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ADULT TRAINING IN FIRMS

(Commission Communication)

ADULT TRAINING IN FIRMS

Commission communication to the Council

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Development of continuing training for employees in firms in the
European Community

Commission communication to the Council

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Under the terms of the Single European Act to promote "its overall harmonious development, the Community shall develop and pursue its actions leading to the strengthening of economic and social cohesion" (Article 130 A). Completion of the internal market and achieving a technological Europe will call for a significant effort as regards training people, specifically human resources, the central component of growth.

2. The Council Resolution of 11 December 1986 on an action programme on employment growth emphasizes - amongst other points - the necessity "to have a labor force that has both the skills and the flexibility necessary to meet the changing requirements of industry and commerce ...", and, within this contract, "the need to bring about an improvement of the level of training and of retraining opportunities for adults ...". Drawing on this Resolution and the related mandate given to the Commission, and on the guidelines that emerged from the discussions held in connection with the Social Dialogue (in particular the joint opinion on "the cooperative strategy for growth and employment" adopted in November 1986 by UNICE, CEEP and ETUC) the aim of this Communication is to identify the priorities for Community action in the field of continuing training for adults - as opposed to initial training - and thus to give a new impetus to current activities in this area. It is thus closely associated with the cooperative growth strategy for more employment set out in the Annual Economic Report for 1986/87.¹ It represents a contribution to the policies and strategies already implemented in the field of training and as one means of absorbing and preventing unemployment, especially long-term unemployment.

3. This Council communication represents an extension of the guidelines set out in the Council Resolutions of June 1983 concerning vocational training policies in the European Community in the 1980s and concerning vocational training measures relating to new information technologies.² It is equally closely linked to Community action programmes under way as regards employment and youth training in the European Community.³ Moreover, it provides a frame of reference for proposals for specific action as regards training for SMEs, soon to be examined by the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training with a view to presenting a proposal for Community action to the Council early in 1987.

4. This communication was drafted, bearing in mind the discussions of this Committee which met in May 1986. After underlining the need to reinforce continuing training for wage-earners as an investment (Section II), this communication highlights the positive lessons to be learned from firms (Section III) and the key components of the strategies to be implemented in the Member States (Section IV). It concludes with proposals regarding the priorities to be established for Community action (Section V).

¹COM(86)530 final.

²OJ C 193, 20.7.1983; OJ C 166, 24.6.1983.

³COM(86)285 final.

II. NEED FOR ADULT TRAINING

5. The importance of training to accompany technological and economic change, and more generally to revitalize the economy and the competitiveness of firms has long been understood. In the last ten years it has become apparent that traditional short-term economic measures are no longer sufficient since they limit socio-economic measures to the defensive role of adjusting to so-called "spontaneous" market factors. Completion of the internal market is necessary to stimulate economic growth in the Community, and it must be accompanied by a concerted labour market policy, on the one hand to avoid distortions of competition and increase firms' ability to adjust to structural changes, and on the other to give investment in human resources a central role.

6. The decision to concentrate on adult wage earners is no way presupposes that unemployed adults and/or other adults looking for a job are of less importance - on the contrary. The fact is that in many cases training for such adults (basic skills, recycling, etc.) takes place within firms and makes use of the same equipment and training materials as for those who are employed. The firm, regardless of size and/or status, is the place where goods and services are produced, and the workers and employees concerned constitute the core of the working population.

Moreover, the wage-earning population, which is easily identifiable and is not at odds with society for economic or social reasons, is directly affected by changes wrought by technology on work organization: it will therefore be affected by any innovative approach - of which training is one component - designed to make the work-place the focal point for the development of new skills. Finally, it can be assumed that firms and the wage-earning population will provide a stimulus for initial training and more general continuing training activities.

A. Training investment: aims and obstacles

7. In parallel with traditional training institutions giving priority to problems of employment or occupational integration of young people without skills or whose skills are inadequate or inappropriate and to workers who are unemployed or threatened with unemployment, training activities whatever the target public, are increasingly aimed at specific economic objectives. In those cases most representative of this change of attitude, economic goals and training goals are merged in a single programme.

8. The interaction with economic goals - at the level of firms and/or employment areas - is accompanied by a change in the ultimate aim and content of training policies. No longer is it a question of correcting after the event certain effects of industrial restructuring and new technological processes: there is a need to adopt an approach which anticipates the future that will seek, through adequate training policies, to multiply the effects of material investment and improve its results as regards productivity and work organization.

