

TRADE UNION NEWS

from the **European Community**

No 8 Spring 1972



European Communities
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THE COMMISSION'S SOCIAL SURVEY FOR 1971

"The year 1971," begins the European Commission's annual social survey, published last February, "was dominated by employment problems." On the most immediate and worrying level, Community unemployment figures went up by some 300,000 between December 1970 and December 1971, reaching an estimated 2,107,000 at the end of the year; on the European institutional level, two of the year's most significant events were the reform of the European Social Fund and the creation of the Standing Employment Committee, both concerned above all with maintaining and balancing Europe's jobs; and in the long term, as the Commission notes in devoting its introduction to the survey to employment questions, the whole problem "will come right to the forefront of Community preoccupations as the outlines of the economic and monetary union are sketched in."

The reasons for the increase were many. In the first place, monetary uncertainty and the American measures to protect the dollar had a definite repercussion on the level of investment, and thence on employment itself. Other factors were an increase in competition at world level, the growing influence of the multinational companies, accelerating technological progress and Common Market integration itself - the result of new divisions of labour within the single industrial unit of Europe and consequent structural changes, for example. Further, unless the unemployment problem is dealt with at a Community, as opposed to national level, short-term "solutions" could make the broader situation even worse.

In the light of gloomy employment predictions for the coming year, the Commission fears that there could well be a "brake on migratory movements and sackings of foreign workers, involving the latter's return to their home countries, whose own positions could thereby be worsened. Such an export of unemployment is not an acceptable solution, however. On the contrary, it would itself cause new difficulties and could be justified neither socially nor on a Community basis, particularly if those concerned were subjects of member states.

"Pressure on the employment situation is therefore liable to be even stronger in the Community's peripheral or mono-industrial areas, which are particularly sensitive to a redistribution of activity, changes in competition conditions and structural modernization. In these regions the Community thus has to face up to specific and important conditions of unemployment and underemployment.

Obviously, in these circumstances national measures are no longer enough - indeed, they need to be coordinated at every level throughout the Community. This is a direct challenge to Community will and Community solidarity.

Alongside its policy programmes - the medium-term economic programme and the "Preliminary guidelines for a Community social policy programme", for instance - the Community now has two important instruments for putting policy into practice. They are the renewed Social Fund and the Standing Employment Committee already mentioned above. There should soon be a third: a European programme for vocational training, the outlines of which were discussed and adopted by the Council of Ministers in July 1971(1).

Vocational training plans: The Commission places considerable emphasis in its survey on this third instrument for action on the job front. According to the "General guidelines for elaborating a Community-level programme of activities in the field of vocational training", the programme, to be drawn up by the Commission, should be based on an overall view of all the training problems being faced by the different economic sectors and should concentrate on the priority action to be undertaken to meet the difficulties arising out of the application of Community policies.

The broad fields of activity were outlined by the Council: one, stepping up the exchange of information and cooperation at Community level, and secondly, renewing efforts to standardize the training levels and requirements applied in the Six. It is interesting to note in this context that during 1971, a European centre was set up to promote training efforts being carried out in the agricultural and rural domain.

The question of training was also brought up in the communication which the Commission addressed to the Council on the subject of monetary and financial relations within the Community. The communication underlined the need for closer monetary coordination to be accompanied by "the intensification of social policy with the aim of encouraging employment, training and retraining of workers" in the member states.

Relations with trade unions and industry: Noting the milestone along the path towards full concertation represented by the creation of the tripartite Standing Committee on Employment, the Commission goes on to record its satisfaction at increasing internal cooperation within employers' and workers' groups, not only at national but also at sector level. It considers that there is a clear trend towards tighter labour cohesion on a European scale, spurred on in particular by trade union anxiety at the increasing scale of activity of the multinational corporations and the growing number of transnational mergers and takeovers, which, as the report admits, can have harmful consequences for the workers involved.

(1) There are also plans for a regional development fund to aid new investment in problem areas.

The survey sees a definite intensification of the trend towards extending to European level the common actions begun within the national framework - for example the transformation of the European Metal Committee into a fully-fledged European Metalworkers' Federation with 3 million members.

