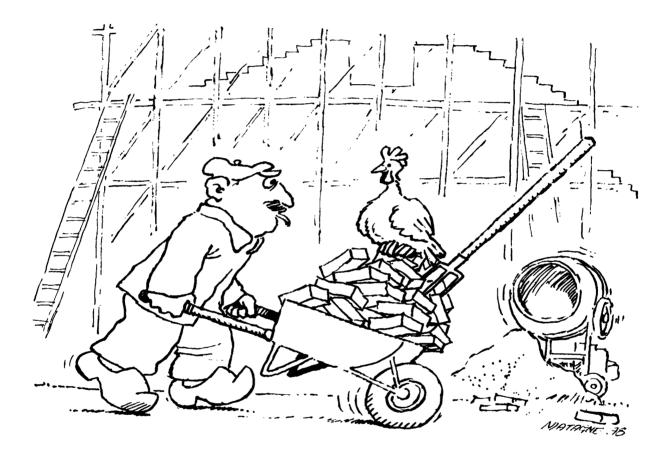
# euroforum

weekly

reproduction authorized

# europe day by day

Brussels 17 October 1978 Nº 36/78



From the farm to the building site - vocational retraining helped by the European Social Fund. See page 3.

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This bulletin is published by the

Commission of the European Communities Directorate General of Information Rue de la Loi 200 B–1049 — Brussels — Tel. 735 00 40 This bulletin, which is produced with journalists in mind, gives an informal account of Community activities. It does not necessarily reflect the official position of the Commission.

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# ++ ONE MILLION BENEFIT FROM SOCIAL FUND IN 1977

Retraining farmers leaving the land, adapting textile workers to other industries, helping migrant workers integrate in their new country of domicile - these are just some of the tasks tackled by the European Social Fund.

Annex 1 takes a look at the work of the Fund in 1977.

#### ++ STRATEGY TO REDUCE UNEMPLOYMENT

The European Commission has been developing a strategy to raise the rate of economic growth and reduce unemployment in the Community.

The main points are discussed in Annex 2.

# ++ MINIMUM EUROPEAN WAGE?

"In the absence of a general extension of the minimum wage throughout the Community which, by definition, only concerns wage earners, does the European Commission not think that it should propose that all Community countries adopt a minimum income per person applicable to the handicapped, pensioners etc.?"

In reply to this question from Mr. Willy Dondelinger of the European Parliament, the European Commission has stated that this problem is currently being examined within a general study on low paid workers. Also the Commission has engaged some independent experts to examine the notion of minimum income, as applied to all categories of the population, wage earning or not. Based on this information and following consultation with parties involved (governments, social partners) the European Commission will decide whether proposals will be appropriate.

#### ++ GENERALISED TARIFF PREFERENCES, 1979

The European Commission has just submitted to the Council of Ministers its proposals to grant generalised tariff preferences to developing countries in 1979.

Generalised preferences is a customs system applied by industrialised countries to the developing countries to facilitate the exports of some of their products. The system covers reductions in or elimination of customs duties accompanied, in certain cases, by quantity restrictions on exports.

In the scheme proposed for 1979 the European Commission has given priority to measures benefiting the least developed countries. It has also modified the customs systems applicable to textiles. The effect of this will be to double the volume of preferential textile imports from these countries.

According to the Commission's proposal, the theoretical total volume of tariff preferences in 1979 will amount to 7 900 million European units of account (1 EUA =  $\pm$  1.3 dollars), which represents a 15% increase on 1978 (1974 total was only 3 250 EUA). This total is composed of 6 600 million EUA for industrial products and about 1 300 million EUA for agricultural produce.

The Commission's proposals have tried to take into account the need to improve the access of developing countries to the markets of industrialised countries, and yet at the same time to be prudent about the difficult situation facing certain industrial sectors in Europe.

# ++ DEEP SEA DIVERS AND HEALTH

The European Commission is interested in deep sea diving, not necessarily to harmonise holiday makers' snorkel equipment but rather to save the health of professional divers. The exploitation of oil and gas fields in the North Sea now requires divers to descend as far as 500 meters, and this can have serious repercussions on their health. At such depths the pressure is extremely high (50 atmospheres) and it is vital to know the proper compression and decompression techniques to be employed and the correct procedures for doctors in case of accident.

