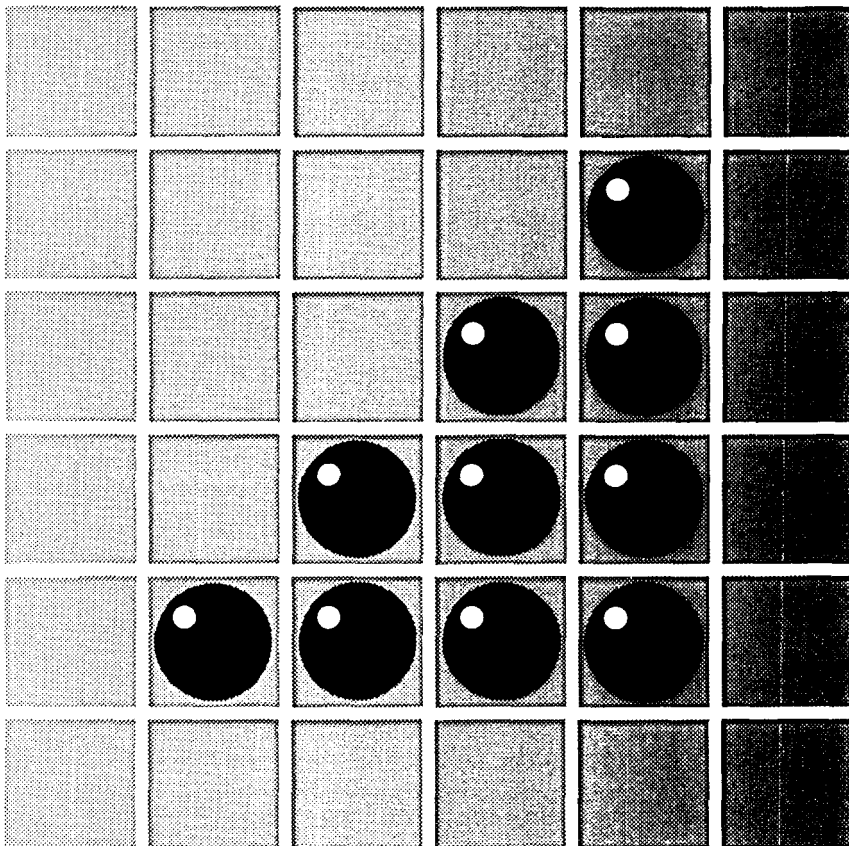


THE SOCIAL POLICY OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY



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**The social policy
of the European Community**

Third edition

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Introduction

One of the principal objectives of the European Community is to integrate the economies of the 10 Member States, and thereby create an economic area in which some 270 million citizens can share in the constant improvement in living and working conditions called for by the authors of the Community Treaties.

The first section of this booklet describes the origins of social policy in the Treaties establishing the three European Communities (European Coal and Steel Community, European Economic Community and European Atomic Energy Community).

The economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s was a source of great social progress: in the first 15 years of its existence, *per capita* gross domestic product in the Community practically doubled in real terms; the same was true of real wages, which grew fastest in the countries where they had been lowest when the Community was set up. In general terms there was an upward harmonization of living and working conditions in various Member States in keeping with the objective set out in the Community Treaties.

The second section deals with changes in Community social policy, which gathered great momentum in the 1970s as the economic crisis spread across the world.

The social action programme implemented by the Community during this period has three main objectives — full and better employment, an improvement in the living and working conditions of society as a whole and the least-favoured categories of persons in particular, and increased involvement of management and labour in the life of the Community and of workers in the life of their firms.

This second stage in the Community's social policy has had both its successes and its failures.

Real *per capita* gross domestic product continued to increase, though by no means as fast as in the previous two decades, and there has been a marked increase in real wages, notably during the first part of the period in question; prosperity measured by home ownership and ownership of consumer durables, has gone up at a time when working hours have become shorter and paid annual holidays have become longer. On the other hand, the world crisis has pushed the unemployment rate up; by the end of the 1970s there were more than six million job-seekers, which is twice as many as there were in the 10 present Member States in 1958.

The world economic situation continued to deteriorate in the early 1980s. In 1980 Community GDP grew in volume terms by only 1.4% and in the following year it actually fell by 0.6%; however, there was a slight upturn in 1982. This unfavourable economic situation in the Community was accentuated by high inflation, significant balance of payments deficits and

particularly by steadily rising unemployment; the number of jobless rose from 6 million at the end of 1979 to 8 million at the end of 1980, 10 million at the end of 1981 and 12 million at the end of 1982. The present outlook leaves little hope of an improvement in the near future.

Community social policy in the 1980s will therefore be confronted with more serious problems than ever before. It has an important mission: to safeguard past achievements, enable those who did not benefit in the past to benefit now and, if possible, make further progress.

The Community has received applications for accession from Portugal and Spain, both of which have economic and social structures likely to exacerbate the present problems confronting the Community.

Achievement of the social objectives of the Treaties up to the beginning of the 1970s

Social provisions of the Treaties establishing the Communities

Since 1 January 1967 there has been a single Commission and a single Council for the European Coal and Steel Community, which was set up in 1952, and the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community, which were set up in 1958. The original Treaties, however, have not yet been merged and thus still constitute the legal basis for the Community's social policy. This section discusses the main social provisions in those Treaties.

The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC)

The ECSC was set up to bring coal and steel production in the Member States under a common High Authority, the idea being to create a common market for coal and steel. To this end the ECSC was endowed with far-reaching powers to regulate the market and to rationalize and modernize the two industries.

Social questions were not overlooked: one of the Community's objectives was to 'promote improved living and working conditions . . . for the workers' and provision was made in the Treaty for:

- (i) studies and consultations to facilitate the redeployment of workers made redundant by market development or technical change and to assess the possibilities for improving workers' living standards and working conditions (Articles 46 to 48);
- (ii) promoting research into occupational safety (Article 55);
- (iii) financing programmes for the creation of new activities and the grant of aid for the retraining and resettlement of workers (Article 56);
- (iv) guaranteeing adequate wages for workers in the ECSC industries (Article 68);
- (v) establishing free movement of workers whilst safeguarding their entitlement to social security benefits (Article 69).

The European Economic Community (EEC)

As its name implies the EEC is first and foremost an economic community. But the Treaty establishing it contains social provisions similar to those of the ECSC Treaty, although some of them are not so far-reaching. To ensure the constant improvement in working conditions and employment referred to in the preamble the Treaty makes provision for:

- (i) the gradual achievement of the free movement of workers, accompanied by guaranteed eligibility for social security benefits (Articles 48, 49 and 51);

- (ii) encouraging the exchange of young workers under a joint programme (Article 50);
- (iii) promoting close collaboration between the Member States in social matters so as to encourage an improvement in living and working conditions and make possible their harmonization while the improvement is being maintained (Articles 117 and 118);
- (iv) the principle of equal pay for men and women doing the same work (Article 119);
- (v) setting up a European Social Fund to promote employment opportunities and geographical and occupational mobility for workers within the Community (Articles 123 to 127);
- (vi) establishing general principles for implementing a Community vocational training policy (Article 128).

The European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom)

'It shall be the task of the Community to contribute to the raising of the living standard in the Member States and to the development of relations with other countries by creating the conditions necessary for the speedy establishment of growth of nuclear industries' (Article 1).

To this end, the overriding need is to protect not only workers but the population as a whole from contamination hazards, and the Euratom Treaty provides for the establishment of basic standards for the protection of the health of workers and the general public against the dangers arising from ionizing radiation (Articles 30 to 39).

Implementation of the social provisions

The European Communities were set up at a time of unparalleled economic prosperity which, give or take a few cyclical fluctuations, lasted until the beginning of the 1970s. These beneficial effects of what, in point of fact, was a worldwide trend were intensified by the gradual removal of legal, quantitative, qualitative or other barriers to the movement of goods, capital, services and persons between the Member States.

Thus, from the late 1950s until 1972, the level of prosperity rose faster in the Member States than in most of the other industrialized nations of the Western world: in real terms gross domestic product practically doubled, the increase being more pronounced in the countries which had the lowest levels when the Communities were set up (see Table 1).

A healthy economic climate such as this is, of course, conducive to social progress, and indeed the wages of workers in the Member States doubled in real terms during this period, while other improvements were achieved in their working conditions.

Free movement of workers

The principle of freedom of movement — the right of Community citizens to decide where to work in the Community — has gradually been extended both to the ECSC industries and to the rest of the economy.

TABLE 1
Economic growth of the six countries

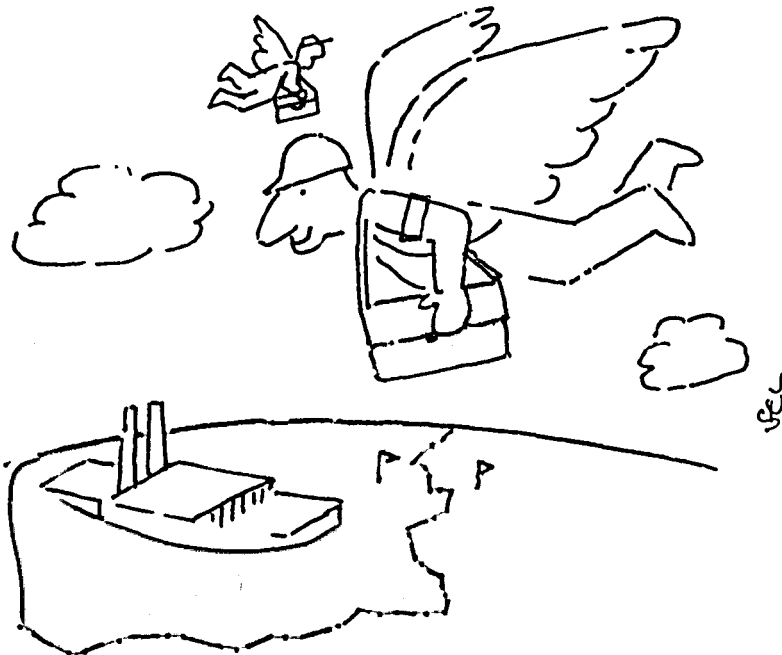
Country	Gross national product per capita				Wages ²
	ECU ¹		Increases in		Increases in real terms
	1958	1972	nominal terms	real terms	
Belgium	1 024	3 224	215	90	91
FR of Germany	986	3 745	280	100	115
France	1 183	3 354	184	111	97
Italy	592	2 110	256	107	144
Luxembourg	1 337	3 642	172	73	70
The Netherlands	751	3 216	328	104	111

¹ 1 ECU (1.3.1983) = BFR/LFR 45.01; DKR 8.12; DM 2.28; 78.46; FF 6.47; HFL 1320.65; IRL 0.72; UKL 0.62; USD 0.93

² Average annual earnings.

SEA national accounts, SOEC; Report on the development of the social situation in the Community 1973, Commission of the EC.

Workers in the iron and steel industries covered by the ECSC Treaty were guaranteed freedom of movement under two decisions taken by the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting in the Council on 8 December 1954 and 16 May 1961, which opened up a whole range of occupations.



The principles of Articles 48 and 49 of the EEC Treaty, which govern freedom of movement for workers, were finally given practical form by a Council Decision of 15 October 1968; this entered into force on 8 November 1968, more than a year before the date stipulated. All wage and salary-earners in the Community may apply for job vacancies whatever their nationality, reside in another State for that purpose, settle there in order to take up employment and be joined there by their families; they are eligible for the same rights as nationals as regards working conditions and terms of employment. However, a few restrictions are maintained on grounds of public policy, public security or public health, particularly as regards employment in the public service.

To facilitate the international recruitment of workers the Commission set up a 'European system for the international clearing of vacancies and applications for employment', the Sedoc system, which is designed to give priority to workers from the other Member States for jobs which cannot be filled by national workers. The system uses a 'standard language' for the mutual clearing of vacancies and applications for employment, and particulars of both are compiled at the same time and exchanged between placement offices in the Member States.

