

ESF InfoReview

N°1 / February 1997 - Newsletter of the European Social Fund

Letter from Commissioner Flynn



If you could survey the 380 million people in the European Union (EU) as they went to sleep on New Year's Eve, and see what they really wanted out of the New Year, I have no doubt what the most common wish would be. It would be for secure jobs for themselves and their families.

When the Heads of State and Government of the EU countries met as the European Council in Dublin in December, they knew this as well as you or I do. They knew that the fight against unemployment is a priority task of the EU, one which involves many different areas - sound macro-economic policies, modernising our labour markets (not least to exploit new sources of jobs), making our tax and social security systems more employment-friendly, and many other things too. All Member State governments, and all the European Commission's Departments contribute to these in their own ways.

But there is one area singled out by the European Council of Ministers which I believe is particularly important, and where the European Social Fund (ESF) carries the European Union's major effort. It leads the fight for what the European Council of Ministers described as the focus on labour market efficiency and on investment in human resources.

Underneath these rather technocratic words lies the reality of what the ESF does. It supports the training and re-training of people all over the European Union, whether they are in economically less developed regions or not. It helps them to get ready for a job - or to keep them in a job, even if threatened with losing it because of technological change. It supports all the services that people need to

make and keep them "employable", whether these involve simply training itself, or, as is increasingly the case, other services - counselling, career guidance, even crèche services for mothers with young children so that they can attend courses and sessions and prepare themselves properly. The ESF smoothes the pathway to work for everyone, wherever and wherever they are in Europe today.

That is what the ESF does - and so that is what this ESF InfoReview is all about. I want the ESF to be better known. I want the people who work with it - not just here in Brussels, but all over Member States, in central, regional or local government, in training and service providers - to see what the ESF is doing elsewhere and be able to learn from that; and at the same time to be able to share their own experiences and contribute to building up a richness at European level from which we can all benefit.

The ESF is the EU's single major instrument in the fight to help people find the jobs they so badly want - and over 19 million people were unemployed and looking for work in the EU in 1997. This InfoReview is part of way in which we can best use the ESF for the benefit of Europe's peoples. I shall contribute to it myself from time to time; I hope that many readers will do the same.

Pádraig Flynn
Commissioner in charge of Employment and Social Affairs

In this issue

The challenges ahead - Hywel Ceri Jones	2
Promoting equality of opportunity in Europe	4
Euroview	8
The why, what and how behind Objective 4	
Euro 15 News	12
The Herbeumont Forum	15
Community Initiatives	18
Employment and Adapt in action	
Headlines	23



The challenges ahead - Hywel Ceri Jones



Since 1993, Hywel Ceri Jones has been Deputy Director General of the Directorate General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs (DG V). In this capacity he has special responsibility for the European Social Fund.

Hywel Jones has extensive experience in dealing with the issues of employment and human resources, not only from his present position in DG V but from a professional career devoted to this area of policy which includes his previous post as Director of the European Commission's Task Force for Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth.

As we enter 1997, the ESF is now embarking on the crucial mid-term phase of its present programming period (1994 to 1999). A number of important developments have recently taken place in relation to the ESF and it is opportune now to review the perspectives and challenges facing the ESF in the coming year.

Dublin Summit

The evolving European employment strategy has taken great strides forward in 1996, and its importance was amply reflected in the conclusions of the Dublin European Council on 13 to 14 December 1996.

The Joint Report on Employment, which was presented to the Summit, represented a significant step forward, insofar as it provides an excellent analysis of the progress achieved by each Member State in implementing the common goals for boosting employment set out at the Essen Summit in 1994. The Report in particular demonstrates how national policies are adapting to meet these priorities and are subsequently being reflected in ESF programming.

The main thrust of the Report emphasises the importance of promoting active labour market measures within public expenditure programmes, par-

ticularly in terms of human resources development, and the need for Member States to move further in this direction.

Building on the framework of the European employment strategy, but taking the process still further, the President of the European Commission, Jacques Santer, took the initiative early last year to call for the European Confidence Pact for Employment. A key proposal advanced by President Santer is for the creation of territorial job creation pacts involving public and private partnerships in selected regions of Europe. Dublin provided the opportunity to assess the headway already made on this proposal and gauge the responses of Member States to the idea of territorial pacts. The notion of mobilising all actors at a local level has been well received so far. Preparations for launching this initiative are almost complete and we hope to see the first projects starting on the ground by this Easter. These will continue for three years, backed-up with technical support from the European Commission.

Social Affairs Council

The Social Affairs Council, held in Brussels on 2 December 1996, took the significant decision to establish a new Employment and Labour Market Committee. This Committee will act as a forum for the increased pooling of information amongst Member States, thus furthering the transfer of good practice. Its work will start early this year, complementing the existing work of the Economic Policy Committee.

Social Dialogue Summit

The high-level Social Dialogue Summit met on 29 November 1996 in Dublin, with the participation of the Irish Prime Minister, President Santer and Commissioner Flynn. The social partners provided a valuable input to the continuing debate over how the ESF can contribute further to job creation, by pledging their increased support for youth employment and lifelong learning.

With regard to youth employment, the European Commission reaffirmed its intention to make available in 1997 technical assistance to allow the social partners to prompt businesses to provide further openings for combined work and training for young people.

The first Cohesion Report

The first Report on Economic and Social Cohesion, presented to the Social Affairs Council in December 1996, is of special interest to the ESF because it assesses the impact of the Structural Funds during the period 1994 to 1996 on economic and social cohesion in the European Union.

The report clearly illustrates how the Structural Funds have played a key role in lessening disparities between the cohesion countries and the rest of the European Union, with Objective 1 programmes proving to be a particular success.

Nevertheless, further progress still needs to be achieved in two key areas which the Report pinpoints as core challenges facing Structural Fund operations in the near future. The first area is the growing gap between wealthier and poorer regions within the Member States of the European Union, and the second the persistence of long-term unemployment. What is important is that both these issues will need to be confronted when defining the future shape of the Structural Funds for the next programming period after 1999.

A Cohesion Forum, to be held on 28 April 1997, will provide a unique opportunity to carry forward the debate on the Cohesion Report. Social Affairs Ministers from both the European Union and central and eastern Europe will be invited to participate in this Forum.

The mid-term evaluation and review

The reform of the Structural Funds in 1993 established the possibility of re-programming interventions after three years to allow the European Commission and the Member States alike to learn lessons from the past and undertake any fine tuning where necessary. 1997 marks an important stage in this process and mid-term evaluation is now under way. A mid-term evaluation report is due in the spring, and all those involved in the ESF should take advantage of this opportunity to assess the progress already achieved, whilst making adjustments to bolster the impact of the ESF on employment.

Future of the Structural Funds

The first steps in the discussion on the future development of the Structural Funds will take place in late 1997. Key to this discussion will be: the out-

come of the Intergovernmental Conference, the revision of the financial perspectives of the European Union and the initial phase of deliberating on future enlargement in the European Union. This will undoubtedly be a complex and political agenda and one which concerns all those involved or interested in the activities of the ESF.

ESF budget execution 1996 and the European Court of Auditors' Report

Budget execution in 1996 was a real success. 100 per cent of mainstream ESF funds were committed and paid, and the proportions in the Community Initiatives were only slightly lower. Overall results for the ESF show that 98.41 per cent of commitment appropriations and 97.97 per cent of payment appropriations were used - the best result for any of the Structural Funds and a marked improvement with 1995.

Allied to this is the question of correct and wise execution of the budget, and the report of the European Court of Auditors presented in November 1996 is receiving the European Commission's urgent attention. It is important to note that the European Court of Auditors has not found any evidence of widespread fraud or irregularity, despite some contrary impressions given erroneously in certain newspapers. Underspending, however, remains a challenge as do certain aspects of implementation, even though the European Court of Auditors acknowledges that good progress has been made in response to previous criticism.

The European Court of Auditors also confirms that the "overwhelming majority of substantial errors it found originated in the Member States". The European Commission is drawing up an action plan to deal with these issues as rapidly as possible.

Simplification of procedures

The European Commission has given priority to this issue by setting up a working group within DG V. It has met on several occasions and is pressing ahead speedily with its work. In parallel, the group concerned with simplification in relation to the Community Initiatives is also proceeding. The European Commission will ensure that sufficient space is found in the 1997 work programme to act on any forthcoming recommendations.

Visibility of the ESF

The ESF takes the issue of visibility seriously. The European Commission has undertaken a Communications Audit in the Member States to establish the most effective way of developing, in collaboration with the Member States, a pro-active information and communications strategy aimed at achieving a wider understanding of the ESF. The initial findings from this audit have recently been received and the key results and recommendations which flow from it will be presented in February 1997.

Our hope is to make the ESF more transparent to the wider public and more readily accessible to potential beneficiaries. With greater clarity and publicity about the ESF's objectives and mechanisms, project promoters and beneficiaries can see how ESF assistance is translated into practical action. This can only improve the quality of project operations, and further the transfer of innovation and good practice.

The year ahead

The ESF has had a heavy work programme in 1996 and can look forward to an even more demanding one in 1997.

Success can only be achieved through well-planned and concerted action involving real partnerships between all the relevant actors at European, national, regional and, perhaps most importantly, local levels.

