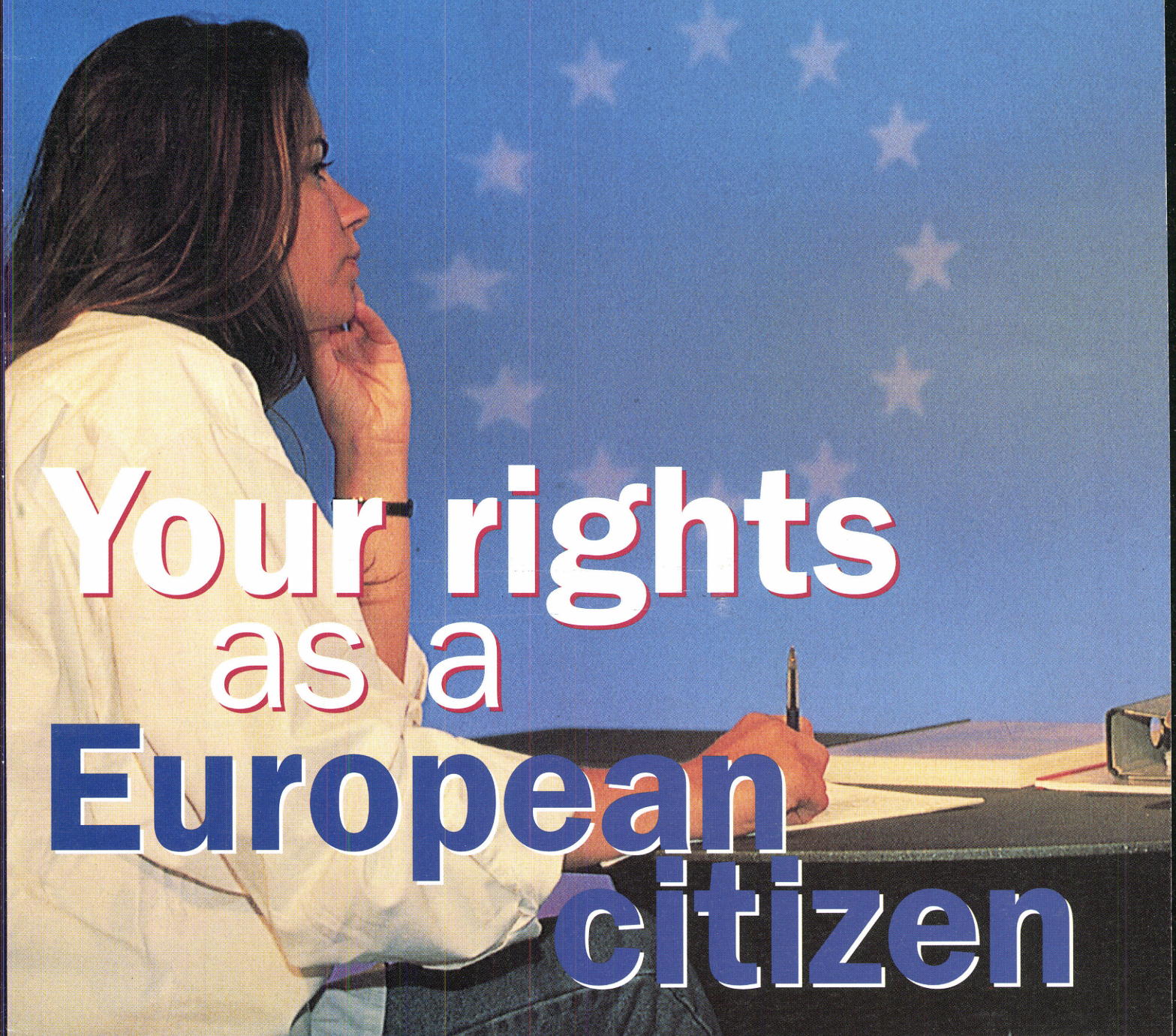


Social Europe magazine

November 1996 number 5



Your rights as a European citizen

Parental leave
A European right

Crisis on the labour market
58 innovative projects

Fight against racism
The 1997 European Year

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



*Social
Europe*

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A magazine produced by the European Commission

Social Europe magazine is produced by the Information and publications unit of the Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs Directorate-General (DG V) of the European Commission.

This magazine is published in German, English and French.

The activities of DG V range from employment and labour policy to all aspects of social policy, including health and safety standards and some of the key issues in today's society, such as equal opportunities, social exclusion and immigration.

DG V also manages the European Social Fund, the principal financing tool for programmes aimed at developing human resources.

Notice to readers:

The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect either the position or views of the European Commission

This publication was produced for the European Commission by Deloitte & Touche Europe Services Edited by Euro Media Services Design and layout by Made in V. (Brussels)

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Printed in Belgium

Editorial



Our most important task is the modernization of the European social model. This edition tracks our efforts and our progress in this endeavour. By modernization, I do not simply mean coping with the impact of technology, important though this is. I mean also equipping people and institutions to ensure that the

process of integration in Europe delivers real economic and social progress for all. The pace of change in Europe causes insecurity among people, and it can cause our institutions, sometimes, to look like puzzled spectators, rather than managers of change. Above all, we must be persuaders in favour of change, not because change is inevitable but also because change, correctly harnessed, will a great force for good. To address these issues, we need to create understanding among, and partnership between, people and institutions.

We focus, in this edition, on a number of important elements which will be central to this task of creating such an environment. The Citizens' First campaign is fundamental to engaging people in the modernization of Europe. It is about fostering a sense of participation and

ownership. The Green Paper on the information society is about the ramifications of the pervasive change being brought by the emerging information and communication technologies, for people, for working life, for democracy and access.

The launch of the European Year against Racism is another important element in helping shape the civilized and just society needed for a truly productive economy. Finally, we are now moving to a hugely important stage in the development of our European Employment Strategy, the Dublin Summit in early December. That meeting will be a key staging post in progressing our work across the whole European agenda, from the IGC to EMU. It also represents the next step in shaping the macroeconomic stability and structural reform which, together, can attack, in a sustainable way, Europe's high unemployment.

This edition, therefore, offers practical examples of the kinds of action which the Commission believes necessary in order to reshape our social model to fit better with today's realities. This means using the strong economic performance of Europe as a vehicle for making the structural changes needed across our employment systems. This means re-examining the policies and institutional frameworks which

do not, presently, reflect the nature of working life now confronting us, because, all too often, they hark back to a working life based on old assumptions, of mass production processes, a mainly male workforce, with a single job and skill for life.

I commend to you the Green Paper on the Information Society – People First. It looks hard at these questions in terms of the information and communication revolution. It offers a vehicle for us all to contribute to finding the European path to the information society. It is perhaps the first time that the focus has been so clearly on the human dimension of change.

I hope you will also play a full part in taking the messages of the Year against Racism to all those you represent, in private, public and non-governmental sectors. And I commend to you the Citizens' First campaign as an important tool in creating a two-way process of communication between the citizens of Europe and the European institutions, to meet the social progress aspirations which we all share.

Pádraig Flynn
Commissioner for employment and social affairs

Citizen's First!

The Commission launches a major information campaign

Few people realize that across the European Community the governments of the Member States are passing laws which apply to all European citizens, giving them new rights and obligations. A recent survey found that just 25% of Europeans had ever even heard of the Intergovernmental Conference which began in March of this year, and just 11% knew that its task was to review the Maastricht Treaty – the first treaty to include the notion of European citizenship. This is why the Commission launched in November 1996 a campaign entitled 'Citizens' First' with the specific purpose of informing Europe's citizens of their rights –and their social rights in particular.

It's up and running! In November 1996 the European Commission launched its 'Citizens First' campaign, the first of three major campaigns aimed at the general public. This will be followed by two further campaigns, one on the Intergovernmental Conference (the negotiations between the governments of the Member States to review the Maastricht Treaty on European Union, starting last March) and the other on the Euro.