9. The emphasis is placed on "training-investment" (in other words the capacity to mobilize and make the most of human resources in and by firms) on account of the increasing importance ascribed in companies' strategic choices to factors such as flexibility of the production processes, need to exploit the results of research and development, and higher manufacturing standards. The strong growth of investment in intangible assets in the total investment of firms observed in recent years in industrialized countries (where training is central, together with other functions such as R&D, marketing, etc.) confirms this change of attitude towards continuing training, particularly the desire to find a better balance between general training and technical training.

10. The aim of making the most of human resources in firms, which themselves are undergoing profound changes,⁴ leads to recognition of the central role of training policy, in particular the development of in-service training to accompany the general evolution of skill profiles, while controlling new technological and industrial conditions for the production of goods and services, market and non-market.

11. To give in-service training a central place in firms implies that it cannot develop fully unless from the outset it is considered a non-material investment, closely linked to the overall development strategy, itself defined with a view to integrated and forward-looking management of all production factors.

12. There is broad consensus concerning this general approach among those concerned, employers, workers, trade organizations and the public authorities. General assent is expressed with regard to the three following proposals:

- (i) firstly, it is not a question of developing training for its own sake, but designing it as an intrinsic element of modernization and the best way of promoting the efficiency, mobility and skills of workers throughout their working life;
- (ii) secondly, there is a need for increased and more frequent recourse to continuing training measures by way of response, without going to extremes, to company policies and needs as well as to workers' individual and group aspirations and motivations;
- (iii) thirdly, there is a need for transformation of the procedures and methods of continuing training which must become largely diversified, and be based on the opportunities opened up by new information and communication technologies leading to new forms of partnership between users and trainers.

13. Regardless of the relevance and validity of an approach where training is regarded as an investment, it must be said that firms encounter a number of obstacles and constraints in implementing this policy. Without seeking to draw up an exhaustive list, attention should be drawn to the following:

- (i) problems facing firms as regards the management of an integrated and forward-looking training policy: budget estimates, planning objectives, choice of partners, defining and planning activities, regulation of production and training time, etc. The obstacles are such that some employers tend to limit in-firm training to the acquisition of a minimum of qualifications and technical skills;
- (ii) problems inherent in the growth of insecure employment and the increasing fragmentation of the labour market, especially the growth of temporary work, fixed-term employment contracts or reduced working hours (predominantly affecting women workers) causes particular problems. Such workers are often not very skilled, and on account of their peripheral position in relation to stable and skilled employment are likely to be left out of firms' training plans, especially as regards arrangements for training leave and training provisions included in collective agreements.

⁴See, "The further education and training of the adult labour force", OECD, Paris, 1986.

- (iii) problems arising within firms as a result of links between training policy and other aspects of internal administration (e.g. work organization and conditions, reorganization of working time, staff management, training of persons in charge of training, etc.);
- (iv) problems associated with participation of workers and their representatives in establishing strategic choices as regards continuing training and implementation of training activities proper. This point is all the more important since continuing training should be the means enabling workers to adapt rapidly and on a continuing basis to restructuring inside the firms - which are primarily responsible for this training - while the workers and their representatives should be informed and consulted according to existing national practices of the training measures implemented by the firms. This approach will encourage and motivate the workforce and create a better understanding of the changes the firms have to face.
- (v) problems relating to the structure of the training market, especially the role and place of outside training bodies acting in response to demand and at the behest of companies, especially with regard to their awareness of remote training resources, and the dispersion and fragmentation of existing training resources and equipment;
- (vi) difficulties concerning access to information concerning administration and education: rules and procedures are often complex, and the information available is often scattered and obsolescent, lack of references to materials, methods and cost, etc.

14. These obstacles are all the more evident in the case of the SMEs whose needs, given the nature of the industrial fabric, are more specific and widespread, and loom so large that many firms still regard adult training as an additional expenditure, or as a sacrifice to the social consensus or administrative rules and regulations. Furthermore the needs of firms and of SME's in particular vary quite widely according to the level of economic development attained. This is especially valid in the case of disadvantaged regions where firms are facing serious difficulties in adjusting to economic and industrial change and where SME's play a key role in development. SME's are confronted with options of strategic importance, simultaneously involving the modernization of plant and production systems and the setting-up of new management and work organization methods. Whether or not they operate in a high added-value bracket or maintain sub-contracting relationships with larger enterprises, SME's have to cope with a more specific training problem - reskilling at all levels.