Some one hundred doctors from more than 20 countries will be meeting in Luxembourg, October 12 and 13 next, to discuss these problems. The seminar is being held at the initiative of the European Commission's body for accident prevention and the health of workers in the extractive industries.

# ++ PESTICIDES BLACK LIST

Our health and the quality of our food are possibly at risk through the increasing use of chemicals in agriculture (plant protection or phytopharmaceutical products) and in 1976 the European Commission proposed a ban on the marketing and use of plant protection products which it considered harmful to mar, animals or the environment.

In the first stage these include mercury compounds and certain persistent organochlorine compounds (aldrin, chlordane, dieldrin, DDT, endrin, HCH, heptachlor and hexachlorobenzene). The proposals also provide for the inclusion of further compounds should evidence of their harmful effects come to light.

The proposals are currently being examined by the Council of Ministers which has already adopted another Commission proposal on the harmonisation of national legislations relating to the classification, packaging and labelling of pesticides.

#### ++ MOTOR BIKE DRIVING LICENCES

The minimum age at which riders may take the driving test for motor bicycles is 17 years in the United Kingdom and 18 in all other EEC countries. The definition of motor bicycles in terms of cubic capacity, speed and even weight in some cases differs from country to country, and the Commission wishes to standardise legislation relating to driving licences. The Council of Ministers is currently examining a proposal drawn up by the Commission which, if adopted, would standardise the minimum age permitted for a driving licence and the type of vehicles which the licence would cover.

#### ++ INSURANCE PREMIUMS

Substantial differences exist between insurance premiums paid in different Common Market countries. This is mostly due to differing market conditions. Where premiums are not State controlled, they are based on the law of supply and demand.

The calculation of life assurance premiums depends on many factors which make direct comparison extremely difficult. Moreover, it is governed in most Community countries by stringent official regulations which prevent prices being based on market requirements.

The existence of these regulations also explains why there are still nine separate markets in the insurance sector. The Commission does not approve of this situation and has for a number of years been trying to create a single European insurance market through the introduction of freedom of establishment and the freedom to provide services in this sector.

# ++ AFTER SALES SERVICE

"In view of the serious problems posed by after-sales service, is the Commission considering organising at the Community level an analysis of information regarding complaints about services so as to determine in which areas consumer dissatisfaction is greatest and to provide a remedy?"

In reply to this question from Mr. Pierre-Bernard Cousté of the European Parliament, the Commission has stated that it is fully aware of the problems posed by after sales service but does not believe that the time is ripe to organise such an analysis of these complaints at the Community level. The Commission is at present considering whether Community legislation should be introduced on certain types of service to ensure better consumer protection.

#### ++ ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH PROGRAMME

For four years the Community will coordinate research being undertaken by scientists in different European countries dealing with the analysis of water pollutants and study of air pollutants. This was decided by the Council of Ministers following a proposal from the European Commission. The Nine will invest some 16 million European units of account in these two research programmes.

#### ++ COMMISSION RULES ON PRINTING AND WRITING PAPER

In 1977 the European Commission succeeded in terminating an agreement between Belgian and Dutch printing and writing paper manufacturers belonging to the Belgian pulp, paper and carton manufacturers association COBELPA and the Netherlands' association of paper manufacturers, VNP. This was announced in Euroforum N° 20/78.

COBELPA has requested us to stress that these agreements were notified to the European Commission in 1962 "which proves the good faith of the manufacturers in question", and that the share of Belgian manufacturers in their own national market has since dropped from 90% in 1962 to 30-40% in 1976.

# ++ NUCLEAR LEGISLATION

The European Commission has just published a 1978 updating of its report on "Authorisation procedures for the construction and operation of nuclear installations within the EEC Member States, including supervision and control" (EUR 5284). The report is available from Community bookshops listed on the last page, priced £6.80.

#### ONE MILLION BENEFIT FROM SOCIAL FUND IN 1977

1977 was a year of disappointments. After the short-lived economic upturn in the last quarter 1976, the economy did not grow as expected in '77. Even worse, the number of unemployed rose from the disturbing 5 million recorded in 1976 to top the 6 million mark the following year. It was against this background that the European Social Fund attempted to justify its existence in 1977. But with only a 40% increase in its resources over 1976, the total volume of aid requested from the Fund exceeded available resources by 50%.