Using your European rights

So what is the aim of Citizens First? To make Europe's citizens aware of the rights and possibilities made directly available to them by the European Union, and to show them how to use them.

The campaign focuses principally on the citizen's social rights, in relation to working in another Member State, health care systems in the Union, health and safety

at work, and equal opportunities between men and women in the Union.

Although the project is managed by the European Commission's Directorate-General responsible for the internal market, it was the Commission's specialist services which drew up the brochures for each of the areas covered by the information campaign.

Thus the Social Affairs Directorate-General (DG V) will publish in May 1997 a set of three guides, on health provisions in the EU, health and safety in the workplace and equal opportunities in the EU. The demand for information is enormous: DG V receives as many as 100 calls a day from citizens wanting to know more about their rights and what Europe can mean for them.

Multimedia approach

The 'Citizens First' campaign seeks to make use of all modern information



Need any help?

The Citizen's First guide on access to health care in another Member State will give practical information.

channels: seminars, conferences, debates, computer networks, press articles and, of course, the good old paper medium, no doubt the most effective in reaching a maximum number of people.

The essential information on each topic will be included in brochures. These genuine guides to European citizenship will be supplemented by more detailed information sheets.

The guides and information sheets will be available from a number of information centres (libraries, chambers of commerce, trade unions, universities) and from the Commission's offices in each Member State.

.../...

Freephone service

A freephone service will also be set up. Available in the 11 Union languages, the service will operate at two levels. A first level will answer questions of a general nature and send out guides and information sheets free of charge on request. A second level will provide advice on more specific questions and direct callers to the most appropriate bodies (national authorities, local services, non-governmental organizations, etc.). All of this should be operational by the end of November.

By way of example, let us look at the guide to 'Working in another Member State of the Union' (one of the first such guides to be published). This guide first sets out the rights of workers with employee and self-employed status respectively. For employees it briefly describes the right of residence (including for families), access to employment, working conditions, access to training, trade union rights, social and fiscal benefits, the situation of frontier workers and, finally, secondment by the employer to another Member State. For the self-employed, the brochure explains the conditions for setting up a permanent

establishment inside the country or, alternatively, for the provision of services from another Member State.

Country by country

The guide also provides explanations on the subject of the recognition of diplomas, social security and tax obligations. It lists under what conditions a citizen can seek employment in another Member State and continue to live there even after ceasing a professional activity. Finally, two paragraphs are devoted to the protection of personal data and how to exercise your rights.

All of this is included in a dozen pages in a language which is easy to read and understand, plus a list of useful addresses, ranging from the Commission's offices in each Member State to the responsible national bodies.

Each guide will be published in the 15 Member States and adapted to the specific circumstances of each country. We are not therefore simply talking about availability in the 11 official languages, but 15 different versions in the national language or languages

of the Member States, and in certain minority languages.

The recognition of diplomas for each profession

There will be different information sheets for each topic. There will be seven information sheets on working in another Member State, for example. One will set out the procedures for the recognition of diplomas for each profession, while another will give practical information on social security provisions in each Member State.

The Commission wants the 'Citizens First' campaign to provide useful practical information and not to be seen as some kind of Union propaganda. The concern is to inform the citizen of his or her rights under the present legislation and to indicate how Community law is currently being applied in practice.

**For more information on 'Citizens First!':
Angela Martini, European Commission,
DG XV, Avenue de Cortenberg 107,
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Fax (+32-2) 295 43 51.
Tel. (+32-2) 299 42 53.**



Ever heard of it?

Just 25% of Europeans have ever heard of the Intergovernmental Conference launched by the Heads of State or Government in March 1996.

Internet

All about Europe with the Europa server

The European Commission is moving with the times. For the last 18 months, it has had its own Internet site with the 'Europa' server. Type 'http.europa.eu.int' and you will be on-line for Europe.



It was DG X (Directorate-General for Information), the General Secretariat, and the Commission's Computer Centre – or Informatics Directorate – which jointly came up with the idea to set up a Europa server on the Internet and subsequently arranged the whole project.

In May 1995, DG V (Directorate-General for Social Affairs) was one of the very first Directorate-Generals to take up the invitation to contribute to Europa; it was soon ready with documents on its activities for consultation on the server.

Since spring 1996, the Commission's Informatics Directorate has authorized every Directorate-General to create an 'Intranet' site for the internal circulation of information. This internal network has proved to be a veritable goldmine. First of all, it provides a global view of the information available. In turn, this makes it easier to structure the information for access via Europa. But above all, it has initiated a dynamic: as the various services become increasingly aware of, and thus more likely to use, this tool, so they themselves are encouraged to provide more information.

The result is that information which can be usefully circulated among a wide-ranging public can now be selected from a much wider basis than before, while internal information flows have increased. Transparency benefits on all fronts, externally via the Internet of course, but also internally within DG V. What is more, this development promotes the decentralization of information which becomes both more detailed and more reliable as it now comes directly from the relevant services or individuals.

All about Social Europe with Info 92

For the moment, the information available on the Internet Europa server on the subject of European social policy is largely static in nature, with descriptions of the DG V (Directorate-General for Social Affairs) services, general information on its field of action and activities, etc. But this is soon to be substantially increased.

In the meantime, to find out more about Social Europe and in a more dynamic way, you can subscribe to the Info 92 data base. This offers a panorama of the social situation throughout the European Union, describes in detail the social policy adopted at European level and how it is implemented in the individual Member States, and informs you about opportunities provided by Community legislation in the field of free movement within the European Union.

Info 92 also includes a guide to European programmes, networks and observatories in the social field and an annual review of developments in social policy.

Until such information becomes available on the Europa server, the only way to obtain it is by subscribing to Info 92.

For further information on Info 92 and details of how to subscribe contact:

Eurobase Service.
Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.
2, rue Mercier, L-2985 Luxembourg.
Tel. +352 2929 42001 - Fax +352 2929 42700.
Electronic address: helpdesk.eurobases @opoce.cec.be.

N.B. Journalists may subscribe, at the same address, to the Rapid database providing access to all the press releases which the European Commission releases every day. An average of 3 or 4 press releases a week are concerned with social policy.

The information society

People first

The world is witnessing a genuine revolution: the revolution in information technology. A revolution which runs deeper and is happening faster than any which has gone before it, bringing far-reaching changes to economic, social and human relations, hence certain concerns. Is not the information society going to kill more jobs than it creates? And will not the emergence of these new technologies further widen the gap between rich and poor, between those with knowledge and those without it? It is in order to answer these legitimate questions that the European Commission has just approved a 'Green Paper' entitled 'Living and working in the information society'.

The Commission's main aim in presenting this 'Green Paper' is to encourage the debate on the social and societal implications of the information society. Without such a debate, our societies will not be able to control current developments. The reactions to the 'Green Paper' will allow the Commission to draw up action proposals from next year. These reactions must come from all the players involved. The revolution now unfolding before our eyes requires a social dialogue between the social partners. But also a civil dialogue, involving the non-governmental organizations in particular.

The main concerns relate to employment. People are haunted by the fear that machines are replacing workers.

A coffee and a PC please!

The cyber-cafés, a way of making sure the information society does not benefit electronic communication at the expense of human contact.

Production and distribution techniques are being revolutionized. And the need to adapt permanently to new technologies, the sense of 'no longer being up to date', creates uncertainty and fear, undermining job security. This is a challenge, not only for employment but also for equal opportunities ...

