

Brussels, May 29, 1963

IP (63) 99

*Professor
Levi Sandri*

PRESS RELEASE

Social policy has not been lagging behind other aspects of Community activity. This is the conclusion reached by Professor Levi Sandri, EEC Commissioner responsible for social affairs, in an address to the Plenary Session of the Economic and Social Committee yesterday.

*May 28
1963*

Even though the drafters of the Treaty had been particularly cautious in this field, he said, social policy had been playing a more important role as the years went by, both because of the essential value of its specific objectives, linked as they were with the well-being of the citizens of Europe, and because of its relevance to the final aim of the Treaty, the closer union of the peoples of Europe, leading to political unity.

Social policy could not ignore economic policy, but it must not be subordinate to it.

Recalling that the Commission had in the last few years supervised the working of the instruments of social policy created by the Treaty (freedom of movement for workers, the Social Fund, social security for migrant workers), M. Levi Sandri added that important tasks though they did not always attract publicity, had also been performed by the Commission; it had made a large number of studies which had prepared the way for further measures of co-operation between the States - on social security, working hours, collective bargaining and industrial health.

On the subject of social security for migrant workers, he observed that in this matter, which was highly complex, the greatest possible simplification was needed if the Community Regulations were to work smoothly.

With regard to occupational training, the principles recently adopted laid responsibilities upon the Community authorities and upon the Member States. The Advisory Committee on occupational training would be meeting at the earliest opportunity to initiate action on those principles which came within the purview of the Commission. It was enough to recall the estimate of 2 000 000 persons seeking employment against 600 000 vacancies to realize the importance of occupational training. However, he had his doubts concerning this figure. In his opinion Community unemployment was now well below the two million mark.

"Occupational training, the Social Fund and the free movement of workers are," he said, "the basis of a Community employment policy."

The Social Fund had already spent 12 300 000 units of account, but there was room for improvement in the way it functioned; the adaptation of domestic legislation to the principles governing the utilization of the Fund would suffice to allow of substantial progress in this field. The question of the Community being empowered to choose schemes to be financed through the Fund - at present the Fund could only make reimbursements of expenditure actually incurred by the Governments - was worth considering, but any such arrangement would require carefully worked out rules.

- o - o - o -

Professor Levi Sandri announced that before the end of the year a Round Table would be organized on low-cost housing requirements; it would study in particular the demand for this kind of housing and the conditions governing the letting of low-rent accommodation. This Round Table would examine the feasibility of Community action to make more low-cost housing available for migrant workers.

- o - o - o -

Before the summer holidays the Commission intended to submit to the Council of Ministers a programme for certain essential points in the Community's social policy regarding farm workers, such as working hours, housing and training.

- o - o - o -

In its Action Programme the Commission had expressed the view that there could be no comprehensive social policy without wage policies at both national and Community levels. Professor Levi Sandri explained that the idea was not to impose regimentation in this field any more than in the other common policies; the aim was to help industry to work out wage policies acceptable to all concerned. It was in no sense an attack on the independence of the contracting parties.