B. Demographic constraints

15. A second reason militates in favour of the reinforcement and renewal of in-firm training for adults, namely the demographic trend. The population of the 12 Member States of the Community is static, or even declining as a result of several factors: the birth rate, which is below the renewal rate of the population (except in Ireland and to a lesser extent in Greece), the fall-off in immigration, and a reduction in the mortality rate are bringing about ageing of the population in the long term. Combined with earlier retirement, these trends will lead to the disappearance of the current surplus of young labour and will reinforce the relative weight of workers in the 25-44 age group of the working population⁵.

⁵ See report by the Economic and Social Committee on the demographic situation (CES/602/84 final).

16. Increased use of new technologies, their dissemination and their implementation in the production process are currently in the hands of young people whose level of training, in terms of qualifications and skills, corresponds more closely to the new manpower requirements. Given the long term relative decline in the number of young workers, and the reduced occupational and geographical mobility of adult workers, in the long term the logical and least costly way of offsetting this is to reinforce adult training systems, including retraining and advanced training. In other words, priority given to youth employment, however necessary it may be in view of high unemployment levels and obstacles in the way of occupational integration, should not involve overlooking or underestimating the crucial importance of adult training for firms in particular, and society in general.

III. TRAINING OF WORKERS IN THE MEMBER STATES

17. With the technical assistance of CEDEFOP, which has organised several conferences on this topic, the Commission has undertaken a number of comparative studies and analyses of the trends and patterns as regards in-firm training facilities for workers, and the financial mechanisms used. Special attention was given to the role and contribution of the various bodies concerned: employers, workers, public authorities and the two sides of industry.

18. A number of conclusions have emerged as a result of this work:

- (i) while employers have the chief responsibility for in-firm training, concertation mechanisms exist in all the Member States which bring together the two sides of industry and the public authorities. In some sectors these mechanisms may go as far as setting up a warning system informing persons involved on the labour market of any new economic or technical developments so that they can have maximum impact on and rapid translation into adaptation measures;
- (ii) in many Member States financing procedures have been introduced through legislation and collective bargaining;
- (iii) public authorities frequently take action to regulate the supply and demand for training, especially where there is an imbalance as regards the need for skilled and highly skilled manpower;
- (iv) in some Member States, the public authorities have worked out (and given financial support to) integrated in-service training programmes, at predominantly sectoral or regional level;
- (v) in most Member States stress is placed on the need for continuity between education and vocational training (especially as regards the 16-25 age group), for example the development of channels of employment and public authority systems of regulation. It should however be pointed out that political declarations in support of continuity do not necessarily lead to consistent administrative practices on the part of the different bodies engaged in education, vocational training and employment policy.

19. These conclusions must be examined in a context in which the public authorities are increasingly drawn in to take a hand in basic training - especially for young people and the unemployed - especially as regards upgrading measures - leaving the most directly useful training to firms. Segmentation of the training market in this fashion is in the long term unlikely to benefit the implementation of a consistent training strategy.

In this connection leaving the training of young people entirely to the public authorities is undesirable, and plans should be made to encourage firms to take a more active part in this type of training. To this end, the Commission intends to prolong the ongoing Community programmes by presenting proposals to the Council on "training and preparing young people for adult and working life".

IV. KEY COMPONENTS OF TRAINING STRATEGY FOR ADULTS IN FIRMS

20. Once it is recognized that in-service training and a skilled workforce are the prerequisites for success in a firm's modernization efforts, that the idea of training-investment will significantly improve the competitiveness and productivity of the firm, and that there is no conflict between the firm's interests and those of the worker as regards the importance of training, it is possible to identify three innovative trends as well as a number of implications for the role of and action by the public authorities and the two sides of industry.

A. Innovative trends

21. Search for a rapid return

Very often constrained by severe economic conditions to bring about radical changes in their attitude to training, a number of firms have noticed that in so doing they have enlarged their margins for manoeuvre as regards organization and flexibility of production. In other words a more integrated approach to the various internal management policies will produce a more rapid return on investment, it being well understood that technological innovation does not affect all categories of workers in the same way or with the same intensity. Investing in training for each of these categories will generate differing levels of payback and a faster or slower return.