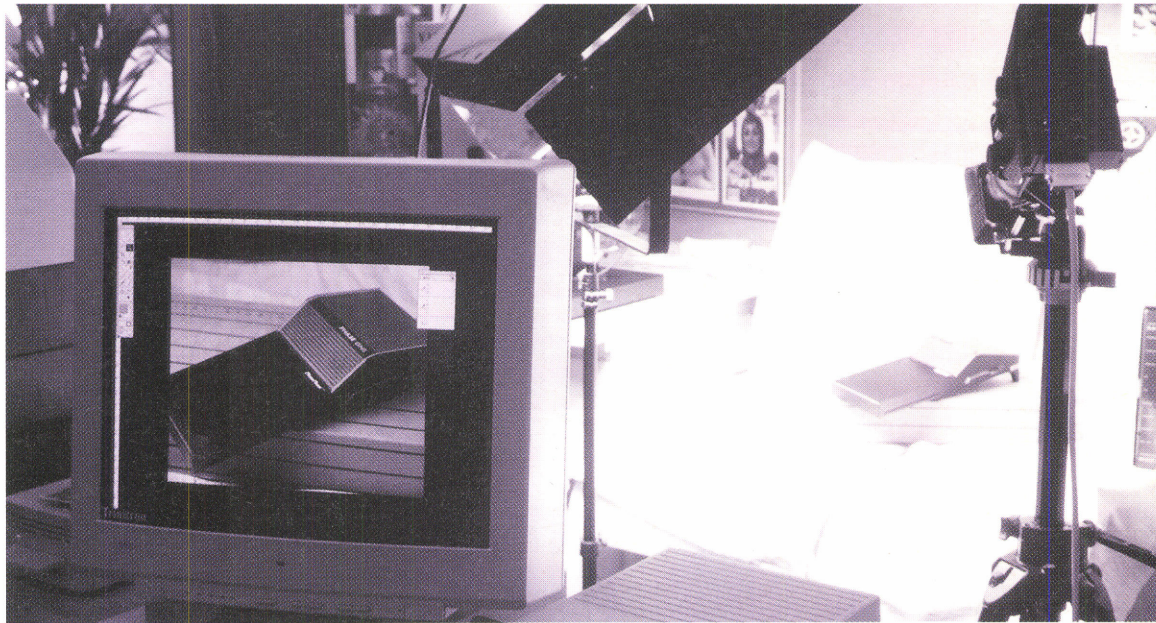
An ill-adapted world of work

Yet studies show that it is not the introduction of new technologies as such which is a threat to the world of work, but the way in which work is ill-adapted to them!

The nature of the challenge has therefore been identified. We must develop knowledge and make the economic players increasingly aware of new forms of work organization. We must overcome the – sometimes justified – suspicions of companies when confronted with changes whose benefits they sometimes fail to grasp. This applies to small and medium-sized enterprises in particular, despite the fact that these are the very firms which should be benefiting to the full from the information society as, by their very nature, they employ a small workforce characterized by flexibility and a capacity to reorient quickly.

Finally, the legal and contractual framework of work must also be quickly





adapted. And in so doing we must ensure a balance between the flexibility companies need and the security which is essential to workers. We must build a new model as the old one founded on a full-time job for life was no more than a stage in the process of development towards the information society ...

37% more jobs in the audiovisual sector

There are 18 million unemployed people in Europe, not counting the 9 million demotivated Europeans who would no doubt be looking for a job if they felt they had the remotest chance of finding one. Paradoxically, there has been a constant increase in employment since 1960, which means there has been an increasing number of jobs, but not enough to meet the demand for jobs among the active population. Moreover, these jobs have moved from the processing industry with its low technological content to the services sector which has seen the strongest growth. Although the information and communication technologies have seen no more than a low growth in employment, the audiovisual sector saw a 37% increase in jobs between

1983 and 1992. It is in those areas where information and communication technologies have had the most impact that we have seen employment grow.

In order to make the most of these effects, Europe must be careful not to adopt the attitude of 'everyone for himself' and create a climate of confidence among consumers and investors alike. In addition, it is up to the public authorities and social partners to manage the process of a changing employment landscape. Education and training certainly have a major role to play in this. People must learn more, and throughout their working lives. There is also real urgency: the more time passes, the greater the risk of inappropriate know-how becoming an insurmountable obstacle.

The other concern relates to social cohesion. On the one hand a marvellous means of making distances disappear and creating the 'global village', could not information technologies paradoxically make people further apart and create a gulf between rich and poor, the young and the elderly, between those with knowledge and those without it? Some people fear this may be the case. But this challenge to democracy and

When the new technologies create new jobs:

37% more jobs in the audiovisual sector
between 1983 and 1992!

equality can be met. How? By adapting the regulations so that all persons and all regions have an equal opportunity; by making the maximum use of human resources; and by making everyone responsible and promoting the integration of those who, without assistance, would no doubt remain 'by the wayside'.

This the origin of the European dimension: respect for cultural diversity, the protection of democracy, the development of the market economy. We must ensure that the new technologies are correctly used and made available to everyone in the service of the Community's fundamental values. In this way they will no longer be seen as a threat, but as an opportunity.

Employment

European initiatives are increasing

The European Union is stepping up its fight against the hydra of unemployment. At the Commission's initiative, we are seeing a growing number of actions designed to launch a genuine crusade for employment. The European confidence pact, the work of the European social partners in studying how to achieve a more flexible working time which reconciles the interests of companies and workers, and the various schemes developing under the banner of the 'European strategy for employment' agreed by heads of state and government at the Essen European Council in December 1994, are all weapons which the Commission is resolved to use in the interests of employment.

Any crusade is of course a lengthy affair and the 'Jerusalem of full employment' is not yet in sight. But the Commission sees the dynamic now being created as a considerable victory in itself: mobilization for employment is becoming a reality! A reality involving all areas of society.

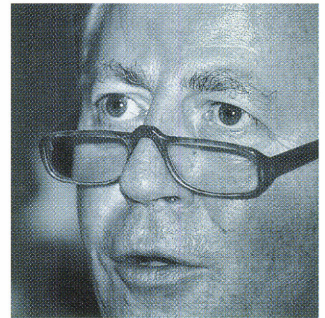
Perhaps the best example of this is the decision by the European social partners – the UNICE for the employers, the European Trade Union Confederation, and the CEEP on behalf of public enterprises – to take up the Commission's invitation and enter into negotiations with a view to reconciling flexible working hours (a legitimate demand by business managers) and security for workers, a subject of natural concern for the unions.

A united front

This undertaking, officially confirmed at the time of the European Council in Florence last June, is seen as being of

crucial importance by the Commission: the two sides of industry coming together in a united front! Under the banner of the Social Protocol to the Maastricht Treaty, by which they are much encouraged, they are each bringing their own sensibilities and concerns to the struggle, while at the same time recognizing the other as an ally in this war involving millions of citizens and thousands of companies which will decide the fate of the European model of society.

It is because he is convinced of the dramatic importance of this issue that at the beginning of the year Commission President Jacques Santer invited 'all the Union's political, economic and social forces to mobilize' in the service of a 'European confidence pact for employment'. His statements were as clear as they were irrefutable: 'The status quo is untenable with a Europe of 18 million unemployed' and all players in economic and social life, 'are called upon to contribute to change'.



Combating unemployment and developing a medium- and long-term view of society:

European Commission President Jacques Santer brings the two together.

Breaking the deadlock

The only way to break the deadlock is for everybody to take 'a step in the direction of the next person'. At a round table of the social partners held by the Commission in Brussels at the end of April, President Santer confronted each player in the economy with its responsibilities. Companies, he explained, must agree 'to place employment and the investment and progress which a skilled, confident and motivated workforce offers them at the forefront of their considerations'.

For their part, employees must accept 'a labour market which operates in a less corporatist manner' and recognize 'the link between a high level of social protection and efficiency'. Lastly, the public authorities must undertake to 'promote a framework which is favourable to a competitive economy' and make it possible 'to build a society of solidarity which makes the most of what its citizens have to offer'.

Cultural revolution

Jacques Santer was in fact calling for a genuine 'cultural revolution', a call soon taken up by the Commission as a whole. The European confidence pact which it submitted to the European Council in Florence, where it received its political approval, initiates a far-reaching process of modernization based on four pillars.

