particularly those regarding the training of young people and continuing in-service training, it is meant to meet the aim which the Council set itself of continuing to promote coherence between the specific operations carried out to encourage equal opportunities and overall economic and social policy, both at Community and national level.

#### IV. Action to be taken

##### 1. AIMS

The action to be taken should :

- aim at greater participation by young and adult women in general training operations and, in particular, those linked to occupations of the future;
- develop specific measures for women, particularly as regards training for occupations where they are under-represented.

##### 2. ACTION PROPOSED

###### (a) General measures

Consciousness raising campaigns (films, videos, brochures, seminars, visits to firms, etc.) should be developed, so as to show girls and women, their environment, the two sides of industry, guidance services, and training organizations women engaged in non-traditional activities, in particular those related to occupations of the future.

The guidance, training and placement services should be staffed with qualified persons aware of the specific problems of girls and women (e.g. equal opportunities counsellors). The training of instructors should likewise be developed along such lines.

Follow-up should be provided for girls and women who have been advised to take up and/or trained for non-traditional occupations, so as to provide them with genuine opportunities, identify the difficulties they encounter and show them how to overcome them.

More decentralized and more widely distributed educational and training facilities would provide girls and women with a genuine opportunity to benefit from these operations.

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<sup>1</sup>Mainly because of their family responsibilities.

(b) Partnership

Training for women should not be seen as an isolated operation with which only the training organizations are concerned. It should be part of a wider process, involving all the parties concerned : the educational authorities and organizations, school and vocational guidance, the two sides of industry, the training organizations, the lenders, the central and/or regional and/or local authorities, the equal opportunities organizations, undertakings and women's groups or associations.

(c) Guidance

School, university and vocational guidance services should seek people out rather than be bodies which must themselves be sought out - something which puts women at a disadvantage.

The psychological and other tests now in use should be revised, so as to give girls and women an equal opportunity to show their aptitudes and skills.

(d) Higher education

Studies should be carried out to discover why girls tend to choose short higher education courses and, above all, why they are more likely than boys to drop out.

Provision should be made within the grant system for ways of compensating for the double handicap - social and sexual - borne by girls from underprivileged backgrounds.

As part of the links to be developed between the universities and industry, efforts should be made to enable girls to benefit on an equal footing from the programmes set up (in-firm courses, etc.). A special effort should be made in the science field to enable women graduates to take up careers other than teaching.

In departments where new technologies are studied efforts should be made to assign girls to key areas not yet earmarked as male preserves.

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<sup>1</sup>cf. Comett Programme.

(e) Vocational training outside the education system

Measures should be taken to encourage greater participation by girls in the various vocational training systems, particularly apprenticeship, other than those teaching certain "female" occupations.

There should be a re-examination of "female" training courses which do not provide real occupational skills or else lead girls into overcrowded occupations (domestic science, hairdressing, dressmaking, etc.) and they should either be done away with or, where appropriate, adapted.

Measures should be taken on a priority basis to encourage girls and young women engaged in apprenticeships to set up their own business or cooperatives. They should be trained in financial management, informed about access to backup and financial facilities, and measures should be taken to encourage and stimulate a variety of support formulas.

(f) Continuing training and training for adult women

Continuing training measures should be specially developed for women, who often are in greater need than their male colleagues of retraining and of having their skills brought up to date.

Campaigns to provide information, exploit the full potential of training and encourage participation in it should be undertaken, especially with regard to women.

To do something about the poor participation by women in continuing training and training for adults, target figures - to be revised regularly - could be set up, where appropriate, especially in respect of sectors where women are under-represented and the occupations of the future.

Timetable and duration of training courses should be adapted to the specific problems of women. Concentrating on evening and weekend courses should be avoided, since this excludes women with family responsibilities and fairly short (six months, for example) courses should be proposed, so as to encourage women, especially those with family responsibilities, to take part in them and stay to the end. In some other cases (isolated mothers, women in the country), training by modules or distance education accompanied by periods at a training centre might be suggested.