22. Implementation of integrated planning

The possibility of incorporating company policies in a multiannual framework and thus working out plans for medium-term goals closely integrated with human resources management, investment and employment policies increasingly would seem to be paying off. This is true in the case of large firms where such an approach makes it possible to mobilize individual and group potential, provided it is backed up by social dialogue. It is also true in the case of the SMEs, primarily groups of SMEs and/or structures linking a large firm with SME subcontractors who work out a joint plan for a large-scale training project over two or three years, at the same time making a significant financial commitment, especially in the advanced technologies.

23. Development of new partnerships

The effectiveness of innovative in-service training for workers is multiplied by partnerships associating different firms, or associating firms and outside agencies. These partnerships can aim at:

- (i) pooling advanced technological processes to produce joint training programmes;
- (ii) joint action to identify training requirements by carrying out audits, and translating production requirements into training aims;
- (iii) pooling of financial resources leading to an immediate increase in resources available for mobilization to support training.

B. New role of the public authorities and the two sides of industry

24. Although in practice employers bear the chief responsibility for in-firm training, the public authorities, in the framework of their responsibilities and the legislation and provisions governing their relations with the two sides of industry, can make a significant contribution to innovative approaches. By organizing the environment in which firms operate by means of regulations or direct assistance, the public authorities can encourage innovation, especially by:

- (i) assisting in the launching of training operations, especially by providing advice on technological and industrial projects and their implications for work organization and training, and by grouping - at sectoral or local level - economic units dealing with similar problems as regards technological change and changes in the skill profiles of their staff;
- (ii) supporting pilot projects in association with firms, or even groups of firms at regional or sectoral level in the context of contracts for the economic development of training. Such contracts necessarily imply the joint definition of specific training goals and planning these goals with regard to time and the different categories of staff concerned. They also call for the prior organization of consultation procedures associating the various bodies concerned, the workers, especially their representatives, and the development of follow-up procedures to provide the necessary support for training measures as they proceed;
- (iii) ensuring, throughout the training operations, access of the persons concerned to advisory, guidance and follow-up services which should accompany all types of training.

25. In all events cost control is vital given that the large-scale development of in-service training comes up against the ever-increasing cost of training, especially in the areas of production affected by the new technologies. From this point of view, more systematic procedures to reduce the burden of firms as they expand their in-firm training effort should be worked out so that the innovative products and methods which certain firms develop spontaneously can be disseminated widely. In this connection, the public authorities could contribute to a broader dissemination of self-instruction opportunities by providing support for the dissemination and transfer of the "products" (content and methods), and as regards training, by promoting the use of new information and communication technologies (e.g. by appropriate tariffs for the cost of using the telephone networks). Similarly, as regards accounting, the question arises of treating training expenditure in the same way as investment expenditure - a measure which could give firms access to bank loans to carry out training projects justified by the expected economic benefits.

26. The fact that the public authorities can encourage or provide incentives for innovative in-service training policy does not in any way suggest that implementation of the policy should be limited to a dialogue between the employers and the State to the exclusion of the workers and their representatives. Negotiations between the two sides of industry have a direct impact on the working world, including vocational training matters. Efforts as regards in-service training will be ineffectual unless the workers are motivated to participate and this will mean:

- (i) recognition of their role as partners, through systematic information and consultation before, during and after in-service training measures;

- (ii) real possibility of access to training activities that are not confined to the firm's short-term specific requirements, especially as regards the development of holiday/training leave formulas;
- (iii) implementation of financing systems and/or allowances or tax arrangements;
- (iv) the recognition outside of qualifications acquired through primarily "in-house" training.

