

SocialEurope magazine

July 1996 number 4



Social Europe meets citizens' Europe



**European Social
Policy Forum**

Skin cancer

**Launch of the European
campaign**

Disabled people

**Multimedia
to the rescue**

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL V
EMPLOYMENT,
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS



*Social
Europe*

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Editorial



President Santer and I recently welcomed nearly 2 000 participants, including 800 NGOs, the social partners and European Parliamentarians, to the first European Social Policy Forum.

The objective was to complete an important circle, to develop a civil dialogue to inform the political and social dialogue. Without this, a real citizens' Europe is not achievable. But, with the non-governmental sector, and its unique two-way relationship with the citizens of Europe, we can achieve this.

The Forum was an important step in developing that dynamic. It had many highlights. There was the report on fundamental social and economic rights, prepared by the Comité des Sages, which I commend to you.

There was President Santer's strong encouragement of our endeavour. There were the Forum themes: equal opportunities; employment; social protection; and the Future of working life, through the lens of the information society. The message was clear. Social policy is a productive factor. It is a positive force for society.

I had the opportunity to underline the importance of the Intergovernmental conference, which began as the Forum proceeded, to stress that the social dimension must be clear and strong, in the future construction of Europe.

The Forum exceeded the expectations I had when I launched the idea in my White Paper on social policy. It brought to life the civil dialogue at European level.

How shall we proceed? We have achieved a mutual understanding of our respective roles, responsibilities and capacities in developing a strong civil dialogue, involving fully NGOs.

From this, we can find new ways to work together, including by building upon the proposal made by Mr Stephen Hughes in his address to the Forum on behalf of the European Parliament. He offered support for a Commission initiative to provide support for NGOs to engage actively in the shaping of European social policy. We are now discussing how to take this forward with the European Parliament. I intend to convene a second European Social Policy Forum immediately after the Intergovernmental conference, to take stock, and to build from the IGC results.

The Forum constituted an important milestone in shaping a European civil dialogue. The report will be available soon. Meanwhile, this issue of *Social Europe magazine* offers a flavour of the discussion.

* Pádraig Flynn
Commissioner for employment and social affairs

European Social Policy Forum

Social Europe meets citizens' Europe

The front cover of our previous issue¹ announced the European Social Policy Forum, to be held in Brussels at the end of March. Exceptionally, we have decided to devote this issue in full to this single event which marks the beginning of a new era in relations between the European Commission and civil society – which means you!

The 28, 29 and 30 March 1996 are destined to go down in the history of European social policy.

During these three days in Brussels, almost 2 000 people from throughout the Union representing non-governmental organizations, trade unions and employers' organizations came together to openly debate the whole future of Europe's social policy.

On 29 March in Turin, the Intergovernmental conference on the review of the Maastricht Treaty also got off to a promising start in awarding absolute priority to social affairs and employment.

Finally, it was at a truly historic meeting of Europe's social affairs and employment ministers, held on 29 March in Brussels, that the decision was taken to ratify the first collective agreement ever signed by the trade unions and employers at European level, on the right to parental leave. The Council even scored a double success by simultaneously reaching agreement on a draft directive on companies which temporarily transfer employees to another Member State.

We will be looking at these two agreements and the Intergovernmental conference in a future issue of Social Europe magazine.

For the present, however, we want to report on what was said and done at the Forum, while awaiting the full official report which the Commission will be publishing within the next few weeks in cooperation with the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.

Four lines of attack

Forum participants were offered four lines of attack in debating the future of social policy: equal opportunities, em-

ployment, social protection and the future of working life.

As a source of inspiration they had a general report by the Comité des Sages set up by the Commission a few months previously, chaired by former Portuguese Prime Minister Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, plus specific reports on each of these four areas.

This written material was supplemented with a multimedia presentation by Hugues de Jouvenel of Futuribles International, a multidisciplinary and forward study association concerned with the impact of social, economic and cultural change on social policy.

Lastly, as the final stimulus before the parallel sessions, came an address by Jacques Santer, President of the European Commission, delivered en route for Turin where he was to meet heads of governments and prime ministers for the start of negotiations on the review of the Maastricht Treaty – the famous Intergovernmental conference.

Jacques Santer, President of the European Commission, addressing the Forum: 'The social dimension and citizenship have now come together'.





Parallel session: the Forum debates produced genuine exchanges between the 2 000 participants.

Social Europe in action

Throughout the Forum, participants were also able to get acquainted as they viewed an exhibition presenting the concrete achievements of the NGOs, trade unions and employers' organizations in what was a genuine showcase of 'Social Europe in action'.

The general opinion was that the parallel sessions produced meaningful debate, even if the large number of participants meant that speaking time had to be limited.

And as if any proof were needed that the Forum's conclusions were not in any way prefabricated, we can inform you that the individuals charged with summarizing the debates worked late into the night of Friday 29 March in preparing their speeches. On Saturday morning, the hall was packed to capacity for the closing plenary session.

In an immediate response to the rapporteurs, Mateldi Grassi, Italian Secretary of State, Soscha Gräfin zu Eulenberg, Vice President of the German Red Cross, Percy Barnevik, Chairman and Chief Executive of the electrical engineering company ABB (Asea Brown Boveri Limited), and Ieke Van den Burg of the FNV (Dutch Trade Union Federation) sought to draw

the pertinent lessons from the Forum and highlight the way forward.

And now

The European Commission certainly had cause to rejoice. The Forum participants clearly gave the thumbs up to the event and expressed their desire for more: another Forum, which could possibly be held after the Intergovernmental conference, as Commissioner Flynn indicated in his closing speech (see editorial); but also, and most importantly, a more permanent, structured and searching debate on the model of social dialogue between the Commission, the trade unions and employers' organizations, a dialogue which is now reaching maturity following its relaunch by Jacques Delors in 1985.

Thus ended three red-letter days for anyone who has followed the European Commission's unflagging efforts over the past 25 years to initiate a European social policy worthy of the name.

¹ Social Europe magazine No 3, March 1996.

For a complete account of the Forum, including the conclusions, ask the DG V documentation centre for the 'Report on the European Social Policy Forum', free of charge.
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Comité des Sages

For a remodelled European Union

To launch the debate, the European Commission submitted to the Forum a report drawn up by a Comité des Sages.

The Commission had set up the seven-member committee¹ in October 1995, chaired by Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, former Portuguese Prime Minister. Its mission: to consider whether the Charter of fundamental Community social rights for workers, adopted by the European Council in December 1989, should be updated and broadened to cover the rights of all citizens and included in the new, revised Treaty on European Union. The general view was that the Comité des Sages had successfully discharged its mission. During the Forum itself, the announcement came from the Court of Justice of the European Communities that it was adopting the committee's views on the link between the Treaty on European Union and the European Convention on Human Rights, adopted by the Council of Europe.

Loudly proclaiming their commitment to the European social model, the Commission's team of 'wise men' submitted 26 proposals intended to place social questions at the very heart of European integration. One of these proposals is for the Treaty to include a set of fundamental rights, including the right to a minimum wage. For the longer term, the Comité des Sages also suggests instigating 'a broad and democratic process in order to jointly compile a full list of civic and social rights and obligations'.

But, as committee chairman Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo points out, it would serve no purpose to amend any particular Treaty provision. 'We need a new initiative, a new breadth of vision. We are talking about a genuine remodelling of the European Union.'

The Comité des Sages: 26 proposals reaffirming social rights as central to European integration.