During the 1970s this standard system was generally adopted by placement offices in the Member States and it is now used regularly to centralize several thousand vacancies within the Community.

Social security for migrant workers

One of the fundamental conditions that must be met before a worker will agree to work in a foreign country is that he should be able to qualify for benefits in the event of illness, unemployment, industrial accident, disability and retirement and for dependent relatives.

One of the first legal acts of the European Economic Community in 1958 was to set up a social security system for migrant workers, which entered into force on 1 January 1959 (workers in the ECSC industries working in another Member State were already eligible for social security benefits under the rules on freedom of movement). The following principles apply:

- (i) migrant workers from the Member States are eligible for the same social security benefits as national workers;
- (ii) periods of employment and insurance completed in several Member States are aggregated for the calculation of benefits;
- (iii) the beneficiary may, at any time, request the transfer of social security benefits from one Member State to another.

Promotion of workers' geographical and occupational mobility

The ECSC High Authority began giving aid to promote the re-employment of redundant workers in March 1954 and the European Social Fund began operating at the end of 1960. In both cases the Community originally granted financial assistance, generally covering 50% of the total cost of operations, to promote the re-employment of redundant workers, particularly tide-over allowances during the interim period prior to re-employment and financial contributions to vocational retraining and resettlement.

Workers in ECSC industries

In the ECSC, workers in the coal industry were mainly affected by adjustment and restructuring measures in the 1950s and 1960s. Consequently, they accounted for the bulk of the 460 000 or so workers who had received financial aid worth nearly 350 million dollars from the High Authority by the end of 1972.

In the early 1970s several Member States began to submit a growing number of applications for assistance for vocational retraining and resettlement of iron and steel workers. As a result of the increased difficulties facing the iron and steel industries, the trend was reversed during the 1970s and more was spent on aid for adaptation measures for iron and steel workers than for workers in the coal industry (see Table 2).

TABLE 2
Redeployment aid for workers in the ECSC industries, 1954-82

Country	Coal mining	Steel industry, iron ore mining	Total
	<i>Number of recipients</i>		
1954-75	450 779	112 761	563 540
1976-82	71 472	174 389	245 861
Total	522 251	287 150	809 401
Belgium	90 465	21 141	111 606
FR of Germany	298 558	78 524	377 082
France	43 835	53 120	96 955
Ireland	—	229	229
Italy	6 391	23 574	29 965
Luxembourg	—	2 298	2 298
The Netherlands	41 446	1 839	43 285
United Kingdom	41 556	106 425	147 981
	<i>Amounts granted</i>		
1954-75 - million u.a.	233.1	31.9	265.0
1976-82 - million u.a./ECU	142.8	340.9	483.7
Total	375.9	372.8	748.7

The ECSC Treaty also provides for something that has no equivalent in the EEC Treaty — low-interest loans for the building and modernization of low-cost housing for workers in the coal and steel industries. The aim is to enable these workers to acquire suitable accommodation at a reasonable price or a reasonable rent and thereby improve their living and working conditions.

Funds were made available via special financial aid schemes; nine have been implemented so far. These schemes provided Community financial aid for about 180 000 low-cost dwellings (see Table 3).

TABLE 3
Financing of the nine ECSC low-cost housing schemes — situation at 31 December 1982

Country	Commission funds (million EUA)		Total number of dwellings financed
	Own resources	Borrowed funds	
Belgium	13.41	18.59	8 176
Denmark	1.70	—	573
FR of Germany	90.17	13.24	100 474
Greece	0.88	—	91
France	52.29	—	40 387
Ireland	1.17	—	267
Italy	26.76	62.81	9 569
Luxembourg	4.95	1.70	1 410
The Netherlands	9.97	2.14	6 216
United Kingdom	19.15	—	11 572
EUR 10	220.45	98.48	178 735

The first European Social Fund

The European Social Fund is the chief instrument of employment policy which the Treaty gives the Community institutions; and yet its budgetary allocation for the 1960s was wholly inadequate, considering the scale of the task it was to perform.

Article 123 of the EEC Treaty describes its task as being to 'render the employment of workers easier and increase their geographical and occupational mobility'. For this purpose it may grant assistance to guarantee the reintegration into the production process of unemployed, underemployed and handicapped persons.

The first Social Fund had two major weaknesses: for one thing it could only intervene retroactively, that is to say, when the worker who had received vocational retraining had been productively employed for at least six months; for another, intervention from the Fund for a particular country or region depended mainly on the scale of structures and funds available there for vocational retraining and resettlement. It is hardly surprising, then, that the main beneficiary of the first European Social Fund was the Federal Republic of Germany (see Table 4).

TABLE 4
Amounts granted by the first Social Fund

Country	Vocational retraining	Resettle- ment	Total	% per country
	<i>(million units of account)</i>			
Belgium	12.7	—	12.7	3.2
FR of Germany	168.0	4.3	172.3	43.7
France	49.0	2.5	51.5	13.1
Italy	137.4	4.7	142.1	36.0
Luxembourg	—	—	—	—
The Netherlands	15.6	0.1	15.7	4.0
EUR 6	382.7	11.6	394.3	100.0

In all, Community financial assistance provided under the Social Fund helped more than 1.1 million unemployed persons to find new employment (850 000 or so of them being Italian), while 800 000 job-seekers were resettled, of whom about half were Italian.

Improvement of living and working conditions

As can be seen from the first section, the Treaties did not really provide the Community institutions with many practical instruments for improving the living and working conditions of workers or of society as a whole. In the EEC Treaty only the principle of equal pay is binding on the Member States; the Euratom Treaty adds minimum health and safety standards. But the Commission, mindful of the general spirit of the Treaties, has always endeavoured to raise the level of well-being in broader terms.

Equal pay

Although the constitutions of most of the Member States assert the principle of equal treatment for the two sexes, equal pay for men and women doing the same work was still a long way off in the 1950s; on the contrary, collective agreements in industry commonly made provision for lower pay for women in most of the founder Member States.

Under Article 119 of the EEC Treaty these pay differentials should have been entirely done away with by the end of 1961. However, this was not so and the Member States meeting in conference on 30 December 1961 passed a resolution revising the original schedule. It was agreed that all pay differences for men and women should be phased out by the end of 1964.

Other working conditions

In the 1960s the Commission undertook a series of studies and surveys on virtually every aspect of employment and social protection and discussed these problems with national experts at seminars and working groups (with government representatives, with employers' and workers' representatives, or in tripartite groups). The results were published and helped to make all concerned more fully aware of working conditions in the Member States.

The Commission also addressed recommendations to the Member States in matters as varied as the protection of young people at work, industrial medicine, social assistance and accommodation for migrant workers and their families and the adoption of a European list of occupational diseases, etc. But recommendations, unlike directives and regulations, are not binding on the Member States, and all too few of them have been transposed into national legislation.

Safety at work

Far more striking progress was made as regards the protection of workers against industrial accidents and other risks, especially in the steel and coal industries. The High Authority very

soon began to deal with this problem, first and foremost in collieries where, in addition to the higher risk of accidents, there were health hazards arising from the inhalation of dust. The standing Mines Safety and Health Committee was set up in 1957 and its intensive activities have been instrumental in reducing the hazards of working in mines.

A Steel Industry Safety and Health Committee followed in 1965; it has drawn up a whole series of safety standards and undertaken voluminous research into safety problems in that industry.

The Commission has proposed action on several fronts for more coordinated measures to combat industrial accidents in more general terms.

Health protection

One of the first things the Commission did in the Euratom sphere was to establish uniform basic standards guaranteeing the nationals of all the Member States the same protection against ionizing radiation. These basic Euratom standards have regularly been revised and the permissible level of emission has steadily been brought down. Euratom inspectors are responsible for monitoring and checking levels of radioactivity, while the Community network of monitoring stations measures radioactivity in the air, in fall-out, in foodstuffs and in water. The results are regularly analysed and published.

Social provisions for certain industries

Outside the ECSC industries, the main specific areas in which a social policy has been applied are agriculture and transport. Joint committees consisting of an equal number of employers' and workers' representatives from the Member States have been set up at the Community institutions to consider a variety of social problems connected with various types of transport, agriculture and fisheries, and particularly vocational training, working conditions and safety.

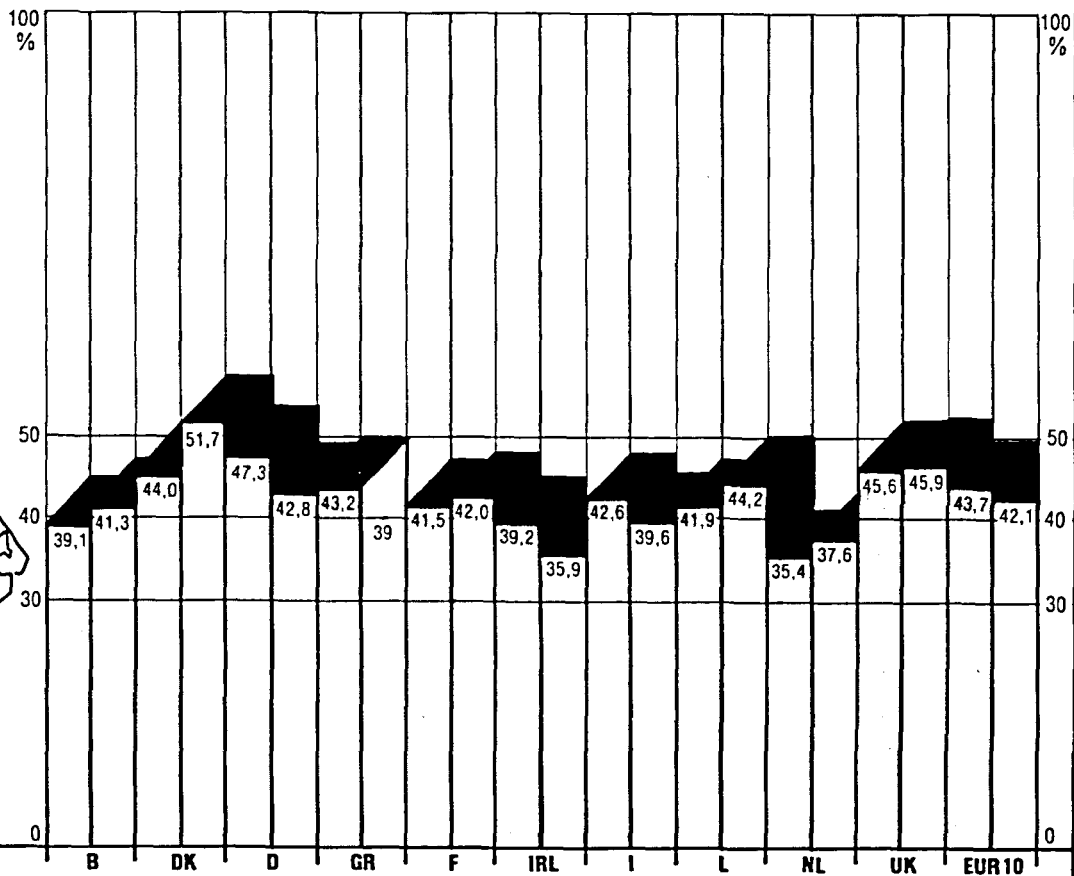
In mid-1968 their findings led to the first European agreement in agriculture (a sort of Community outline agreement) on the maximum working hours of full-time workers in arable crop production. This was based on an average working week of up to 45 hours in any one year. It was followed by a similar agreement for full-time workers in livestock production. Both agreements were updated (the average working week was reduced to 40 hours) in 1978 and 1980 respectively. In December 1981, the provisions of the agreement for the arable production sector were extended to full-time agricultural workers engaged in the production of all farm and horticultural crops, excluding forest products. So far agriculture is the only branch of economic activity in which agreements have been reached at Community level by employers' and workers' organizations.