V. PRIORITIES FOR COMMUNITY ACTION

27. The common vocational training policy is based on Article 128 of the Treaty and the Council Decision of April 1963 on the general principles governing it. A new impetus for Community action in this area was provided by the Council resolution concerning vocational training policies in the European Community in the 1980s⁶ and one concerning vocational training measures relating to new information technologies⁷ and the 1985-88 work programme currently being implemented (Tecnet)⁸ which together on the basis of the observations and analyses set out in this communication provide the point of departure for Community action on adult training. Similarly, the goals assigned to the structural funds (especially the European Social Fund and the ERDF), also provide an environment and the means for Community action in this area, especially through the provisions in the Single European Act on the development of an integrated approach.⁹ Lastly, the recent Council decision setting up the COMETT programme¹⁰ underlines the importance of interaction between those concerned with training (especially universities) and undertakings, mainly through joint transnational continuing training projects and support for multilateral initiatives for multi-media training systems. Finally, account should be taken of the work done by CEDEFOP in various areas, mainly as regards the financing of training, and actions underway following the Council decision concerning the correspondence of vocational training qualifications.¹¹

28. In the area covered by this communication, Community action initiating and supplementing policies implemented in the Member States could be aimed at the three following objectives: exploiting the experience gained with a view to transfer and dissemination, developing new products and methods of training, promoting the development of new in-service training practices. It could be structured around four trends:

- (i) individualized training courses and new links with technical knowhow and social skills in the context of firms and the learning possibilities this environment provides;
- (ii) the vital need to develop new teaching materials, especially in connection with learning in new work situations, not only as regards qualifications but as regards new approaches to work organization, accompanied by the spread of new technologies in firms;
- (iii) the new possibilities opened up by the recognition of a new division of educational tasks between firms and education systems, thus opening the way to a fruitful combination of production activities and training activities, of working time and learning time.

⁶ OJ C 193, 20.7.1983.

⁷ OJ C 166, 24.6.1983;

⁸ COM(85)167 final.

⁹ Bull. EC, supplement 2/86, Article 130 D.

¹⁰ OJ L 222, 8.8.1986.

¹¹ OJ L 199, 31.7.1985.

- (iv) the new opportunities provided by information, telecommunications and audio-visual technologies to encourage continuing training, with particular reference to the general objectives of a Community tele-communications policy adopted by the Council in December 1984, and to the R & D activities which the Commission intends to propose shortly in regard to the actual technological aspects of these new training methods (DELTA).

29. Taking account, in this context, of the experience gained from current activities, especially the interventions of the ESF, and greater exploitation of this experience - three additional fields of action may be identified:

- (i) provision of support for setting up integrated training operations. In many cases, the effectiveness of a training operation depends as much on its innovative character (content and method) as on its being integrated in an overall approach. This can take the form of training audits and includes such phases as:

- identification of requirements
- definition of teaching practices
- combination of training methods
- methods evaluating operations.

Depending on procedures to be established, Community support could be given for training operations presenting an integrated approach and which would meet a number of criteria which could be:

- grouping together of several economic units that pool their efforts (SMEs in one production sector, large firm with subcontracting SMEs, etc.);
- precisely identified technological areas (especially those coming under Community R&D programmes such as BRITE);
- the wish to organize operations on a multiannual basis or extend them to other partners;
- use of innovative teaching practices,
- search for recognition of qualifications obtained through operations of this type;
- implementation of a dialogue in one or more firms calling for close and permanent consultation of the various social bodies concerned.

- (ii) an increase in the number of partnerships between firms and trainers in order to create new products.

The association of firms and trainers, especially when accompanied by joint work at the production site, leads to positive results as regards the quality and reproduction of training operations. From this point of view it is clear that the development of adult training largely depends on the Member States' capacity to develop new training materials for use in learning new work situations. As an extension of what is proposed under the COMETT programme, Community support could be given to operations, associating, in a European framework, one or more firms with training centres to develop and produce these new training materials. For example, such joint operations could concern the following areas:

- transition from research to industrial application,
- implementation of technological innovation in production,
- increasing general public awareness of the new technologies, especially workers with regard to the technological choices to be made.

(iii) support for the development of training systems on an individual basis. This point should be underlined: the success of a number of projects depended on the involvement of the individuals concerned in the success of the project, and on personal involvement going beyond the framework of the project itself. It would seem that by offering individuals more opportunities to follow courses on their own initiative considerably reinforces the take-up rate and dissemination of projects for groups initiated by firms or public authorities. The development of wide-ranging open training programmes with a flexible organization,¹² regardless of the supporting institution (firm, local authority, training organization) could play a decisive role in the development of worker training. In this connection the Community could provide financial and logistic support for setting up, in the context of the abovementioned European network of operations, concerted remote training operations, the content, methods of organization and management of which should be examined with the two sides of industry at European level.