'Europe is in more peril than it believes. The present social shortcomings pose a serious threat.' In tackling the whole question of the 'Europe of civil and social rights' the final report by the Comité des Sages¹ came straight to the point. Unemployment, exclusion, a lack of citizenship — the dangers are sufficiently worrying to merit some strong words. This is no basis on which to build the future Europe. It is not by ignoring its social dimension and active citizenship that Europe is going to be able to rise to the internal and external challenges it now faces. If this Europe in the making is going to succeed in carrying its citizens along with it, then it must demonstrate its ability to apply and ensure respect for fundamental civic and social rights.





Pádraig Flynn, European social affairs Commissioner, at an employment stand: coordinating and incentive actions at European level must be clearly justified.

Reaffirming social rights as central to Europe

It is sometimes forgotten that the ultimate aim of European integration is not economic progress in itself, as this is no more than a means of allowing each citizen to realize his 'potential personal development'. The present challenges facing Europe and its Member States are not just institutional, economic or monetary. They are also – and perhaps primarily – of a civic and social nature. The present European Union lacks substance: it has no clear identity and the citizenship measures introduced in the Maastricht Treaty (free movement, right to vote and stand in European and local elections, right of appeal to an ombudsman, diplomatic and consular protection) are not enough to create any deep-rooted sense of involvement or commitment.

The Comité des Sages therefore believes that citizenship would be effectively promoted by including civic and social rights in the Treaty, their application being assured by the Court of Justice of the European Communities.

These rights would include equality before the law, prohibiting all forms of discrimination, equality between men and women, free movement within the Union, the right to choose one's profession and educational system, and freedom of association,

negotiation and joint action. Also included would be the right to education, work, social security, protection of the family, etc. Finally, the Comité des Sages considers it necessary to clearly lay down the right to a minimum wage for 'people who, despite their efforts, are unable to obtain paid employment and who have no other source of income'.

More generally, the provisions on social policy – and the protocol on social policy included in the Maastricht Treaty (signed by 14 of the 15 Member States) in particular – would benefit from being grouped together in a single section, making them both more visible and more accessible. The Comité des Sages also proposes providing more solid legal bases for the action of the Court of Justice by allowing it to broaden its references, in particular in order to include the Council of Europe's European Convention on Human Rights.

This would be just a first stage. In the longer term, we must deepen and further specify these fundamental rights and provide a more balanced view of the citizens' rights and obligations. This is something which concerns society as a whole. It is why the committee proposes a wide-ranging consultation involving, within an 'ad hoc' committee, not only the social partners but also non-governmental organizations, the European Parliament and national parliaments.

Citizenship involves employment

But citizenship is more than a question of articles in a treaty. The rise of unemployment in Europe – and long-term unemployment in particular – is a direct cause of exclusion and is raising increasingly acute questions of justice and social integration. Combatting this threat to the welfare State, this 'lack of citizenship', is also a major imperative. The place of employment in the Treaty must therefore be reappraised and European initiatives and coordination in this field must be given full legitimacy.

The report also stresses that 'if Europe is to refuse greater inequalities and social marginalization, and the spread of passive assistance policies aimed at people excluded from society, then it must make a considerable effort to innovate, organize and mobilize in order to build a mode of development in which everyone has a place'. This effort will take different forms and will no doubt involve a review of the very concept of work. But in seeking a model which combines competitiveness and social cohesion, Europe must not seek to be competitive by dismantling the welfare State or reducing social minimums.

The Comité des Sages accepts that this will be a difficult and complex task. Social questions are first and foremost a nation-

al matter and there is no question of contesting this basic principle: the rules of subsidiarity and proportionality remain imperative. Each country must retain its identity and the level of income and benefits must take economic developments into account: the level of wages, social benefits, and the method of financing social security systems will therefore remain the responsibility of the individual Member State.

However, we must now define those areas in which Europe can provide an 'added value' – areas such as leading and coordinating forward studies, defining a body of fundamental social rights, drawing conclusions from free movement, helping to correct imbalances, in particular through the Structural Funds, facilitating a common approach (on employment, agriculture, drugs, AIDS, cancer, and so on); or helping to bring legislation into line when it gives rise to unfair competition. The possibilities are vast.

Our conceptions of work and social rights are changing rapidly at a time when the economic and social climate is not conducive to a reappraisal of existing values. Yet 'the European social model, if it is to be true to its vocation, must be original, which means innovative'.

¹ The Comité des Sages, which was active from October 1995 to February 1996, was chaired by Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, former Prime Minister of Portugal, President of the Independent Committee on the Population and Quality of Life, and President of the World Institute for Research into the Development Economy of the University of the United Nations. The other members were Eduardo Garcia de Enterría, former judge at the European Court of Human Rights, professor of administrative law at the Universidad Complutense, Madrid; Harmut Kaelble, professor of social history at Humboldt University, Berlin; Louka Katseli, economic adviser to the Greek Prime Minister, professor of economics at Athens University; Frédéric Pascal, economist, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the SCIC, former Vice-President of Amnesty International, France; Bengt Westerberg, former Swedish Social Affairs Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, Chairman of Swedish Telecommunications; and Shirley Williams, former British Education Minister, professor of economics at Harvard University. The rapporteur was Jean-Baptiste de Foucauld, inspector of finance and author of several works on social policy.



Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, Chairman of the Comité des Sages: 'If it is to be true to its vocation, the European social model must be original, which means innovative'.

Equal opportunities

Uniting the citizens too

'We are not uniting nations, we are uniting men', said Jean Monnet, founder of the European Community. The individual and collective capacity to combat discrimination, whether sexual, racial, religious or philosophical, is one of the founding principles of developed societies. The European Community not only pioneered the cause of equality between men and women – through the legislation it has initiated, the action programmes it has launched, the activities of the Structural Funds, and the systematic inclusion of an equality clause in concluding agreements with third countries – it also promotes equal opportunities for disabled people and combats all forms of racism, xenophobia, social exclusion and much else besides. It does so in cooperation with the social partners (in order to combat racism at the place of work for example) and non-governmental organizations (such as the associations to combat social exclusion, whose role is recognized in the Maastricht Treaty).

Discrimination is an obstacle to equal opportunities which may assume a thousand and one different forms. Its victims may be individuals or indeed a whole community – and to the point where their very physical integrity is under threat. The motivations are many and varied, ranging from the rejection of sexual, racial, religious or philosophical difference to the rejection of other social classes or opinions.

A number of situations can engender this catalogue of inequalities. We are seeing this today in our fast-changing European societies which are giving rise to new forms of exclusion. These may be dramatic, such as the crisis in the French suburbs where many young people are victims both of their exclusion from work and of a certain kind of racism. Alternatively, as in the case of the homeless, the exclusion can assume a symbolic value, a vivid testimony to a society which is changing so rapidly that it leaves a part of its members abandoned by the wayside. Finally, it can take a rather more discreet form, such as discrimination against women, officially a thing of the past but in practice still very real in many fields.

The great divide

The fact is that social and economic divides are growing wider, and the non-governmental organizations at the Forum bore witness to this. The great divide in Europe is between those who have a job and those who do not. As the rapporteur Dr Conroy of Dublin University pointed out, we may have created 10 million jobs between 1985 and 1990, but we also lost money.

Pádraig Flynn, European social affairs Commissioner, at the Forum's migrants stand: racial, religious and philosophical discrimination are all obstacles to equal opportunities.