In an increasing number of sectors, industry and trade unions are setting up either ad hoc bodies or permanent, institutionalized committees to look at the problems of their industry from a European angle. The Commission is clearly in favour of these meetings and would like to see them extended: it considers that "the achievement of the Community's social objectives by means of European collective bargaining ... must rank high on the list of Community priorities." One way of moving towards such a system would be to set up a dossier of collective agreements, as the Commission has already proposed.

On another level, the proposed statute for a European Limited Company (involving worker co-determination) is still being examined by various working groups from the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Council.

Working conditions and workers' rights: Under the heading working conditions and rights, the Commission observes a tendency on the part of both trade unions and in some cases legislators to devote more attention to questions of job security, severance pay, assistance for retraining and the like. Following up this observation, it comes to the conclusion that there are several points which could be included in a possible programme for improving and harmonizing working conditions in the Community, consonant with articles 117 and 118 of the Treaty of Rome. Such points, it has suggested to the Council, could be: motives for dismissal; periods of notice; compensation and aids; roles of worker representation bodies and the authorities; protection for certain categories of worker; and special rules for collective dismissals. "Mensualisation" (giving staff status to blue-collar workers), the Commission adds, which is coming in for increasing attention in several countries, is another step in the same direction of making employment more secure.

Leaving aside these general considerations, the survey notes that there has been a broad movement towards the norm of a 40-hour working week; indeed, in some cases (e.g. German industry) it has already been achieved almost everywhere through collective bargaining. Improvements have also been made in every Community country in the field of paid holidays.

Wages: Wage trends and policies have been in large measure dominated by the fact that in 1971, as in 1970, all the Six were faced with persistent inflationary pressures coupled with monetary uncertainty and the possibility of recession.

But the most marked characteristic of wage policy in 1971, the Commission says, came in the way negotiations were carried out rather than in their content. Negotiations tended more and more to be made "objective" - based, that is, on statistics and concrete criteria, with the two sides paying more attention than in past years to general economic and social conditions. Whilst approving this tendency, the survey observes that with profits and profit margins also rising, wages can go up to some extent without resulting in higher prices. Furthermore, in any attempt to exercise control over consumer prices, "attention should not be confined exclusively to wages; all other types of income should be the object of at least as much scrutiny, indeed vigilance ... Any wage freeze or pause seems quite illusory if it is undertaken against the will of the two sides of industry, and *a fortiori* if it is not accompanied by parallel measures with regard to other forms of income ...

Social services: The Commission's survey notes with satisfaction that social services for migrant workers and their families have been considerably improved over the past year. Efforts have also been made to ease the lot of other less privileged groups of the community, particularly the handicapped. In spite of these efforts, however, much remains to be done, as was brought out by the symposium organized by the Commission in Luxembourg for a first-ever look on a European level at the problems of rehabilitating the handicapped and placing them in suitable jobs.

Social security: Under this heading, particular interest attaches to the concept of a "European social budget", which, at the request of the Council, the Commission has listed as a priority. Such an instrument would make it possible to place the overall social security efforts undertaken at national and Community levels within a global medium-term framework. "In this new field," the report adds, "a start has already been made with the social security indicators recently published which the Commission ... intends to pursue and develop. These actions will extend to the Community level initiatives taken or envisaged within the national framework."

The Commission's investigations reveal that by 1975, social security expenditures in the Six will have reached between 20.1 and 23.3% of national income, compared with equivalent figures of 18.4 and 20.4% in 1965. It should be noted, the survey adds, that "according to ILO figures for 1966, the Community countries (between 16 and 17.5% of GNP) are a long way ahead of other industrialized countries like the United States (7.3%), Japan (6%) or the United Kingdom (12.7%)."