It may be added that certain innovative in-service training operations for workers could provide a mainstay to which could be associated, in accordance with methods to be arranged with the circles concerned, young and/or adult unemployed workers; in this way the firm could offer a framework for training activities for this disadvantaged group.

30. The three complementary fields of action described above should also provide a platform for solid support envisaged by the Commission in connection with the social dialogue which Article 118 B of the Single Act requests it to initiate after ratification by all Member States. This concerns in particular the logistic and financial support for training and for the exchange of information and experience for and between both sides of industry, notably on the key theme of improving the awareness of workers, employers and their representatives regarding technological choices. In this same vein the Commission should also support the efforts of both sides of industry in order to show the advantages of continuing training to all persons or agencies concerned, both in terms of career prospects for the workers and of increased technological competitiveness for the firms.
31. Vocational training for management is probably fundamental to efficiency and to the ability of firms to confront new industrial challenges and technological change (as underlined in the Commission's report on "improving the competitiveness and industrial structures of the Community"). In addition an important dimension of the Community action proposed here is training for the management of human resources, particularly for managers who are a priority target group. The introduction and dissemination of new technologies, and especially in the case of SMEs the transfer of technology, have had a considerable impact on the internal operation of management, training, (re)training advanced training etc. are all affected in different ways. Implementation of a coherent approach within firms, i.e. the need to develop a coordinated strategy in this area calls for a special effort as regards the firms'

¹²In the context of remote training programmes, such systems usually make use of a combination of technical resources and individual work in groups on a decentralized basis.

internal management, and therefore special training for this task. In this respect, particular attention should be paid to improving knowledge about working conditions and the relationship between them and the organisation of work, as underlined in the Commission's Communication on living and working conditions. This also goes for "health and safety" aspects, insofar as building safety into vocational training is both a means of attracting the interests of workers to follow (and especially follow-up) their training, and also likely to convince employers that safety and economic efficiency are not poles apart.

32. This experimental approach, focused on the firm, should be supported by the development of a concerted research programme, focusing on a number of key common topics.

The programme, like the one implemented under the TecneT programme, would, in a Community framework, bring together research departments and innovative firms from various Member States account being taken of work already accomplished, especially by CEDEFOP.

The topics suitable for cooperative research could be the following:

- (i) obstacles and constraints (rules and regulations, taxation, etc.) to the development of new training partnerships, especially in the case of the SMEs,
- (ii) employment channels, paths to unemployment and access to qualifications of the future;
- (iii) positive actions to be set up for workers undergoing in-service training;
- (iv) division between group and individual investments;
- (v) externalization of in-service training operations.

33. The above Community action could be accompanied by the exchange of information and experience on innovative in-service training practices in the Member States. Along the lines of what is already underway, it could be supported by a programme of study visits and meetings, thus reinforcing activities in this area already implemented by CEDEFOP on behalf of the Commission.

VI. CONCLUSION

34. The urgent need for Community action in the field of adult training in firms is particularly evident in the case of SMEs. As has already been said several times above, these enterprises are faced with special problems of development and adjustment and, consequently, with special problems of continuing training.

Continuing training for SMEs, as part of the overall Community strategy outlined above calls for an effort aimed primarily at management staff and forming one component of a general policy involving all the staff of these enterprises. The additional fields of action proposed in paragraph 29 are therefore particularly relevant where SMEs are concerned, whether the aim is to improve the quality of the continuing training available, or to foster the development of an integrated approach which provides SMEs with training guidance and technical assistance, or finally, to promote innovative methods involving continuing training partnerships between groups of SMEs and/or large firms and subcontracting SMEs.

35. As outlined earlier in the introduction, this Communication represents a first response to the Council Resolution of 11 December, 1986. By identifying the possible basis for Community action in respect of in-service training for workers, this Communication is fully in line with the Community strategy to strengthen the links between economic growth and the social dimension of the Community in the context of the completion of the internal market and the development of a technological Europe. As of now, with the assistance of CEDEFOP, the Commission intends to consolidate the efforts underway, especially in regard to training in human resources management.

36. In conclusion, the Commission invites the Council, and the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee to examine this Communication. On the basis of the conclusions that these Institutions draw up, the Commission after due consultation with the two sides of industry and the bodies concerned (particularly the Advisory Committee for Vocational Training) will take the initiative towards the end of 1987 of submitting a proposal to the Council for a Community medium term action programme which should be implemented during 1989.