These statistics simply confirm the general feeling: the ranks of Europe's poor are growing all the time. And the difference in earnings is constantly widening.

This situation does not only have material consequences and does not only mean loss of income or of housing. It undermines an individual's dignity and creates a sense of insecurity, whether justified or not. It also fuels extremist and xenophobic reactions and disillusionment with the democratic process. As the NGOs say, this is the real 'cost of inequality' which may be compared to the cost of non-Europe.

This is the Europe which is seeking to steer a course between two objectives as it tries to reconcile economic development and social development. In so doing it is remaining true to the spirit of the Commission's White Paper on growth, competitiveness and employment adopted by the European Council in December 1993 in Brussels, and the principles set out by the European Council in December 1994 in Essen.

Conflicting aims

But in practice these aims can prove conflicting, as the Forum delegates pointed out. Creating a more flexible labour market clearly brings the risk of creating a more unequal one at the same time. Those cast aside by the technological and economic revolution swell the ranks of the excluded. Women, having so recently acquired emancipation, could well be the ones to pay the price of the new forms of work now advocated as they are pressurized to accept part-time or shift work. Non-residents, whether or not they are citizens of the Union, could find themselves excluded from the economic circuits in favour of nationals.

Also, the very fact of completing this single market with all its promises of freedom and equality could have the unwanted effect of delocations. Such phenomena could create the feeling that Europe is principally concerned with the free movement of goods and services rather than meeting people's needs.

Yet there is a great deal which proves that the contrary is the case. Since the 1980s, a whole range of Community policy has in fact served to improve the well-being of its citizens. There have been the declarations, such as the Commission's communication 'Towards a Europe of solidarities', which restate the founding principles of a developed society, as already mentioned. There have also been very concrete actions, in particular through the Structural Funds whose current programming makes equality between men and women an express priority, plus the specific programmes which directly contribute to promoting this equality.

Community policy has also had an indirect effect in this area. It has succeeded in convincing employers, trade unions and non-governmental organizations of the need to adopt a European approach to equality. The latest example is the formalizing of the NGOs' European platform. In seeking a dialogue with the European bodies, they have agreed to adopt the appropriate structure.

A legal framework

Equality also needs a legal framework. But to what extent should this be binding? Women's rights organizations have stressed the importance of such a legal framework as a solid foundation for poli-

cy, but have also made the point that the law does not change mentalities. For this the answer lies in information and training, and that requires funding.

For their part, the employers pointed out the drawbacks of excessive restrictions: the employer must not be denied all freedom to decide. We must avoid devices which impinge upon individual freedom.

Initiatives taken by certain Member States – such as the British Commissions on racial equality, which have real powers to investigate and to act – can, on the contrary, draw inspiration from new policies able to ensure that Europe does indeed not simply unite nations, but people too.

The stand of a Flemish organization for the integration of disabled people: the European Commission is campaigning for equal opportunities between men and women, disabled and able-bodied people and foreigners and nationals.



Employment

Flexibility, friend or foe?

The employment workshop was one of the Forum's most eagerly awaited debates. As the decade's number one concern, employment no longer seems to be dependent on the economic cycle alone. Work has also ceased to be purely an economic factor, the means of earning a wage. Today it is also expected to contribute to the development of the individual and the community. Flexibility is important for companies but how can it be reconciled with employers' expectations?

Despite generally optimistic forecasts, including the expected positive effects of economic and monetary union, Europe remains plagued by unemployment. With more than 17 million unemployed, no less than 10 % of the labour force is out of work. In his report to the Forum, Professor Ides Nicaise¹ stressed the increasingly structural nature of this unemployment. Whereas in the 1970s it was possible to attribute unemployment to the economic downturn, today we find deeper underlying causes related to the economic and technological changes affecting our societies.

One of the key factors in these changes is the need for companies to adapt with increasing speed to market demand and technological evolution – if not revolution. The race for ever-increasing competitiveness can be summed up in just a single word: flexibility.

Mr Hakan Lundgren, representing Swedish employers, illustrated how this trend works in practice – a trend which is very much in evidence in his own country. In the past, companies mass produced standard articles. Today, they must meet a more diverse and specialized demand. This means flexibility, in turn leading to changes to the company structures themselves. The clear dividing lines between administration and production, between white collar and blue collar workers, are tending to disappear. And whereas the



The European Commission's employment stand: a friend of employment through economic recovery, flexibility can also be the foe of that selfsame employment.

post-war company could almost impose its own method of production, today it finds that the clientele dictate the structure.

All of this may seem to have little to do with the matter of employment, but in fact this flexibility clearly determines the nature of employment. Moreover, it is not just the employers who are calling for greater flexibility – employees too would welcome a degree of flexibility in their

working life in order to invest more in their personal development and family life. The traditional image of the head of the family with a job for life is a thing of the past.

The flexibility of man

But none of this prevented the trade unions and the non-governmental organizations at the Forum from clearly stating the acceptable limits to this flexibility.

Health in particular must not be allowed to suffer. Statistics were submitted establishing that mortality is higher among workers with atypical working hours than in other categories.

Effects on mental health must also be looked at. Two contrasting scenarios are cause for concern: the employee who is worn down by excessive working hours, to the extent that he is a virtual prisoner of the workplace, and the individual who is totally excluded from it.

A friend of employment to the extent that it promotes economic recovery, flexibility can also prove the foe of the employment it creates. Employers are aware of this, stressing the importance of a motivated, confident and dynamic labour force which is 'committed' to the company. Too much uncertainty about the future and excessive insecurity can undermine these essential requirements for productivity.

The trade unions and NGOs drew attention to another aspect of flexibility: the way it tends to aggravate precariousness, or even poverty. This is the case of the Anglo-Saxon countries, and the United States in particular, which has favoured total labour market deregulation. Although it may have quite low unemployment, it has a much higher incidence of poverty.

Another way

The European Union has chosen another way. The way of reconciliation between economic development and an acceptable level of social protection. The Netherlands in particular, with its Melkertbanen, seems to have shown that it is possible to be more flexible without increasing poverty.

Finally, equal opportunities were a constant subject of concern throughout the many debates on flexibility. Do not women run the risk of paying the price for this flexibility, more than men being pushed into accepting part-time work, working from home, or 'odd jobs'? Also, could not the technological developments at the origin of these on going changes leave

abandoned in their wake the least educated and thus most fragile members of society?

A unique contribution

The NGOs contribution to the Forum on these questions was unique. Employment, and in particular working conditions, is an important area of public authorities and social partners' activity. These non-governmental organizations are faced with the human, almost individual, dimension of these on going changes in society on a day-to-day basis. As such, they offer a distinctive voice. Between the public authorities pulling on the macroeconomic levers on the one hand and the social partners with their respective responsibilities to companies or members on the other, the NGOs have today assumed the role of spokesman for 'civil society', to use the fashionable term. They have thus joined with the unions which, through the ECS, are calling for a Community employment policy and for the Treaty itself to include the principles laid down at the Essen European Council.

The NGOs have specific demands. They want a body of fundamental social rights and a status for job-seekers. They want more direct access to the Structural Funds whose use is at present delegated to the Member States in the name of

subsidiarity. Finally, they want to be actively involved in the on going dialogue. As the sub-contractors for the public sector in an increasing number of fields – the environment, care, reintegration, combating exclusion – this Forum provided the NGOs with their very first opportunity to make their views known.