Unemployment trends

	December 1970	December 1971	January 1971	January 1972
Belgium	87,200	99,000	87,300	(76,700)(1)
Germany	175,100	269,800	286,200	375,100
France (estimated)	430,000	535,000	470,000	(417,000)(1)
Italy	1,032,200	1,088,900	1,144,300	(1,168,300)(1)
Luxembourg	33	22	20	(28)(1)
Netherlands	66,600	114,500	78,900	134,300
Community (estimated)	1,791,100	2,107,200	2,066,700	(2,170,428)(1)

Source : Commission's Report on the Social Situation in 1971

(1) Provisional figures (not quoted in the report cited). For the Community as a whole this equals an unemployment rate of approximately 2.9%. (The equivalent UK figure was approaching 4%).

Assistance given by the European Social Fund 1971(2)

	Retraining \$ thousands(3)	Resettlement \$ thousands(3)	Total \$ thousands(3)
Germany	29,630	159	29,790
Belgium	1,531	1	1,532
France	6,165	-	6,165
Italy	17,469	6	17,475
Luxembourg	1	-	1
Netherlands	1,506	4	1,510
Community	56,302	171	56,473

(2) To this should be added an equal sum provided by the member states.

(3) At \$2.4 to the £ sterling.

Source : Commission's Report on the Social Situation in 1971

Total foreign workers employed in the Community(1)

Country of origin	1971(1)
Belgium	63,000
Germany	49,000
France	70,000
Italy	746,000
Luxembourg	3,300
Netherlands	24,000
Community	1,015,000
Greece	279,000
Spain	489,000
Portugal	255,000
Turkey	487,000
Yugoslavia	521,000
Algeria	250,000
Morocco	105,000
Tunisia	44,000
Others	402,000
Total for non-member countries	2,832,000
GENERAL TOTAL	3,847,000

(1) Estimated by the Bureau européen de Coordination (BECODE)

Source : Commission's Report on the Social Situation in 1971

● Mansholt's EEC environment plan

Community action on the huge and increasingly important question of the environment has so far been relatively modest, although the Commission has made some proposals on certain immediate priorities - the reduction of some of the more dangerous air and water pollutants and common action on the conservation of land and natural surroundings, for example. (See Trade Union News No. 7, p.9). Recently, however, Dr. Sicco Mansholt, the Commission's new President, outlined much more comprehensive and radical proposals through which, he suggested, the European Community should attempt to make itself the world leader in the attack on pollution. He proposed in a letter last February to the Commission's then President, Signor Malfatti, that the present Commission should use the last year of its mandate to prepare an overall plan for correcting Europe's ecological balance, stabilizing its population, cutting down material consumption, and curbing growth rates. The concept of the gross national product as an indicator of a nation's welfare should be replaced by "gross national utility" or the idea of "gross national happiness" suggested by the Dutch economist Professor Jan Tinbergen; correspondingly increased weight should be given to intellectual and cultural wellbeing.

Dr. Mansholt suggested that the EEC economy should be rigorously planned by a central authority to penalize pollution and bring about a "closed circuit" economy which would recycle consumer products and eliminate waste. A system of certificates for non-pollutant and recycled goods should be introduced, with preferential tax and tariff rates to encourage their manufacture, and aid to developing countries should be used to promote the production of such "clean" items.

The key problem, Dr. Mansholt says in the letter, is population; even with a birth rate well below that of the developing countries, Europe still needs to find its way towards a system of population control since its consumption per head of finite natural resources is some 25 times greater than that of the Third World.

● Regional policy essential for economic union, Commission report says

By 1980, a total of 3,540,300 new jobs, costing \$164,158.75 millions to create, will be needed in the underdeveloped and declining industrial regions of the present six members of the EEC, according to a recent report prepared for the European Commission. Half this sum will be required in Italy alone - an investment effort so vast that even if the

country were able to provide it on its own, the result would inevitably be social, political and economic tensions which could jeopardize the whole future of European economic and monetary union.

The report - "Regional Policy and Economic and Monetary Union" - therefore underlines the Commission's view that a Community scheme for regional policy is essential in the interests of further European integration.

After showing that regional imbalances are a powerful inflationary factor, the study goes on to give estimates of what needs to be done to iron them out. The table below shows the number of new jobs which will be needed in the six countries by 1980 (in thousands).