I look forward to this important year ahead for the ESF, confident in the hope that our continued efforts to improve its effectiveness will be fruitful both in the medium term and in relation to future strategy and action.

This text was adapted from the presentation given by Mr Jones to the ESF Committee at its meeting on 13 December 1996

Promoting equality of opportunity in Europe

The European Union has always considered equal opportunities as paramount. For some, the White Papers and official statements vowing to uphold equal opportunities for men and women seem far removed from the realities of everyday life. But little by little, progress is being made – and at the vanguard of the EU's effort is the ESF.

The principle of equal pay for men and women was recognised from the start by the European Community and was made an explicit right by Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome. Article 1 of the ESF's own Regulation requires the Member States and the European Commission "to ensure that operations under the different objectives respect the principle of equal treatment for men and women". More recently, the concept of actively promoting equal opportunities was put forward in two White Papers in 1993 - 'Growth, competitiveness and employment', and 'European social policy - a way forward for the Union', and in the conclusions of the Essen, Cannes, Madrid and Florence European Councils.

A European Commission paper dating from November 1995 notes that considerable progress has been made in recent years, particularly with regard to the level of training and the growing number of women entering the work force. However,

the paper also notes that certain challenges remain:

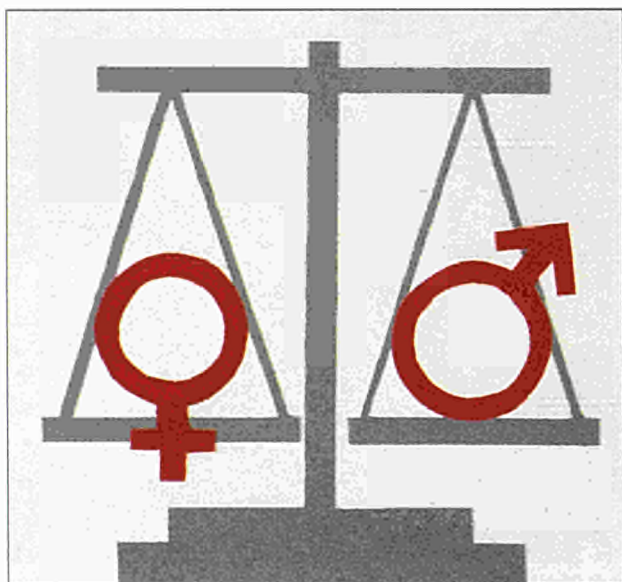
- although women are better qualified today, their qualifications do not always match the needs of the labour market
- women remain under-represented in decision-making posts, particularly in political and social negotiating bodies
- certain groups of women remain particularly disadvantaged, such as women in rural environments, single parents, immigrants
- the progress made is uneven across the Member States, in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

The fourth action programme on equal opportunities for the period 1996 to 2000 aims to tackle some of these problems by strengthening the role of women as active citizens in the broadest sense. The programme is designed to promote a global approach to the situation of women as regards positions involving decision-making, influence and power, in both the business and public sectors, and also to introduce a gender dimension into all EU policies and initiatives.

The communication on mainstreaming, adopted in February 1996, assesses the ways in which equal opportunities have been taken into account to date in EU policies. It also contains suggestions for future action. An important part of the communication

talks about the Structural Funds and how their resources can be used to help promote equal opportunities. Indeed, when the Structural Funds were reformed a few years ago, equal opportunities were once again on the agenda.

Hywel Jones, the Deputy Director General of DG V responsible for ESF policy and operation, does not question that progress was made in equal opportunities during the 1989 to 1993 programming period.



Balancing inequalities

He feels that the real question facing the European Commission is whether more could be done. It became clear during the design of the 1994 to 1999 programme, that the answer was "yes". "We believe we can and must do more to promote equal opportunities: in the planning, the implementation, the monitoring and the evaluation processes of the Funds," said Mr. Jones at a conference in March 1996 on the use of the Structural Funds for this very purpose.

The ESF takes the lead

During the 1989 to 1993 programming period, it was largely the ESF of the three Structural Funds that contributed to the promotion of equal opportunities. Through its funding of measures to train and help young people and the long-term unemployed, women benefited enormously as well. However the money earmarked specifically to help women was relatively low; only five per cent of ESF appropriations (i.e. ECU 380 million).

A crucial measure to improve this situation has been the creation of the Community Initiative Now,

launched during 1991 in the middle of the 1989-1993 programming period. Hywel Jones noted that Now sprang from the need to do something about the segregation of the labour market and the growing sense of social exclusion in Europe, both of which have an enormous impact on women. Now carried a budget of ECU 156 million over three years. Out of the 800 projects assisted, 300 were aimed at the creation of small businesses or cooperatives. Other projects raised women's awareness of, and access to, opportunities on the labour market.

DG V looked carefully at its experience with Now when it came to plan for the 1994 to 1999 programming period. "Now taught us some valuable lessons," said Mr Jones. "This was particularly true of the need to have more flexible eligibility rules. Now also pioneered the concept of 'pathways to integration' whereby packages of personalised measures aimed at reintegration into the labour market were developed." Having proved its worth, Now has ECU 380 million at its disposal for the 1994 to 1999 planning period, well over twice the resources it had previously.

Half way through the 1994 to 1999 funding phase, the European Commission is concerned to ensure that equal opportunities are developed as an integral part of all Community Initiatives, and within the mainstream Structural Fund programmes.

Equal opportunities - a specific ESF Objective

While the governing rules of the Structural Funds make explicit reference to the importance of respecting equal opportunities, the ESF actually goes further. The promotion of equal opportunities is one of its specific objectives. Equal opportunities are referred to in all ESF programming plans. The intention is to take equal opportunities into account as a priority, across the board. The Structural Funds have increased accordingly.

Approximately ECU 785 million have been allocated to specific equal opportunity measures which is more than double the money earmarked for the first programming period. In many Member States, the concern for equal opportunities has led to the creation of a specific priority under Objective 3 (Austria, Belgium, Spain, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Germany, United Kingdom) and the allocation of human resources appropriations under Objective 1 (Ireland, Portugal, Italy, Greece, United Kingdom, Germany). There is no specific mention of an equal opportunity priority in the documents relating to Objective 2 (although this will change in the pro-

gramming period 1997 to 1999) and Objective 5b, and only an indirect one in those relating to Objective 4 (Belgium). Besides specific measures targeted at women, an evaluation of all the measures provided within the programming documents is carried out. The aim of this evaluation is to quantify the effects that the different policy measures have on women.

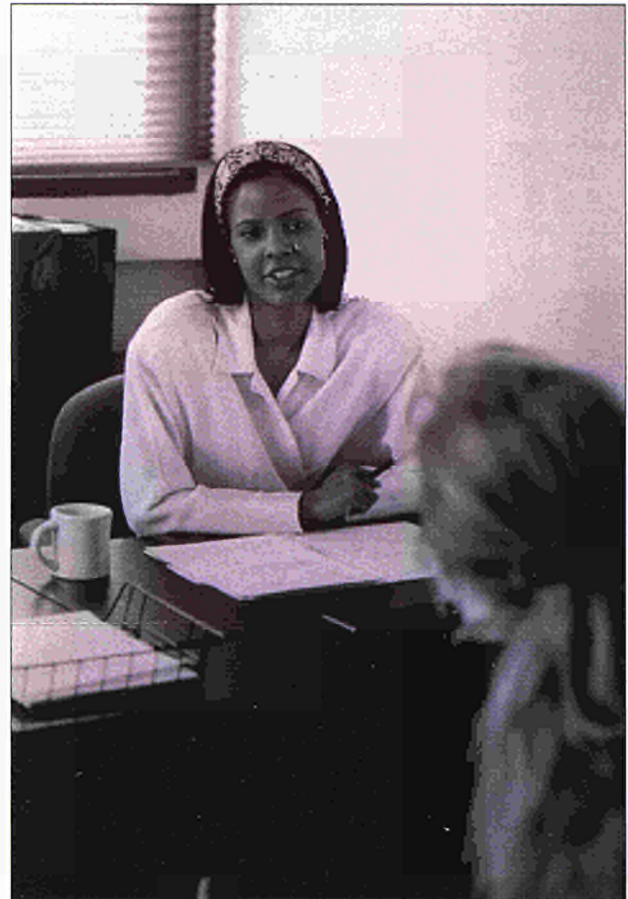
Specific measures are also being developed to allow women improved access to the labour market by providing assistance with child care and other family responsibilities, and by improving their competitiveness and employability. The latter can be achieved through specific training measures, business start-up aids, and by providing useful information on job vacancies. In some cases, the programme includes measures designed to change the attitudes of parents and women by encouraging them to opt for vocational studies not traditionally pursued by women.

The Structural Funds join forces

Another important feature of this current funding period is that the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the ESF and the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) are working together more frequently and with greater efficiency. Take for example, education and training activities; the ESF handles the operating costs while the ERDF is responsible for the purchase of equipment. This coordinated approach is particularly effective in the provision of facilities enabling women to combine work and child care. These include crèches, kindergartens, after-school care facilities, and transport to poorly-served, sparsely-populated areas - all vital for women trying to take advantage of training opportunities.