¹ Ides Nicaise lectures on the employment economy at the Brussels School of Economics and on the financial management of non-profit-making associations at the Louvain School of Social Studies. In 1996 he was awarded a doctorate in economic sciences for his work on poverty and human capital.

The Swedish trade unions' stand: the European Union is choosing another way, that of reconciling economic growth with an acceptable level of social protection.



The NGOs at the Forum

European civil society out in the open

Of the 2 000 Forum participants, no fewer than 600 came from the voluntary sector. Just like the Commission's other Directorate-Generales (DGs) – and in particular those active in the fields of the environment, development and consumption

DG V (Social Affairs) works closely together with many non-governmental organizations which it encourages and assists in adopting a European structure.

This is true in the fight against social exclusion, in promoting the rights of women, disabled people and migrants, and in other sectors too. DG V recently brought together these NGO networks within an 'NGO platform' which in future could become the Commission's interlocutor in exactly the same way as the social partners (European Trade Union Confederation, Union of the Industrial and Employers' Confederation of Europe, the European Centre of Public Enterprises, etc.). Although the NGOs were present at all stages of the Forum and its preparations, it was at the exhibition that they were most in evidence – and on which we now report.



The NGOs speak out: towards a structured dialogue with the European Commission.

Manioc, 'makayabu' and fresh groundnuts: BFR 50 (1 ECU = about BFR 38). Dictionary of the gastronomy of Zaire: 350 BFR. There is no doubt about it, 'Les Enfants déplacés' (displaced children), an association which helps integrate Africa's black community into the economic and cultural structures of Belgian society, certainly knows how to make learning fun.

'Les Enfants déplacés', explains Eugène Simba, 'are the children of servants of former colonials in Africa. They were born in Belgium, but do not feel Belgian. Worse still, they are not at home anywhere, not in Europe and not in Africa either'. We therefore provide them with social and occupational support services in order to help them to integrate. They can obtain legal advice, for example, and attend a range of training workshops (data processing, building renovation, sewing, hairdressing, etc.).

'Les Enfants déplacés' participated in the vast exhibition organized on the

fringes of the European Social Policy Forum. 'For us, this Forum has been an extraordinary opportunity to let people know we exist and to establish contacts with other associations which are combatting exclusion. North Africa is much better organized than sub-Saharan Africa. As a result, the access of black African associations to the media is often limited and they fail to get that little push in the right direction from the subsidizing authorities.'

A little push in the right direction

A little push in the right direction... The European Commission neither wants nor is able to build a social Europe on its own. But that does not mean Brussels is not ready to back a great many initiatives. 'The Union is becoming increasingly important. Many associations want European funding, information on Community policy or want to make their voices heard by the Union's decision-makers', reports Peter Sluiter, from the Centre for European non-profit-making organizations (CENPO). Unfortunately, there are few organizations which can afford a permanent representation in Brussels.

The CENPO is there to help: 'The CENPO is a non-profit-making services centre for non-governmental organizations (NGOs). We can help them in all kinds of contacts with the Union, and in establishing partnerships between themselves. The associations in the field can no longer remain isolated. There is a growing need to cooperate and exchange ideas.' Especially if you place it in a more political context. 'Drawing on the experience unavailable to the employers and trade unions, the NGOs want to become a third social partner for the Union', points out Catherine Parmentier of the European federation of national organizations working with the homeless (Feantsa). 'Admittedly the dialogue between the associations, the social partners and the Commission has not yet reached maturity – but the Social Policy Forum is a start. It has served to set up a platform of European NGOs working in the social sector.'



Parallel session: representatives of the NGOs were present throughout the Forum and at every stage in the preparations.

In search of cooperation

There is strength in numbers. On that they are all agreed, starting with Alberto Melo, manager of the In Loco association. In Loco was founded in 1988 in order to promote the rural development of the Algarve hinterland, a region in southern Portugal threatened with desertification. 'We are trying to restore confidence to the people by improving their training on the one hand and perfecting their production systems and creating markets for their products on the other', he explains.

With the creation of mini-enterprises, help for farms in processing their own produce, and the promotion of rural tourism, In Loco is creating a dynamic for success. 'We have acquired great experience in revitalizing the local economy, but it is always the most enterprising elements in society who benefit from this', observes Alberto Melo. 'We would like to do more for the most underprivileged – but we still have a lot to learn I'm afraid.'

In Loco was recently appointed technical coordinator of the European TASC (Territorial Action for Social Cohesion) network, and at the Forum was particularly interested in 'seeing what is being done in Europe' in the fight against social exclusion.

Two approaches to exclusion

Where does the world of exclusion begin and end? A good question. Children, women, elderly people, disabled people, drug addicts, the homeless, the inhabitants of neighbourhoods in crisis, the unemployed, and so on. There are those who believe that the majority of Europe's population suffer from exclusion to some degree.

Some approach the problem from a sectorial angle. This is the case of the Fondation européenne des services d'accueil téléphonique drogues (FESAT) and the Binationale Drogenfachstelle (Binad). Others, such as Etape and the Fédération nationale des associations d'accueil et de réadaptation sociale (FNARS), two French organizations, adopt a much broader approach.

The FESAT represents 17 telephone counselling lines specializing in drug-related questions. 'The telephone is an increasingly important tool of prevention. We encourage the exchange of practices between professionals and voluntary workers and organize training sessions in order to ensure that the services are always of the necessary standard', stresses Tina Thewes. The Binad project seeks



The stand of the Austrian Ministry for the Family and Young People: together with the NGOs, the social partners, European institutions and national authorities were also active at the Forum.

Women are a valuable asset

The notion of family immediately evokes images of women and children. At a time when Europe's ageing population is bringing the threat of a labour shortage, women are a particularly valuable asset for companies, believes Fotoula Ioannidis of the IRIS network (Community network for vocational training for women). Yet the family responsibilities which women are traditionally expected to bear coupled with their chronic under-representation in high-tech sectors of the economy make them the first victims of unemployment and vulnerability, she continues.

The IRIS network pursues three main aims: to promote equal opportunities in vocational training, to improve the quality of training for women, and to establish links between Europe's various training bodies. The Chamber of Labour, described by its managers as an 'Austrian solution', adheres to this approach. As Ingrid Moritz points out, the Chamber of Labour represents the social, economic and legal interests of employees in Austria. It is an independent organization which receives no aid from the Viennese authorities and is funded by the contributions which its two million members are legally obliged to pay.

As a recognized social partner, the Chamber is not only involved in drawing up legislation which affects employees but it can also initiate proposals for new regulations. 'We also provide individual services for our members, and provide them with legal protection when necessary', explains Ingrid Moritz. 'We defend the interests of women in particular, in order to avoid any discrimination, and we have set up intensive programmes of continuing training. We also provide financial aid to families on low incomes in order to allow their children to follow the training or studies they want to.'

Fotoula Ioannidis (IRIS network) stresses that equal opportunities necessarily involve 'increased efforts by the public authorities to provide community reception

to improve cooperation in the area of drug policy and support for addicts between the German *Land* of North Rhineland-Westphalia and the Netherlands. Mechthild Neuer explains: 'We have a lot to learn from one another. We are therefore trying to set up a network bringing together the various German and Dutch institutions with experience of drug addiction, both public and private. We are also trying to repatriate and reintegrate into society those German addicts who are present in the Netherlands illegally.'