First of all, we must stay on course: budgetary discipline does not mean sacrificing jobs at the altar of the single currency, but the chance for a healthier and more prosperous economy which actually creates jobs. At the same time, maximum benefit must be drawn from the multiplier effect of any action to promote employment at European level. But how? By making full use of the potential of the internal market which must be completed, by improving the Union's overall competitive environment (among other things, by quickly financing trans-European networks) and by helping companies, in particular SMEs, to develop and benefit from their advantages.

Secondly, we must speed up the reform of employment systems, which means modernizing the labour market. The Commission believes that the Community institutions, the Member States and the social partners must look at how best to activate national employment systems and leave no stone unturned as it 'sets about organizing the future of employment'. Lastly, the Union's structural policies must be placed even more firmly in the service of employment. The confidence pact for employment heralds the start of a major drive for employment. It is an appeal to all the players in economic and social life to come together and question existing practices, 'combining the fight against unemployment with a medium- and long-term vision of society'.

A long-haul job

Needless to say, this joint approach initiated by the Commission is set to be a long-haul job. It begins with the strategy agreed in Essen on the basis of the White Paper on competitiveness, growth and employment, which it then builds on by defining the practical tasks involved and bringing on board every possible agent for change. It should produce the first concrete commitments at the Dublin European Council in December, when the Heads of State or Government will be presented with a single report drawn up by the Commission and employment and finance ministers.

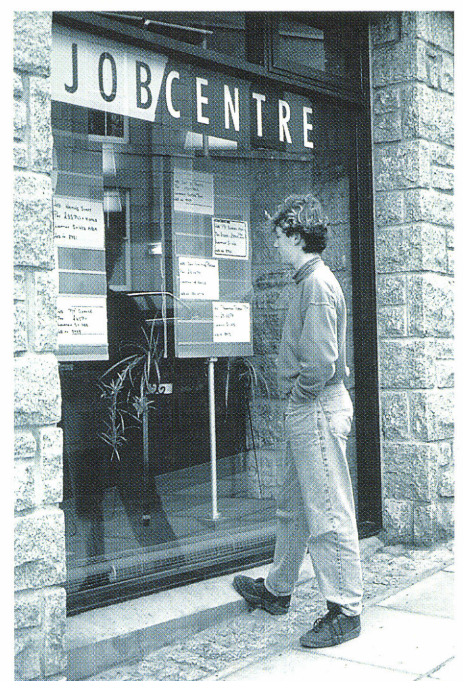
Decided in Essen, this single report, preceded by an interim report in Florence, will take stock of the implementation of the European strategy for employment. It will assess progress achieved at every level, in terms of macro-economic policy, structural policy and policy more specifically concerned with the labour market. It will also put forward proposals and other recommendations of a nature to permit a deepening of this strategy.

Other reports concerning particular aspects of the combat for employment will also be submitted to the Heads of State or Government in Dublin. But it is this single report (the second following that addressed to the Madrid summit in December 1995, calling for efforts to focus in particular on youth

unemployment, long-term unemployment and the flexibility of the labour market), which the Commission believes must reveal the underlying coherence of all the actions now being launched as part of this crusade for jobs.

What effective action?

The Community institutions, governments and social partners must look at how to activate national employment systems.



European Social Fund

Heading for innovation

Through the intermediary of the European Social Fund, the European Commission has initiated a dynamic to anticipate the EU labour market of the future.

A labour market which we can be sure will have very little in common with the one we know today.

New technologies, immersion in the information society, the dominance of a services economy, and the new socio-cultural behaviour which all these factors will bring, and are indeed already bringing, are all harbingers of major changes in employment. So we had better prepare and act in advance as much as possible in order to avoid having to cure new ills in the future.

On 28 May, the European Commission decided to finance, out of the European Social Fund, 58 innovative projects out of the 169 submitted by the Member States. This will cost the Community budget ECU 23.8 million, the total cost of the projects amounting to ECU 60 million.

In regions lagging behind in development, Community funding will cover 75% of a total project cost, and just 45% in the more favoured regions. In this way the Union is also trying to reduce

regional imbalances and promote economic and social cohesion. In 1994, 32 projects of the same type were selected on identical bases.

The projects selected by the Commission seek to explore a new approach likely to have a positive impact on the labour market. As Social Affairs Commissioner Padraig Flynn pointed out, they are a testing ground for possible 'solutions to very concrete socioeconomic problems'.

Breaking new ground

The Commission thus fully supports the European employment strategy approved at its initiative by the EU Heads of State or Government and which makes an explicit appeal to break new ground and show creativity in seeking solutions to the crisis currently affecting the labour market in the Member States.

There is a need to improve flexibility both inside companies and on the labour market in general, and to reflect on the reorganization of working time and how to create new jobs by meeting new needs, such as those linked to the quality of life and environmental protection.

Everybody can have ideas. But you must also have the means to put them to the test in order to find out whether they are feasible and relevant. In order to stimulate the development of such practical laboratories for trying out new ideas, the European Commission has turned to the European Social Fund, designed as a natural instrument in the service of experimentation and demonstration.

It intends to use this instrument in the pursuit of three goals, as defined by the

Preventing unemployment:

The European Commission is funding 58 innovative projects as a means of testing a preventive approach to the expected major changes in employment.



European Council in Essen in December 1994. First of all, to achieve an economic growth which creates more jobs, which inevitably means exploring new areas of activity – by highlighting the local level – and looking at new forms of work organization. Secondly, to improve the workings of the labour market itself, which means showing creativity in matching the supply and demand side of labour, giving an impetus to the mobility and flexibility of workers, and creating a route for a return to work which effectively combats exclusion. Finally, as human resources are the Union's principal wealth and the cornerstone of any development, there is a vital need to improve training.

Priority themes

It is against this background that the Commission defined priority themes and invited individuals, companies, universities, and administrations to bring to its attention, through the Member States, any relevant schemes they may be working on and which could possibly benefit from Community help at the implementation stage. The 58 selected projects are examples of precisely such schemes.

This is why these projects include schemes designed to help achieve reduced and more flexible working hours which meet the desires and the circumstances of employees and employers. Other projects are designed to reduce indirect labour costs, in particular for low or unskilled jobs.

Some projects are designed to develop services to meet the specific needs of people exposed to exclusion, or to provide them with more help in finding a job through better contacts between companies and local labour markets. Another priority suggested by the Commission concerned the way of using public



Too expensive?

Some of the selected projects are designed to reduce indirect wage costs for low or unskilled jobs.

funds allocated to unemployment benefit in a way which would positively encourage employment.

Finally, the SMEs, training bodies, research institutes and social partners were invited to try out new approaches to training which take work organization into account.

All the projects selected include at least one innovative element of such a nature that if the experience proves a success it can then be exported to other regions and countries of the Union. The desire to make these projects genuine laboratories in preparing the labour market of the 21st century should allow the Commission to further define its target over the next few months. It is in this way that today's innovation, which will perhaps be tomorrow's reality, will be able to flourish throughout the Union. So if any of you out there have any ideas

Long-term unemployment

1988-96: an initial evaluation of the Ergo programme

Whereas unemployment can be a scourge on society, long-term unemployment can be a personal tragedy. Not only does it rob individuals of a job, bringing their career development to an abrupt halt, it also puts them on the road to progressive decline which usually results in increasing marginalization and exclusion from the life of society. Individuals caught in the vicious circle of unemployment, with every day fewer resources with which to escape from it, suffer a human tragedy which society has the obligation to accept as a fundamental challenge. The European Commission's Ergo programme was intended to help the Union's Member States to take up this challenge more effectively. We now report to you on this action programme to cure a sickness of our times.

When all is said and done, the fact remains that of the 18 million people who are at present without a job in the European Union, no less than half are long-term unemployed. Individuals banished from the world of work for more than a year. If it is not correctly managed

(which it generally is not), forced idleness lasting several months often leads from purgatory to hell rather than a successful return to working life.

The European Union and its Member States are therefore facing a major

problem for society. In order to provide an effective response, in October 1988 the European Commission launched the Ergo Community action programme for research and communication on long-term unemployment.