The joint committees have made an extremely useful contribution to the preparation of regulations harmonizing certain social provisions in transport, the first of which was adopted on 1 April 1969 and dealt with the minimum age for drivers, driving periods, rest periods and control procedures applicable to road transport. To ensure more effective application of this Regulation, on 20 July 1970 the Council approved a Regulation making it compulsory to install a mechanical checking device (tachograph) in road transport vehicles.

Civil working population

(% of total population)

1960
1981



Social policy from the beginning of the 1970s

The common market came into being at a time of economic prosperity, which made it possible for pockets of unemployment to be absorbed and for living and working conditions to improve considerably. However, it became apparent that not all sections of society were benefiting equally from this increased prosperity. Declining industries had to rethink their production system and adapt and resettle their workers, whereas other expanding industries were short of skilled labour. Residual unemployment affected certain categories of people, occupations and regions more than others. Rising wages and social security benefits in real terms brought about only scant improvements to the distortions in the income and assets pyramid.

To cope with this situation and to overcome obvious shortcomings in the Community social policy, two important measures were undertaken early in the 1970s: the first radical reform of the tasks and operation of the European Social Fund and the launching of a social action programme.

European Social Fund

First reform of the European Social Fund in 1971

At the end of the 1960s the Commission had begun preparations for a fundamental reform of the tasks and operation of the European Social Fund designed to make it an instrument of Community labour market policy more closely adapted to the integration achieved so far. To achieve this aim, the Social Fund had to become more flexible and projects for financing could no longer be selected according to the Member States' own criteria but according to Community criteria. It also had to be made more effective.

This significant reform was incorporated in a decision of the Council of Ministers of 1 February 1971 and came into effect on 1 May 1972. Apart from the abovementioned principles the reformed Social Fund could provide assistance for operations carried out by private bodies or even firms. In addition, the reformed Social Fund had a much larger budget than its predecessor.

The Council decision of 1 February 1971 on the reform of the European Social Fund refers to two areas of intervention:

- (a) Under Article 4 the Social Fund may intervene when the employment situation is affected or threatened as a result of a Community policy or when the need arises for joint action to match labour supply and demand in the Community.

Under this Article the Council took decisions in respect of vocational retraining, reintegration and other measures on behalf of:

- (i) persons leaving agriculture to take up employment elsewhere;
 - (ii) workers in the textile and clothing industries who had to move to another industry;
 - (iii) migrant workers;
 - (iv) handicapped persons;
 - (v) unemployed persons or young job-seekers under 25;
 - (vi) women.
- (b) Under Article 5 the Fund may intervene to deal with certain difficult employment situations. Its activities mainly concern:
- (i) backward regions and regions where the predominant industry is in decline;
 - (ii) difficulties encountered by certain groups of firms;
 - (iii) adaptation to technical progress;
 - (iv) handicapped persons, elderly workers and women over 35.

Most of the Fund's appropriations (about 90%) are allocated for basic and advanced vocational training, which will help promote occupational mobility.

The rapid extension in the European Social Fund's coverage after the first reform in 1971 gave rise to a number of difficulties: these included the risk of dispersing aid, sluggish adaptation to the needs of the labour market, and delays in examining applications and paying the aid.

Review of the rules governing the operation of the Social Fund, 1977

To ensure that priority for Fund assistance was enjoyed by the industries and regions most in need of it, the Commission put a series of proposals for reform to the Council in 1977. These proposals were adopted by the Council at its meeting of 28 October 1977 and entered into force on 1 January 1978.

As a result, since 1978 at least 50% of the Fund's appropriations have been reserved for operations referred to in Article 5 of the 1971 decision designed to resolve employment problems in the less-developed areas of the Community; assistance for these operations may be given at the increased rate of 55% (instead of 50%). Special attention has been focused on unemployed women: henceforth the Social Fund may contribute towards the vocational training and adaptation of women over 25.

Creation of a new type of Social Fund aid for young people in 1978

From Table 5 it can be seen that unemployment in the Community increased in the 1970s, particularly after the first oil crisis in 1973. This deterioration of the situation on the labour market particularly affected young people under 25, whose share of total unemployment rose from 24% in 1970 to over 39% in 1979. The situation is all the more serious in that it particularly affects school-leavers, many of whom cannot even find a first job. They then get caught up in a vicious circle: because they have no vocational training they cannot obtain employment, and because they have no employment they cannot acquire vocational experience.

Workers' average earnings

Average annual increase in real terms (%)



- 1960/65
- 1965/70
- 1970/75
- 1975/80

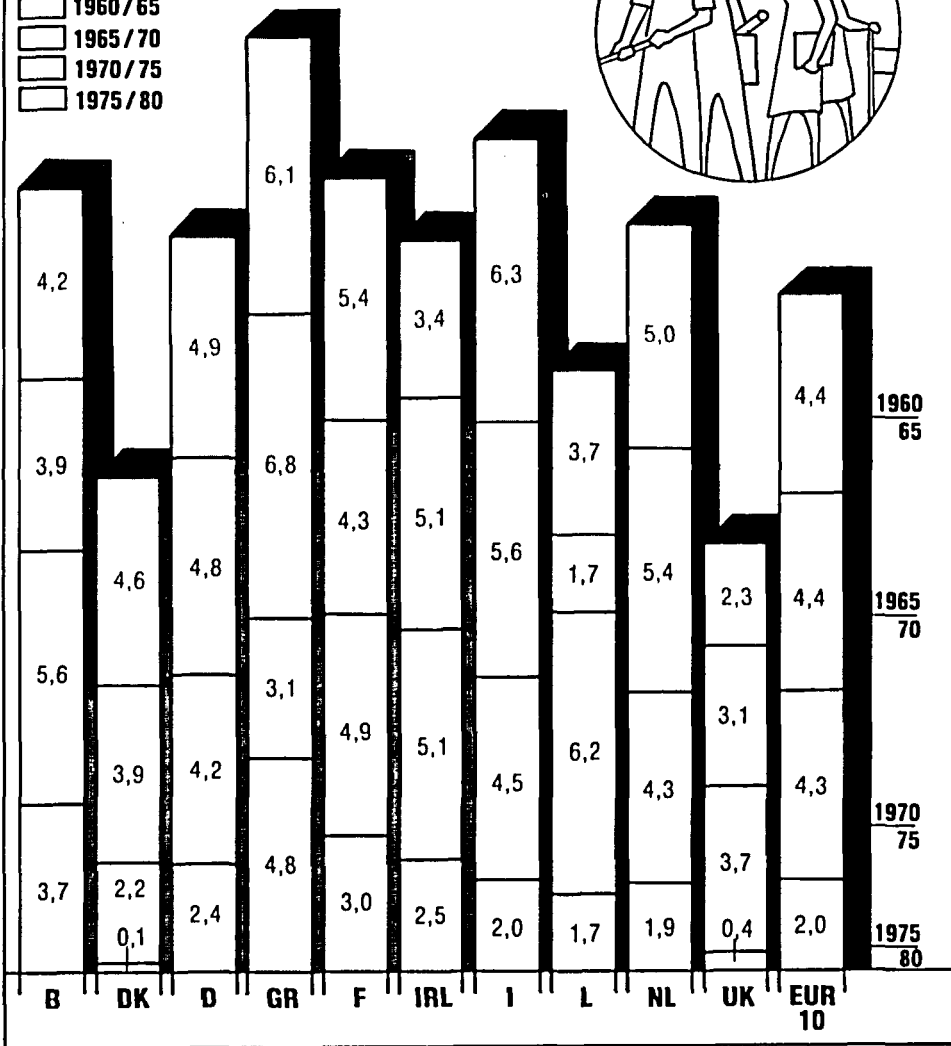


TABLE 5
Youth unemployment in the nine countries

Year	Total number of registered unemployed ¹ (‘000s)	Registered young job-seekers ²	
		(‘000s)	as % of total
1970	2 121	451	24.0
1971	2 586	655	27.5
1972	2 862	750	28.2
1973	2 592	680	28.7
1974	3 067	820	30.2
1975	4 612	1 540	34.5
1976	5 238	1 835	36.7
1977	5 736	2 160	37.9
1978	5 973	2 190	38.2
1979	6 060	2 240	39.1

¹ Source of the average figures is the *Eurostat Review 1970-79*.

² Mid-year figures are obtained from national statistics.

In the light of this situation and following a request by the European Council held in Bremen on 6 and 7 July 1978, the Council adopted on 18 December 1978 a regulation proposed by the Commission on the introduction of a new form of aid from the European Social Fund for young people. Assistance of up to 30 EUA per person per week may be given for up to 12 months:

- (i) to promote the recruitment of young people under 25 years of age who are unemployed or seeking employment, by means of additional jobs likely to give young people experience with a vocational content or making it easier for them to find a stable job;
- (ii) to promote the employment of young people under 25 years of age, who are unemployed or seeking employment, by means of projects for the creation of additional jobs which fulfil a public need.

This regulation is important in that for the first time the European Social Fund can make a direct financial contribution to creating new jobs: previously the Fund was confined to promoting geographical and occupational mobility.

As a result of this new regulation, since 1979 the reformed Social Fund has been able to make a more significant contribution to financing national activities to promote geographical and occupational mobility and the recruitment and employment of young people. In 1982, the share of the Fund's appropriations for commitment reserved for young people equalled the volume of appropriations allocated for disadvantaged regions for the first time (see Table 6).

Further revision of the Social Fund, 1983

Pursuant to the Council Decision of 1 February 1971 concerning the review of the European Social Fund, in October 1982 the Commission forwarded an opinion on the review of the European Social Fund with a view to reforming the tasks and operation of the Fund.

According to this opinion, the major objective of the review was to establish closer coordination between the Fund and Community priorities in respect of employment and vocational

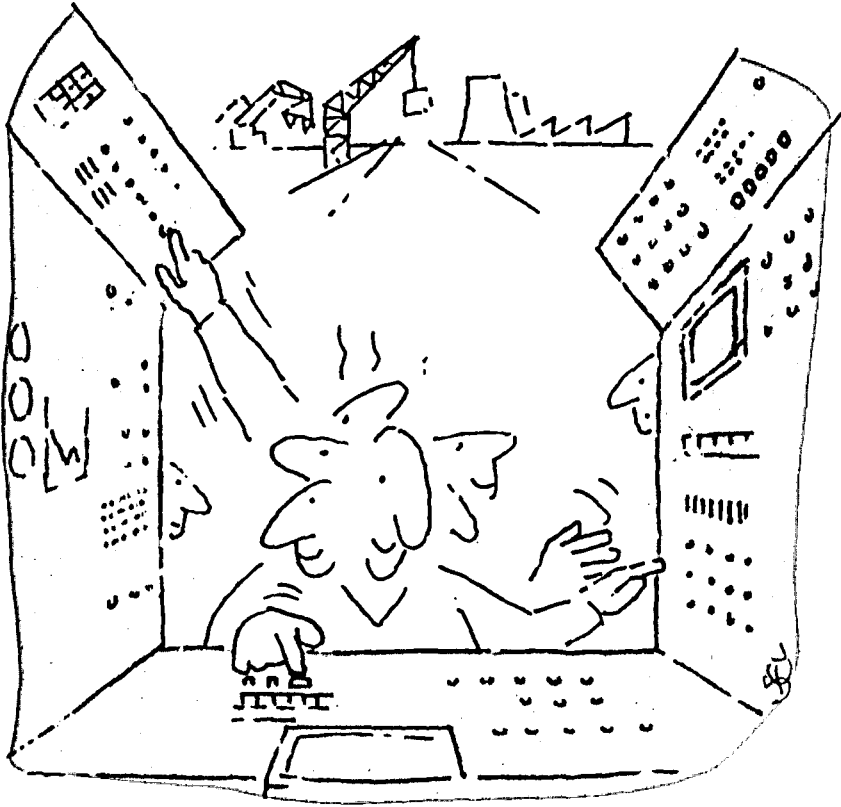


TABLE 6
Commitment appropriations of the reformed Social Fund

Year	Totals (million EUA/ECU)	of which			
		for young people		for regions	
		million EUA/ECU	%	million EUA/ECU	%
1972	27.89	—	—	17.13	61.4
1973	182.08	—	—	109.35	60.1
1974	254.58	—	—	157.63	61.9
1975	371.83	35.14	9.5	206.64	55.6
1976	440.00	69.92	15.9	240.21	54.6
1977	615.80	174.10	28.3	310.00	50.3
1978	568.08	179.28	31.6	263.87	46.4
1979	774.45	301.55	38.9	322.30	41.6
1980	1 014.22	392.20	38.7	423.78	41.8
1981	1 000.15	373.38	37.3	422.36	42.2
1982	1 533.93	609.52	39.7	608.36	39.7

Source: Reports of the activities of the European Social Fund.

training, to ensure greater consistency between the Fund's intervention and the economic, industrial and sectoral policies pursued by the Community and ensure more effective coordination between the Fund and the Community's other financial instruments. To improve the effectiveness of intervention by the European Social Fund, the Commission was in favour of simplifying its complex structure, the nine separate fields of intervention would be replaced by three areas of activity, including, in particular, young people under 18.