Etape has the status of youth hostel. Located in Cambrai, it is one of 300 integration enterprises in France. 'Our job is to assist an adult public in difficulty, such as the long-term unemployed, former prisoners, etc.', explains Michel Bernard. 'We offer them a two-year employment contract, during which we pretrain them for a trade so that they can regain some self-confidence. We concentrate mainly on activities related to tourist accommodation and catering.' The Etape 'employees' also receive support services (accommodation, learning to read and write, etc.) which at the end of their two-year period are

often oriented towards quality vocational training.

The FNARS has the same aim as Etape – namely, combatting exclusion – but on a bigger scale. 'The federation represents some 500 French associations which jointly operate a thousand establishments, many of which are accommodation and social readaptation centres', explains Véronique Thiebaut. 'We deal with a range of publics: women, families, young people, elderly people, drug addicts, etc.'

The FNARS is a charitable organization which acts as a pressure group, lobbying France's executive and legislative authorities; it also seeks to coordinate its members' actions and to promote the exchange of good practices. One such practice is the Jardins de Cocagne: 'The principle behind the Jardins de Cocagne is to help people in difficulty to get back into society through gardening and market gardening. In some districts we grow biological products, involving the local population: in return for an annual contribution, families receive a basket of fruit or vegetables every week.'

facilities for children (day nurseries, after-school centres, etc.). In Brussels, the Observatoire de l'enfant (providing reception and support services for children) helps contribute to achieving this aim.

The Observatoire de l'enfant

The Observatoire de l'enfant was founded by Belgium's Commission communautaire française in 1991. This is a public institution with responsibility in certain areas concerning the French-speaking population of the Brussels capital region. Patricia Vincart explains: 'In the Union, policy on children remains linked to other policy, such as reconciliation between family and working life. But children are the guarantee of the future and have their own needs. Our main aim is to improve the well-being of children.'

Drawing inspiration from various studies, the Observatory has set itself a number of aims: to improve training for specialists in infants and non-school reception centres at the same time as helping local authorities whose facilities for nought to three year-olds are overburdened to open new day-care centres; also, to launch schemes designed to facilitate the mobility of children in towns.

'We have already published a brochure which allows parents to structure the way they teach their children to use public transport. We are now aiming at total mobility. For this we are trying to set up a permanent working party representing pedestrians, cyclists, drivers, public transport and even insurance companies', stresses Patricia Vincart. 'It is the town which must adapt to the child, and not the other way round.'

Neighbourhoods in crisis

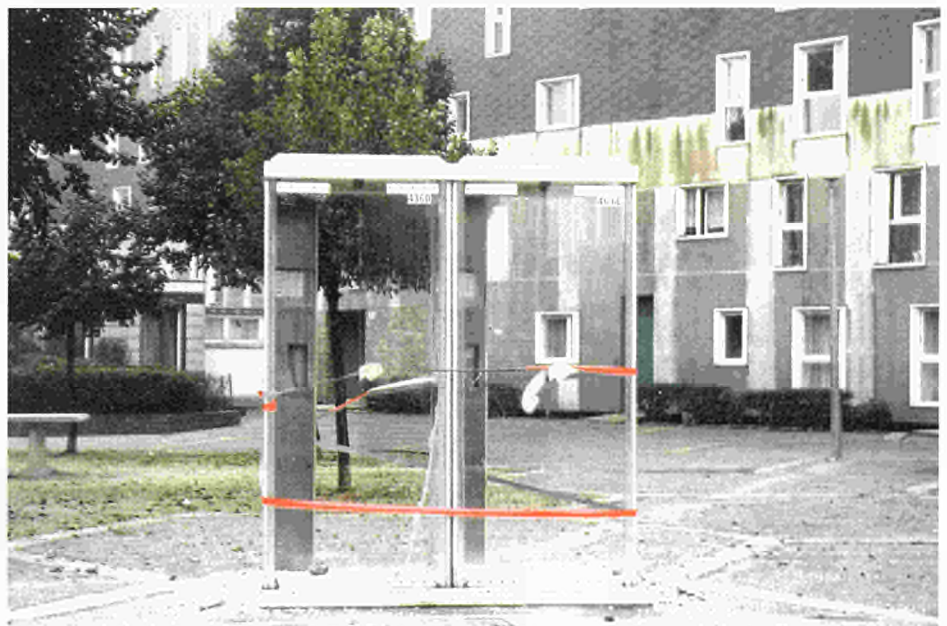
Is the city fraught with every danger? 'Certain neighbourhoods are threatened with under-development. There is a real danger for European democracy', believes Fotoula Ioannidis.

In this respect, the International Association for the revitalization of neighbourhoods in crisis certainly has a major role to play. The 'Neighbourhoods in crisis' network brings together some 30 European towns which, as Thérèse Claeys Bouaert explains, have opted for an 'integrated approach' in combatting the problems of social exclusion which are undermining certain vulnerable areas: 'The municipal authorities must work together with the associations in the field in implementing actions to tackle the planning, economic and social problems facing some neighbourhoods'.

In order to draw maximum benefit from local experiences, exchanges are organized between the network's member towns. A newcomer to the network is the municipality of Toledo which is supported by the European Urban programme. All the efforts in this Spanish town are concentrated on the industrial area of Poligno which has never really got off the ground. Jose Luis Rubio, coordinator of the Urban Toledo project, explains the situation: 'Many of the area's young people are now coming up to school-leaving age. If we do not act this will become a neighbourhood in crisis'. In cooperation with many NGOs, the city authorities are going to implement an 'integrated project' combining training with social programmes for families or drug addicts, etc., and a plan to improve the urban environment and to create local

jobs. 'Poligno has many small businesses looking for services which they are at present unable to find in the immediate area. There are therefore employment gaps which we are going to try and fill by encouraging the creation of local cooperatives.'

Neighbourhoods in crisis: the European Urban programme permits support for local authorities working with associations in the field in neighbourhoods in crisis.



Social protection

Four factors of fundamental change

A modern society rests on one essential pillar: the social protection of its members. In other words, on the bond of solidarity between its strongest and its weakest members.

A genuine European invention, social protection is one of the greatest achievements of our century.

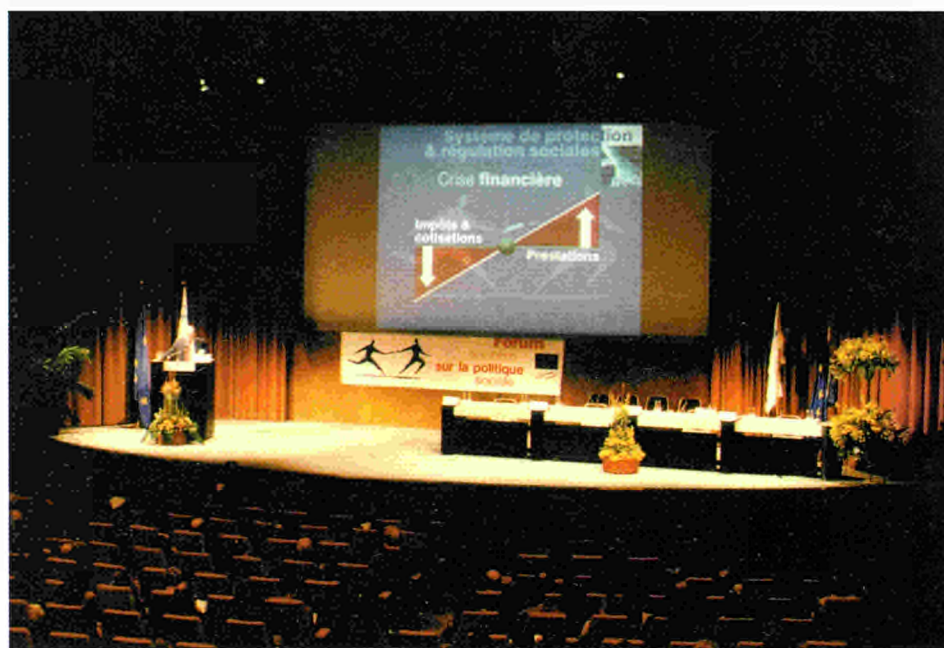
But now, on the eve of the third millennium, it is in a state of crisis – and some believe its very existence is under threat. Failing a searching inquiry into social protection today, tomorrow it could well come across difficult times.