The Structural Funds have also joined up to support measures to help women entrepreneurs or women who work with their husbands in small businesses. Assistance for adapting production, local development or improving quality of life is not just of value to women, but is a powerful indirect means of promoting equality because they make what is locally available so much more attractive and relevant. It is that local feature which is one of the keys to improved employment opportunities for women.

Much of the Community added value comes in bringing project organisers together. Once the networks have been established, good practice starts to circulate throughout the system.



Getting women back into the labour market

Communications improve effectiveness

The importance of networks became even more apparent following the three-day Social Policy Forum in March 1996, which brought together the widest range of social affairs participants, from employers and unions to non-governmental organisations and European Union institutions.

“Good communications avoid the need to keep reinventing the wheel,” said Dr Pauline Conroy, who acted as the rapporteur on the forum’s equal opportunities workshop. “This applies across the board, be it in terms of helping the long-term unemployed, single mothers or racial minorities to become more employable.” While stronger links between voluntary organisations and EU institutions could add to overall ESF costs, this extra resourcing would be more than offset by improved results. A proposal that the ESF should pay for Internet dialogue between employers, unions and NGOs was given an especially enthusiastic welcome by delegates at the forum.

The forum also highlighted another point. The EU will not succeed in increasing job opportunities for women unless it has a strong social strategy which mainstreams women's issues. "New opportunities for women are all very well," warned Barbara Helfferich of the European Women's Lobby, "but women are affected by all sorts of other policy decisions too. The time has come to introduce women's interests into mainstream ESF projects, such as making training in information technology accessible to mothers who stay at home, and offering subsidies to SMEs that offer specific openings for career-break women."

"Before you can train or retrain women, basic infrastructures must be in place," said Helfferich. A typical case is the single mother with a poorly paid part-time job, for whom training courses are impossible without subsidised child care or home help. "This is the purpose of mainstreaming women's issues and why the input from such a broad social spectrum at the forum's equal opportunities workshop was so significant," she said.

What more can be done?

DG V has taken on board the comments from the Social Policy Forum and the Conference on Equal Opportunities. Part of the strategy for equal opportunities is to assess the impact of policies while they are still in operation. By carefully monitoring and evaluating the work largely through Monitoring Committees, DG V will be able to pinpoint any policy weaknesses as early as possible.

Hywel Jones firmly believes that more can be done in a number of areas, as follows.

- Using the full flexibility offered by the programming arrangements to ensure that maximum provision is made for the most effective ways of promoting equal opportunities
- Combining Structural Fund operations in the work on pilot projects linked to equal opportunities, bringing together the ERDF (Article 10), the ESF (Article 6) and the EAGGF (Article 8). The combined use of Article 6 and 10, for example, helps to test new ideas as to how to master the social implications of the information society. It also supports actions within the framework of the development of new sources of employment, such as care services, which are of particular interest to women.

- Ensuring that the Structural Funds make a substantial contribution to equal opportunities as a vital part of the European strategy for employment and job creation, which has been developing progressively under the impetus of successive European Councils.

More practically, in order to alleviate some of the constraints which primarily affect women, the Structural Funds can be used as a matter of priority to develop infrastructures and services for the care of dependants, or to enable companies to create jobs and reconcile work with family life through the reorganisation of work patterns.

The Funds must also contribute to the economic and social integration of urban and rural populations that are becoming increasingly marginalised. A concerted effort is required to combat the rapid marginalisation of women who are disadvantaged or who live in sensitive areas through the reconstruction of social links. For example, the creation of social centres (multi-purpose halls for sport, entertainment, distance learning, etc) or the financing of teaching tools and business creation support services.

These guidelines complement those relating to the promotion of new sources of employment, the adaptation of the organisation of work and skills and support for regional development and local initiatives.

"We are aware of the importance of the Structural Funds. Let's now do everything in our power to increase their impact on building the equality of opportunities," Mr Jones concluded. ■

The why, what and how behind Objective 4

The ESF's 'new' Objective 4 has certainly attracted controversy since its launch almost two years ago, but how has it fared since then and where is it heading in the future? The European Commission sponsored a seminar at the start of 1996 in Toulouse to ask that very question, focusing on 'The adaptation of workers to industrial change.'

Objective 4 has a twofold aim: to help workers in all Member States adjust and respond to the impact of industrial change, while adapting those same workers to systems of production which are themselves constantly evolving. Its ultimate goal is to improve the qualifications and prospects of all those in employment. The question put forward by critics is whether Objective 4 in this new form, is actually needed.

There has never been any doubt in the mind of the European Social Affairs Commissioner, Pádraig Flynn. He reiterated his belief at the seminar, when he said "My message to companies is that you cannot afford to wait passively for the labour market to deliver the skills that you need. You must engage in an active partnership with both government and training providers in order to help design the

courses and the programmes which will shape future skills. Partnership is the key to our working future and this simple fact is the core premise underlying Objective 4."

Why was Objective 4 established?

Whatever your opinion of Objective 4, there cannot be any doubt as to the degree to which Europe is changing. The so-called 'globalisation of the marketplace', accelerated by the liberalisation of international trade, has brought with it a vastly different economic landscape than that traditionally experienced and understood by the citizens of Europe. Furthermore, technological innovation is resulting in profound changes to the ways in which work is carried out, as well as changes to the very nature of work itself.

A key report by the ESF, presented at the 1996 Toulouse seminar, argued that the major stimulants of industrial change were information and communication technologies, which has implications both within and far beyond industry. The great logistical advantages afforded by computers have allowed companies to improve their management techniques enormously, resulting in greater efficiency



The information society - a challenge for tomorrow, today

but also in job cuts. On the upside, however, new technologies have also created new demands, providing new sources of employment across different sectors. These developments have in turn changed the way employment is distributed across sectors. The growth of the European service sector since the 1980s has been well documented, as have the numerous job losses experienced by the manufacturing and agriculture sectors. Even within sectors, there has been a drift towards the more service-oriented ends of industry, paving the way towards an economy based on a new type of knowledge requirement.

Traditionally accepted qualifications are becoming less valuable on the labour market, thereby increasing the need for training and retraining throughout Europe. The individual worker can certainly be forgiven for not knowing how he or she should improve skills. The ESF can play a vital role in clearing up this confusion by helping Member States to gain quick and easy access to the process of change taking place across Europe.

What are the key policy issues behind Objective 4?

Those familiar with the policy detail of Objective 4 will know that it is through anticipating industrial change that the ESF forecasts the types of skills that will be needed as industry progresses ever forward, and as such, it is perhaps the most important strand of policy in Objective 4. Through anticipation of industrial changes, training can be more effectively targeted to equip workers with the flexibility of skills required by the changing, modern work environment. To paraphrase a popular saying, an ounce of prevention is worth a ton of cure.

However, anticipating industrial change is by no means the overriding focus of policy. Indeed, partnership is another strand of policy which is fundamental to all the aims of Objective 4. A relatively recent area of growth in industry in the last decade, has been small and medium-sized enterprises which have substantially increased their importance as job and wealth creators.

Every year between 1988 and 1995, an average of 250,000 jobs were created by firms with fewer than 100 workers. It is precisely these 'hotbeds' of entrepreneurial development which need encouragement and training and which, as Commissioner Pádraig Flynn rightly points out, cannot afford to keep pace with change merely by their own effort. These

smaller organisations are crying out for some form of partnership relationship which will enable them to move forward and access opportunities.

Policy detail in a nutshell

One of the central tenets of European Union policy is to establish a common approach to industrial change at both national and EU level, assisting both the employed and the unemployed.

Objective 4 adheres to this approach, primarily by focusing on equipping people who are still in work with up-to-date skills. In doing so, it emphasises the complementarity of ESF actions with all actions undertaken at an individual level by enterprises throughout the Member States. In Objective 1, 2, 5b and 6 regions, Objective 4 also deals specifically with retraining programmes for individuals who have lost their jobs.

The hope is that by providing access to focused training, workers will be protected more fully from the vagaries of unemployment, and will be able to look forward to greater continuity in their working lives. Objective 4 also aims to help workers adapt to changing the focus of their jobs through encouraging participation in a broad range of training, in the form of transferable and versatile skills.

Above all, Objective 4

- encourages training linked to new technologies
- helps to foster training within companies
- promotes cooperation between the public and private sectors
- provides technical and financial assistance to companies, to help them improve their management techniques.

Objective 4 can be summarised as follows:

- it evaluates the effect of industrial change on employment and develops analysis and forecasting techniques to predict employment and labour-market trends
- it introduces strategic planning for human resources in companies, including new forms of employment management
- it analyses the kind of qualifications required to meet the changes forecast and highlights the kind of in-house employee training required.

Objective 4 is complemented by the Community Initiative Adapt, which provides the same kinds of services, but on a totally transnational basis, reflecting the increasingly international markets in which both companies and individual workers are now operating. The transnational characteristic of this action allows any resulting innovations, analyses and experiences to be shared and disseminated as widely as possible.

How is the funding split?

The ESF committed ECU 407 million to the Member States, under Objective 4 for the 1994 to 1996 period.