	New jobs to be created (thousands)			Cost (\$ millions)(1)		
	in under- developed regions	in declining indus- trial regions	Total	Private invest- ment	Public invest- ment	Total
Germany			464.3	1.16	0.53	1.69
France	550	150	700	1.75	3.331	5.08
Italy	2,000	100	2,100	5.25	2.04	7.29
Netherlands	60	80	140	0.35	0.09	0.44
Belgium	10	120	130	0.33	0.06	0.39
Luxembourg	-	-	6	0.02	-	-
Total			3,540.3	8.86	6.05	14.89

(1) \$2.4 to the £ sterling

To create these jobs, the report estimates, will require enormous amounts of both private and public investment.

The yearly private investment needed averages out at around 20% of the total annual private investment carried out in the Community (1969 figures). This conceals large variations between individual countries: only 5% of total new private investment would need to be earmarked for Luxembourg's new jobs, whilst the figure for Italy's underdeveloped and declining regions is as high as 61.8%.

● Aids for EEC coal and steel areas

The European Coal and Steel Community raised a loan of some £13.2m on the Italian capital market earlier this year to finance the modernization of coal and steel plant in the Six and the establishment of new industries in coal- and steel-producing areas. The loan is the fifth to be raised in Italy by the ECSC since it was set up in 1952. In total, the Community since that time has raised total loans for these purposes on European and American capital markets equivalent to £432m at current exchange rates. Adding in its own resources, it has made available for industrial redevelopment in the EEC a grand total of £470m.

The ECSC loans are re-lent at favourable interest rates to companies and public bodies and corporations operating in coal and steel areas. They act as "pump-priming" agents, encouraging private investment to follow up their lead. The ECSC contribution to new investment generally accounts for about 10% of the total.

On the UK entry into the Common Market next year, the British coal and steel industries will qualify for similar aid. In addition, British ex-miners and ex-steelworkers will be eligible for retraining and "tiding-over" grants if mines or steelworks close down.

In 1971, total aids to the Community's coal industry alone (direct aid, indirect aid, payments to cover the industry's social security deficits) amounted to £790m. The direct aids vary considerably from country to country, but can be considerable. By contrast, except for a partial write-off of capital debt, the British coal industry has received very little subsidy at all.

● Continental Can takes dispute with Commission to Court

The US packaging firm Continental Can and its subsidiary Europemballage have asked the Community Court of Justice to declare invalid a Commission request that they end their near-monopoly for certain packaging products in Germany and the Benelux. A spokesman for the two companies said in February that the move would not prevent Continental Can from settling the dispute out of court.

Last December, the Commission asked Continental Can to submit proposals by July 1, 1972, on how it intended to comply with Article 86 of the Rome Treaty which forbids companies to take improper advantage of a dominant position within the EEC or a substantial part of it. The Commission's action follows last year's takeover by Europemballage of the Dutch firm Thomassen and Drijver-Verblifa, which, together with a Belgian subsidiary, has a 100% share of the Benelux market

for some materials. Through a German subsidiary, Continental Can also has a dominant position in the German market. The Commission therefore suggested the company should cease some of its activities in the fields specified. Continental Can submitted the required proposals to the Commission, which in May declared them unsatisfactory.

The Commission's move followed a three-year investigation and is only the second time this particular Article of the Treaty of Rome has been invoked. If successful in court, the Commission may go on to probe any or all of 22 other industrial sectors where concentration is considered so high that any more mergers could signify a similar abuse.

● Women at work in the European Community

Since the war, changing patterns of life and the use of labour-saving machinery in the home have enabled an increasing number of women to go out to work. Europe is no exception. In 1968, of women aged 14 to 65, the proportion going out to work was 26% in the Netherlands, 30% in Italy, 40% in Germany and 47% in France; in Britain the figure was 35%. Of the total civil work force in 1969 in the Netherlands 23% were women, in Italy 27%, in Germany 34%, in France 37% and Britain 36%.

There are considerable variations in the figures for different branches of activity, however. In Germany, e.g., more than half the agricultural work force is composed of women. In France and Italy women account for about a third of the agricultural work force, and in Belgium about a fifth. Only in the Netherlands, at 12%, is the proportion of women working on the land as low as in Britain or America.