The new situation regarding social protection is the result of four fundamental factors identified by Professor Maurizio Ferrara of the University of Pavia. The most frequently cited factor is Europe's ageing population. There is a growing population of over-60s, many of whom are retired. Some figures estimate that their numbers could grow by 50% over the next 25 years.

The clearest danger inherent in this phenomenon is the growing imbalance between the working and the non-working population. This means fewer contributors to a social security system required to provide for an increasing number of people. The increase in life expectancy also brings additional costs, in terms of health care in particular.

More precariousness

The second change relates to the transformation in family structures, overturning the traditional image of a homogenous, well-defined society. The growing number of divorces, single-parent families, and people living alone has a direct impact on social protection. Not only are we seeing the emergence of specific needs for these new categories, but vulnerability is also increas-



Social protection in pictures: an ageing population, the breakdown of family structures, the new role of women, changing production methods and so on.

ing. In many cases, the origin of social exclusion lies in family break-ups. There are calls – especially from the NGOs – for an individualizing of fundamental social rights insofar as the traditional bonds – family, neighbours, community – are tending to loosen.

A third aspect, a consequence of the former, is the new role played by women. Some NGOs laid particular stress on this:

women today are being asked to be excellent professionals while remaining excellent mothers and wives! One way of responding to these almost contradictory demands is to improve nursery facilities, but another is also to avoid women being penalized for concentrating on their family. One example comes from Sweden where parental leave is granted either to the father or mother, whichever the family prefers.



All facets of social protection: European integration is not neutral when it comes to social protection, which never the less remains the responsibility of Member States.

Finally, Professor Ferrera identifies a fourth, macroeconomic phenomenon: changing production methods. The flexibility of the labour market, a subject much discussed at the Forum, brings the need to reconsider the conditions of access to social protection.

All of this is sufficient evidence of the unsuitability of existing social protection structures. Dating from the time of full employment, they are unable to meet the challenges of today's society.

The snowball phenomenon

Above all, existing structures are founded on an essentially passive form of social protection. A snowball effect is becoming apparent: in concentrating on granting an income to people who are not working rather than on their return to work, social security bears the seeds of its own destruction. Its assets, built on the contributions of companies and employees, could be rapidly exhausted if 'active' measures are not introduced, namely reintegration and training.

There is therefore a need for reform. But there are constraints. First and foremost, these are linked to the present state of

public finances which are stretched to the limit – and beyond in certain Member States. Even without the budgetary constraints linked to the Maastricht objectives for economic and monetary union, the national budgets offer no more scope for extension. Perhaps there is a way of making better use of existing resources. But we must also look at the cost of non-protection: impoverishment, the development of slums, violence and the destruction of societies.

There are also limits to the demands which can be made on the contributors to social protection. Excessive demands bring the additional danger of creating conflict between the different social groups, resulting in the very opposite of what we are seeking and the destruction of the bonds of solidarity.

An increasing role

Social protection clearly remains the responsibility of the Member States. But Europe's role is increasing. The agreement on social policy between all the Member States except the United Kingdom, annexed to the Maastricht Treaty, allows the Council of Ministers of the European Union to act unanimously on social security and the social protection of workers. This is in

fact essential as European integration is not without its effects on social protection: the removal of internal borders, the switch to a single currency and the risks of social dumping due to divergent social systems all have a direct bearing on social protection.

Another question lies at the heart of the debate in some Member States: the disappearance of the monopoly of the public authorities in the area of social protection. In addition to the philosophical aspect, this question must also be viewed from the angle of effectiveness. Do we not need new partnerships, and not only with the social partners but also with the 'third pillar' (i.e. the NGOs), in order to counter the lack of flexibility – some would say bureaucratic rigidity – of present systems? And if so, how are we also to avoid the fragmentation of social protection and conserve its status as a compulsory and universal system?

Laboratory of the future

Part of the answer lies with the NGOs, many of which were set up in order to meet the needs generated by current changes. In this respect, the Forum was something of a laboratory of the future for social protection.

The information society

Between the apocalypse and paradise on earth

'An information society is a society of learning.' This affirmation – and the reports which make it¹ – served as the springboard for the discussions of the Forum's parallel session on 'The future of working life in an information society'. But a second and equally important affirmation must also be taken into account, 'Technology itself is neither good nor bad. It is the use which men make of it which determines both the nature and extent of its benefits'. In other words, any discussion on the emerging 'information society' (IS) must necessarily take into account both the new potential and the new responsibilities. While the IS offers major new prospects for job creation, extensive reform of work organization, a renewal of the individual's and society's relationship to education and training, and so on, so it can also reinforce or even create new exclusions, and increase surveillance and control of the individual's activities. Such are the issues which are central to this debate.

But what do we mean by the 'information society'? The expression is, in fact, ambiguous and the subject of much discussion among the experts. The arguments essentially revolve around two key elements: intensity and humanization.

Intensity involves judgements on the speed and depth of the information revolution. It reflects the debates between two schools of thought.

Two schools of thought

The first school of thought sees the information society as something radically new and information technologies (IT, namely

data processing, software and the goods and services associated with the new basic technologies of micro-electronics and optronics) as affecting all areas of activity.

This school believes that the expression 'information society' defines an emerging society which will transform industrial society as much as the latter transformed the traditional agrarian societies.

The second school of thought stresses the limited scope of the changes, pointing out that the long-term trend will be towards an increase in information activities and that the information technologies will accentuate the trend rather than bringing anything radically different.

The fundamental debate on the subject of intensity is therefore between those who believe that the IS is 'more of the same thing' and those who view it as 'something completely different'.

Questions

This debate raises a number of concrete questions.

Are the new technologies replacing present activities or creating completely new ones? Depending on the intensity of the IT presence in the world of work, should we expect – as some are hoping for – a rapid increase in jobs in the service sectors linked to IT?

Does this therefore mean more self-employed occupations, more jobs in decentralized and small firms, with 'electronic pavilions' and working from home coupled with shorter working hours involving more retraining, sabbatical leave and a shorter working week?

Or should we believe the pessimists who foresee massive job losses and job insecurity and an even greater divide between skilled and unskilled workers and between those in work and those out of work? At the organizational level, will the IS produce smaller and/or decentralized organizations, or rather increasingly powerful transnationals penetrating sectors previously organized at the local level, and in particular many services?

The potential for humanization

These differences also lie at the centre of the debate on the humanizing potential of the IS through the use of IT. This debate is between those who see the IS as characterized by greater democracy as

information technologies permit greater individual expression and choice, and those who stress the risk of increased monitoring and control of political and private activities.