Two major objectives

Its main objectives were twofold. First of all, to increase awareness, especially among the decision-makers, of the particular problems facing the long-term unemployed and those threatened by such a prospect. Secondly, to study the many actions undertaken to combat this scourge in order to improve them where necessary and bring potentially model actions to the attention of the Union as a whole.

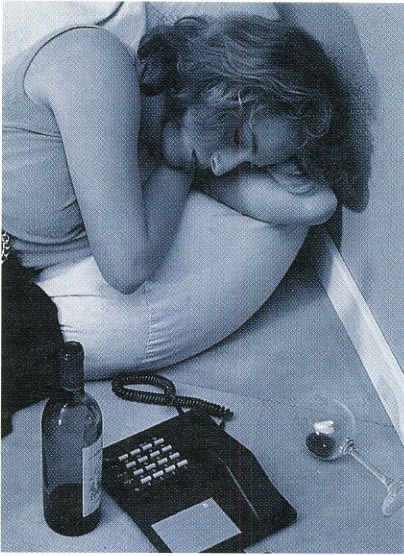
The first stage of Ergo lasted from 1989 to 1992 and consisted of identifying projects, ranging from local initiatives to national integration and training programmes. A list of 1 700 projects was compiled, 116 of them being the subject of a detailed analysis which made it possible to evaluate better the relative effectiveness of a wide range of measures and approaches.

The results of this work in identifying and analysing projects were laid down in a report which provided a better understanding both of the nature of the problem and exactly what it involves. This document highlighted the need to continue to take special measures for the benefit of the long-term unemployed as they presented a particular profile.

Escaping the vicious circle:

from 1988 to 1996, the European Commission conducted the Ergo programme to help Member States to act more effectively against long-term unemployment.





Aggravating factors:

alcoholism but also having a disability or being homeless are all obstacles to employment.

Little valued by employers when they have the choice, they often lack the qualifications or education necessary to apply for the jobs available. Also, their ability to find a job decreases the longer they remain unemployed as any qualifications they do have progressively lose their value, not to mention the growing lack of self-confidence which their situation inevitable breeds.

Disability, alcoholism, and homelessness are additional obstacles to gaining employment, as also is the fact of living in a region particularly affected by restructuring or decline and with a surplus of available labour. Finally, if you are a woman, elderly, a member of an ethnic minority, an immigrant, or have a criminal record, then you are further disadvantaged and often condemned to exclusion.

Spreading the word on good practices

This sad but true situation caused programme managers to highlight a number of fundamental 'good practices', such as firmly focusing aid and support

projects on the needs and abilities of the individuals concerned, and on the specific local situation; and also adopting a holistic approach: if efforts at integration are to succeed, then measures concerning the labour market and actions to overcome individual social and financial obstacles and problems rooted in the local area must also be included in an integrated approach. This means the emergence of an active and cooperative partnership.

Armed with this knowledge, Ergo was ready to move to its second stage. Launched in 1993, this sought to refine further the global diagnosis on the basis of 28 projects which received Community funding covering some 75 % of their total cost. These projects were selected with a threefold objective.

First of all, to understand on the basis of these projects and its own research how, and under what conditions, positive practices may develop as guides to policy (supported by the facts) in combating long-term unemployment. Secondly, to promote and lend impetus to the dialogue between the actors in the field – from the local authorities to national programme managers, and including employment agencies, cooperatives, associations and other players in the social economy – in order to promote exchanges of information and know-how and the creation of partnerships. Finally, to ensure that good integration practices identified at local level are systematically brought to the attention of all those involved in the same combat in the European Union.

The projects selected covered a quite wide range of fields, from research activities to the development of new networks and including the production of guides and manuals on good practices. Eight newsletters on Ergo's activities

and successes were distributed in all the Member States. A Partnership Fair was also set up in order to bring together the bearers of positive experience and those seeking to benefit from their methodology and practices.

After Ergo

The Ergo programme has now ended. It concluded with four seminars held in Dublin, Antwerp, Berlin and Barcelona which assessed the work achieved and considered in what way this could influence policy to assist the long-term unemployed. Participants spoke of access for the long-term unemployed to specific schemes adapted to their handicaps, the progression from these schemes to lasting employment, and cooperation between the various levels involved, ranging from the local level to the Community.

These seminars were then followed by an international closing conference held in Brussels on 17 June, which in turn also looked at how to make maximum use of good models for assisting the long-term unemployed. But although the Ergo programme may have ended, the Commission does not intend to divert its attention from the subject.

Quite the contrary: the problem of the long-term unemployed and other vulnerable groups on the labour market, together with structural macro- and micro-economic aspects of the problem, will be the subject of initiatives, reports and research by the Commission at all levels.

Disabled people

Europe, employment and a fruit salad

Stephen Duckworth is a familiar figure at the Eurostar terminal at Waterloo Station, London. The railway staff all know him as he is the man who taught them how to cater for disabled customers. With his portable telephone, smart suit and diary full of appointments, Stephen Duckworth is just like so many other businessmen you find in the City. But even in London people sometimes turn their head as he passes, because Stephen is in a wheelchair.

Fifteen years ago, Stephen was completing his third year of medical studies and indulging his passion for rugby. Then one day he had an accident during a match: Stephen's neck vertebrae were damaged and he was left partially paralysed. He completed his medical studies four years later and discovered he had a talent for business which he decided to put to use in the field of the vocational integration of disabled people.

Making a profit?

It was in 1988 that Stephen Duckworth set up Disability Matters, a company based in Salisbury. 'Yes,' stresses Stephen, 'Disability Matters is a commercial company, and we make a profit. Disability Matters is not a charity or a non-governmental organization. We offer employers very high quality services on such matters as how to hire disabled

staff or keep them in their jobs, and how to cater for them as customers.

Take the example of the Eurostar which operates between London, Brussels and Paris: this is perfectly accessible to people in a wheelchair but staff still needed to know how to meet the needs of disabled customers. We are also running training courses in customer reception for the 40 000 employees of a leading British bank. Disabled people have bank accounts too you know ...

But our main aim is to promote the employment of disabled people. We explain to employers that a disability does not prevent them receiving a particular training or acquiring a particular occupational skill. There is no reason to restrict disabled people to poorly skilled jobs. We explain to employers that disabled employees are very often more motivated and take less time off sick, which in

fact makes them model employees ... Of course we always exaggerate a little there,' adds Stephen with a smile.

Disability Matters also works directly with disabled people. In this case, training is subsidized out of public funds and essentially assumes two forms: psychological training designed to restore confidence to disabled people who have often been out of work for a long time, and training of a more technical nature, such as in data processing or other occupational skills.

European commitment

There are hundreds of organizations in Europe involved in the training and employment of disabled people. But not so many which are run as a genuine business. Disability Matters has won wide recognition in the United Kingdom and sits on several national boards and bodies, such as the Confederation of British Industry. A fact which is all too often forgotten is that the genuine integration of disabled people on the labour market is not possible without the involvement of the employers themselves.

Within the Helios programme, for example, dialogue has been established between organizations of and for disabled people, the authorities, rehabilitation professionals and employers, but it



Trained by Disability Matters?

As the Eurostar trains were designed for wheelchair access, rail staff were trained in the art of catering for disabled people.



Doctor and businessman :

partially paralysed in a rugby accident, Stephen Duckworth founded Disability Matters in 1988.

needs to be further stepped up. Stephen Duckworth and his colleagues from Disability Matters are of course involved in this dialogue. They participate in the Helios programme's exchange and information activities in the sector of economic integration (employment and vocational training), in a sub-group which deals specifically with the obstacles faced by, and opportunities open to, disabled people on the open labour market, and the training of disabled people and employers with a view to promoting the recruitment of disabled people.

At the Helios meetings Disability Matters has organized training sessions for the Portuguese, Belgian, French and Danish partners. These same partners now hope to further develop their cooperation through Leonardo.