In industry, women form about 20% of the total labour force. By countries the figures are: Germany 24%, France 24%, Italy 20%, Belgium 18%, the Netherlands 14%. Contrasts between regions are often higher: in Germany, a third of working West Berliners are women, for example, while in the Saar the proportion is no more than 12%. In France, Italy, and Belgium, a similar pattern is to be found; variations are much less in the Netherlands.

Services employ more women as a proportion of the work force than industry - 48% in France, 42% in Germany, 39% in Belgium, 33% in the Netherlands and 31% in Italy.

Numerically, most women work in manufacturing industry. Services come next - administration, commerce, catering, banking and insurance. But there are big contrasts between countries. There are 30m German women, for instance, not a great deal more than Italy's 26m. But Germany's manufacturing

industry employs twice as many women as Italy's, and her commerce and catering four times as many. In France, nearly ten times as many women as in Italy work in banking and insurance. Italy, on the other hand, has the greatest number of women landworkers.

Women in all the countries of the Six are paid less well than men in nearly every occupation - despite Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome which provides for equal pay. Discrimination is least among clerical workers: a large proportion of them are employed in the public sector, which sets a good example in the field of equal pay. In manufacturing industry pay differences between the sexes are rather greater, and the biggest differences of all are found among professional workers. In general, the better paid the job, the smaller the proportion of women to be found in it. The great mass of women workers are still doing the lowest paid jobs.

● Eurobusiness: the outsiders are learning quicker

Nine years' experience show that it is non-Community firms - mostly American - which have so far benefited most from the scale of the Common Market. Most of the rationalization and structural improvement being achieved by European industry is still taking place within national borders. The position is illustrated by the following figures, which cover the years 1961-1969 inclusive:

Subsidiaries set up in the Community:

by EEC firms in other EEC countries	2,300
by non-EEC firms in the EEC	3,540
by EEC firms outside the Community	1,158

Cooperation agreements:

intra-EEC	1,000
between EEC and non-EEC firms	2,790
between firms in the same EEC country	1,350

Mergers and takeovers:

intra-EEC	257
of non-EEC firms by EEC firms	215
of EEC firms by non-EEC firms	820
of and by firms in the same EEC country	1,860

Thus, international cooperation agreements and takeovers have been initiated three times more often by firms in outside countries than by firms within the EEC. It is interesting to note that by far the most common method for national enterprises to extend their Common Market activity has been to create subsidiaries responsible to the parent company for production and distribution; no doubt because national differences in company law and taxation make satisfactory intra-Community mergers (e.g. Agfa-Gevaert, Fiat-Citroen, Credit Lyonnais-Kommerzbank-Banco di Roma) very difficult to achieve.

● EEC retail prices report

Since 1966, the European Communities Statistical Office has been publishing half-yearly surveys of retail price movements in the Six. The surveys have covered some 300 articles and services ranging from tomato ketchup to an hour's work by a qualified plumber, electricity to chrysanthemums, with the prices in the different countries translated from national currency to units of account (=dollars) to allow direct comparability. In 1970, the survey was thoroughly revised to give the final statistics even greater usefulness: the number of articles and services checked on was raised to 500, the number of towns used for the survey was more than doubled from 22 to 54, and the figures obtained are being processed to give a complete picture of the purchasing power of households and industrial workers throughout the Community. The late arrival of the report on the situation in November 1970 (it was available only at the end of 1971) is due to the changed nature of the work, but it is hoped that in the future publication will follow much more quickly on the actual survey, especially since from now on the checks will take place only once a year, in October. For the moment, these figures do not provide a basis for direct comparison with UK prices since the brands and models used for the tests are not recorded (under tape recorders, e.g., the report gives three sets of figures for a "selected make and model" in different categories and one set for "the most common roughly comparable makes"); once the UK is a member of the Community, however, and its statistical bodies start supplying Brussels with the same detailed information contained in the report, there will for the first time be a possibility of comparing retail prices and - hopefully - real wages throughout the enlarged Community.