The larger part of this sum has been directed towards training, although this figure varies from Member State to Member State, from between 30 to 80 per cent. Ten to thirty per cent of the budget was set against projects relating to the anticipation of market trends and anything from 5 to 30 per cent went towards improving training systems. Technical assistance generally accounted for the smallest portion of the budget, from between five to fifteen per cent.

How successful has Objective 4 been to date?

This is a difficult question to answer, given that Objective 4 has not had sufficient time to make its mark on social policy in Europe. For the moment, it is just coming out of what could be termed its 'learning phase,' and its effectiveness will be measured and tested in the concrete results and actions of the next two to three years.

Peter Zangl, then Director of the ESF, summed up this difficulty in his closing speech at the Toulouse seminar. He said that the seminar marked the transition of Objective 4 from its initial start-up period to the important phase it is now facing, in which it will need to demonstrate its practical achievements to a wider audience. Although he was confident that, in the main, there was general support for what Objective 4 was trying to achieve, especially as regards the focus on anticipating industrial change, Zangl nevertheless identified a number of outstanding concerns which Objective 4 will need to overcome in order to gain public confidence and to convince the critics of its positive economic benefits across Europe. Mr Zangl highlighted that

- the whole issue surrounding the process of anticipating industrial change still needs a great deal of work in order to develop and use it effectively

- Monitoring Committees need to become more pro-active
- technological change is moving at a pace far greater than originally anticipated, yet Objective 4 still needs to integrate the information society more fully
- the ESF should concentrate its efforts to a greater extent on training and training systems
- Objective 4 needs to determine how it will involve public companies in taking up its policy
- Objective 1 and 2 regions should be incorporating more Objective 4 projects.

Building on his comments, the European Commission has released a mid-term report on the implementation of Objective 4 and the Adapt Initiative. It is an honest appraisal of their strengths and weaknesses and will provoke an interesting debate. Although the report acknowledges that the implementation of Objective 4 projects has been slow overall, it has been able to draw some valuable lessons from experiences gained in the first funding-period, which should help future work.

The first point to note is that there was significant variation between the efforts made by Member States to achieve the Objective's goals. Numerous reasons have been offered in explanation: different levels of integration with national policies, and different levels of preference accorded to Objective 3 and 4 by national administrations appear to be the main suggestions.

Nowhere has this variation been more apparent than in the area of anticipating industrial change. Due to significant differences between Member States' decision-making structures and approaches to funding, results have been extremely diverse. Again, this is for a variety of reasons: the methodology used by Member States differed substantially, and not all administrators found it easy to incorporate this element into training programmes. The exact degree to which anticipation of industrial change has been successful is, however, very difficult to quantify. In fact, the report's authors stressed that all of their assessments must be taken in context - it is extremely difficult to measure the effects of social policy, and any results should be treated as pointers, rather than definitive truths.

Another area of concern is whether Objective 4 helps all sectors of the economy equally: experience suggests that some do better than others. This does not, however, imply any inherent bias in the system; inequalities can be attributed rather to the varying ability of different groups to attract funding. Finally,

it seems that it was not easy to target accurately those most threatened with unemployment, and small and medium-sized enterprises. Administrators have reported difficulties with identifying and monitoring the intended groups, and finding effective methods of cofinancing with SMEs. Nevertheless, all Member States have largely succeeded in implementing Objective 4's bottom-up philosophy, and people on the ground are becoming increasingly involved in the various projects.

In addition, on the positive side, there have been some useful side effects that will be worth monitoring closely in future. According to the European Commission report, Objective 4 has positively influenced economic restructuring.

National administrators have found it easier to direct active labour policies to workers in employment, and there has been increased synergy between national schemes and Objective 4. Labour and economy ministries have benefited as a result. Furthermore, despite the problems outlined above, the emphasis on the anticipation of industrial change has helped governments pre-empt the need for remedial or crisis measures through preventive approaches. This is especially useful in Member States where public authorities do not usually carry out this kind of work.

Objective 4 has also helped foster and strengthen cooperation between training organisations, especially through the establishment of interprofessional agreements and the transfer of good practice. And although the exact benefits of these activities are hard to assess accurately, everyone agrees that they are of enormous importance. The report recommends further research into this kind of effect.

The picture is thus mixed. Objective 4 is up and running, and lessons are being learned fast. But its architects, and those who implement it, face some daunting challenges over the next few years.

Where now?

The burning question on all lips is: what happens next? Should Objective 4 continue much as before, with special attention given to those areas outlined above? Or should new approaches be adopted in the light of experience? The message for the time being appears to be: let us give it some more time. Rome was not built in a day, and any attempt to address the huge changes facing the European Union are bound to face teething problems. If adapting to industrial change was easy, there would be no need.

Implementing Objective 4 will, by its nature, have to be a gradual process, as labour market policies take new directions. And without making excuses, Objective 4 has faced some tough obstacles. To begin with, it marks a significant departure from traditional approaches. Its style has proved difficult to fit into existing structures, especially as national governments have generally focused on the unemployed rather than those with jobs. Unfortunately, its innovative character has often resulted in an overly strict interpretation of, for example, the 'horizontal approach,' which has caused delays.

Even so, a mutual learning process has taken place which is reaping many rewards. Member States are already beginning to make efforts to accommodate Objective 4's unique style, and for its part it has found ways to fit in without excessive disruption. Objective 4 administrators also have to reassess some of their initial priorities.

Considerable research still needs to be carried out on the nature of the changes sweeping through society in the late 1990s. Not least of these are the globalisation of markets, technological innovation and the advent of the information society. All of these changes will have a major impact on the way companies manage their future and Objective 4 actions will need to adapt to these new challenges.

Most importantly, there is an urgent need to clarify Objective 4's aims and methods. A greater understanding of these questions should bring the various programmes closer to the workers and employers who are meant to benefit from them. It could also help improve anticipation of market trends. Objective 4 would also benefit from greater cooperation with other active bodies - especially the economic and social partners.

Although these are far from easy goals, according to the report, it should be possible to achieve them all within the existing framework. We hope that is the case. Objective 4's critics will not be silenced, and can justifiably demand some concrete improvements.

Nevertheless, the ESF is confident that as the beneficial effects of Objective 4 start to trickle down through the Member States, it will gain increasing support. Objective 4 can deliver, and will be a major force for the good of all as Europe grapples with an era of technological change. ■

Euro 15 News

In this section, we hear from a selection of Member States about how they are putting the social policies co-funded by the ESF into action. From projects which assist the young unemployed to find a way into the labour market, to projects which tackle the issues faced by the disabled in reintegrating themselves into the competitive job market, ESF co-funded projects are in place and are attempting to make the lives of all workers across Europe more equitable.

If you are working in partnership on a project co-funded by the ESF, we would like to hear from you, to share your experiences of good practice and success with others, as well as any problems you may have encountered and the steps taken to overcome them. If you would like to share your experience of putting ESF policy into action, please contact the ESF Editorial Board at: (+32-2) 295 44 90.



Denmark

Fighting exclusion at the Reva Rehabilitation Centre in Copenhagen

Denmark's four-month training project, known as BETA, aims to help physically disabled people who have suffered from long-term unemployment and/or sickness, and who are consequently dependent on social security.

The project is coordinated by the Reva Rehabilitation centre in Copenhagen, which began the initiative in 1992 in partnership with two other rehabilitation institutions. "Many companies are uncertain about employing disabled people," says Kirsten Draiby, the project leader. "Our aim is to combine BETA's expertise in rehabilitation with a broad knowledge of the job market," she says, "and it is BETA's goal to help individuals adapt their personal qualifications to the needs of the particular jobs available in the market-place."

BETA primarily tries to help individuals who, although disabled, can still carry out about 50 to 100 per cent of the work that non-disabled people do, but who nonetheless find themselves excluded from early retirement schemes. In addition to job training, BETA helps with job applications and work placements, and provides follow-up support for both the employee and employer when jobs are offered and taken up through a scheme known as the 40/60 (so called because of the ESF co-funding arrangement).

Although BETA's experience shows that flexibility, a willingness to cooperate, and personal responsibility are the key elements in securing a job, social obligation towards people with disabilities is not a dominant issue for most employers. Employers tend to be attracted to the scheme either because of an acute need for labour, or because of the low cost involved in employing disabled individuals. Furthermore, individuals who do manage to access a training programme often do not move on to full-time employment, since employers are wary of offering long-term contracts to disabled workers, despite the financial compensation provided in such cases to cover reduced ability to work.

"We want to strengthen cooperation between public authorities and private business, doctors and labour unions, and work together to create methods and models which overcome exclusion and move towards a fuller integration of exposed groups in the workplace. We have to work as one to change outdated attitudes," says Kirsten Draiby.

Danish youngsters play key role in turning former Soviet submarine into city's third largest tourist attraction

When an old Russian submarine was purchased by the Danish Submarine Foundation in 1994, a group of young Danish unemployed helped to turn it into a thriving tourist attraction, under Objective 3 of the European Social Fund.

"The 76 metre submarine was initially given to us for free by Mikhail Gorbachov, but the revolution came shortly after. And then the military discovered the 'market economy'," says Birgitte Rørdum, a project leader of the Rolling Gallery, which supervised the restoration of the boat and turned it into the third largest tourist attraction in the city.