Once again these differences involve the answers to a number of questions. Does the use of IT mean centralized control or individual and collective liberation? Should we be concerned with the increased scope for information or the increased inequalities in the face of this information? In connection with working life, will information technologies be used in order to eliminate or downgrade jobs or can we suppose that a new technology always creates a new demand and thus new jobs and a new demand for skilled staff?

Thus, in the humanized vision of the IS, prevailing attitudes and values will bring a growing interest in personal fulfillment, release from bureaucratic or other constraints, and greater involvement in the life of the community. The alternative scenario is one of increased duality of working life, with many people excluded from work, resulting in an increasing divide between leisure interests and political concerns.

A mixed and variable future

The future is unlikely to correspond to either one of these radical scenarios. More probably it will be made up of a complex and variable mix of the two.

It is very likely that the future will be composite. There is no reason why various models of the information society cannot co-exist, using information technologies in different ways, just as today we have different models of the industrial society. These societies differ to the extent that they avoid social exclusion and create new opportunities for the underprivileged.

If we want to be sure to take account of solidarity, any discussion of the information society must be careful not to separate the social aspects from the technical, industrial and economic aspects.

It is also important to recognize that above and beyond these differences, information is playing an increasingly important role in the life of every individual. If an information society or societies are to have 'a human face', individuals must be able to control the information rather than be controlled by it.

A society of learning

Controlling information means being able to use and transform that information. Hence the suggestion by the European Commission working party charged with looking at ways of 'Building the information society for all' to consider 'the information society as a [society of learning] in which learning and the development of knowledge must be a lifelong process, at work and in the home, and through education and training'.

¹ 'Building the European information society for all, first thoughts of the senior group of experts', interim report, January 1996; European Commission.

'The future of working life in an information society', study document drawn up for the European Social Policy Forum workshop, March 1996.

The Relay Europe stand: the European Commission is looking at how to build an information society for everyone, a genuine society of learning.



Changing world

Adapting social Europe

The European model of society is based on common values. Human rights and democracy come first, followed by a social order aimed at reconciling individual and collective aspirations. But today this model of society at the service of the individual is at risk of capsizing. It is growing creaky and cracks are beginning to appear. Will it be able to weather the present economic storm? And if so, at the price of what modifications?

Europe has a special place in the history of humanity. It adopted a development model which, since the industrial revolution, has combined the market economy – with citizens who are simultaneously producers and consumers – with a solidarity between members of society expressed in the system of social protection. This method of collective organization, known as the social market economy, proved extraordinarily effective in the immediate post-war years.

But because the world moves on, the certainties and customs of yesterday are growing fragile. Doubts and fears are in-

creasing. What does the future hold? Do the changes taking place before our very eyes, but which we never the less sometimes fail to notice, mean the end of the European model of society? It is of course impossible to provide any absolute answers to these vital questions for our future.

But this did not mean the Forum was going to avoid the issue. Quite the contrary. On the basis of a study by Hugues de Jouvenel, representing the 'Futuribles International' association, the Forum sought to identify the major trends at work in the Union's Member States in order to

be able to reflect upon the possible future of social Europe in the 21st century.

The demographic stumbling block

Some of these trends may be described as pronounced and as such would appear irreversible during the next 20 years. One such trend is demographic ageing and thus the imbalance in Europe's age pyramid. The reproduction rate is constantly falling: in 1994 it was just 1.45 children per woman, when 2.4 is required in order to renew the generations.

The babyboom generations which are at present at the active stage of their lives will soon be succeeded by a 'trough generation': by the end of the century we will have more people leaving the labour market than joining it. For those troubled by the prospect continuing high unemployment, this may seem like good news. But is it?

No! Because, due to an almost mechanical effect, populations which are not being renewed are ageing. And as Hugues de Jouvenel points out, 'as long as earnings are linked to length of service, wage costs will increase'. This trend does not augur at all well for the competitiveness of the European economy.

But something more serious still is at work. First of all, the number of elderly people will continue to rise: the over-65s almost doubled in numbers in the OECD countries between 1950 and 1980, and this trend is set to further accentuate with a further doubling possible by the year 2040. At the same time, we are going to

Principal development trends: Europe and its social market economy, a special case in the history of humanity.



see an unprecedented increase in the numbers of very elderly people (aged 80 and over). The net result will be a minority of young people (under 20) compared to older people (over 60) by around the year 2005.

So, society will become all the wiser? That may be. But in the meantime this trend is very worrying to those concerned with the future of our model of society. Who is going to finance the social protection systems if not this 'minority'? Moreover, if there is no change to present legislation, the increase in the number of elderly people will lead to a major increase in retirement pensions and in health expenses for very elderly people.

Hugues de Jovenel poses the question as follows: 'The fact is we must look at the future of the major socioeconomic balances and, as a result, at the future of Western societies. The increase in the absolute numbers of elderly people and – more seriously still – their proportion as part of the total population, is a matter of great concern'.

A new age

Another 'pronounced' trend, one which is becoming more evident by the day, is the move to the post-industrial age. Tertiary sector expansion is not only present in the form of a growing services sector which is unable to compensate for job losses in agriculture and industry; it is also making inroads into production activities. Just one quarter of the price of butter, for example, is attributable to agricultural work in the strictest sense. And as the Commission White Paper on growth, competitiveness and employment points out, 'Between 75 and 95% of the wage bill of companies is now attributable to organizational rather than direct production activities'.

We are thus most definitely entering a new age and witnessing the emergence of a new model. Without us always being aware of it, the world is entering an era in which wealth will essentially depend on our intelligence alone. This will bring colos-

sal challenges. But at least the players – and that means every one of us – will have a crucial part to play in the unfolding adventure.

This is why it is so important to get things right, and not to believe, for example, that unemployment, under-employment and social exclusion are inevitable trends. There is certainly no denying the fact that the trend exists, as Hugues de Jovenel explains: 'Given the present economic and social system and the policy of day-to-day adjustment, unemployment is likely to rise sharply for years to come, with growing inequalities and our societies becoming increasingly prone to natural tensions between three distinct social categories: the persons of means (jobs for life, prosperous retired, etc.), the vulnerable (all those with temporary jobs and other precarious situations), and the excluded.

This trend is also potentially explosive, especially as denying two out of three Europeans a job with an essential monetary and symbolic value (self-fulfillment in society) is ultimately intolerable – socially, economically and politically, but the trend is not inevitable if Europeans – and these are the best placed to achieve this progress in the Western world – roll up their sleeves and get to grips with the problem.

A different way of thinking

The time has no doubt come to learn to adopt a different way of thinking and to dispense with a number of preconceived ideas. We must think of ways to develop new activities to meet a demand which is not – or at least not any more – met in Europe and still less so by our neighbours. Perhaps there is a need for a controlled deregulation of the labour market allowing individuals to move in and out of work, holding temporary, part-time or alternating jobs, while at the same time exercising other activities which, as Hugues de Jovenel explains, 'should be awarded their true value rather than waiting for them to be destroyed in order to condemn the way they were neglected'.

There is no such thing as fate. There are simply men who, in this part of the content, have built a civilization ... and remain perfectly capable of building a new one.

Hugues de Jovenel of Futuribles International: possible futures for the social Europe of the 21st century.