As in the past, the European Commission has tried to encourage vocational training and retraining programmes with clearly defined goals and limits, many of which would never see the light of day without financial help from the Fund. Despite these financial problems, more than one million people have taken part in programmes assisted by the Fund. To this can be added the 250 000 or more taking part in programmes during 1977 and 1978 which were financed by the 1976 budget. For these two categories, total aid granted by the European Social Fund amounted to 812 million units of account (1 u.a. = 1.3 US dollars).

The poorest regions in the Community have benefited most from the Social Fund and 76% of the total budget has been allocated to priority regions. Unfortunately the economic crisis affecting the weaker regions has made it difficult to guarantee jobs at the end of the retraining programme.

#### Leaving agriculture

In line with the policy established in 1972, the European Social Fund helps those leaving farming to obtain new job qualifications. In 1977 requests of this type decreased considerably, both because young people are showing more interest in farming and because the unemployment problem makes industry less attractive.

Workers leaving the land head mostly for the building, metal work, tourist or craft industries. Some 20 000 persons benefited from programmes approved in 1977. Priority was given to farmers' children and wives wishing to find a job outside of agriculture, even if the head of the family stayed in farming.

#### Textile crisis

The crisis which has been affecting the textile and clothing sector for a number of years has seriously complicated the

employment situation. Companies have tried to save jobs but this does not necessarily help reorganise the sector. It is necessary to reduce the labour force and develop new activities which can create jobs in the regions concerned.

Reorganising the textile industry has also been hampered by a shortage of workers with adequate qualifications. The Social Fund was active in this delicate social, political and economic area in 1977 and helped train or retrain close on 20 000 people.

# Migrant workers

More than 2 000 children of migrant workers living in Bavaria are able to follow courses in their mother tongue whilst at the same time learning German. This was one of the particularly interesting schemes encouraged by the Fund and it symbolises the effort many countries are now putting into helping migrant workers adapt to new living and working conditions.

Whilst the number of migrant workers has decreased (six million today against 6.5 million in 1973) requests for assistance far exceed available resources - 60 million u.a. of applications on a budget of 25 million.

In most countries, special attention has been accorded to language teaching and it is worth mentioning a British language training project specially adapted for life at work. Each industry has its own jargon which migrant workers need to fully understand to get on with their colleagues and get on in their job.

Applications for aid approved in 1977 will contribute to the schooling of some 80 000 children of migrant workers, to organising language and training courses for some 150 000 adults and to training some 3 250 teachers and social workers. In addition, a further 180 000 people are expected to benefit from projects approved in previous budgets carried out in 1977 and subsequently.

#### Problems of being young

As in 1976, the manpower and training services in all Community countries accorded absolute priority to measures to reduce the numbers of young people out of work. All existing training programmes have been expanded and new projects rapidly introduced in anticipation of a new crop of young people finishing school and coming onto the job market.

The Social Fund has practically doubled its budget for young people (tò 174 million u.a.) but despite this it was impossible to meet applications totalling 374 million u.a.

All over Europe, resources have been mobilised to reduce unemployment among young people and applications have flooded in to the Social Fund. The number of projects from local and regional bodies have multiplied. In Italy and Germany in particular, a number of regional authorities have put forward special programmes for complementary or supplementary training.

In addition there has been a considerable increase in the number of applications proposed by private associations - particularly in the United Kingdom - which is a very promising development. Though small in scope, these private applications often involve very innovative methods and approaches, particularly in the field of vocational training.

Certain young people are particularly badly off. They are usually those who have left school early without any qualifications and have little chance of improving themselves. Increasing emphasis has consequently been placed on supervised practical work experience either in industry or in training centres undertaking work of a general social value.

In 1977, more than 480 000 young people benefited in this way from programmes approved by the European Social Fund.

#### The handicapped

Despite the devotion and self-sacrifice of people helping the handicapped, society is still a long way from its goal. Whilst some talk of the 'leisure society' and 'post-industrial society', the handicapped still live in the dark ages.