Since the Rolling Gallery began in 1989, several hundred unemployed youths have taken part in the project. The youngsters are taught basic EDP (electronic

data-processing) and public relations skills, in addition to receiving help with their English and German, to enable them to act as guides on the boat. They are normally allowed to participate in the project for a period of six months, with an option to continue for a further six months. "We succeed in getting people off social benefits to a far higher degree than most other projects," says Birgitte Rørdum. "We have found that by building up a degree of self-confidence in youngsters, most are sufficiently challenged to take up a specific job training project or to go out and find a job themselves." However, as Ms Birgitte Rørdum points out, "It is not just the unemployed youngsters who benefit, the town in turn benefits from the money spent by tourists on other attractions, in the shops and in the restaurants."

The total cost of the project has been DKR 6,800,000.

France

Human resources development to improve industrial competitiveness (Konzette)

The ESF is funding 20 per cent of the total cost of a vocational training project under Objective 4 in the field of the industrial production of staples.

Konzette, a French enterprise specialising in the manufacture of staples and office staplers, aims to improve its industrial competitiveness by establishing new industrial production sites, automatic wrapping systems and integrated computer networks. To achieve its objectives, Konzette will develop new working processes, improved internal capabilities and management systems.

The Konzette project is designed to help poorly skilled employees to improve and expand their skills base. Moreover, the training curriculum enables the company's workforce to adapt to new technologies - the primary mission of the ESF under Objective 4.

Finland

Eighty per cent success rate at the Blue Workshop Arts Centre in Helsinki

If you fancy a snack in the Uusimaa district of Helsinki, why not pop into the Blue Workshop, a production school and training centre for unemployed young people? Aimed at youngsters with an average age of 20, who have not completed comprehensive studies or who lack vocational training, the workshop provides training and practical experience in arts-related fields. These range from managing a lunchtime café, running a puppet/street theatre group and operating

a textile dyeing and jewellery business, to organising a sewing group which produces a range of products, from quilts and rucksacks to theatrical costumes.

Youngsters in the Uusimaa district gravitate towards the arts, a field in which it is difficult to find jobs. However, during their six-month training period, the Blue Workshop enables them to assess more effectively whether this type of work is something they want to pursue for a living. They have to conform to normal working hours and are taught the need to establish a work/leisure routine in their lives.

The Blue Workshop is also active in the media field. A good example of its involvement in this area is the innovative media workshop organised by the city of Helsinki. The workshop provides access to a training programme and production school for the young unemployed under-25s. Participants learn how to produce television and radio programmes, make magazines, and learn photography using new technologies.

The total cost of the project is around FM 3.7 million, and tutor Hellevi Bengs says, "We think we have been successful. There have been almost no drop-outs and there appears to be a market for the goods produced by our trainees. Up to 80 per cent of those who pass their six-month employment period move on to a school of further education or take up apprenticeships."

Portugal

Confederation of Portuguese Farmers (CAP) selects and finances training projects in agriculture

In Portugal, CAP is one of the social partners which promotes ESF projects. CAP has set up a three-year framework programme, the so-called "modernisation of the economic fabric" programme. It selects and finances training projects presented by organisations dealing with agriculture. Within the programme, CAP carries out a number of innovative actions.

Original projects such as managing biological agriculture with foreign trainers specialised in this field, or marketing training for farmers, have stimulated improved competitiveness in these areas.

Through these projects, the farmers are taught how to make their production more competitive. They are encouraged to network and taught what they can do in order to start selling their products in big supermarkets. Farmers, who previously thought that it would be impossible to sell to big supermarkets, managed to establish business contacts after the course.

Spain

Training workshops provide under-25s with work experience

About 55,000 people are expected to benefit from the 'School-Workshop' programme in Spain, which teaches new skills while offering valuable work experience. The programme is aimed at those under-25s who have no diploma qualification, a group which accounts for a particularly high proportion of the jobless in Spain.

There are two phases in the programme: first, a distinct learning period of between one to three years in what are known as 'school-workshops' and, secondly, a vocational houses programme which can last from six months to a year, and which allows participants to apply their experience directly in the workplace. Students tend to work in professions which are involved in the development of Spain's cultural heritage or in organisations which are helping to revitalise city centres suffering from urban decay. Organisations that initiate projects in these areas have an obligation to take on a quota of student workers, with a view to hiring them in the various projects which they administrate.

Germany

Electronics training project focuses on youngsters confronted by exclusion

The Wind und Wasser project is now into its sixth year, providing about 30 young people a year with elementary/intermediate training in electronics or metallurgy. Working under Objective 3, the project largely tutors foreigners and refugees, often from broken homes, with an average age of 18.

The students follow a strict curriculum, which prepares them for the first stage of their secondary education. This involves practical work, theoretical study and visits to local companies. Students also sit a test at the end of their year's training and work practice. If they fail this they are given another opportunity to sit the exam six months later. While the project acknowledges that it is impossible to find jobs for everyone, the majority of the participants do learn more than they anticipated and learn to manage their lives more effectively.

Nevertheless, projects like this are costly, and some critics believe the project costs the city too much money. With ECU 500,000 of funding from the ESF and the city government, the operational costs are a constant threat to the existence of the scheme. In addition, the rigorous paperwork required by the ESF can sometimes be very time consuming for the

beneficiary. However, despite of these problems, the project is still up and running and public opinion is generally sympathetic.

One example of a successful project is a windmill constructed on a public building by students, who also designed an electronic device to monitor the power it generated - a feat worthy of professional engineers. "A project like this shows young people what they are capable of," says tutor Joerg Ludwig. "The young people see the results of their work and they can be proud. They learn teamwork and, equally as important, they learn to learn on their own."

Belgium

Brussels job-search scheme

A job search scheme which aims to help find jobs for young people, immigrants and other groups was launched in Brussels in 1990. It was cofinanced by the European Social Fund and the government of the Brussels region and has been decentralised and is managed at a local level through ORBEM, the employment office for the Brussels region.

ORBEM establishes links or 'missions' with local community groups, based on a model first established in France, in an attempt to make job-seeking a partnership process with a human face.

The missions have been adapted to meet the needs of local communities in the six districts of Brussels which have been targeted. They build on local knowledge and provide disadvantaged groups with a structured, concrete, practical and efficient means to help them access the job market. Organisations providing crèche facilities, and an organisation operating a job club scheme (atelier de recherche active d'emploi) are examples of the types of partnerships which have been set up through ORBEM. ■

The Herbeumont Forum, 6 to 7 June 1996 - a place for dialogue

The ESF listens to the needs, ideas and opinions of those it aims to help. This was well demonstrated last June in the small Belgian town of Herbeumont. On 6 to 7 June, a forum organised by the European Commission and the Belgian authorities brought together a wide spectrum of people interested in social integration through training. From trainees to politicians, the conference offered everyone involved with the ESF an opportunity to speak.

The event was a resounding success. Two hundred trainees (Flemish, French and German speaking) spoke about their experiences and concerns. Their message was delivered to trainers, social workers, trade unions, civil servants and politicians. Over 300 people, individually or in groups, had the opportunity to express their views and influence their own futures, for the very first time. As one participant put it, "I can express my gut feelings and fight for a cause. I think that this forum will lead to a better understanding between unemployed people in training and others."

Why a forum?

Herbeumont was never intended to be just another conference. Its organisers wanted to highlight the profound changes in the ways that social policy is carried out in Europe. The ESF is adamant that without the input of those it aims to help, any assessment of its successes will provide little more than a theoretical gloss to the work of civil servants.

During the first six months of 1996, the organisers of the forum set up working groups across Belgium to sound out what the unemployed themselves had to say. The passion and conviction which administrators encountered made it clear that much could be gained from a clear dialogue.

The forum concentrated on five major themes:

- employment as the classic route to social integration
- training : an obligation, happy accident or social right?
- the uncertainty of integration
- the right price
- group dialogue and collective action.

Herbeumont - a constructive dialogue

The results of the different working groups were presented to a plenary session at the end of the conference.



An open forum for exchanging views

Eyeing each other from opposite sides of the square were trainees and civil servants (the ESF Unit, the cabinet of the Belgian Minister, the European Commission). The other two sides of the hall were occupied by workers and trainers. The participants launched into a lively discussion of the facts, problems and solutions to each of the themes. The results were conveyed to other groups and followed by more discussions until each workshop had built up a relating picture for the final session.

At the forefront of every one's mind was the plight of the unemployed and the problems they encounter daily - administrative jungles, limited information, the absence of choice, and the lack of negotiating power. The unemployed presented gritty accounts of life in the late 1990s.

"Unemployment is a contagious disease which others fear to contract."

"I have always adapted well to things, except unemployment."

"At the moment, I am nothing! I am not part of the scene."

Isolation, abandonment and loneliness emerged as commonplace experiences amongst the jobless. Above all, participants were calling for two things: respect as human beings, and the chance to play a full part in society.

Throughout the day, however, these deep-rooted problems were approached in a creative and optimistic way. Mime-shows, musical performances, theatrical sketches and all means imaginable were used to express what trainees felt and believed should be done to help them enter the mainstream of society.