The European week against cancer

Targeting sun abuse



'Avoid over-exposure to the sun and sunburn, especially during childhood', states article 5 of the European code against cancer. So out with those parasols: the theme for this year's European week against cancer is the prevention of skin cancers and, exceptionally, it will be running from June to October.

The war on excess ultraviolet rays is on. In 1996, as part of the 1996 European week against cancer, the European Community will be campaigning to prevent skin cancers.

Every year the European week highlights a particular article or group of articles from the European code against cancer. The code is a set of 10 recommendations addressed to the general public in order to promote a more balanced lifestyle. The fact is that an estimated 70% of the Union's 840 000 cancer deaths a year originate in certain (ill-advised) individual choices (smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, poorly balanced diet, etc.).

Over recent years the European week against cancer has adopted the following themes: passive smoking (1993), the benefits of fresh fruit and vegetables (1994), and the code as a whole, which was revised in 1995. In future years it will focus on cancers primarily affecting women (1997), and making men more aware of the risks of cancer (1998).

An action plan

In terms of informing the public, the European code is the cornerstone of the Europe against cancer programme adopted in 1987 as the Community's very first health initiative.

The programme has since been implemented through three multiannual action plans. The first two covered the years 1987-89 and 1990-94 and primarily concerned four fields: cancer prevention, cancer screening and early detection, the training of health professionals, and support for cancer research.

The third action plan (1996-2000) was adopted last March. Taking as its legal basis Article 129 of the Treaty on European Union, which states: 'The Community shall contribute towards ensuring a high level of human health protection by encouraging cooperation between the Member States and, if necessary, lending support to their action', the essential aim of the new plan is to develop knowledge of the causes of cancer and the means of preventing this scourge.

In this connection, informing and educating the general public on health matters remains a priority field of action: a poll conducted in November 1995 shows that more than one in four Europeans still believes that it is not possible to prevent cancer – mistakenly.



A European identity

There is therefore a need for major campaigns aimed at the general public – and European week against cancer is the most important of them all. The Commission is allocating it a budget of almost ECU 1.5 million out of an annual budget for the action plan against cancer of ECU 12 million for 1996.

The week will be dominated by a vast Union-wide information campaign conveying motivating messages with a strong European flavour. It will be organized by the European Commission working in close cooperation with some 40 associations active in the fight against cancer in the Union's various Member States, all of which will also be allocating substantial resources to the campaign.

The Commission's role is twofold, both initiating and coordinating the campaign. It promotes the use of common messages which are adapted to all the Union languages and cultures and transmitted in each country by the national partners.

Ultraviolet rays

Deliberately simple and thus easily assimilated, these messages are based on a fundamental scientific truth. This year they will concern the prevention of skin cancer, and more particularly the risks linked to overexposure to ultraviolet rays.

Every year 1.3 million new cases of cancer are diagnosed in the Union. Although it might not be Europe's commonest cancer, it is the one which has seen the biggest growth in Europe over recent years. The cause is overexposure to the sun which has been very fashionable since the 1930s.

Excessive doses of ultraviolet rays can cause malformations in the skin cells. The campaign will recommend citizens to expose themselves to no more than reasonable doses of sun, in the knowledge that this will reduce the risks of contracting a cancer.

Three stages

The European week against cancer is usually held during the second week of October and involves a great many national, regional and local events. But the 1996 theme is scarcely suitable for an autumn campaign. Consequently, the 1996 week will consist of three stages.

The first stage will run from 3 to 9 June. It will seek to make all people responsible for children (parents, staff at day-care centres and schools, etc.) aware of the dangers of the sun and the precautionary measures to be taken. Overexposure to the sun is, in fact, particularly harmful to young children.

The second part of the campaign will run during the summer holidays, in July and August. It will consist mainly of restating the message at holiday destinations (beaches, campsites, etc.).

Finally, from 7 to 13 October the campaign will be aimed at a second target public: health professionals such as GPs, dermatologists and nursing staff who play an essential role in detecting anomalies and in educating people. The campaign will concentrate on the dangers of winter tanning, using sunbeds for example, and the importance of an early detection of skin cancer in improving the chances of survival.



A campaign initiated and coordinated by the European Commission: skin cancer is the cancer which has seen the biggest growth in Europe over recent years.

Handynet

Multimedia in the service of disabled people

Handynet was created on the initiative of the European Commission as an information system in all the Community languages in the service of disabled people. Its first module concerns the technical aids required by certain disabled people and provides comprehensive details on this market sector.

What, who, how?

Details of the technical aids for disabled people available in the European Union countries are included on a CD ROM, updated three times a year. This CD ROM allows users to search in three principal sections: 'what', 'who', and 'how'. The 'what' provides a detailed description, with 5 000 photos, of more than 40 000 technical aids complete with technical and functional specifications and prices in all the Community's currencies. Wheelchairs (much more diverse than is often believed), day-to-day living aids for people unable to use their hands (for the kitchen, bathroom, etc.) and adaptations to motor vehicles are just some of the items included. Brief interactive demonstrations effectively convey to users the potential of certain retraining or communication software.

The 'who' contains information on organizations in some way connected to the technical aids, such as manufacturers, distributors, and information and advisory organizations. With its 15 000 addresses, the Handynet CD-ROM already saves you the space of a bulky telephone directory.

Finally, the 'how' describes the procedures in force by which every user is able to buy, hire or borrow a technical aid, in the context of the social policy implemented in each Member State.

A genuine multimedia tool

The Handynet CD-ROM uses the full potential of modern multimedia, with written information, pictures of illustrations, animated sequences and user-friendly interrogation mode. Everything has been designed so as not to discourage a user who is unfamiliar with the new technologies. An on-line extension is planned for the near future.

Handynet also guarantees each and every user identical information in the 11 official languages of the European Union. Moreover, the DOS version provides access for blind people through a voice synthesizer or Braille printing.

Where to get your CD-ROM

Since August 1995 the production, marketing and distribution of the Handynet CD ROM has been entrusted to HANDYCOM, a European consortium of companies located in Strasbourg (Imexpert), Portsmouth (UPEL), and Cordoba (Promi). The CD ROM is updated three times a year. The first Handynet CD ROM costs ECU 200 (+ VAT) and the updates ECU 75 each. You are recommended to take out a subscription for the updates. For any further sales information, please contact

Handycom

5, rue Jacob Mayer, 67000 Strasbourg; Fax: +33 88.77.73.75; E-mail: imex @ dx-net.fr or alternatively the Handynet national collection centres, whose addresses are available from DG V/E.3.

Communication

Although the Handynet CD-ROM is an ideal support for information on technical aids, disabled people and their organizations are primarily interested in being able to communicate directly, through electronic mail systems for example. In cooperation with EURES, the European information system on employment set up by DG V, the Handynet electronic mail is at present directly linked to some 50 partners of the Helios programme: NGOs, ministries in the Member States, and the Commission. This electronic mail system is naturally going to be extensively expanded.

What role for the user?

The quality of information available to disabled people does not solely depend on technological equipment or progress. It also – and perhaps above all – involves a dialogue with the users who, as the individuals primarily concerned, are best able to define their specific information needs. This is why organizations of disabled people are closely involved in developing Handynet, through the European Forum of disabled people.

Please note that any reader interested in the problem of technologies for the benefit of disabled people in general and in Handynet in particular can obtain a copy of issue 7 of Helioscope magazine (Spring 1996), available free of charge in 11 languages, from the integration of disabled people division, DG V/E.3, rue de la Loi 200, J 27, B-1049 Brussels.