In the Commission's view, the review should lead to greater concentration of Fund resources in areas of greatest need, particularly those affected by unemployment and economic difficulties, and on the other hand should enlarge its capabilities for action in respect of young people, the creation of new jobs and innovative measures. To improve the efficiency of the Fund it proposed that procedures for the award and payment of assistance should be accelerated.

It is expected that the Council will adopt this reform in 1983 so that the new provisions can take effect from 1 January 1984.

Social action programme

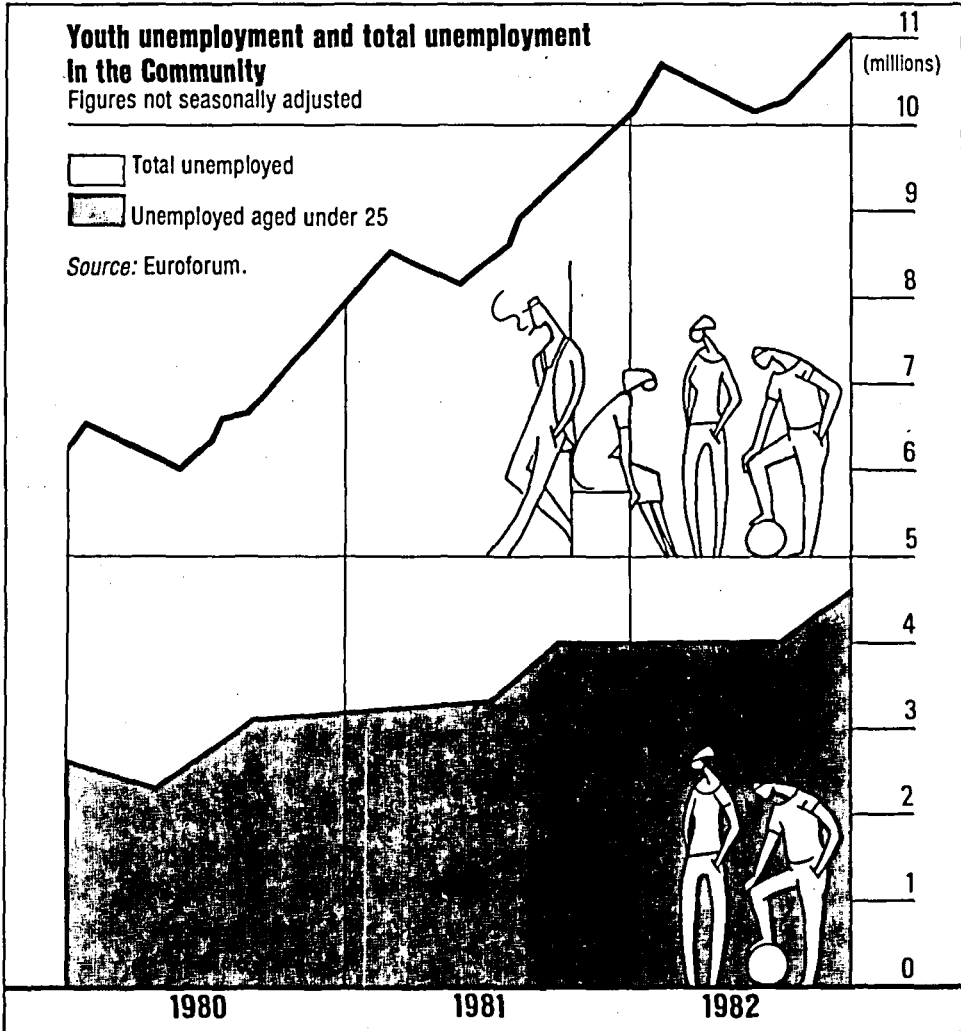
The 1971 reform of the European Social Fund had demonstrated the Community's growing interest in social matters and an awareness of the need for an active Community social policy. This approach was clearly expressed in the final declaration of the Paris Summit Conference in October 1972 when the Heads of State or Government of the Member States of the enlarged Community emphasized that they 'attached as much importance to vigorous action in the social field as to the achievement of the economic and monetary union'.

To this end the Community's institutions were asked to draw up an action programme by 1 January 1974, 'providing for concrete measures and the necessary resources, particularly in the framework of the Social Fund'.

In October 1973 after lengthy preliminary discussions, the Commission submitted to the Council proposals for a social action programme and a draft resolution on the principal objectives and priority actions involved.

Under this resolution, adopted by the Council on 21 January 1974, the governments of the Member States undertook to carry out some 40 priority measures during an initial three-year period in pursuance of the Community's three major objectives:

- (i) attainment of full and better employment;
- (ii) improvement and upward harmonization of living and working conditions;
- (iii) increased involvement of management and labour in the economic and social decisions of the Community, and of workers in the life of their firms.



Achievement of the three principal objectives

The social action programme went further than the Treaty in providing the Community with the means of conducting an active social policy, enabling it to show a more human face by taking a greater interest in the problems of its citizens.

The priority measures set out in the resolution of 21 January 1974 consequently added a whole range of activities for less-favoured groups and persons.

A salient feature of the social action programme was also the desire to increase the Community's powers in social policy; provision was made for certain measures to be implemented by means of binding legal acts.

Lastly, practical steps were taken to increase the involvement of management and labour.

The 40 or so planned measures were implemented during the next three years, and much was still being done in the second part of the decade. The chief measures involved are briefly described below in relation to the three major objectives of the programme.

Attainment of full and better employment in the Community

Shortly after the social action programme was adopted the Community had the opportunity to prove its ability to cope with the problem of achieving full and better employment. Following the first oil crisis during the winter of 1973-74 the European economy went into a recession in spring 1974 and did not begin to emerge from it until three years later.

Table 5 above provides a very accurate picture of the sudden rise in unemployment between 1973 and 1976: in three years the number of job-seekers registered by the employment services doubled (from 2.6 to more than 5.2 million). Although the figures continued to rise slightly until the end of the 1970s the combined efforts of the Community and the Member States at least contained the rate of increase.

While there was a marked increase in the aggregate number of unemployed persons, certain regions, industries and categories of workers were particularly hard hit, and this led to considerable quantitative and qualitative mismatches in labour supply and demand. Coordinated national and Community policies on vocational training thus constituted two major weapons in the struggle to achieve a better balance.

Better coordination of Member States' employment policies

The Commission encouraged cooperation between the various national employment services, particularly by organizing what proved to be very useful meetings at Community level between heads of national employment services to exchange experience and ideas. The workings of the labour market became much easier to understand as employment statistics were refined, procedures for forecasting market trends were coordinated and special labour market research programmes were carried out.

On 27 June 1980 the Council adopted a resolution on guidelines for a Community labour market policy, setting out Community objectives in this field and defining the measures to be taken and the means to be implemented. This resolution regarded the main aim of labour market policy as being to reduce the imbalance between the supply of and demand for labour while at the same time seeking to bring about better integration of the Community labour market.

TABLE 7
Number of registered unemployed at the end of the year

(thousands)

Country	1979	1980	1981	1982
Belgium	366.8	430.5	525.4	580.2 ¹
Denmark	143.2	221.3	255.4	262.0 ^p
FR of Germany	866.8	1 118.3	1 703.9	2 223.3
Greece	49.4	59.3	61.4	82.5
France	1 468.9	1 632.0	2 014.4	2 131.4
Ireland	88.6	122.2	141.1	179.9
Italy	1 711.3	1 850.4	2 187.1	2 585.4
Luxembourg	1.2	1.5	2.0	2.6
The Netherlands	216.7	322.4	473.6	644.2
United Kingdom	1 355.5	2 244.2	2 940.7	3 097.0 ¹
EUR 10	6 268	8 002	10 305	12 035 ^a
Young people under 25 as % of total unemployed: October	41.5	43.2	43.1	40.5 ^a

^p = Provisional.
^s = Estimate.

¹ New figures excluding persons registered with employment offices but not in receipt of unemployment benefit.
Source: Unemployment: Eurostat monthly bulletin.

The Community should increase its activity in the following three areas:

- (i) *Improvement of knowledge of the labour market.* — This knowledge is required to give a clearer picture of the measures needed both nationally and at Community level. To this end, the resolution recommends the strengthening of cooperation between national and Community employment services in matters such as length of work, different forms of employment, unemployment flows, the structure of employment and unemployment, the transition from general and vocational education to the world of work, vocational and post-school training of young people and the content of and changes in the national qualifications required.
- (ii) *Development and cooperation of placement services.* — Provision was made for an action programme for the development of and cooperation between national placement services, in particular in areas such as staff training, computerization of public employment services, vocational guidance for adults and the generalized use of the Sedoc system.
- (iii) *Concerted forward-looking management of the labour market.* — The aim here is to stimulate cooperation between the two sides of industry and the employment services so as to achieve a forward-looking manpower utilization policy which would also have regard to repercussions on employment and working conditions. Such a policy would aim for a balanced approach to employment by being geared to the needs both of business and of local communities.

Community action to combat unemployment

Following the European Council of 29-30 March 1982 which emphasized the need for a coordinated policy to promote investment and combat unemployment, on 27 April 1982 the

Standing Committee on Employment discussed a Commission communication on the subject. Attention was particularly focused on the need to increase public and private productive investment in order to encourage economic growth and employment while reinforcing the competitiveness of European firms.

The main points of this communication are incorporated in the resolution on Community action to combat unemployment, adopted by the Council of Ministers on 12 July 1982. They are:

- (i) promotion of public and private productive investment in such a way as to strengthen the competitive capacity of undertakings and to encourage economic growth and raise employment;
- (ii) promotion of the development potential of small and medium-sized undertakings, local initiatives and cooperatives, which are a source of innovation and a factor for creating employment;
- (iii) priority to be given to vocational training for young people and measures to promote their integration into the labour market;
- (iv) continuation of the dialogue with both sides of industry regarding the reorganization of working time.

Accordingly, and having consulted the standing Committee on Employment, the Commission presented to the Joint Council of the Ministers for Economic, Finance and Social Affairs on 16 November 1982 a communication dealing with these problems and identified three areas of action: improvement of the economic environment, reorganization of working time and increased job opportunities for young people.

The Council expressed serious concern regarding the employment situation of young people and underlined the urgent need to introduce specific measures immediately to improve their employment prospects. It also considered that the reorganization of working time could in certain conditions help to improve employment.