Recognising the need for feedback

The above activities delighted DG V/C Director Lluís Riera Figueras, who accorded the highest priority to the Herbeumont Forum. During a keynote speech, he reaffirmed that the fight against unemployment was the single most important task facing the European Union and stressed that it could never be successful without the participation and cooperation of its citizens.

"To make European social policy work, it is essential to go to the grassroots and listen to people," he told the inaugural session of the meeting. Turning to the trainees, he explained, "We have come to ask you how to target our activities better, not only here in Belgium but also throughout Europe. Please take the floor... let the dialogue begin!"



Michel Jadot, Belgium's General Secretary at the Ministry of Employment and Labour, told delegates that it was time for employment policy to take account of the bigger picture, such as the limits faced by institutions, economic growth and the steady march towards economic and monetary union. He stated that it was vital not to get bogged down in working groups and words - it was essential to get out onto the streets and deal with the realities of what unemployment means.

Between 1994 and 1999 Belgium will receive ECU 700 million from the ESF to help tackle joblessness. While that represents a mere four per cent of the total of Belgian efforts, it is clear that the ESF's aim is not to replace national schemes, but to add value and efficiency to what was already being tried. Michel Jadot felt that what the ESF was doing was valuable, but relied on the kind of feedback Herbeumont could provide. "The beneficiaries of the ESF's



cofinancing activities are here," he announced. "We want to assess your level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction... we are listening to you."

According to Lea Verstraete, generally known as the European Commission's founder of the forum, a partnership at all levels is essential for the ESF. "Contacts between beneficiaries and public servants should be made on a regular basis," she said. She stated that the European Commission expected big things from the conference - it was essential to provide concrete ideas which would lead to better methodology. In her view, simple observations were not enough; the European Commission needed structured suggestions as to what it should do.

Pleas for better training

Perhaps the strongest message which emerged during the conference was the need for more and better training. It was agreed that too few people had access to this indispensable door to the workplace. As it is organised at the moment, it was felt that training does not provide a direct route to employment. "Training should be provided as soon as possible. It often arrives too late, when one is already falling into long-term unemployment," said one participant.

It was concluded that everyone should have equal access to the benefits of training and that the selection criteria should be revised. "No one tells you what is available and who to apply to," claimed one.

"Why not create a database with all available training schemes?" suggested another.

Nevertheless, it was felt that one should not assume that training is an automatic ticket to work. "Finding a job afterwards is a bit like the lottery," complained one trainee. "Training should not just be a one-off opportunity. It should be geared towards individual routes to integration. It doesn't take personal development into account, it shapes you indiscriminately," said another.

It was agreed that training should be longer and followed by guidance and help. "You follow a course for a year or eighteen months and then they say goodbye, good luck, sort yourself out" said one trainee. "Training also gets in the way of work, because employers fulfil their needs with other trainees who cost them practically nothing. It should not be a carousel, where you go on a course, get a



job if lucky, or else go back and do another course." Frederic, 24, told the conference about his skills acquired through training courses: mason, plasterer, printer, baker. He is currently learning construction. All his training gives him certificates: "What can I do with a piece of paper that says I have been trained?" he asks.

A permanent floor for trainees

One thing was clear by the end of the day: that the trainees could offer extremely important insights into the issue of training as a whole. However, one forum is not enough. The trainees want the event to be repeated frequently, allowing them a permanent dialogue with their government.

In addition it was agreed that the unemployed should be given the means to organise themselves, and have a guaranteed input in the development of social policy. Also, those who are pursuing training courses should be able to express themselves and to participate in the Monitoring Committees.

One trainee summed the conference up as follows: "What was very important at Herbeumont was that, for the first time, it was the people most concerned who spoke. And they were listened to, even by the politicians who had taken the time to come out of their offices and hear new, real-life experiences. I am sure that it was a very useful experience for them, and that they learned a lot for the future.



Illustrations: Alain Wibert

We must continue with this, to go on seeking good ideas which will lead to new solutions."

A member of Mr Van Cauwenberghe's cabinet agreed, adding, "The message of Herbeumont is clear, the trainees demand an ongoing evaluation of the usefulness of training and trainers. For us, that poses questions of coordination, quality and complementarity to those who operate the courses."

The European Commission saw the exercise as a starting point, not an empty bag of promises. To help the working groups to continue, and to give them a structure and means, the European Commission promised to finance the cost of the groups at a rate of 75 per cent for at least 12 months.

The fact that policy-makers must be prepared to listen to the unemployed is no longer an issue. The task that now lies ahead is to find the best way to hear what they have to say, and to put their suggestions into effect.

Additional information in French and Dutch (proceedings of the event, a summary of the major themes and a video of the forum) is available on request at the secretariat of Mr Harrington, DG V/C/4. Please contact the secretariat at tel (+32-2) 29 54453. ■

Employment and Adapt in action

In each edition of ESF InfoReview we will be providing relevant and useful information on the two human resources Community Initiatives, Employment and Adapt, which were set up in 1994 and which will run until the end of 1999. In this first issue, we have focused on general, background information for those readers less familiar with the Community Initiatives.

Who benefits?

The Employment Initiative benefits people who encounter special difficulties in the employment market. It provides opportunities for distinct groups of people through four separate strands.

- Women can access new opportunities in the labour market through projects promoted under Now.
- Horizon aims to integrate individuals with disabilities into the labour market. Previously, it also targeted groups which will now be covered by the Integra strand.
- A wide range of projects are initiated under the Youthstart banner to help young people get the education, training and 'job start' they need to gain a foothold in the labour market.
- Integra, a new strand of the Employment Initiative, aims to meet the needs of disadvantaged groups, particularly migrants, refugees and similarly vulnerable groups.



A helping hand for the most disadvantaged groups

The Adapt Initiative targets workers and employers. Its primary goal is to help them anticipate industrial change and deal with its effects. A new strand of the Initiative, Adapt-bis (building the information society), will help focus attention on the information society as a major factor in industrial change and social policy development. Adapt-bis projects will be financed within the existing Adapt Initiative measures, guided by the information society priorities agreed between the European Commission and the Member States. These cover training, guidance and counselling to help

the workforce adapt to new conditions; they encourage partnerships and cooperation between research centres, companies and public authorities; they create networks between producers, sub-contractors (especially SMEs) and consumers; and they contribute to the development of a social policy to encourage the development of the information society.

Core principles underlie projects

The overriding aim of both Community Initiatives is to bring about positive change in mainstream labour-market policies and practice within the context of five guiding principles, which should be reflected in the design of any Adapt or Employment Initiative project.

- Inviting local involvement: to ensure that real needs or opportunities are identified and that the experience of a wide range of local services and agencies are focused on the development of appropriate responses.
- Promoting innovative techniques: experimenting with new ideas and approaches or new combinations of existing concepts and methods.
- Transnationality: cooperating with, and learning from, innovative partner projects in at least one other Member State.
- The multiplier effect: making sure that the products of local projects or transnational partnerships have as wide an impact as possible.
- Complementarity: creating links with other programmes or initiatives and using, or combining, resources in the most sensible and effective way.

How projects get off the ground

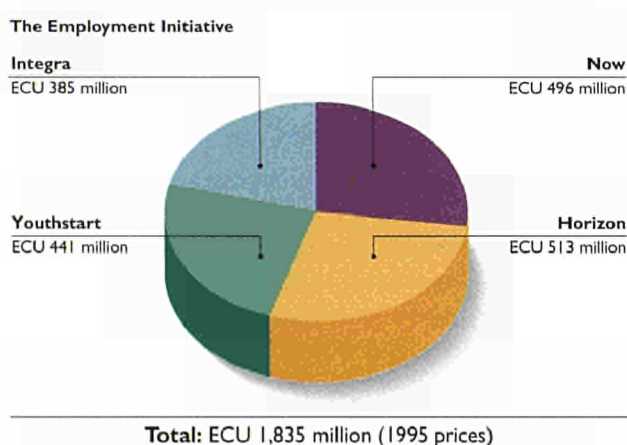
Member States submit Operational Programmes for the Employment and Adapt Initiatives that reflect the specific social and economic needs of their particular country and the particular emphasis they wish to place in the implementation of these Initiatives. Once the Operational Programmes agreed with the European Commission, the first advance of EU funds is transferred.

Following a call for proposals, the first of which was in 1995, followed by a second in 1997, each Member State selects and approves projects from the applications received. The whole process of implementing these Initiatives at national level is overseen by a Monitoring Committee, comprising representatives from national and sometimes regional authorities,

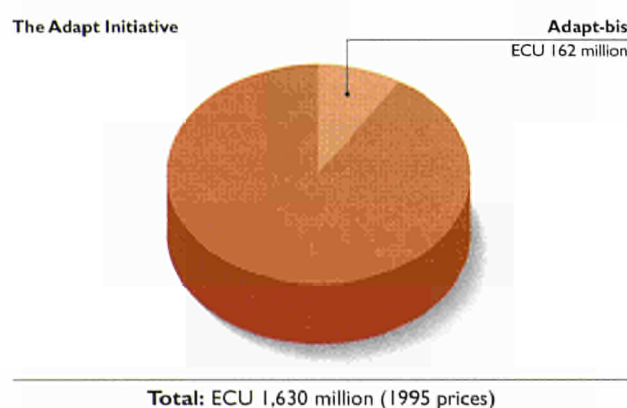
economic and social partners, NGOs and the European Commission. National Support Structures (NSSs) have also been set up in each Member State to assist the national European Social Fund Mission. A small proportion for both these Initiatives' budgets is allocated to these NSSs and to the European Office for Programme Support (EUROPS) which provides Community-level technical assistance to the European Commission.

