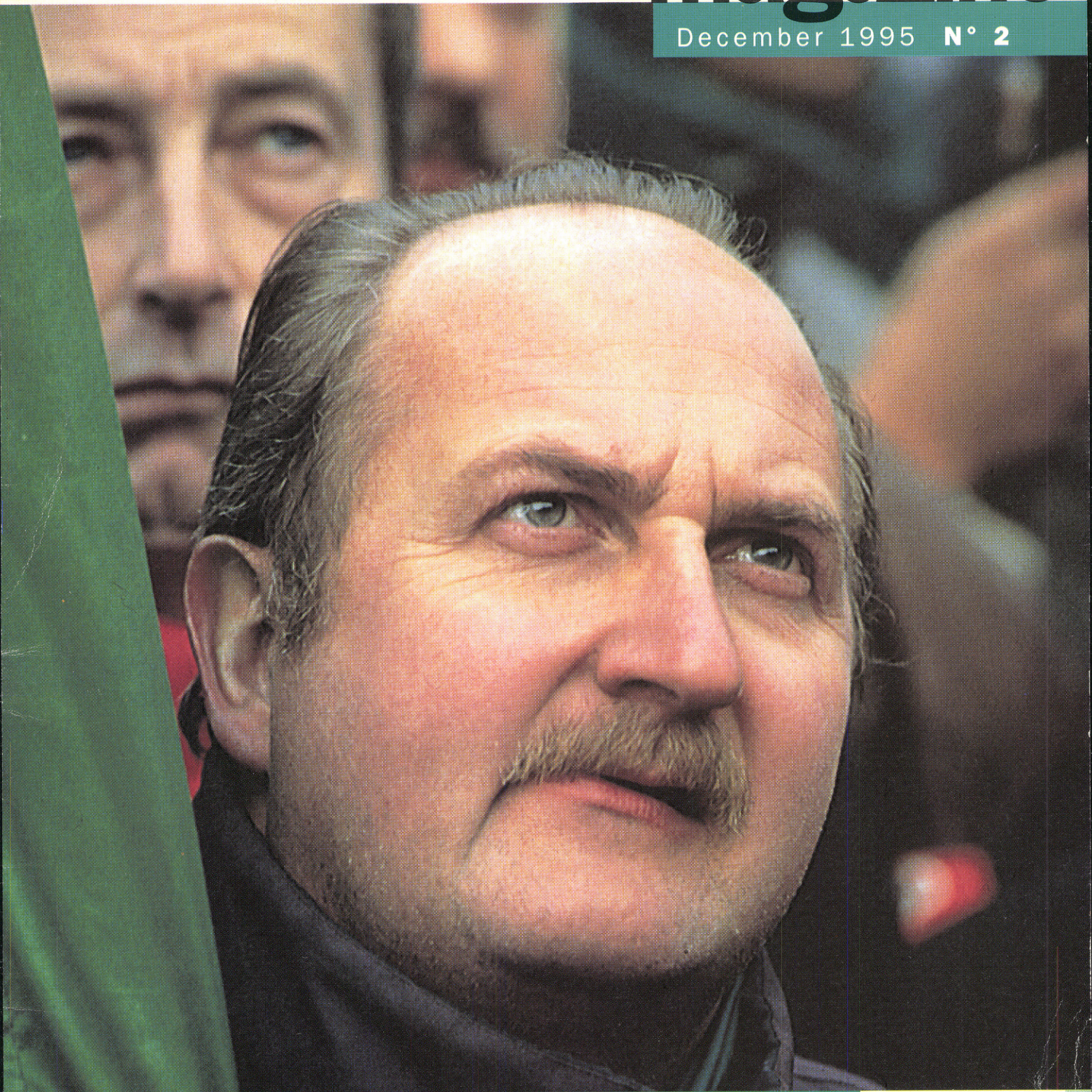


# SociaEurope magazine

December 1995 N° 2



## Employment report (p.10 - 15) Reasons for hope

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 opportunity, 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

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## Edito



As we go to press with the second issue of *Social Europe magazine*, I approach the future with cautious optimism as regards employment matters.

I have recently produced, with my colleague Mr. de Silguy<sup>1</sup>, a communication on the European strategy for employment. This document was adopted by the Commission on 11 October and is an important step towards tackling our employment problems. It will be a key part of both the Ecofin<sup>2</sup> and Employment and Social Affairs Council deliberations on the road to the European Council Summit in Madrid<sup>3</sup>.

The communication shows that we do have reasons for hope. It shows clearly that both the macroeconomic conditions, and some of the structural reforms are now in place to start making inroads on Europe's unemployment problem. The key message is that if

Europe manages to achieve its objective of investment-led growth of 3 to 3.5% per year, the resulting fall in unemployment could be to a rate of about 7.5% by the end of the year 2000. However, if these macroeconomic developments are accompanied by structural measures – along the lines of the Essen conclusions<sup>4</sup> – aimed at increasing the employment intensity of growth, unemployment could fall by a further 2.5%.

I must temper my hopes for the future with my concerns for the present. We have nearly 18 million unemployed people. We have many more who need and wish to contribute to productive active society.

Greater attention must be paid to the least-favoured categories in our society. Efforts to give all young people a chance of education, training or job experience before they enter the labour market, should be a top priority in all Member States. A greater emphasis

should also be put on the prevention of long-term unemployment. Regrettably, few Member States have taken major steps recently to promote equal opportunities for women on the labour market.