In the context of Community economic and industrial policy, the Commission is concerned with the promotion of productive investment and the development of small and medium-sized firms. In this connection it is at present preparing proposals containing measures to support development and the promotion of employment by new small-scale undertakings, in other words small and medium-sized businesses, cooperatives and local community ventures.

In the specific area of Community social policy the Commission has given priority to the problems of young people and measures concerned with the reduction of working time.

Employment policy for young people

The particularly unfavourable employment situation for young people (see Table 5) led the Commission to promote, in its programme for 1982/83, the introduction of a 'social guarantee' for young people for the first two years after completion of compulsory education; emphasis would be placed on measures leading directly to job creation.

Accordingly, in April 1983 the Commission forwarded to the Council a communication entitled 'The promotion of employment for young people'¹ in which it is stated that the unemployment rate for young people is over 22% while the average rate is about 11% (October 1982). If the rate for young people is to be brought down to the average level, in the present situation some 2.5 million additional jobs would have to be created.

A special effort will be needed to rectify the unacceptable level of long-term youth unemployment — particularly as regards the 1.5 million young people out of work for over one year — through job-creation measures and the organization of work at local level.

In its communication, the Commission identified five types of action which it believes all Member States should undertake or develop. These actions would be designed to:

- (i) give priority to young people in the job opportunities resulting from the reorganization and reduction of working time;
- (ii) encourage employers in the private sector to create new jobs and increase the recruitment of young people;
- (iii) help young people to develop new enterprises;
- (iv) expand non-market sector employment opportunities with recruitment concentrated on young people and provide jobs for long-term young unemployed through special temporary public programmes or quotas;
- (v) assist young people to develop their vocational abilities and non-vocational interests through better support facilities.

The Commission intends to support these operations by Community measures to assist in the development and evaluation of employment policy measures for young people. To stimulate experimentation and innovation in the Member States, the Commission advocates a series of networks of demonstration projects on specific themes, to be part-financed by the European Social Fund.

The reorganization of working time

Towards the end of the 1970s the employment situation started to deteriorate rapidly and the European Council, at its meeting on 12 and 13 March 1979 in Paris, recognized the need to give priority to improving this situation and requested the Commission to present a communication on the social and economic implications of a concerted reorganization of working time.

To meet this request the Commission presented to the Council a communication on the reorganization of working time which was discussed on two occasions by the Council. As a result of the second of these discussions, on 18 December 1979 the Council adopted a 'Resolution on the adaptation of working time' expressing its agreement on the guidelines to be followed in this area. The Commission and the two sides of industry were given the task of together examining the conditions in which a Community approach to the reduction of the present volume of working time could be worked out.

¹ COM(83)211 final.

The Resolution provides for several areas of action which can be subsumed in two groups:

- (a) reduction in working time, including:
 - (i) restrictions on the systematic use of overtime;
 - (ii) flexible retirement — that is, a reduction in total working life;
 - (iii) a reduction in annual working time, entailing a cut in weekly working hours, longer annual holidays and more training leave;
- (b) new types of work organization that could lead to a fairer distribution of available work, in particular:
 - (i) part-time work;
 - (ii) temporary work.

Pursuant to this resolution, in July 1980 the Commission forwarded to the Council, for the attention of the Standing Committee on Employment, three communications dealing respectively with part-time work, temporary work and flexible retirement. In 1981 and 1982 these were followed by proposals for directives on voluntary part-time work and temporary work, together with a draft recommendation concerning flexible retirement.

On 10 December 1982 the Council adopted a recommendation on the principles of a Community policy with regard to retirement age which, in particular, provides for the introduction of more flexibility in the rules applicable to the age at which entitlement to a retirement pension is acquired; this gives individuals more freedom of choice with regard to the age of retirement and an opportunity to prepare for retirement in the best conditions.

On 14 December 1982 the Commission adopted an amended version of the Directive on voluntary part-time work which takes account of certain amendments proposed by the European Parliament.

This amended proposal for a Council directive concerning temporary work (temporary employment businesses and fixed duration contracts) is designed to give greater protection to and provide certain minimal guarantees for persons wishing to engage in this form of work, particularly through the elimination of fraud and discrimination, and the introduction of certain social obligations applying to the employer.

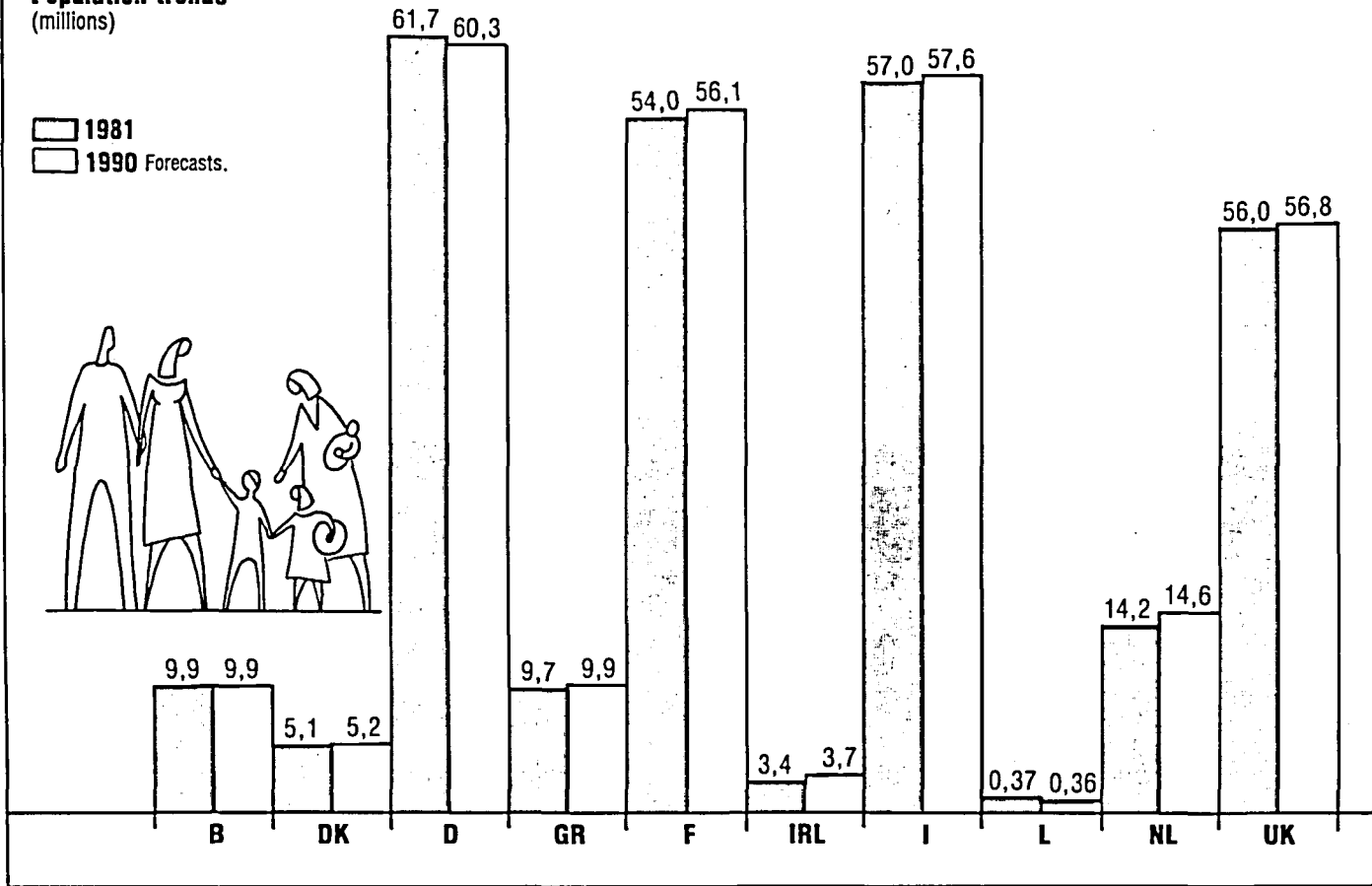
In the light of the other aspects covered by the resolution concerning the adaptation of working time and pursuant to the resolution of 12 July 1982 on Community action to combat unemployment, in December 1982 the Commission forwarded to the Council a memorandum on the reduction and reorganization of working time in which it comes out in favour of a more positive approach to working time as an instrument of employment policy. By means of this communication the Commission hopes, *inter alia*, to resume the dialogue with the two sides of industry on the reduction of the working year.

Achievement of a common vocational training policy

Since young persons and notably first-time job-seekers are particularly hard hit by rising unemployment, the Commission addressed a recommendation to the Member States on 6 July 1977 on vocational preparation for young people under 25 who are unemployed or threatened with unemployment.

Population trends (millions)

1981
1990 Forecasts.



The Commission recommended that vocational preparation and guidance, practical basic training and work experience should be provided.

In December 1976 the Ministers of Education had also adopted a resolution concerning measures to improve the preparation of young people for work and to facilitate their transition from education to working life.

On 18 December 1979 the Council adopted a resolution which advocates developing linked work and training for young persons and contains guidelines for the Member States on the content and concept of the coordinated programmes which should be drawn up, the occupations involved, supervision and recognition of training and diplomas awarded, social protection and training leave.

Aware of the need to adapt the Member States' vocational training systems to meet present and future economic and social requirements, in 1982 the Commission presented two communications to the Council; the first, accompanied by a draft resolution on vocational training and new information technologies, was forwarded early in June. It includes several proposals for Community action over the period 1983-87 designed to supplement and reinforce Member States' policies in this area. To this end the Commission selected a limited number of specific measures of common interest mainly affecting small and medium-sized firms. Large-scale firms in the services sector are gradually introducing automated administration and management techniques and are using the new technologies as a means of instruction, training and information in non-vocational matters.

On 28 October this specific communication was followed by another — referred to above — on vocational training policies in the European Communities in the 1980s which puts forward a five-year action programme focused on three broad priority spheres of common concern:

- (i) the social and vocational preparation of young people for adult life;
- (ii) the implementation of training programmes to ensure greater equality of opportunity for women;
- (iii) the planning and organization of training measures at local and regional level.

This communication is accompanied by a proposal for a Council resolution specifying the action to be undertaken by the Member States and the Commission.

Employment of handicapped persons and migrant workers

One of the earliest instances of action under the social action programme was the adoption by the Council, on 27 June 1974, of two Commission proposals for decisions authorizing aid for:

- (i) special operations to facilitate the employment and geographical and occupational mobility of handicapped persons;
- (ii) operations which were part of an integrated programme to facilitate the employment and geographical mobility of migrant workers in the Member States of the Community.

The 1982 budget set aside a total of 172 million ECU for these two categories (122.5 million ECU for the handicapped and 49.5 million ECU for migrant workers).

Redeployment of workers in industries in difficulty

A Council Decision of 19 December 1972 already provided for an ESF contribution to operations in support of persons leaving agriculture to pursue non-agricultural activities.

Another decision of the same date dealt with temporary assistance for persons employed in the textile industry, expiring on 1 January 1976. Since, the situation in the industry had not improved much in the intervening period, it was extended by Council Decision of 9 February 1976 and the clothing industry was also included.

In both cases the Fund grants assistance for measures to promote the employment and geographical and occupational mobility of persons who are forced to leave these industries and seek employment in other industries as a result of essential restructuring measures. Assistance can be given in certain circumstances to self-employed persons who wish to take up a new activity with self-employed status. In 1982 ESF appropriations for commitment amounted to 9.8 and 26.4 million ECU for these areas respectively.