Budget allocation

The European Union budget for the Employment Initiative is ECU 1,835 million. The pie chart below shows how this budget is divided between the strands.



The Adapt Initiative commands a budget of ECU 1,630 million, of which ECU 162 million are foreseen for activities under the new strand, Adapt-bis, for the period 1997 to 1999.



Pointers to the future

An initial analysis of the projects already selected for the Adapt and Employment Initiatives is already providing some pointers to the themes and issues which could have an important effect on policy and practice in the future.

What areas is the Adapt Initiative focusing on?

Nearly half the 1,200 Adapt-bis projects relate to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), since most Member States' Operational Programmes made it clear that the creation of jobs through SMEs, the changing role of small companies and their training and other support needs, were key priorities under the Adapt Initiative framework.

One such project in the United Kingdom will provide training, guidance and consultancy to enable workers in SMEs at risk of closure to protect themselves against redundancy by buying themselves out and taking over the operation and development of a company. A Finnish project, in the same vein, plans to educate technical and commercial SME employees to adapt to the structural changes facing their companies, and to train them to deal with ecological and high-tech applications issues in areas such as bio-processing, energy conservation, and non-degradable products.

Other projects established through the Adapt Initiative fall into the following categories.

Job creation schemes. A Danish project, in partnership with projects in France, Germany and Italy, is focusing on the potential within SMEs to generate new ideas and products during the production process. One of the spin-offs of this exercise may enable employees to set up independent production units and new enterprises.

Anticipation. Improving anticipation of industrial change and its effects is the focus for a university-led project designed to pass on European know-how and develop training tools and programmes for SME employees in the Swedish food industry. This know-how has been gained through work accomplished across a number of European research projects which examined change and development in the food industry. The Swedish project will be working with partners in Germany and Portugal.

Local partnerships. The prime objective of a significant number of projects is to improve the quality of local partnerships and support structures. One such project is a French transnational support network for SMEs, involving some 600 workers in 150 companies across five other countries. Training consultants in organisations which serve SMEs will be kept up-to-date through exchanges of experience and know-how, and there are plans to establish an information database and a national and international resource network.



New working methods. Another sizable group of projects will be based around new methods of work organisation and the training which workers require to cope with change. A German project will provide telecoaching for 15 SMEs involved in teleworking and outsourcing. The companies will all be linked by Euro-ISDN, and the methods and the results will be fully shared between all partners. A Dutch project, focusing on the handling of dangerous goods by port workers, will develop common training modules for different modes of transport, in partnership with Belgian and German port authorities.

What projects are being set up through the Employment Initiative?

Almost 2,400 projects have been selected to participate in the Employment Initiative, all of which support four priority measures:

- the promotion of new systems of guidance, training, counseling and employment
- the promotion of training with appropriate guidance, placement and support
- job creation
- awareness-raising amongst potential beneficiaries and key actors.

The current three strands of the Employment Initiative create projects targeted at an extremely varied audience.

The 750 Now projects, some of which have been set up using experience gained from the first Now Initiative (1991 to 1994), focus on four major themes.

Job creation and self-employment. Since the creation of the Now Initiative, there has been a large increase in the number of projects relating to enterprise creation and self-employment. Enterprise creation is helping to provide work where jobs are

scarce, as well as helping women to create the right conditions for combining work and caring responsibilities. Many experienced and highly-qualified women are choosing the option of business creation to overcome the barriers they encounter in the labour market.

Vertical and horizontal desegregation. Many projects in the first Now Initiative aimed to improve women's access to non-traditional sectors, such as the construction industry. In the current programme, however, greater emphasis is being placed on vertical desegregation of the labour market, that is improving access to managerial positions in which women continue to be seriously under-represented.

New technology. The use of new technology is permeating all sectors and women with up-to-date skills can improve their access to jobs. Furthermore, new technology facilitates more flexible work arrangements, as work can be carried out locally and at times which fit in with other responsibilities, such as child care.

Participation. Through the participation of the social partners, examples of good practice can be more effectively integrated into training and employment policy and practice. Involvement in these projects ranges from private enterprise and trade unions, to training organisations and other relevant bodies. As such, they may be part of a local partnership running the project, members of steering committees, providers of financial support or even managers of the project itself.

Targeting the disabled

In Horizon, there are 654 projects focusing on people with disabilities and 491 projects working with groups most at risk of exclusion. The latter group is now covered under the Integra strand.

A new approach to integrating the disabled. Projects in this area focus on innovative methodologies and new approaches to integration, creating individual structured pathway programmes, new forms of assessment and qualifications, closer relationships between training experience and work experience, the training of specialised trainers and other support staff, the modernisation of protected employment environments, and the continued exploration of distance training and distance working.

A cooperative approach. A holistic approach to the social and economic integration of people with disabilities requires the gradual development of partnership approaches at local level. Horizon projects

provide the opportunities to establish cooperation between public, private, professional and voluntary agencies and to compare these experiences with those of transnational partners.

Encouraging job opportunities. In contrast to the first Horizon Initiative (1991-1994), the current programme also encourages the creation of job opportunities through social enterprises, the development of local services by disabled people, and a new partnership with local employers through the creation of adapted workplaces in open employment. Horizon is also exploring new patterns of participation which focus on the various stages of integration which disabled people need to satisfy in order to fully integrate them, socially and economically, into the job market.

... and excluded groups

A many and varied audience. This project category aims to reach many different audiences. Nearly half the projects create opportunities for migrants, ethnic minorities, refugees or itinerant groups to prepare for training, obtain qualifications, or create their own self-employment or employment, especially in sectors where employment-intensive growth is predicted. Other projects are focused at poorly qualified long-term unemployed people, lone parents, prisoners and ex-offenders, drug abusers and ex-drug abusers, and homeless and isolated people. Some projects focus on neighbourhoods with particularly high rates of unemployment.

Developing local relationships to promote job opportunities. These Horizon projects include the development of specialised guidance, counselling and training methodologies, the training of trainers and other intermediate staff, and the creation of new access routes and pathways to training and employment. In comparison with the first Horizon Initiative, a larger proportion of the projects relate to the development of local approaches to help service employment creation, support for the development of social enterprises and, increasingly, support for the creation of viable, legitimate enterprises.

Giving young people an opening into the job market

Over 60 per cent of the 499 Youthstart projects in progress focus on developing and providing innovative training and placement programmes, and almost the same number of projects concentrate on guidance, and establishing links with the labour market.

Approximately 25 per cent of projects involve job creation schemes and a similar percentage run information activities to help promoters and others understand the particular problems that young people face, or, equally, to help young people understand the opportunities offered by Youthstart. Member State Operational Programmes indicate that one of the most pressing problems to be tackled is the exclusion of a substantial number of young people from education, training and the labour market. Other areas of concern for Member States are young people in rural areas, immigrants, refugees and ethnic minorities.

Developing cooperation at the local level. From initial studies of project descriptions, the principal themes which appear to be prevalent relate to local involvement. Thus new structures for cooperation

between training providers, local authorities, the labour market and other actors are being developed at local and regional levels, to coordinate and improve the various types of provision for young people.

Guidance pathways. This is another popular theme in which new frameworks and approaches are developed to support young people in their choice of lifestyle, training and career. New approaches to training, including pre-training schemes, the development of transversal skills, practical work experience in firms and a range of innovations in curriculum and certification are also major themes.