Stephen Duckworth explains: 'If we really want to promote the employment of disabled people, we need a commitment at three levels: European, national, and local. But we must also be able to count on individuals. Through Helios we have been able to discover employment projects for disabled people which owe their success – in countries where the environment is not a priori favourable to the employment of disabled people – to the commitment of just a few individuals.'

Given Disability Matters' past record of success, the question of expanding its

activities to Europe is inevitably raised. 'At the moment', replies Stephen Duckworth, 'Disability Matters is working on a Horizon project alongside Irish and Danish partners. It is a small-scale project, running for just one year and with a budget of ECU 200 000, but we have a more ambitious project in the pipeline for next year. It is thanks to Helios that we have been able to get to know Horizon, meet our partners and submit our project.'

Our aim is to train instructors so that other people in other countries can pick up on our ideas. We do not want to expand Disability Matters directly. We certainly have substantial experience in the employment of disabled people but what do we know about the cultural characteristics of Spain or France? We want to create a better world for disabled people, not collect copyright fees on our ideas.'

But how does he see the creation of a social Europe when confronted every day with employers and a social category, namely disabled people, who are two or three times more likely to remain unemployed?

Stephen Duckworth clearly sees unemployment as being the number one problem: 'If Europe does not succeed in creating jobs, it is going to go the same way as the United States, with the increasing marginalization of one half

of society, with the related problems of an underground economy, violence and drugs, etc. But we must also be more flexible in the face of a changing world of work.'

Should we cling to heavy industries when we know that steel and coal are going to be cheaper even if they are imported from Chile or the other side of the world? We must not resist change or developments in employment, but rather benefit from them.'

On the subject of social Europe, Stephen Duckworth sees a development: 'We began, with the Treaty of Rome, with a purely economic Europe, with the creation of a market. Maastricht marks the opening-up of a more social area, we are starting to recognize the minorities and marginalized groups which are also part of Europe: disabled people, women, migrants, etc.'

Europe must not be a kind of mish-mash in which all the ingredients lose their flavour and originality, but a fruit salad in which you recognize the flavour of each fruit while at the same time the fruit salad as a whole has a distinctive flavour.'

Parental leave

A promising birth

A powerful lever in the fight for equal opportunities lies in the possibility of both women and men taking a temporary career break in order to look after a child. This is why 3 June 1996 is a red-letter day: it was then that European ministers responsible for social affairs adopted a Directive on parental leave which lays down a set of minimum rights. But it is not only the content which is worthy of note, but also the manner of its adoption.

Parental leave is a recognized right in the majority of EU countries, with the exception of Great Britain, Ireland and Luxembourg. But the situation also varies widely in the other 12 countries. In Sweden, both parents are entitled to paid parental leave, in Greece it is available to one of the partners, but without pay, while Belgium opts for the unpaid *pause carrière* which is negotiated directly with the employer.

The June Directive grants workers, irrespective of sex, in all Member States, with the exception of the United Kingdom, an individual right to parental leave of at least three months following the birth or adoption of a child. This is unpaid leave. The Directive protects workers against any dismissal which may

result from a request for parental leave. After the period of parental leave, the worker is entitled to return to his former job, retaining all acquired rights or rights which he or she was in the process of acquiring. Lastly, the Directive allows workers to be absent from work in the case of unforeseen circumstances linked to urgent family reasons.

This Directive is also a first as regards the manner of its adoption. To understand this properly, we must first retrace our steps a little.

Since 1983

It was in 1983 that the Commission submitted a draft directive on parental leave. For the next 12 years, discussions at the Councils of Ministers failed to reach agreement, due to the absence of the necessary unanimity. This is why, in 1994, the Commission decided to turn to another instrument: the social consultation permitted by the Social Protocol to the Maastricht Treaty.

This consultation began in 1995 between the European Trade Union Confederation, the Union of Industries of the European Community (UNICE), and the European Centre of Public Enterprises. It was not long – 14 December 1995 to be exact – before a joint agreement of the social partners was reached. A 'historic' date as the Commission President and Social Affairs Commissioner described it at the time.

The European Commission had always believed that parental leave agreed at European level would help achieve genuine equality of opportunities between women and men on the labour market, encourage a better reconciliation of family and working life, and help introduce the more flexible work organization which is necessary in order to create new jobs.

All that now remained was for the Commission to invite the Member States to transpose this outline agreement into Community legislation. This it did on 3 June 1996. For the very first time, the social partners had thus played a leading – even decisive – role in shaping the European social environment.

The Directive was adopted by 14 of the 15 Member States under the aegis of the Maastricht Social Protocol which exempts the United Kingdom from a part of European social policy. At the time of its adoption, Ireland and Luxembourg had no legislation on parental leave and thus had to adapt their legislation. Other countries already had legislation which went further than the Directive. These countries are obviously entitled to maintain this existing legislation and to introduce new legislation which goes even further if they desire. This is what the Directive's non-regression clause is about.



Throughout Europe:

Men and women in the EU are now entitled to three months' parental leave following the birth or adoption of a child.

Family welfare

The Commission encourages good practice

Although the Commission has no official responsibility for family policy, it does show a very close interest in the policies implemented in the Member States. It encourages the exchange of good practice at Community level, finances the activities of NGOs, and carries out important research, thus permitting meetings between national civil servants specializing in this field. It has done so since 1989 when the EU Council of Ministers asked the European Commission to step up its efforts in the area of family policy and the protection of children.¹

There is no Community policy on the family as such, as the Union's responsibilities do not extend to this field. But this is not to say that European policies do not touch upon the family. Starting with social policy of course. Initiatives in the field of equal opportunities, for example, clearly have a direct impact on the family. For confirmation, you need look no further than the measures recommended in the area of parental leave. But other Community policies also have an evident impact on the family, such as free movement, the internal market, the economy and finances, etc.

The absence of any formal responsibility for family policy does not mean that the Union excludes the family from its field of reflection. Quite the contrary! The European Family Policy Observatory, the Commission's interservices group and a group of senior civil servants specializing in this field all pay

particular attention to monitoring the development of the family in the Union Member States.

A kaleidoscope

The very notion of the family varies enormously from one Member State to another. In one country single-parent families are recognized and in another they are not. Some countries prefer to use the term 'household' whatever the biological composition of the family unit. It was in order to provide a general picture of this diversity that, in 1989, the European Commission set up the European Family Policy Observatory.

Initially responsible for gathering information on family policy first in the 12 and then in the 15 Member States, today the Observatory has widened its field of investigation to include an

assessment and impact analysis of family policy.²

But the Observatory is not content with organizing meetings every six months. It regularly holds seminars on particular subjects and produces an annual update of family legislation. Areas covered by its research include the effects of social security benefit, the implications of fiscal policy, child care, violence in the family and against minors, the harmonization of family and working life, and assistance for families in difficulty. All in all, this amounts to a kind of sociography of families in Europe, allowing comparisons to be made by applying parities of purchasing power.

Unity in diversity

The family is not just a biological, sociological and economic phenomenon: it is also a cultural phenomenon. It is not therefore surprising to discover great diversity in family structures in Europe. Yet this diversity is in fact rooted in unity.



Single-parent family or household?

Single-parent families are not recognized in all Member States of the Union.

Marriage remains a fundamental reference for the family even if, paradoxically, it is on the decline throughout the Union. Although living together outside marriage is increasingly acceptable, the family continues to be of prime importance to the vast majority of Europeans, whatever their status.

A number of figures illustrate this fact: 51% of Europeans believe that marriage is a personal choice; 44% believe that the family should help care for its elderly members; 59% are in favour of increased assistance for couples wanting to have a child. These examples show that the family remains the essential core of society, ready to fulfil a series of functions on behalf of that society, and as such is deserving of increased support.

This changing but nevertheless essentially stable pattern was the subject of a conference held last June in Louvain, on the subject of 'Changing families and changing policies in Europe'. Seminar

participants were able to analyse the impact of new technologies and working conditions on the family. They looked at ways of combating the discrimination which could stem from the various family structures, fiscal benefits, double-income households, and legal devices which discriminate between individuals on the basis of their family status.