The steel industry was hit by increasingly severe structural difficulties towards the end of the 1970s and at the end of October 1978 the Commission presented to the Council a communication on the social aspects of the steel policy together with a resolution adopted by the ECSC Consultative Committee. In 1979 the Commission set out detailed proposals in its communication on the social aspects of the restructuring of the steel industry which was accompanied by a draft Commission decision relating to the creation of special temporary allowances to help workers in the iron and steel industry, in the framework of the Community restructuring plan. In June 1981 the Council agreed that the Community could contribute, under Article 56(2) (b) of the ECSC Treaty, to the allowances paid by Member States under their steel industry restructuring programme in respect of early retirement (put into effect before the end of 1984) and short-time working (for the period until 30 June 1982). To meet the financing needs, the Council agreed to make available, up to the end of 1982, appropriations amounting to 162 million ECU to be transferred to the ECSC budget from the general budget.

Improvement of living and working conditions

As a result of steady economic progress most citizens of the Community are today living in material circumstances which allow them to have concern for what has come to be known as the quality of life. Their well-being is mirrored not only in their earned or other income but also in working conditions and safety at work, social security, health protection, the leisure they enjoy, their housing and standard of living, and so on.

This has also been recognized at Community level, and a whole series of measures were designed to improve living and working conditions. Here the Commission has been particularly concerned with the problems of the least-favoured social categories; another major achievement was that of implementing the principle of equal treatment for men and women in social legislation and labour law.

More rights for working women

Mention has already been made of the problem of putting the principle of equal pay for men and women, in accordance with Article 119 of the EEC Treaty, into practice. To ensure that the principle was fully applied and to afford still under-privileged women the necessary means of redress in claiming their rights, on 10 February 1975 the Council adopted a directive on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women. Within one year, the Member States were required to repeal all laws, regulations and administrative provisions incompatible with the principle of equal pay, take the necessary steps to ensure that it was adhered to in collective agreements and individual contracts and make it possible for any working woman to claim her rights through the courts, with no fear of dismissal, whenever the principle was not applied.

On 9 February 1976 this directive was supplemented by a directive on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions, to which the Member States were to conform within a period of two and a half years. The Member States were required to abolish all statutory provisions and terms of collective agreements prejudicial to working women.

Then on 19 December 1978 a directive concerning the progressive implementation of the principle of equality of treatment for men and women on matters of social security was adopted. In view of the problems involved, the Member States were given six years to transpose it into national legislation. The aim is to ensure that no one is discriminated against on the ground of sex, and particularly by reference to marital or family status, as regards the coverage of and conditions of affiliation to social security schemes, the obligation to pay contributions and the way they are calculated, and the calculation of benefits and allowances, including extra amounts payable for the spouse and dependents.

It is the Commission's responsibility to monitor the integration of these directives into national legislation. For this purpose the Member States' governments are required, within fixed time limits, to report to the Commission on progress in implementing the directives. If the Commission finds that a country has not honoured all its obligations, it calls on its government to make the necessary changes to its laws, regulations and administrative provisions within specified time limits (the letter of formal notice). If the Member State fails to comply the Commission sends a further request, threatening proceedings in the Court of Justice of the European Communities under Article 169 of the EEC Treaty (the reasoned opinion), which the Commission has initiated in respect of several Member States.

But the Commission is not alone in having access to the Court of Justice. Private individuals may also claim their rights before the national courts and, if need be, bring an action before the Court of Justice. Many of them have indeed done so.

To back up this legislative activity with positive action, the Commission first organized a European conference on equality for women (Manchester, May 1980) and then, on 9 December 1981, adopted a new Community action programme on the promotion of equal opportunities for women in 1982-85.

The programme was prepared with the collaboration of the Liaison Group for Equal Opportunities set up by the Commission in May 1981, and includes 16 specific actions grouped

under two main headings: achievement of equal treatment by strengthening of individual rights, and achievement of equal opportunities in practice, particularly by means of positive action programmes to be carried out in 1982-85.

On 12 July 1982 the new programme was the subject of a Council resolution in which it was observed *inter alia* that in view of the proposed lines of action, the special objectives outlined in the programme should guide the Commission and the Member States in their efforts to extend and put into practice the principle of equal opportunities for women. The Commission is at present concentrating its energies on implementing the various lines of action laid down in the programme.

Stronger protection of workers' interests

Large companies are spreading further and further over national frontiers. The last 20 or 30 years have seen the rise of more and more multinationals, often holding a dominant position on the market. To ensure that workers employed in companies taken over are not helpless against decisions taken by group management that manipulate disparities between national laws for the protection of workers to reorganize, cut down operations or relocate plant, the Commission has begun establishing a set of minimum Community standards for the protection of workers' interests.

For this it has used certain directives, that is the same legal instrument as was used in the case of equal treatment for working women.

Thus, on 17 February 1975 the Council adopted a directive on approximation of Member States' laws governing mass dismissals, whereby an employer who is contemplating mass dismissals is required to consult workers' representatives, notify the competent authority in writing and observe certain time limits.

On 14 February 1977 the Council adopted a directive on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the safeguarding of employees' rights in the event of transfers of undertakings, businesses or parts of business.

The directive lays down that all the transferor's rights and obligations arising from a collective agreement or labour contract existing on the date of transfer shall automatically attach to the transferee until the date of expiry of the collective agreement or contract; a change of ownership does not constitute grounds for dismissal. As regards the additional social benefits paid by the company, the Member States must adopt the necessary measures to ensure that workers and persons who have already left the company continue to receive them within agreed limits.

On 20 October 1980, the Council adopted a directive concerning approximation of the laws of the Member States on the protection of employees in the event of the insolvency of their employer.

One of the aims of this directive is to ensure that in the case of an employer's insolvency the Member States take the necessary measures to ensure that guarantee institutions guarantee payment of employees' outstanding claims resulting from contracts of employment or employment relationships and relating to pay.

Improvement of working conditions

Job satisfaction for workers depends basically on good working conditions. This means not only the classic terms of collective agreements between employers and workers like daily and weekly working hours and paid holidays, but other organizational arrangements as well. In its proposal for a social action programme the Commission advocated changing 'those patterns of work organization which tend to dehumanize work, and create environmental working and living conditions which are no longer acceptable to ideas of social progress'.

To this end, in June 1976, the Commission addressed a communication on the humanization of working conditions to the Council, which took note of the document at its meeting on 9 December 1976. The Communication offered a series of guidelines for improving the quality of work. The Commission took the view that new humanized patterns of work organization would help not only to promote the well-being of workers but also to boost productivity. The communication explains what part the Commission and the European Foundation should play in preparing and implementing directives in this sphere.

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions was established by a Council regulation of 26 May 1975 and opened the following year in Dublin. Most of the studies it has made heretofore concern various forms of shift work, the impact of technological change on work organization, the physical and psychological constraints of work and the consequences of different methods of fixing wages.

Of the various working conditions, the length of the working week is particularly important for the quality of life depends on the amount of free time available for leisure. In recent decades, the working week has been steadily reduced, particularly under collective agreements between the two sides of industry: Starting with an average working week of 48 hours in nearly every country except France in 1950, by 1960 the working week had been reduced to 45 hours or less in several Member States, particularly in the Federal Republic, Ireland, the United Kingdom and the Benelux countries. By 1970 the working week was close to 40 hours in several countries.

To promote the 40-hour working week, the Commission forwarded a recommendation to the Member States on 22 July 1975 advocating a 40-hour week with four weeks paid holiday for all full-time workers by the end of 1978 and if possible before. This recommendation was largely followed; towards the end of the 1970s, the 40-hour week was applied to nearly all industrial workers. Greece, a member of the Community since 1 January 1981, has quickly made good the lag: the agreed 44-hour working week has been gradually reduced, and was cut to 40 hours on 1 January 1983. In accordance with this recommendation, four weeks' basic annual paid holiday was generally accorded to workers in the nine Member States within the time limit — in contrast to 1950, when the basic 12 days or two weeks had been the rule.

In 1983, Denmark, France and Luxembourg extended basic annual holidays to five weeks; in the Federal Republic many workers were already entitled to this basic holiday and in some cases more.

Concertation of social security policies

Two features stand out in the area of social security. In recent years — particularly since the beginning of the recession — the problem of financing the growing burden of social security expenditure has become more acute both as regards the financial equilibrium of the social security systems and the repercussions for the preservation and creation of jobs.

There are significant differences in the social protection systems in the Community given that the Member States have established different priorities as regards risks and persons to be covered. As shown in Table 8, differences in the share of gross domestic product allocated to social security in the various Member States tended to narrow in the 1970s: the figures ranged from 13.2% to 21.4% in 1970 and 21.4% to 30.7% in 1980. These figures also clearly show that social security expenditure has grown much more rapidly than GDP.

TABLE 8
Social security expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product

Country	1970	1975	1980
Belgium	18.5	24.5	27.7
Denmark	19.6	25.8	28.0
Federal Republic of Germany	21.4	27.8	28.3
France	19.2	22.9	25.8
Ireland	13.2	19.4	22.0
Italy	18.4	22.6	22.8
Luxembourg	16.4	22.4	26.5
The Netherlands	20.8	28.1	30.7
United Kingdom	15.9	19.5	21.4

Source: Eurostat, Social protection statistics — 1970-80.

Following the adoption of the Council Resolution of 21 January 1974 on a social action programme, the Commission decided in the mid-1970s to set up two groups for the concertation of social protection policies, in particular social security:

- (i) a group made up of senior social security officials,
- (ii) a group composed of independent experts.

The main purpose of these groups is reflection: they exchange information on the changing situation in the Member States, compare ideas, benefit from each other's experience, discuss common problems, help each other to solve specific problems, jointly consider the best and most appropriate approaches, and above all increasingly approach problems from a European viewpoint.

In the present economic situation, the budgetary authorities are faced with problems in regard to social security systems and the question of maintaining social protection levels. Given that these problems are generally shared by all countries, the Commission considers that discussions at national level could well be extended to Community level with a view to aligning national policies, which is becoming more urgent in the present situation.

Accordingly, on 18 November 1982 the Commission forwarded to the Council a communication on 'social security problems — points for consideration', in which it proposes principal areas for corrective action:

- (i) containment of growth in social expenditure, in particular health expenditure;
- (ii) re-examination of financing methods with a twofold objective of providing a better balance between contribution receipts and tax receipts, while taking steps to ensure that the financing system does not distort employment and production structures;
- (iii) search for a more effective social protection system.

The Commission hopes that this document will stimulate a wide-ranging debate in the Community institutions in the hope of identifying subjects which could be discussed in greater detail at Community level and more specific operations that could be integrated into the Member State's policies.

Another instrument to facilitate the concertation of national social security policies is the European Social Budget, which presents medium-term forecasts regarding social expenditure and its financing on the basis of common methods, definitions and assumptions. The first social budget, covering the period up to 1975, was presented to the Council in December 1974; this was followed by a second social budget covering forecasts up to 1980, submitted to the Council in 1978.

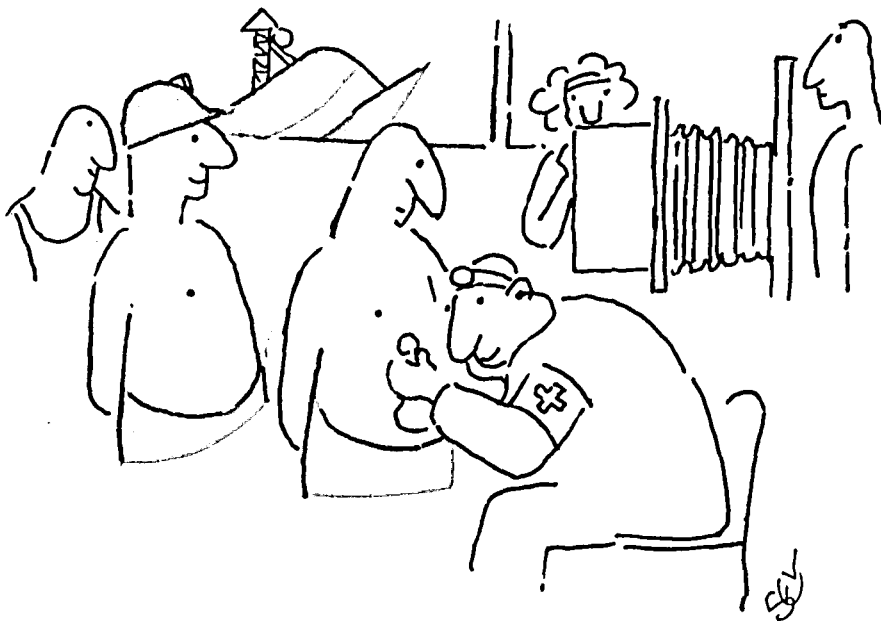
Having received a communication from the Commission designed to ensure the continuation of work in this area, on 27 May 1982 the Council expressed a favourable opinion on a number of conclusions. It was agreed that for the future, efforts should be concentrated on a sequence of short annual reports on expenditure and income in social protection, and medium-term forecasts for expenditure and its financing.