Quite naturally the European Social Fund gives priority to those programmes which show a good example, which show imagination and those which can realistically integrate the handicapped into society. The Fund has also tried to raise the standard of the many people helping the handicapped, in rehabilitation, vocational guidance and training etc.

Applications approved by the Fund in 1977 directly helped some 5 000 persons through short term projects with a good demonstrative value, and 450 persons were helped through training courses for instructors - two types of action with a good multiplier effect. In addition, aid from the Fund will contribute directly to the vocational re-integration of some 25 000 handicapped people.

# The regions

In 1977 more than ever the European Community tried to deal with unemployment in its overall political, economic, social and regional context and not as a distinct problem. The result has been positive and the European Social Fund has noted a real improvement in the programmes submitted. A large number of applications contained innovative ideas in the identification of jobs in the new growth areas.

It is estimated that about 210 000 persons benefited from the new regional programmes approved in 1977, of whom 82 000 were situated in the five priority regions - Greenland, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Mezzogiorno, French overseas Departments.

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Throughout the crisis, European solidarity has been evident, particularly in the operation of the European Social Fund, even with its limited resources. Little by little Europeans are learning the need to close ranks - in adversity it is indispensable and in Europe, inevitable.

#### STRATEGY TO REDUCE UNEMPLOYMENT

The percentage of unemployed in the Community's working population has increased as follows:

	1974	1978
	oʻ	
Denmark	3.1 %	7.2 %
Germany	2.2	3.9
France	2.8	5•5
Ireland	5 <b>•7</b>	8.9
Italy	(5.2)	7.6
Netherlands	2.8	4.2
Belgium	3.1	8.2
Luxembourg	-	1.2
United Kingdom	2.4	6

There are now 6 million unemployed in the Community and underemployment has accompanied the slowdown in economic growth - the average rate of growth was only 1.8% between 1973 and 1977, or one third of the average over the previous five years. Even being optimistic it could only rise to 2.6% in 1978. The Tripartite Conference - the discussion forum of the European Commission, both sides of industry and the governments of the Nine - has the specific task of finding ways for the Community to regain its former high level of growth and employment. The next meeting takes place on November 9th in Brussels and the European Commission has been developing a strategy to increase employment. The strategy has three aspects:

- stimulating economic growth, particularly through investment without inducing inflation;
- strengthening the ability of the Community's economy to change;
- introducing the necessary social measures involved in this strategy.

# 1. Stimulating growth

# Reducing uncertainty

In recent years the high level of inflation, erratic fluctuations in exchange rates and fears of a return to protectionism have, as expected, discouraged investment. The proposals for closer economic and monetary cooperation were adopted by the European Council in Bremen to remove this climate of uncertainty. The new European monetary system aims at organising the links between European currencies in a less anarchic fashion and removing exchange rate instability. This should reduce a good part of the instability which dampens the dynamism of currencies and investment.

# More dynamic demand

To establish sustained expansion without inflation, an increase in investment is indispensable. Under current conditions however, with old uncompetitive structures, investment will have to be directed-towards reorganisation. In the short term that means possible job losses but in the medium term the investment in rationalisation will raise demand for capital equipment and related sectors (research, electronics, services for maintenance and repair of machines etc.). A balance can perhaps be found between lost jobs and the creation of new ones. Only when demand is substantially increased will it be possible to rapidly create more jobs than have been lost. To achieve this objective it is not just enough to increase the profitability of investment, it is also necessary to assure more dynamic demand whilst not forgetting new social aspirations, particularly regarding public responsibilities.

In concrete terms, the European Commission envisages the following actions:

- the Nine should increase public investment which has levelled out or dropped in recent years;
- the Community should increase coordination in the investment field and could contribute by financing public projects
  which exceed national budgetary constraints. Special
  assistance could be given in areas essential for the
  future where Community action would be a useful supplement to national aid (high technology areas, energy,
  services etc.) Finally it would be necessary to
  realise a series of projects of Community interest to
  improve the balance between different regions in Europe
  as well as communication facilities within the Community.