● More money, shorter hours in the EEC

The working week is getting shorter in all Community countries and nearly all industries, according to the latest "harmonized" figures released by the Community Statistical

Office (Social Statistics No. 4, 1971). In April 1971, the EEC's average working week (including overtime) was 43.2 hours. France's hours were highest - 44.6 - followed by the Netherlands with 43.8 hours. Italians and Belgians enjoyed the shortest working week with 42.2 hours.

The figures show that increases in nominal earnings between April 1970 and April 1971 amounted to 17% in Italy, 15% in the Netherlands, 14% in Belgium and Germany, 9.8% in France, and 6.6% in Luxembourg. In real terms, increases were lower - Italy 12%, Belgium 10%, Germany 9%, the Netherlands 7%, France 4% and Luxembourg 1%. Italy is therefore still closing the gap between itself and the rest of the Six in the wage field.

An interesting statistic is that in Italy and Luxembourg, women's earnings were increasing faster than men's; the rapprochement did not occur elsewhere, however.

● Brussels conference for workers of multinational companies

Workers from ten of Europe's biggest multinational companies met in Brussels on 24 and 25 February to explore the position of their companies within a European framework and to exchange information on the particular problems of the trade unions. Arranged by the European Confederation of Free Trade Unions with technical and financial assistance from the European Communities, the conference brought together German, Dutch, Belgian and Italian workers from the following companies: Volkswagen, Thyssen, Siemens, Farbwerke-Hoechst, Fiat, Unilever, Philips, Shell and Nestlé. Community representatives reported on the EEC's attitude towards the multinationals in relation to its industrial policy and on progress being made towards a European company law; these talks were followed by a private session in which participants discussed the general trade union situation in their firms, access to company information and the need to maintain contacts with trade unions organizing company branches in other countries. The group set up a working party to prepare a further conference to be held in October this year.

● European Parliament re-elects Socialist as President

At its March 1972 session the European Parliament re-elected Mr. Walter Behrendt, a German Socialist, as its President for the next twelve months. This is Mr. Behrendt's second term of office.

The Socialist group in the Parliament also had to elect a new president, following the resignation in February of Francis Vals (France). He is succeeded by Herbert Kriedemann (Germany)

● Social security in Germany

Last February, the German Embassy in London issued a general survey of the German social security system which, though making no comparisons with British arrangements, is an extremely interesting statement of a totally different social security philosophy. In contrast to the British universal, state-funded fallback system, German social insurance benefits are almost entirely financed by employers and employees, and all contributions are earnings related under certain ceilings. (E.g. In unemployment and old age pensions insurance this ceiling is at present DM 2,100 (about £250), in health insurance DM 1,550 (about £180) per month. People earning more must still pay contributions but only on a maximum of £250 and £180 respectively). Total deductions currently take about 27 per cent of insurable earnings; well over half of this total goes on pensions, one-third on health and the remainder on unemployment insurance. Industrial accident insurance is financed by the employer alone: other contributions are shared half and half by employers and workers.

"Keeping people in permanent productive employment and enabling them to earn a decent living is a cardinal aim of social policy", declares the report. "Unemployment benefits and assistance are therefore regarded only as a last resort - when all other means of safeguarding and promoting employment have failed". But since in a free society a man cannot be forced to use all these means - including occupation guidance, placing men into other jobs, comprehensive training, retraining and rehabilitation combined with the creation of new jobs, benefits for creating and maintaining employment - rather than taking unemployment benefit, training incentives are in fact higher than the assistance he would draw. Unemployment benefit (maximum period 52 weeks) for a married man with two children, for example, would be about 70 per cent of previous earning plus child allowance; during the normal two years' training which is every German worker's statutory right under the Employment Promotion Act of 1969, the total would be 90 per cent.

Strikers do not qualify for unemployment benefit. After the maximum 52 weeks of benefit, the unemployed may draw unemployment assistance, "but this is normally at a lower rate (about 60%) and is subject to a means test".

Health insurance covers some 90% of the population, and provides in principle free medical, hospital and specialist treatment. After the first six weeks of illness, during which the employer pays full wages, the insurance takes over, paying out 75% of previous earnings plus family supplements. This amount is payable for not more than 18

months during any period of three years for the same illness. When this period expires, the beneficiary is automatically entitled to other benefits under disablement, retirement or social assistance schemes.