Accident prevention and health protection

It is estimated that each year some 100 000 Community citizens die and over 12 million are injured as a result of accidents. Accidents at work still make up the largest category and their economic and human consequences are incalculable; the Commission's action programme proposed various social measures besides the operations already successfully implemented for many years in the ECSC industries.

On 27 June 1974 a decision was taken to set up an Advisory Committee for Industrial Safety, Hygiene and Health Protection, whose main task is to monitor developments in the field of safety and accident prevention at work and job-linked activity and, in particular, to issue opinions on proposals and draft directives prepared by the Commission.

On 8 April 1975 the Commission adopted guidelines for a Community programme on safety, hygiene and health protection at work; these were fully discussed with experts from the governments and occupational associations in the Member States, and the Commission then proposed an action programme to the Council. On 29 June 1978 the Council passed a resolution giving priority to a number of projects.



Pursuant to this Community programme the Council meeting of 9 June 1980 (Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs) signified its agreement on a directive on the protection of workers from exposure to chemical, physical and biological agents at work.

Acting under this outline directive the Commission has already put to the Council several draft directives on protection for workers exposed to various toxic substances.

On 27 May the Council approved the first proposal for a directive on the protection of workers from harmful exposure to metallic lead and its ionic compounds at work. The proposal for a second directive on the protection of workers from harmful exposure to asbestos at work was amended in 1982 to take account of the opinion delivered by Parliament on 23 April 1982.

To complete the picture we should also mention that in 1977 the Council adopted a directive on the approximation of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the Member States on the provision of safety signs at places of work. Its purpose is to harmonize the wide variety of signs used in factories to warn against the risks of accidents and other hazards.

Apart from the special field of radiation protection, where, as already mentioned, Euratom has been keeping basic standards under constant surveillance and regular review, the Commission has also been active in the field of health protection in general.

Recommendations have been adopted for the protection of workers against the dangers of lasers and microwaves. The financing and costs of health services, particularly hospital care, and health education, with special reference to nutrition, smoking, alcoholism, drug abuse and the abuse of medicinal products have been the subject of studies, surveys and publications. The ultimate goal is to determine effective common strategies at Community level.

Integrating the handicapped into working and social life

There are more than 10 million people in the Community who are physically or mentally handicapped — either from birth or as a result of disease or accident — but who nevertheless want to lead as normal a life as possible. If they can get the help they need and have access to specialized institutions, most handicapped people can do a job and therefore make their contribution to society. The Community has therefore made it one of the priority tasks of its social action programme to help the handicapped.

Besides making money available from the European Social Fund for pilot projects for the occupational rehabilitation of handicapped people, the Commission submitted a Community action programme for the employment of handicapped people in a free economy to the Council. On 27 June 1974 the Council passed a resolution on this subject. The programme covers three basic kinds of activity:

- (i) cooperation between rehabilitation and training bodies, selected in order to encourage the development of new ways and means of achieving vocational rehabilitation;
- (ii) short-term demonstration projects aimed at improving the quality of vocational rehabilitation facilities currently in operation;
- (iii) longer-term projects extending the aforementioned measures.

At the end of the first programme, which ran from 1974 to 1979, the Commission submitted a report to the Council. On 9 June 1980 the Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs expressed their satisfaction with the results achieved and urged the Commission to embark on the second stage.

Accordingly, in the context of the International Year of Disabled People the Commission forwarded to the Council a communication on the social integration of disabled people containing a proposal to set up a Community-wide network of locally based development actions with appropriate Community support and accompanying measures. On 8 December 1981 the Council expressed its approval of the programme and adopted the relevant resolution.

Integrating migrant workers and their families into working and social life

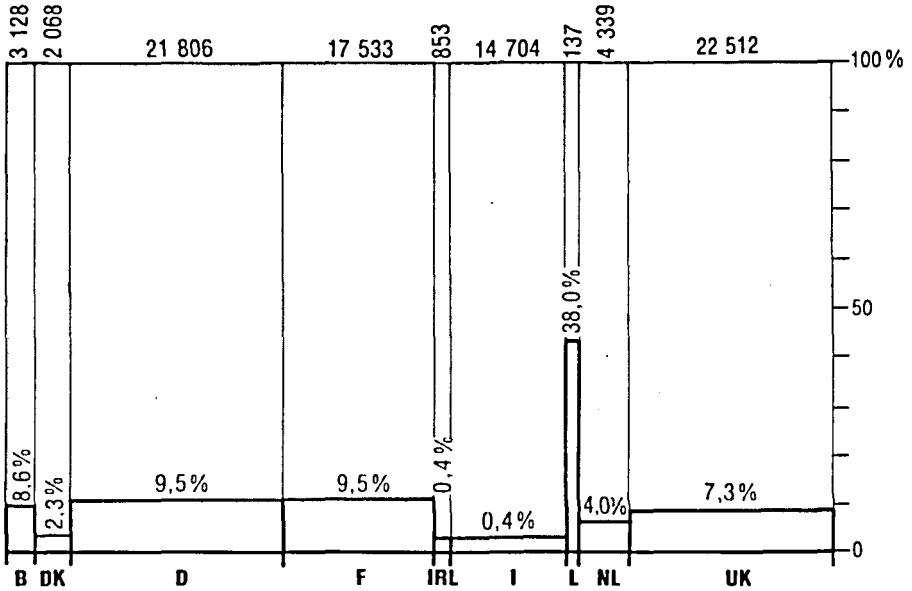
The practical application of the principle of free movement and more especially the recruitment of workers from non-Community countries has had the effect that some 6 million foreign workers, of whom 4.5 million come from non-member countries, are now employed in the Community countries. Many of them have been joined by their families so that the number of foreigners now living in the Community is estimated at 12 million, of whom about 9 million come from non-member countries.

Under the Community arrangements for free movement and migrant workers' social security, workers who have moved from one Community country to another enjoy clearly defined rights. On the other hand, the status of workers from non-member countries is by no means certain. This particularly applies to their working conditions since, as unskilled workers, they often have to take rough, poorly-paid jobs which the local worker refuses to do. Even worse problems arise when it comes to housing, training facilities and the social integration of the worker and his family.

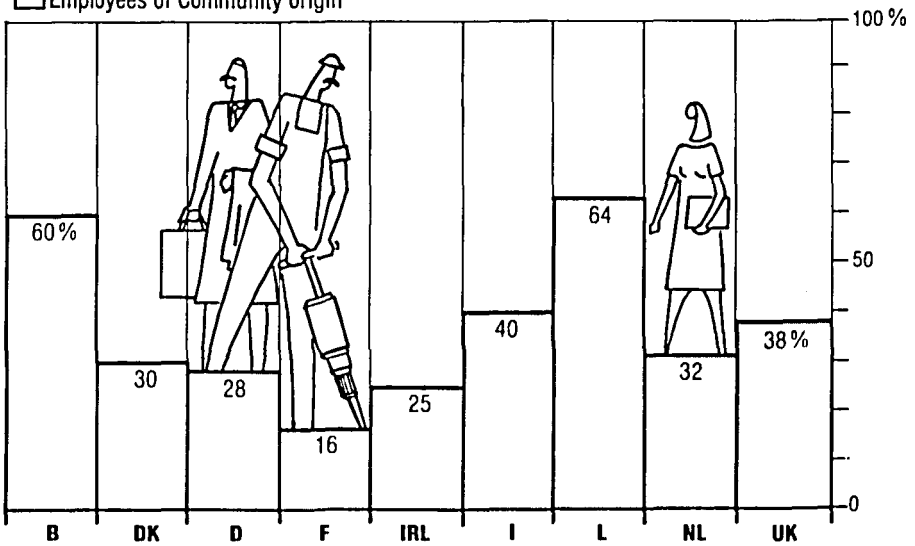
Migrant workers in the Community – 1980

Total number of employees
 Foreign workers in employment

(thousands and percentages)



Total foreign employees = 100%
 Employees of Community origin



To improve the working and living conditions of these migrant workers the Commission proposed an Action Programme for Migrant Workers and their Families, as called for by the social action programme. This was the subject of a Council resolution on 9 February 1976. A number of specific measures relating to language teaching, vocational training, social security, housing, social services, schooling and economic and political rights are planned so that the discrimination still plaguing migrant workers from non-member countries can gradually be removed.

On 9 February 1976, the Council adopted a regulation extending the trade union rights of migrant workers, and this was followed on 25 July 1977 by a directive on schooling for migrant workers' children.

Under this directive the Member States are taking steps to ensure that the children of migrant workers in Community countries are offered teaching in their mother tongue and are taught the culture of their native country.

Aid for the neediest

One major innovation in the social action programme was the Commission proposal for Community measures to help people living in poverty. Despite all the highly developed social security schemes it had found that many people in the Community countries were still living in poverty, especially old people without adequate social protection, one-parent families, the homeless and vagrants.

The Commission therefore proposed an initial programme of pilot schemes and studies to combat poverty, with financial support for 21 projects to be mounted in various Member States and two international studies. This proposal was adopted by a Council decision of 22 July 1975 and the funds set aside amounted to 5.25 million EUA over two budgetary years. The projects fell into four groups:

- (i) renovation of urban areas which are particularly poor or threatened with poverty;
- (ii) meeting needs of social groups which are particularly poor or threatened by poverty;
- (iii) reorganization of special services to help poor persons and their families;
- (iv) adapting existing social services more closely to the specific needs of poor people.

Since implementation of most of these projects extends over more than two years (generally over about five years), the programme was extended up to the end of 1980; eight other pilot projects have been added to the list and additional funds amounting to 14 million EUA have been set aside to cover the extended period.

On 22 December 1981 the Commission forwarded to the Council its assessment report on the first programme to combat poverty. The report showed that poverty had not declined during the previous 30 years of growth and that the gap between the standards of living and opportunities enjoyed by the average man and the poor had not closed.

The report therefore concluded that it was urgent for the Community and the Member States to take energetic measures to combat poverty. On 10 December 1982 the Council noted this report and drew certain conclusions, mainly to the effect that more specific action by the Community was needed; it laid down certain guidelines for such action.

Developing participation by the two sides of industry and industrial democracy

Participation in Community decisions by the two sides of industry

Active participation and shared responsibility by the two sides of industry are fundamental conditions for the attainment of social goals. No progress can be achieved in this area unless there is social consensus of all the active economic and social forces regarding the principal aims of economic and social policy and the measures needed to effect them.

Therefore the Standing Committee on Employment was set up. Its main purpose is to facilitate joint appraisal by employers' and workers' representatives and the Ministers of Employment on current problems relating to employment and labour policy and measures contemplated by the Community. It normally meets twice a year and in recent years has mainly concentrated on the Commission's work with regard to stimulating investment, measures to promote employment, young people and the labour market and vocational training.

On 16 December 1974 the Commission organized the first tripartite conference on the direction future European social policy should take. At the time, the Community was going through its first economic crisis and the discussions were quick to reveal that the resources of social policy would not suffice to solve the serious social problems involved and that a tremendous effort had to be made on the economic and financial front. Further tripartite conferences were therefore attended both by the Ministers for Economic and Financial Affairs and by the Ministers of Labour.