Skills acquired in running a household and looking after a family should in future be given greater official recognition in the form of exemption for certain course elements, in particular elements of courses relating to education, care of the elderly, social services, etc.

Special training and advanced training courses should be provided to prepare women, including women who are unemployed or threatened by unemployment, to set up undertakings or cooperatives or engage in self-employed activities.

The spouses of self-employed workers (including those engaged in agriculture) who help with that self-employed activity should be able to take advantage of training opportunities on the same terms as self-employed workers (including technical training, for example, in agriculture).

Training courses for women should be continued and developed, especially as regards the pre-training, confidence-building, and consciousness-raising phases for certain types of person (women returning to work after an interruption and underprivileged women, e.g. female migrant workers).

(g) Training for women wishing to return to work after an interruption

Specific training courses should be provided for categories involving pre-training modules and confidence building, which are reserved for them (cf. point e).

The opportunities offered by the various public or private training organizations should be extended to cover these categories.

Employers should be encouraged to enable these women to take part in the courses they organize and to develop reintegration projects providing training likely to enable the persons in question to re-enter the firm at the level they were at before leaving.

The development of information and advertising campaigns regarding training courses would increase contacts with women who have interrupted their employment.

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<sup>1</sup> cf. Study carried out for the Commission by M. Chalude on the occupational reintegration of women - initiatives and problems (doc. V/781/86).

(h) Guidance and support measures

Flexible child-minding arrangements should be provided to enable mothers to take part in training courses.

Specific arrangements should be made, in particular, for unemployed women, isolated mothers and women in the country (who seldom enrol their children in child-minding establishments).

Social infrastructure other than child-minding facilities (transport, services) should be rethought in the same context.

Financial incentives might be proposed in specific instances, for example to bodies accepting women or girls for the first time to train them for non-traditional sectors or accepting the spouses of self-employed workers, or training women in how to set up a business.

The allowances paid during training should be on such lines as to encourage the recipients to take part in training courses.

3. COMMUNITY SUPPORT

(a) To back up the operations developed by the Member States in this context it is necessary to develop more systematically the exchange of information and experience at national and Community level, so that the relevant bodies may derive wider and more organized benefit from the lessons drawn from existing experiments.

(b) Such an exchange could be carried out through a network of demonstration projects organized by the Commission in the area covered by the operations suggested at point II.-2. This network will be set up within the framework of the decision making powers of the Commission. It should be set up stage by stage from 1988 onwards for five years and be the subject of an assessment after that period.

It should enable the following operations to be set up :

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- Identification of the main operations conducted by and in the Member States to widen vocational options.

The Commission intends to identify - in conjunction with the national, regional and local authorities and the relevant expert bodies - particularly significant projects in the field of vocational training for women and set up step by step a data bank covering this field.

- Support for comparative research and action research projects

The Commission will support comparative research likely to facilitate the pooling of knowledge and the assessment of existing problems and of projects either under way or under development.

It will also support a number of action research endeavours which could lead to innovative projects.

- Follow-up for operations under way

The Commission intends to encourage a more sustained follow-up with regard to innovative training projects for girls (especially as regards placement, access to jobs and the development of careers) and will support research and seminars on this subject.

- Study visits and exchanges of instructors

The Commission will support visits by experts or instructors from one Member State to one or more other Member States to provide greater opportunities for comparisons of experience.

- Distribution of information

The Commission will make itself responsible for the dissemination of information on operations which have been identified and followed up by means of brochures and other regular publications.

- Seminars, workshops, exhibitions

Seminars will be receive support in the Member States so that the maximum number of persons may be enabled to compare their experiences.

Workshops, exhibitions and other forms of exchange of teaching material might also receive Commission support.

#### CONCLUSION

In this communication the Commission has indicated the operations which it thinks it desirable to develop, both at national and Community level.

After an in-depth discussion of this communication by the institutions concerned, the Commission will draw up before the end of 1987 an appropriate instrument on the operations to be carried out by the Member States in this field.

At the same time, it will set up a network of vocational training for women demonstration projects aimed at widening occupational choices starting from 1988.