Industrial accident insurance includes medical treatment, occupational aids and cash benefits, anyone unable to take up his old job being entitled to retrain without loss of earnings. Over 20% disability entitles a worker to a pension, rising to a maximum two-thirds of previous income in the case of complete disability. The system has recently been extended to cover students and school children.

"In 1957", says the survey, "the old age pensions system was reformed and a whole new concept for social insurance introduced: that pensions are only another form of wages and that their aim is not to keep hardship at bay but to enable old people to enjoy after retirement the same social and economic status they had during their working lives." Normal retirement pension works out at 60 per cent after 40 years rising to 75 per cent after a working life of 50 years. In money terms, a pensioner can now expect between £55 and £60 a month; a third of all pensions currently exceed £100.

Totals have gone up dramatically since 1957, since it is a basic principle of the scheme that "when a pension becomes payable its size is not merely determined by the nominal value of contributions paid but by the movement of incomes since they were paid. Once a pension is computed in this way, it remains pegged to general increases in gross wages by regular annual legislation". All pensioners are insured free of charge against illness by their old age insurance funds. Retirement age is currently 65 for men, 60 for women, but there is a plan to make the retirement age flexible within certain number of years.

● Setback for Italian trade union unification plans

Plans for reforming the three major Italian trade union federations (CGIL, communist-led, 3.5m members; CISL, Christian democrat, 2.5m; UIL, socialist, 800,000) into a single unified centre had run into serious obstacles as the Italian election campaign reached its height. The merger was to have taken place in spring 1973, and would have been preceded by the dissolution of the existing federations in September of this year - the timetable being dictated by the need to complete the fusion (and at the same time disengage from the political parties) before the general elections, in which the unions have traditionally had substantial, and competing, stakes. Now, however, previous agreements by leaders of all three confederations to cut their political ties (one of the

conditions for forming the new centre) are coming under some strain.

UIL turnout: The UIL, for example, now seems to fear that guarantees of political autonomy already given are not enough, and that the united trade union centre could fall under the domination of the Communist party. At its National Council meeting on 29 February, the UIL therefore voted 39 to 31 against continuing with present unity plans, judging the time not yet ripe for such action. Instead, the Council proposed a "permanent consultation pact" between the confederations, permitting on the one hand unity of action and on the other continuing autonomy for the separate organizations.

CGIL going ahead: The CGIL, however, plans to push ahead with the scheduled arrangements. Its own national council decided on 7 March to convene an extraordinary congress to effect the confederation's dissolution on 21 September, and in doing so strongly criticized the UIL's decision to withdraw. The CGIL recommends continued dialogue with the CISL with a view to completing the merger of their two organizations and coordinating action at all levels. Nevertheless, there is now serious doubt about the outcome of the September congress.

CISL in the middle: In the meantime, the CISL has adopted a position somewhere between the two, affirming the "validity of the unification process" but at the same time criticising both the UIL and the CGIL for having "gone back on undertakings freely and solemnly given" in the first case and for not making "effective distinction between trade union roles and party roles at every level" and for tending "to adapt trade union to party political tactics" in the case of the CGIL.

● Eleventh national congress of Force Ouvrière

A wide-ranging resolution on economic, social and international affairs was adopted by the French trade union confederation Force Ouvrière at its eleventh national congress last November. An affiliate of the European Confederation of Free Trade Unions and of the ICFTU, the FO noted "with satisfaction the concrete prospects of the accession of Great Britain and the Scandinavian countries to the European Communities and proclaims its determination to contribute, jointly with the ECFTU, in an enlarged Europe, to the creation of a Community which will be an example, both for itself and for others, and capable of stimulating social progress and securing freedoms". Along with specific demands for consumer protection, an end to land speculation, a new income tax structure, a more democratic economy and a

transformed National Employment Agency, the congress reaffirmed all FO's traditional tenets: belief in the need for a radical transformation of capitalist society, no rapprochement with the Communists, complete independence of the trade union movement from political parties and, in the words of general secretary André Bergeron, writing in the ICFTU journal *Free Labour World*, "its faith in the future of free trade unionism acting in the service of freedom and humanity". M. Bergeron was re-elected general secretary.