The Commission has also tried to develop discussions with the two sides of industry at Community level on specific problems besetting certain industries. A number of informal briefing sessions have been held, but only in the footwear industry has a Joint Committee been successfully institutionalized, on the lines of those already in existence since the 1950s and 1960s for the ECSC industries, agriculture and various forms of transport. The Commission feels that it is essential to have such committees if Community-wide agreements on certain aspects of working conditions in given industries are to be secured.

Industrial democracy

Employee participation, or industrial democracy, takes a different form in each Member State; in most countries, participation by employees or their representatives is limited to matters relating to personnel, improvement of working conditions on and around the job and safety. Any say in financial decisions, particularly in plans for reorganization and investment, is still the exception rather than the rule.

It is these basic disparities in the concept and practice of industrial democracy which have so far stymied two Commission proposals of the early 1970s. One concerns the statute for European companies, under which limited-liability companies could form a European company if at least two of them are incorporated under different national legal systems. It provides for two bodies for the European company — a board of management and a supervisory board, one-third of the members of the supervisory board being workers' representatives.

In addition there would be a European works council for workers employed in establishments belonging to a European company. These workers would also be able to enter into European collective agreements.

The second proposal of the early 1970s — the draft of a fifth directive on approximation of Member States' company law, which was to apply to national companies above a certain size — also calls for a board of management and a supervisory board; at least a third of the supervisory board's members must be workers or workers' representatives.

Following discussions which extended over some 10 years the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee have delivered their opinions on these two proposals (as recently as May 1982 for Parliament's opinion on the fifth directive). The Commission has taken account of the suggestions made in these opinions and amended its initial proposals; with respect to worker participation on the supervisory board of a European company, it now recommends a more flexible system better adapted to national circumstances.

Towards the end of the 1970s, the Commission revived the question of employee participation in the life of the firm. After preparatory work, on 24 October 1980 the Commission submitted to the Council a proposal for a directive on procedures for informing and consulting the employees of undertakings with complex structures, in particular transnational undertakings. It has two aims: the disclosure of information concerning the operations of the company as a whole and, secondly, decentralized consultation (in the case of closures, restructuring, etc.) at subsidiary level where the subsidiary establishments exceed a given minimum size) regardless of whether or not the company is engaged in national or transnational operations. The Commission amended its proposal for a directive in the first half of 1983 to take account of the opinions delivered by the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee in 1982.

Present and future challenges for the Community's social policy

Current situation and medium-term prospects

The 1970s ended with the Community countries facing a number of major unresolved problems, and the prospects for the 1980s are far from encouraging.

After the second great world recession which began in 1974-75, fuelling inflation and unemployment, the second oil crisis and the dominant climate of political insecurity further depressed the world economic situation in 1979, even though there had been signs that the prospects for lasting economic recovery might be brightening.

As a result, economic growth in the Member States slowed down appreciably in the early 1980s: the growth of gross domestic product in real terms, which had been running at 2.9% per year on average in the 1970s fell to 1.4% in 1980 and turned negative (- 0.6%) in 1981; however, it picked up slightly (+ 0.3%) in 1982. This unfavourable trend was further accentuated by an accelerating inflation rate, which rose from about 10.5% to nearly 12% per annum, combined with substantial balance of payments deficits in most Member States.

However, the deterioration in employment resulting from the persistent decline in the economic situation gave the most cause for concern: the number of unemployed (as shown in Table 8) rose from 6 million at the end of 1979 to 8 million at the end of 1980, 10 million in 1981 and over 12 million at the end of 1982 — in other words the figure had doubled in three years.

Certain categories are particularly hard hit by growing unemployment; of these, young people — particularly first job seekers — are increasingly the focus of attention in all the Member States. Young people under 25 account for nearly 40% of total unemployment, which means that at the end of 1982 nearly 5 million young people were jobless.

The continuing economic crisis has also had negative repercussions on the financial position of the Member States, which have been under mounting pressure to take drastic measures to put their financial house in order. This, of course, has had its effect on the general standard of living. There has been a tendency for real income to level off as a result of efforts to improve the economic situation and public finance (including social security); the less-prosperous sections of society have suffered most, and the question of the distribution of the national wealth has arisen again.

There are several reasons for believing that no marked improvement can be expected in the near future.

First of all there are shifts in demographic trends: until the middle of the 1980s the number of young people arriving on the labour market will be higher than the number of workers retiring. This is due to the fall in the birth-rate after the first world war: each year, only 2 000 000 people will reach the age of 65 (still by and large the standard retirement age) while 4 000 000 young people will reach the age of 16. Not until the mid-1980s will the number of first-time job seekers start to fall and the number of workers entering retirement start to increase.

It should also be remembered that a growing number of children of migrant workers from non-member countries (third generation immigrants) who have remained with their families in the Community will also be looking for work.

Uncertainty regarding the energy supply and continuing inflation cloud the medium-term economic outlook and with it the prospects for employment. Likewise the new international division of labour is putting considerable pressure on European industry. Often, the only hope is to adopt the most modern techniques which will increase international competitiveness by improving productivity.

This will generate still further labour problems. The use of new technologies such as micro-processors requires a more and more highly qualified workforce while the demand for unskilled or semi-skilled workers is declining. This mismatch between supply and demand on the labour market will widen in years to come.

Some industries have had to cope with problems of structural change for a number of years, either because of shifts in demand or because of keener competition from non-member countries. The authorities will have to make a great effort to see that there is an adequate supply of labour in these industries — and doubtless in others too. Agriculture has been modernizing in recent decades and now it is the turn of industry to be affected by structural change. And the rapid introduction of modern techniques suggests that services, the only major sector where it is still possible to create new jobs, will also be caught up by these developments.

Finally, the continuing difficulties of the labour market affect some types of people more than others. Because of the increased use of technology and greater specialization, workers who do not have the right qualifications or experience will be hardest hit. Once again, young people in search of their first job, especially those who are underqualified, will find problems. Women are another category: more and more of them will be looking for work. Lastly, older workers and migrants will find their employment problems still more difficult to solve.

Priority measures for the Community

The main problem for the Member States of the Communities in the 1980s will be to combat unemployment and secure a return to higher levels of employment. Economic, financial and social measures adopted by the Member States should be supplemented by Community action to coordinate and reinforce national measures and ensure satisfactory growth combined with relative price stability, to maintain existing jobs and create new employment.

Employment policy

In carrying out the actions already undertaken, the Community is called on especially to improve employment and training opportunities for young people and other categories of workers most severely affected by unemployment. Having submitted a plan of action to promote youth employment the Commission will prepare specific reports on the long-term unemployed and the situation of women.

In the hope of increasing the number of jobs available, and following the guidelines set out in the memorandum on the reduction and reorganization of working time of December 1982, the Commission will endeavour to lay the foundations for an agreement at Community level on the reduction and reorganization of working time through discussions with and between workers and employers — particularly in the initial stages.

The Commission is envisaging several new measures to adapt market structures to the structural changes in the European economy, in line with Community policy. For example, to support and supplement the Community restructuring policy in the iron and steel industry the Commission has submitted proposals for a broad range of new social measures.

In addition, the Commission has made proposals concerning measures to support the development and promotion of employment in new small-scale undertakings (small and medium-sized firms, cooperatives, local communities).

Reinforcement of social solidarity and equality of opportunity

In accordance with its programme of action to promote equal opportunities for men and women the Commission is considering launching certain measures and presenting proposals for new Community legislation to promote equal treatment and positive action for women.

The Commission also intends to pursue and develop its activities to combat poverty and assist handicapped persons and immigrants.

To encourage a review at Community level of specific aspects of public expenditure, the Commission is at present organizing a wide-ranging discussion at Community level on specific questions dealing with public expenditure, in particular on the basis of the principles outlined in its memorandum on social security. This joint reflection should help to identify subjects that should be studied in depth at Community level together with more specific actions that could be integrated into national policies.

Continuation of the social dialogue and improvement of working conditions

The Commission is pursuing its various initiatives to reinforce the social dialogue both as regards Community strategy to combat unemployment and in connection with specific measures. With the two sides of industry the Commission will look into the possibility of an agreement or specific measures at Community level dealing with the introduction of new technology in firms.

To contribute to the steady improvement of working conditions the Commission will concentrate on completing the first programme and launching the second action programme in the field of safety and health at work. It will pursue its activities to promote safety and health in the fields of the ECSC, Euratom and public health.

Social aspects of enlargement

On 28 March 1977 the Government of Portugal applied for accession to the European Community, followed on 28 July 1977 by a similar application from Spain. At present, negotiations are under way between the Community and these two applicant countries.

With respect to social problems, views differ most as regards the principle of the free movement of workers: the Community believes that immigration might be encouraged if the frontiers were opened and Community provisions on free movement of workers were put into immediate application, which could add to the difficulties of the Member States at present affected by severe unemployment. In the early 1980s there were nearly 500 000 Portuguese nationals in the Community, of whom 80% were in France, and over 350 000 Spanish nationals (over half in France).

In view of this, the Community has not accepted the two applicant countries' request to implement the principle of free movement of workers from the date of accession. It has, however, proposed a transitional period, which would be fixed subsequently, during which the Member States could continue to apply to the nationals of the new Member States their national provisions requiring prior authorization for immigration before taking up paid employment. The right to free access to employment in another Member State would not come into effect until after this transitional period.

Under the Community proposal, the family members who normally live with a worker who is in full-time employment in a Member State must be resident in that State for three years (to be reduced to 18 months at a later date yet to be determined) before obtaining free access to employment.

Portuguese and Spanish workers in full-time employment in a Member State at the time of accession or following subsequent authorization, and the family members resident with them, will be given equal treatment in that Member State.

Another request by the applicant countries concerns the immediate acquisition of Community rights with respect to social security for migrant workers. However, given that with respect to family allowances two different schemes are at present applied (in France, on the basis of the principle of the country of residence of the family members) the Community is looking into the standardization of systems and has reserved its position to a subsequent date.

A final request by the two applicant countries concerns the European Social Fund: the Governments of Portugal and Spain have asked that their countries should be considered as disadvantaged areas that would benefit from the higher rate of intervention (55% instead of 50%). Here again, the Community has reserved its position and will revert to the problem subsequently.

Portugal and Spain have stated that they are prepared to apply Community law, that is all the binding acts of the Community, from the date of accession.

Since 1983, discussions of the social affairs chapter with respect to Portugal have entered the final stages now that Portugal and the Community have reached agreement on many issues. When they are completed, similar discussions will take place with Spain before negotiations with the two countries enter their final phase.

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European Communities — Commission

The social policy of the European Community

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This booklet outlines the objectives and achievements of the European Community's social policy from the establishment of the Community until 1983. The closing section considers future prospects.

EN

One of the chief objectives of the European Community is to improve the living conditions of all its citizens.

How far has this objective been achieved and what is the outlook for the 1980s?

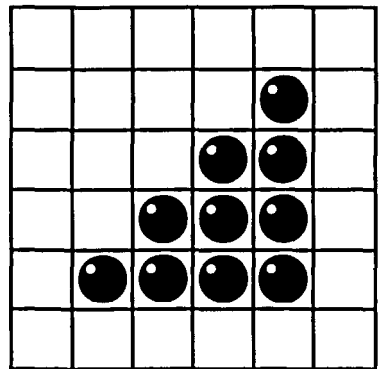
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The second section deals with changes in the Community's social policy during the 1970s.

This is followed by an explanation of the social action programme and the way in which it is being implemented. The programme is far from being complete.

Future prospects are far from rosy with the jobless total passing the 12 million mark in the Community in 1982.

Will the combined efforts of the Member States and the European Community be up to the demands of the situation?



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