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**INFORMATION A LA PRESSE
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SUMMARY OF MR. VREDELING'S ADDRESS TO THE ETUC IN THESSALONICA ON MIGRATION
POLICY IN THE CONTEXT OF ENLARGEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY

When the Community is enlarged to include Greece, Spain and Portugal, a single transitional period will have to apply to all sectors covered by the negotiations. It will not do to set a longer period for freedom of movement for workers than for other issues.

Mr. Vredeling, Vice-President of the Commission, stressed this in his address this afternoon to a meeting of the European Trade Union Confederation in Thessalonica. Mr. Vredeling warned that the right of workers to move freely within the Community - a basic right - could give rise to serious tensions and conflicts in view of the present widespread unemployment.

Mr. Vredeling said "By combining regional development and appropriate transitional measures, it will be possible gradually to guarantee the nationals of the new Member States the right to move and work freely within the Community. A uniform transitional period must be fixed and, I have to say, the Commission is in favour of an adequate transitional period." He pointed out that it was essential to recognize migratory movements quickly and that this would not be possible if freedom of movement were brought into effect right from the date of accession. Nor would it be in the interests of Greece for this to be done.

However, Mr. Vredeling added, "It would not be right to set a transitional period where freedom of labour is concerned which is different from that set for other areas. Apart from the fact that, in my opinion, the discrimination against labour that would result is inadmissible, the integration process is one which covers the economy as a whole, including labour. An exception in the case of labour cannot be made with impunity".

The Vice-President said that the arrangements could be negotiated during the transitional period: "It must be possible to implement freedom of movement for workers gradually. However, once Greece becomes a Member, I feel it would be unacceptable for Greeks already living and working in the Community not to be treated in the same way as nationals of other member countries in so far as their working conditions are concerned, for this would create differences between, for example, an Italian and a Greek both living in the Federal Republic, difference which could neither be explained nor justified".

Mr. Vredeling had earlier gone into greater detail on the situation of migrant workers in the Community. He reminded those present that the great influx of migrant workers dated from before 1973, when economic growth and the economic climate were still favourable. He added, "They were needed for the production process and frequently for jobs which no-one could be found to do on the domestic labour market. They frequently worked and even now work on socially unacceptable terms and conditions. It can be said that with the agreement of the authorities,

employers use or abuse cheap labour."

In this connection Mr. Vredeling cited the following statistics.

There are about 6 million migrant workers in the Community, of which approximately 16% are actually nationals of member countries.

To this have to be added approximately 600 000 illegal workers, accounting for approximately 10% of total registered migrants.

Of the major Member States, the Federal Republic of Germany and France each employ 1 900 000 foreign nationals. In the Federal Republic, the breakdown according to country of origin is as follows:

Italy 280 000, Spain 110 000, Greece 170 000, Turkey 520 000 and Yugoslavia 390 000.

There are 230 000 Italians, 270 000 Spaniards, 480 000 Portuguese, 440 000 Algerians and 130 000 Moroccans in France.

The United Kingdom has 1 700 000 migrant workers, of which 450 000 come from Ireland and 630 000 from the Commonwealth.

In general, the unemployment figures for migrant workers are somewhat higher than the national average. In order to convey some idea of this problem, Mr. Vredeling gave the following examples:

In 1977 there were 20 000 unemployed Italians, 32 000 Turks and 15 000 Yugoslavs in the Federal Republic.

In France, 10 000 Italians, 13 000 Portuguese, 40 000 Algerians and 12 000 Moroccans were out of work.

On the matter of the policy which the Commission wants to implement with regard to illegal migrants and workers, he referred to the draft directive providing a socially acceptable solution to the problem which the Commission had submitted to the Council.

Mr. Vredeling stated that the Council was experiencing considerable difficulties with it; he, however, declared that for his part he felt it was completely wrong that here again use was to be made of a non-binding resolution "the context of which had been changed beyond recognition." He said he did not understand what the difficulties were. The ban on immigration introduced by the Member States in fact increased the requirements of industry for illegal workers. He said it was obvious that something would have to be done about the 600 000 illegal workers in the Community.

With respect to the Commission's policy on migration, Mr. Vredeling said that the fundamental right to migrate should be seen first and foremost as a matter of labour market policy. Workers were not migrating of their own free will if they felt compelled to do so on account of unemployment or low income. The Vice-President went on, "I do not wish to detract from their right but when they are forced into exercising it then it is a bad thing." He explained that this policy must therefore be directed at equal development opportunities, redistribution of wealth and the setting of minimum social standards. At present, labour market policy still fell within the jurisdiction of the Member States but would ultimately have to become a matter of Community policy; precisely because of freedom of movement.

Mr. Vredeling argued that the time was ripe for a coordinated Community labour market policy to regulate the movement of persons from non-member countries.

In the words of Mr. Vredeling, "The time is ripe. If economic growth picks up again, as I sincerely hope it will, there is a chance that the Community or perhaps a single Member State will once more throw open its borders and then it will happen all over again: there will be another wave of migrants who have to do the work which we consider beneath us, thus creating second-class citizens again. This must not happen!"