* * *

FO has recently reiterated its opposition to the entry of Franco's Spain into the EEC. "Franco's language", declared J. Rouzier in *FO Hebdo*, "is not our language; it is the language of dictatorship and tyranny. It is unthinkable that Francoism should be represented in the councils of the Community".

WORKING HOURS AND HOLIDAYS IN THE EEC

The following tables are taken, in shortened form, from a document (available in French) published by the Social Affairs Directorate-General of the Commission at the end of last year. ("Tableaux comparatifs concernant la durée du travail dans les industries de la Communauté" - Situation: avril 1971).

Table 1 : Normal hours of work - legal maxima

	Daily hours	Weekly hours
Belgium	8 h	45 h
Germany	8 h	48 h
France	-	40 h(1)
Italy	8 h	48 h
Luxembourg	8 h	44½h(2)
Netherlands	8½h	48 h

(1) Permitted hours may exceed 40 provided they are not above 60, and do not exceed an average of 54 hours in any period of 12 consecutive weeks. (In practice the 40 maximum is used purely as a basis of calculation for overtime payments).

(2) Permitted hours may exceed 44½ by 4, 3, 2 and 1 hours respectively during the years 1971, 72, 73 and 74.

Table 2 : Normal hours of work - collective agreements (weekly hours)

	Motor industry	Elec-trical engineering	Tex-tiles	Man-made fibres	Rubber	Chemicals	Clothings	Glass	Ship-building	Building & civil engineering	Steel	Coal	
												face	surface
Bel.	42(7)	43	38-43 (3)	vary-ing com-pany agree-ments	44(6)	44(6)	44	42-43	43	43½	42	N. 36, 32-36, 44 S. 39, 43-39, 54	
Ger.	40	40	40	40	40	40-41	40	40	40	40	40	40	40
Fr.	as legal provisions												41½ (70)
It.	41	42½	43(5)	42	42	41(7)	43	44½ (9)	43	41	40	40	42 (77)
Lux.	-	-	42-44	42	44	42	44	-	-	44	41	-	-
Neth.	43½	43½ (2)	43½ (2)	42½	42½	42½	42½	42½	43½ (2)	42½	42½	40	43½- 42½

Footnotes to Table 2

- (1) *Company agreements provide for working weeks of 40 hours or less according to shift.*
- (2) *From 1 July 1971 : 42½ hours maximum.*
- (3) *Varies according to single, double or night shift working.*
- (4) *Agreements concluded to date confine themselves in certain companies to a limitation of maximum hours.*
- (5) *From 1 July 1971 : 42 hours.*
- (6) *Company agreements provide for 40 to 42 hours.*
- (7) *From 1 May 1971 : 40 hours.*
- (8) *From 1 July 1971 : 40 hours. In the hand-made glass, average week is 43 hours.*
- (9) *From 1 May 1971 : 43 hours.*
- (10) *Average over 12 months.*
- (11) *From 1 May 1971 : 40 hours.*

Table 3 : Paid holidays - legal and statutory situation

	Annual holidays(1)	Paid public holidays
Belgium	18 working days(3)	10
Germany	15-18 working days according to age(3)	10-13
France	2 working days per month = 24 days per year maximum(3)	8-10
Italy	12 days of work(4)	17
Luxembourg	18-24 working days according to the age(1)(4)(5)	10
Netherlands	Three times the number of days of work stipulated per week (15-18 days)(2)	7

(1) *The document from which these tables are taken also has figures on additional holiday entitlements for age, length of service, etc., and also indicates where collective agreements in particular industries provide higher holiday entitlements than the legal norms.*

(2) *16½-22 days where a five-day week is worked.*

(3) *Working days: every day of the week with the exception of Sunday and public holidays falling within the week.*

(4) *Days of work: every day of the week with the exception of Sundays, Saturdays and public holidays.*

(5) *Saturday is counted as a half day.*