A positive factor

This reflection concluded that the family – whatever its form – must be seen as a positive factor in well-being, apart from the fact that it retains its primary objective of maintaining demographic development. Participants also observed that the family is included as such in the Union's policies, as a fully-fledged category and not simply as a consequence of other policies (on children, women, etc.). Lastly, they stressed the need to find a common denominator for the different approaches adopted in the Member

States: only the notion of an enlarged family will make it possible to compare present policies and assess their impact.

For example, the Directive on parental leave, which has a direct impact on family policy, is exclusively concerned with the world of work, disregarding those who are excluded from it. In other words, the Directive's approach is not the family as such, the aim being to situate its members in relation to the world of work.

One of the tasks of the European Family Policy Observatory is thus to ensure that the family remains at the forefront of the Community's concerns.



Subject of research:

the impact of new technologies on the family.

1 see the Commission Communication on family policy, ref. COM(89)363 final, of 8 August 1989, and the conclusions of the Council of Ministers responsible for the family which met on 29 September 1989 to discuss family policy, ref. 89/C 277/02.

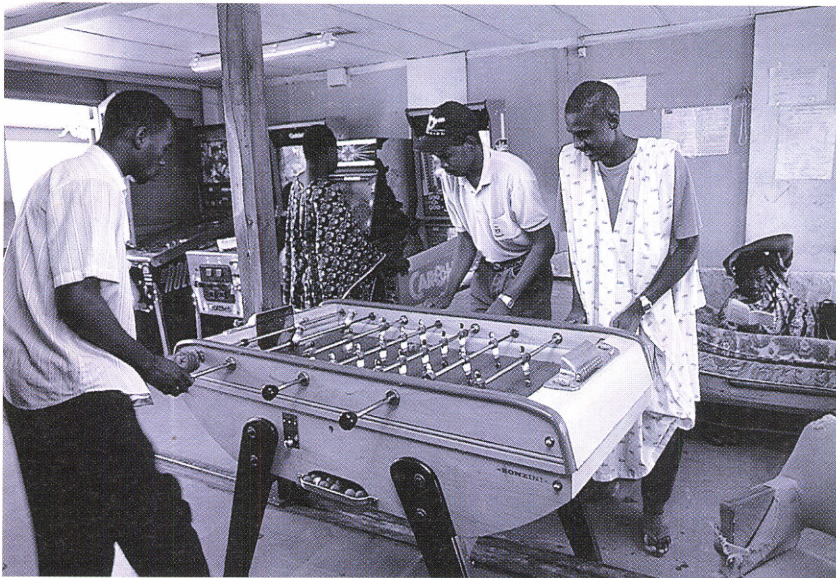
2 see The European Family Policy Observatory. Vol. 1 *Evolution of national family policy in 1994*. Vol 2. *Summary of national family policy in 1994*. These two volumes were published in 1996. To obtain a copy of these publications, please write to the 'Analysis and research on the social situation' unit, European Commission, DG V, 27 rue Joseph II, 1040 Brussels, Belgium.

European Year

Against Racism in 1997

Fuelled in part by the continuing economic stagnation and a deficient education, racist and xenophobic sentiments are growing in intensity across the European Union. A clearly Community problem, it spares no Member State and is damaging the Union's economic and social cohesion.

1997 will therefore be the European Year against Racism.



Segregation ?

The right to equality of treatment and to non-discrimination is one of the underlying principles of European Community policies.

'Do Indians have a soul?', they wondered in the 16th century. We know the excesses to which the conquistadors allowed their doubts to lead them.

Racist and xenophobic sentiments have always been a part of European culture. Although difficult to quantify, they are once again being readily and violently expressed, fuelled by a multitude of economic and social factors: the disappearance of the taboos associated with the Holocaust, increased individualism, fear of the future, deficient education and integration policies, unem-

ployment, poverty, exclusion, etc.

The ways in which these sentiments are expressed and the measures taken to combat them can vary widely from one Member State to another. Responsibility for combating racism thus lies first and foremost with the individual Member States and their regional and local authorities.

At the same time, as the European Commission states in its Communication of December 1995, the problem has a clearly Community dimension, if only be-

cause the right to equal treatment and the absence of discrimination are basic principles of Community policy. Is not the Commission's mission also to ensure the free movement of people and to guarantee the Union's social and economic cohesion?

Time for action

On repeated occasions, the European institutions have undertaken to help combat racism. There have been the Resolutions of the European Parliament, the Commission's support for the Migrants Forum and certain NGOs, and the Decisions of the European Council in Corfu (June 1994) to create a consultative committee 'charged with making recommendations on cooperation between the governments and various social institutions working in favour of tolerance and understanding' and of the Council in Cannes (June 1995) to charge this committee with 'studying the feasibility of setting up a European Observatory on racist and xenophobic phenomena'. Yes, we can certainly say that there has been no lack of good intentions. 'Although we must not underestimate these various initiatives, we can also ask whether, to date, they have succeeded in giving a sufficiently clear signal on the intensity of the European commitment to the fight against racism', the Commission nevertheless wondered in December 1995.

A Community with a human face

This is why the Commission proposed to the Council that 1997 should be designated 'European Year against Racism'. One of the objectives will be to advertise this commitment on the part of the Community's institutions, to concentrate the European debate and give Europe's citizens the chance to act. In short, to bring the Community closer to the citizens.

'It is true', noted one Commission expert, 'that the 15 Member States have found it difficult (for reasons of form rather than content) to agree on the Commission proposal. But there can be no doubt that the Social Affairs Commissioner, Padraig Flynn, is quite correct. There is a strong need for a Year against Racism. We are inundated with appeals from people or associations who are not seeking funds but rather wanting to be included in schemes designed to promote cooperation between all those who are fighting against racism at European level.'

Promoting the exchange of experiences

The aims of the European Year are in keeping with the budget it will receive (ECU 4.7 million): a realistic budget, but no more than that. 'We are not going to banish racism in 365 days', they say in Brussels. 'The Commission is not seeking to be the doctor but the catalyst.' To this end, it will be assisted by an ad hoc group of representatives from the Member States. In addition, a national coordination committee will be set up in each of the Union countries.

The aims are many: to draw attention to the threat racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism pose to the observance of fundamental rights and to the Community's economic and social cohesion; to encourage reflection and discussion on the measures required to combat racism; to promote exchanges of experience at European level; to make known the benefits of integration policies.

In this context, various actions are envisaged at European level: the design of a joint logo and slogan and the development of a poster and information campaign (also on the Internet), the publication of a newsletter, the launch of a competition in schools, the co-funding of certain projects, the dissemination of good practices, and the organization of seminars and conferences on specific themes (education, police training, etc.).



The wrong colour?

Seminars on specific themes such as police training will be organized as part of the European Year against Racism.

The ageing population

Europe in the twilight zone

The ageing of Europe's population presents the Union with many challenges, both economic and social.

Is solidarity between generations going to break down?

Some fear it will. Others, although not exactly optimistic, are at least a lot less pessimistic:

what if the baby boomers born following World War II surprised us all once again?

There is no escaping the figures. Although the trend itself is not new, the ageing of Europe's population is now in the process of assuming unprecedented proportions.

The progressive reversal of the age pyramid is inevitable, states the Commission in its recently published second annual report on the demographic situation in the European Union. In 2025, the number of young people aged under 20 will have fallen by 10.6% (9.4 million) and the number of adults currently considered to be of working age (aged 20 to 59) will have fallen by 6.4% (13.2 million) compared with 1995. On the other hand, over this same period we are going to see a 48.7% (37 million) increase in the number of adults aged over 60 years, and thus in the 'retired' population.

There are two reasons for this trend: on the one hand, the baby boom of the immediate post-war years which was then followed, from 1965, with a fall in fertility (the 'baby bust'); on the other hand, the increase in life expectancy recorded since 1960, which has already given rise to a new category of people, the 'very elderly'.