# Returning profitability to industry and investment

The profitability of industry and private investment will be ensured first and foremost by an <u>upturn in economic activity</u>. The effort to moderate increases in nominal incomes should be continued and real incomes increased against a background of slower price rises. It may possibly be necessary to reduce social contributions and the direct contribution of certain categories of industry.

The Commission also proposes to examine the effects of investment premiums and the incidence of social security financing, which influence investment decisions.

# 2. Strengthening the Community economy's capacity to change

Investment in the restructuring of the European economy should concentrate on creating a large domestic market open to third countries. The unification and openness of the Community market could encourage better use of Community resources and raise the viability of certain industrial sectors.

The Community must increase its ability to respond to changes in the international economy. A protectionist policy is neither possible nor appropriate. Even less so since the Community receives most of its raw materials from third countries, and sells much of its production outside the Nine. By closing our frontiers to finished products from developing countries we are depriving these countries of the income to buy our products and, for example, our turnkey factories. To be able to export we need to keep our market open to imports, which implies that European countries adapt to the new international division of labour.

On the other hand the Community should also develop its ability to adapt to changes in domestic demand and the changing needs of its people. It should be able to satisfy public aspirations which, more than ever, put the accent on living conditions and the quality of the environment.

Finally structural reorganisation should help mobilise the resources of the least developed regions and thereby help resolve their unemployment problems.

The service sector will play an increasingly important role in reducing unemployment. Some services cover normal market operations (trade, financial services, tourism). Others which are becoming increasingly important involve public administrations or charitable organisations in fields such as education, health and social services.

The extension of public services - at popular request - is limited by the size of public deficits and the high level of tax. These financial constraints can be alleviated in part through rapid economic growth, the expansion of national budgets, and by a reduction in unemployment and social security payments.

In the Commission's view, typical actions which could help reorganise our economies could be:

# - to encourage innovation:

Innovation is the principal source of growth but Europe has frequently shown itself incapable of perfecting the techniques in time to cash in on their commercial potential. The Community should be prepared to promote risk capital, solve patent problems, simplify tax questions, set up information networks for small and medium sized enterprises and distribute appropriate information.

# - to intensify research:

The economic crisis has led to cutbacks in research expenditure by both governments and industry, but research is a key element of innovation. All research efforts must be intensified and coordinated at the European level for the best results.

# - to help small companies

Small and medium sized companies employ two thirds of the working population in the Community and to help them operate, the Community should examine their problems of financing and the availability of risk capital.

# education and re-education

To progress towards a high technology economy, the European education system should enable the labour force to acquire the necessary new qualifications (schools all too often continue to train girls for the textile industry and boys for steel works). The Community could help in transforming the education system by way of its financial resources and through experimental projects.

# - to encourage job mobility

Workers are often reserved about innovation, particularly since it can often imply changes of job either to other sectors or regions, and often for the worse regarding prestige and working conditions. Necessary changes need

to be worked out with the labour force rather than imposed on them, particularly when they involve job changes and working conditions. The costs should also be equally shared.

# 3. Suitable social measures for the success of the strategy

It would not be realistic to hope, at least in the short term, that this economic strategy could eliminate the current unemployment problem on its own. It will be a number of years before the Community arrives at a satisfactory level of employment given the current low level of economic activity and the growing number of young people and women coming onto the job market. A suitable division of available jobs could be an important approach to solving pending difficulties. It will be necessary however to ensure that these measures do not lead to an unacceptable rise in wage costs. Action coordinated at the Community level is necessary to reduce the negative impact of these measures on competitivity.

The European Commission envisages the following three measures:

- initiate a Community action to restrict recourse to overtime, to reduce the annual volume of labour per worker;
- prepare a scheme to eliminate the abuses of part-time work;
- encourage the development of more flexible retirement systems.

The European Commission is also conducting research into shift work, the growth of non-discriminatory types of part-time work and extending the possibilities for training young people and adults.

Implementing a strategy based on rapid economic growth demands sacrifices and it is important that these are equitably distributed. For modifications in wage structures to be acceptable to workers, they have to be accompanied by compensations of a qualitative nature. Part of the resulting profits should be diverted towards improving working conditions, particularly regarding shift work, assembly-line work and safety at work. In addition, other public services should be improved (education, health, social security etc.) Finally, worker participation in all economic and social decision-making should be strengthened.

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