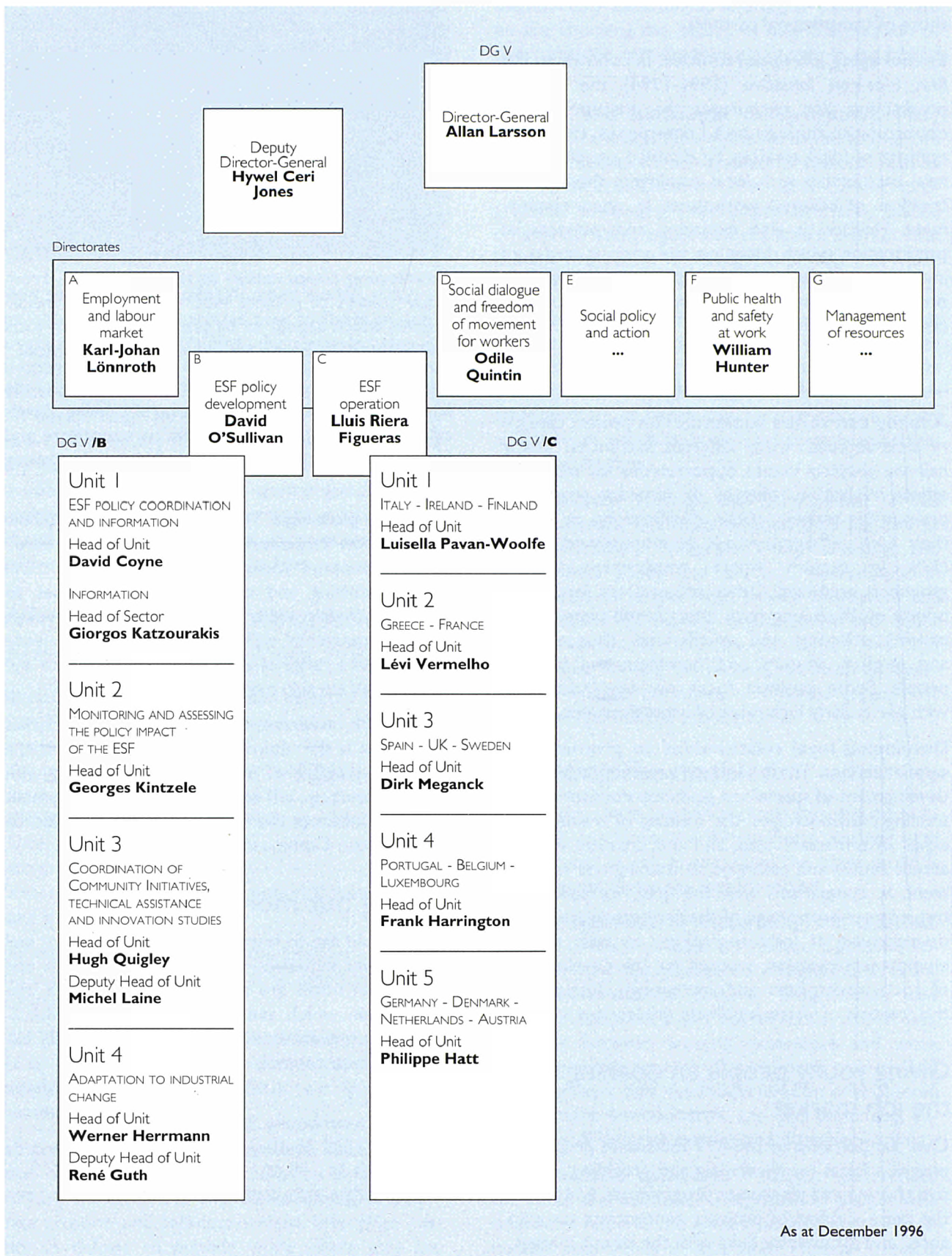
Job search awareness. Finally, as labour-market integration is the ultimate objective of Youthstart, a significant number of projects are concerned with entrepreneurship, job search and local employment initiatives, often in the new jobs areas identified by the European Commission.

Finding out more

If you would like to learn more about the Adapt and Employment Initiatives, a range of publications and information notes are available from EUROPS, the organisation which assists the European Commission in the implementation of these Community Initiatives. Please contact:

EUROPS 2/3
Place du Luxembourg B-1050 Brussels
Tel (+32-2) 511 15 10
Fax (+32-2) 511 19 60
e-mail: info@europs.lrt.be ■

Who's who in the ESF?



Headlines

Mid-term review of the Structural Funds

A mid-term review of the Structural Funds is scheduled for completion by March 1997. This review will provide the opportunity to look at progress made to date and to undertake any necessary fine-tuning. Evaluators, appointed by the European Commission and the Member States, will carry out the review. A meeting took place in December 1996 between the European Commission and the evaluators to discuss the work that has been already carried out and the contents of the mid-term evaluation report.

Innovative ESF projects under Article 6

In May 1996, the European Commission approved 58 innovative projects under Article 6 (technical assistance, and pilot and demonstration projects) of the ESF Regulation. They represent ESF funding worth ECU 23.8 million and a total cost of ECU 55.9 million. These projects are designed to explore new approaches in labour market policy set out by the Essen and Madrid summits. Priority themes for the 1995 call were:

- achieving a more employment-intensive pattern of growth
- improving the workings of the labour market
- reinforcing the training system.

The projects approved will receive ESF co-funding worth up to 75 per cent for Objective 1 regions and up to 45 per cent for other areas of the European Union. As from 1997, Article 6 will be fully managed and financed by the European Commission, with no financial commitments expected from the Member States. The Article 6 priority for 1996 to 1997 is 'New sources of jobs'. A call for proposals for projects was made in October last year, with the deadlines for submission of 30 November 1996 and 15 March 1997. Projects will have a maximum duration of three years.

Adoption of Objective 4 programmes for Luxembourg and Belgium, 1997 to 1999

On 18 to 19 September 1996, the European Commission adopted the Single Programming Document (SPD) on Objective 4 for Luxembourg, and the Community Support Framework (CSF) on Objective 4 for Belgium. Both were adopted for the period

1997 to 1999. For the new programming period, the intervention of the ESF amounts to ECU 2.35 million in Luxembourg and ECU 70 million in Belgium. The priorities are

- anticipation of labour market trends and qualification needs
- improvement of training systems and counselling
- development of training and guidance of individual workers
- horizontal actions.

The ESF Committee gave a positive opinion on the programmes at its meeting on 27 September 1996.

Territorial pacts to maximise and boost job creation

The concept of the territorial pacts was introduced by the President of the European Commission, Jacques Santer, in his confidence pact. The purpose of the pacts is to strengthen political, economic and social partnerships within a certain zone or region to exploit more fully local potential for fostering job creation.

At the European Council in Florence, Member States were asked to select regions or cities which could act as candidates for pilot projects. Once selected, the Member State will present the projects to the European Commission for its opinion. The Commission may make comments or proposals relating to the working plan and will closely follow the pact's work. Important elements for the Commission's assessment will be the involvement of the local partners, the innovative approach of projects and the synergy with the European Union strategy on employment. It is worth noting that the pact will be open to all European territories irrespective of their participation in the regional objectives.

Although no new resources will be made available, some of the schemes proposed could be financed through the appropriate use of the existing programmes, which run until 1999, including financial margins for manoeuvre (underspends, deflator effects, refocussing of programmes). A sum of about ECU 20 million will be provided for technical assistance operations, such as analyses or studies. It could also cover any technical assistance required at European level to encourage the pacts to interact with each other and to develop a European dimension to their operations.

If everything goes according to plan, the Commission will receive the definitive proposals for the pacts at the end of this year and they might be launched in spring 1997. ■

European Social Fund publications

Available publications

- **The European Social Fund** brochure, July 1995 (available in all EU languages)
- Leaflets on the ESF in each Member State, December 1996
 - **The ESF in Ireland** (available in English)
 - **The ESF in Italy** (available in English and Italian)
- **Building the European information society for us all** - First reflections of the High Level Group of Experts, Interim Report, January 1996 (available in all official languages)
- **Living and working in the information society: People first** - Green paper, July 1996 (available in all official languages)
- Information leaflets on the Community Initiatives (December 1995, available in all official languages)
 - **Employment - Now**
 - **Employment - Horizon**
 - **Employment - Youthstart**
 - **Employment - Integra** (October 1996)
 - **Adapt**
- Special Report **Employment-Horizon**
- Special Report **Employment-Integra**
- Special Report **Employment-Youthstart**
- Special Report **Employment-Now**
- Special Report **Adapt**
(available in English and French - other languages to follow)
- **Employment - Summaries of the Member States Operational Programmes**, December 1995 (available in English and French)
- **Adapt - Summaries of the Member States Operational Programmes**, January 1996 (available in English and French)
- **New Perspectives - Youthstart: a new commitment**, March 1996 (available in English, French, German and Spanish)

- **Employment - Horizon: Provisional Directory of Projects, Working Document**, March 1996 (available in English)
- **Employment - Now: Provisional Directory of Projects, Working Document**, March 1996 (available in English)
- **Employment - Youthstart: Provisional Directory of Projects, Working Document**, May 1996 (available in English)
- **Adapt - Provisional Directory of Projects, Working Document**, September 1996 (available in English)

Forthcoming publications

- Leaflets on the ESF in the remaining Member States (available in the national language and in English)

To obtain copies of ESF publications, please contact

ESF Information Sector
Fax (+32-2) 295 49 18

Other publications

- **First Report on Economic and Social Cohesion 1996**, January 1997 (available in English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese)
- **The Structural Funds in 1995, seventh Annual Report**, with Swedish and Finnish summary, 1996 (available in all EU languages)

To obtain copies of these publications, please contact

Directorate-General for Regional Policy,
Fax (+32-2) 296 60 03

The European Commission is not bound by the information contained in this publication. More information on the ESF elsewhere in the European Union and copies of this newsletter can be obtained from the address below. Publisher - European Commission. Currently available in English and French.



European Commission • Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs
European Social Fund: Policy Co-ordination and Information (DGV/B/I) • Information Sector
Office Address: Jozef II-straat 27 Rue Joseph II B-1000 Brussels, Belgium - Office 2/114
Telephone: direct line (+32-2) 295 44 90, exchange 299 11 11, fax (+32-2) 295 49 18
Telex: COMEUV 218777 Telegraphic address: COMEUR Brussels

ISBN 92-827-7534-8



ESF/EN/01.1997/03/01