The ageing of Europe's population, to a degree which can never be offset by immigration, is a constant cause of concern to the Member States. It is a trend which is likely to have an economic as well as a social impact.

Social security under pressure

The main question raised as the baby boomers progressively reach retirement age is how to finance social security. By the beginning of the 21st century, given the present social model, there will be just two workers for every retired person. At the same time, the doubling (if not more) of the number of very elderly people could lead to a significant increase in health expenditure.

In such a context, what will become of the contract of solidarity between generations? What concessions will elderly people be prepared to make for the benefit of younger generations and how are the latter going to finance pensions? That is the unanswered question. Increased income tax, reduced social security benefits, an increase in the retirement age, ... there are many

possible solutions to the potential crisis. But no single one of them is in itself going to provide a panacea. Which means that a new point must be made: does not the ageing of the population mean that elderly people should be considered as a resource rather than a burden?

The Commission in action

Viewed in this light, a whole range of possibilities opens up. And the Commission, boosted by the experience acquired during the 1993 European Year



The very elderly:

increased life expectancy (since 1960) and the baby bust (from 1965, replacing the baby boom) have given rise to a new category of elderly people.

for the Elderly and Solidarity between Generations, is well aware of this.

On 1 March 1995, the Commission thus adopted a proposal suggesting to the Member States that it should lend 'Community support' to schemes in favour of elderly people in the individual countries. This proposal was not taken up, but the Commission has not abandoned the cause. Since 1994 it has had a budget heading (ECU 6.5 million in 1996) allowing it to co-fund projects launched at national or local level for the benefit of elderly people.

'There is an abundance of good ideas', says Brussels, 'For us, it is a question of identifying good practices, making them known, and promoting exchanges of experience.'

For example, the Commission supports the Design for Ageing Network, a network of design colleges which places the emphasis on creating products suitable for an ageing population.

Without a doubt, such examples are proof that the baby boomers who reach the age of 65 from the year 2010 can represent an opportunity rather than a burden for the Union.

Saved by the baby boomers?

This cohort, observes one expert on the subject, will have generally high financial resources and will therefore constitute an attractive group of consumers – a fact which European manufacturers are now beginning to realize. Also – have we already forgotten this? – the generation born in the years 1945-60 is the one which has experienced all the socio-economic upsets and is incomparable with the generation which preceded it, in the sense that it will never act its age, not mentally or physically.

The invention of the term teenager, the 1968 student revolt, the overturning of the very notion of seniority, ... this is a



Retirement in 2015?

The generation of May 1968 could tear down other barricades when they retire.

generation which has been active on all fronts. So why will it not attack one of the remaining rigidities of the system, namely the often forced retirement at a maximum age of 65?

'There is a growing trend for retirement no longer to be seen as a privilege, but as an obligation,' it is said. 'We could end up with a system in which people would have the choice between retiring or continuing their working life.' This would no doubt make it possible to continue the combat against the inequalities which are constantly threatening to undermine social cohesion – and in particular the growing differences between the pension incomes of men and women. More generally, it would also allow us to maintain an intergenerational European model of solidarity which, whatever they say, has to date held up well. QED.

Health and safety at work

The first European Week was held in October

The human and economic costs which occupational accidents and diseases engender every year are all the more difficult to bear as they are scourges which can so often be avoided. For the first time since the European Year in 1992, the Commission therefore held a European Week on health and safety at work, from 7 to 13 October.

Work is good for you, the old saying goes. Really? A look at the figures is enough to scare you off! Every year an estimated 10 million people in the European Union suffer an occupational accident or disease. And several thousands lose their lives.

This human disaster is matched only by the scale of its economic repercussions. In 1992 an estimated ECU 27 million

was paid out in the Community in compensation for occupational accidents and diseases, a figure which is equal to some 4.6 % of the social charges imposed on employers. And when the indirect costs linked to loss of production and the replacement of personnel are taken into account, this figure almost doubles. At a time when Europe is bemoaning its loss of competitiveness, this obviously creates a poor impression.

Although good health is not an absolute guarantee of employment, it can certainly be of benefit to the economy. The Community is aware of this. Article 118 of the EEC Treaty states that 'Member States shall pay particular attention to encouraging improvements, especially in the working environment, as regards the health and safety of workers, and shall set as their objective the harmonization of conditions in this area, while maintaining the improvements made.'

In this context, after having designated 1992 European Year for Safety, Health and Hygiene at Work, from 7 to 13 October the Union held its first European Week for Health and Safety at Work.

Orchestrated by the Commission, this European Week is fully in line with the objectives assigned to the fourth Community programme (1996-2000) in the field of health and safety at work: on the one hand, to promote information, education and training projects; on the other hand, to ensure the proper application of the important Community legislation in force, drawn up by the EU Council of Ministers in the context of the completion of the single market.

.../...

Against the rules!

Education and training in risks prevention, one of the major themes of the European Week for Health and Safety at Work.



cont. from p.23

Priority for non-legislative measure

The fourth Community programme is participating in a new strategy. Compared with its predecessors, it gives greater importance to non-legislative measures designed to improve health and safety at work. As such, it also awards priority to the active participation – rather than the principally 'reactive' participation – of the social partners.

The Advisory Committee on Safety, Hygiene and Health Protection at Work – which includes, per Member State, two government representatives, two trade union representatives, and two representatives from employers' organizations – is in the process of refocusing its activities. In particular, it has set up a 'programming group' charged with submitting proposals. The committee's opinion was naturally sought before deciding to launch the European Week in October.

This Week was organized around two major themes: the inclusion of the health and safety dimension in company management (among SMEs in particular), and education and training in risks prevention.

The Week concentrated on practical aspects (including public and private partners) and sent out a clear message: good risks management is in your own best interests. 'Companies always believe that preventing accidents and disease is expensive', pointed out one expert. 'This is true when correcting a failure of planning and introducing corrective safety. But it is not true when this dimension is included right from the start in the very structure of the company.' In this case, the cost of safety

is insignificant compared with the benefits it brings, such as improvements in working methods and staff motivation, and thus increased productivity.

One competition, two conferences

Subsidiarity permits of no other way: the European Week's two major themes were adapted in line with the individual countries. The schemes were many and varied, ranging from highlighting the implementation of European Directives at national level to providing prevention information at the place of work and during the continuing training of workers and employees, and including increasing awareness of health and safety problems among students and schoolchildren.

Some of these schemes were co-financed by the Commission, which has a budget of some ECU 60 000 per country for this very purpose. The Commission also provided information material and, most importantly, organized three major events in cooperation with the Member States: the third 'Education and training products for the prevention of risks to health and safety' competition (running until November); the Third International Conference on Information Technologies in the Field of Education and Training in Health and Safety at Work (Brussels, 13 to 15 November) and the International Conference on the Inclusion of Health and Safety in the Educational System (Dublin, 28 and 29 November).



Essential reading

Social dialogue: the situation in the Community in 1995: this is the title of a particularly interesting issue of Social Europe (2/95) which traces the history of social dialogue at Community level, from its earliest origins to the present day, both generally and by sector.

Two volumes of the publication entitled '*The Community's social policy*' have been published. The first, *The situation on 1 January 1996*, describes the Community's legislative procedures and includes: a general introduction to the social consequences of completing the internal market, an introduction to each area of social policy, and a summary of the legislation adopted in each sector before the social charter was signed in December 1989. The second volume, *Programmes, networks and observatories*, includes useful addresses and descriptions of existing networks, programmes and observatories in the area of social policy.

Finally, the Green Paper *Living and working in the information society: priority for the human dimension*, adopted by the European Commission in July, has been published in the form of a supplement (3/96) to the European Union Bulletin.

To obtain these publications, please contact the DG V Documentation Centre, 27 rue Joseph II, B-1040 Brussels, Tel. (+32 2) 295 33 22/49 88/63/93, fax (+32 2) 296 23 93