This magazine is an important tool in our objective: to keep the social dimension at the core of our thinking and our actions. Over the coming months, the magazine will report on the progress and perspectives on the employment front, in addition to a variety of other issues at the heart of European social policy.

Pádraig Flynn  
Commissioner responsible  
for employment and social affairs.

- 1 Yves-Thibault de Silguy, Commissioner responsible for economic and financial affairs.
- 2 Ecofin : the Council of Economic and Financial Affairs Ministers.
- 3 European Council (Heads of Governments and Prime ministers) meeting in Madrid, Spain, in December 1995.
- 4 European Council meeting in Essen, Germany, in December 94.

Lifelong education and training

# The keys to the European Year

1996 has been designated European Year of Lifelong Education and Training.

The aim is to stimulate, through initiatives at European, national and local level, a wide-ranging debate on the role of education and training on the eve of the 21st century and to make citizens aware of the need to participate in lifelong education and training. Here are a number of keys to help you better understand the origin of the Year and the way it will operate<sup>1</sup>.

## The general context

The accelerating pace of change and technological developments in today's European societies, and in the information and communication fields in particular, is bringing an ever increasing need for citizens to acquire and constantly update a range of skills. In this context, training – including self-training and training at the place of work – is something which concerns every citizen ... lifelong.

## The European dynamic

The European Year of Lifelong Education and Training is a high point in the dynamic launched by the White Paper on growth, competitiveness and employment. The 1993 report stressed the importance of education and training in combating unemployment. At the same time, it called upon the Member States to initiate a general debate on educational and training reform given the imperfections of current systems.


## The partners in the debates

The organization of a European Year of Lifelong Education and Training was therefore seen as an excellent means of opening up the debate to all European citizens. Including, first and foremost, those directly concerned by the challenge of providing lifelong education and training, namely: schools, universities and institutions responsible for education and training; associations of young people or women, etc.; small businesses; the various political and economic bodies (the local authorities, chambers of commerce and trade), professional associations, trade unions and employers' organizations.

## The themes:

Eight sub-themes have been selected in order to guide the debates and events organized throughout the year:

1. The importance of quality general education for all, including self-learning skills.
2. The promotion of vocational training leading to a qualification for all young people.
3. The promotion of continuing training.
4. Motivating people to participate in lifelong education and training, especially the groups which need it most, such as girls and women.
5. The promotion of better cooperation between training/education institutions and economic entities.
6. Boosting the awareness of the social partners.
7. Boosting the awareness of parents.
8. The development of a European dimension to initial and continuing training.



**Polyvalence and constant updating:**  
two qualities required for the information society.

## The organizers and the budget

Although the Directorate-General for Education, Training and Youth (DG XXII) of the European Commission is the principal organizer of the Year's activities<sup>2</sup>, it is working closely together with other Directorates-General with a particular interest in the results, such as the Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs (DG V). The Year has been allocated a budget of ECU 8 million to cover the various activities, some of which will be funded or co-funded by the Commission. An advisory committee consisting of two representatives per Member State is to help select the projects. Finally, the Year's national coordination bodies are to serve as the link between the project promoters and the European bodies<sup>3</sup>.

## The actions

In its action plan, DG XXII has commissioned two surveys which will form the conceptual basis for the Year. One will focus on the relative private-sector and public-sector funding of educational and training systems in the Member States together with current trends; the other is to look at 'the return on the investment' and will try to show the benefits to Member States of their investments in education and training. An opinion poll is also to be conducted to assess attitudes to lifelong education and training among young people and adults. Many European and national conferences are planned in order to stimulate the debate at all levels. Local and regional actions, such as open days, training programmes, the development of multimedia products and educational software, fairs, exchange of good practice, awards and competitions, etc. will all feature in the range of events and are also eligible for possible co-funding.

Ever since it was first set up in 1958, the European Social Fund (ESF), administered by DG V, has tried to promote continuing/lifelong training in order to combat unemployment. The 1993 review charged it with the specific aim of promoting measures designed to allow workers to adapt to industrial change, giving it greater authority to actively intervene to promote continuing training and stressing the importance for workers to participate in on-going training in order to ensure their continued 'employability'. It will of course be a participant in the debates and conferences on a subject which it knows so well. Also, the European Week in October 1996 organized by DG V – also responsible for health and safety at work – on the subject of 'health and safety management in SMEs', will pay particular attention to lifelong education and training. Other events are still to be finalized at the time of going to press.

- 1 An article in the first issue of *Social Europe* magazine gives further details of the general context of the debate – changes in European society and the arrival of the information society.
- 2 For further information on the organization of the European Year, please contact Jimmy Jamar, European Commission, DG XXII, 200 rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels. Tel. : (32-2) 295 20 82; fax : (32-2) 299 41 52.
- 3 At the time of going to press these bodies will already be operational. They are the national contact point for all bodies, organizations and persons interested in the European Year in the respective Member States.



### Training, self-training ...

In today's world, vocational training is for everyone.

## For further information

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Equality between women and men

## A strategy for the 21st century

The European Union played a very important role at the Fourth World Conference on Women and at the forum of women's NGOs, held concurrently from 30 August to 15 September 1995 in Beijing. This was the result of the major legislative programme developed at European level since the 1970s, the three Community action programmes conducted in cooperation with numerous women's groups, and the importance the present European Commission attaches to this issue. *Social Europe magazine* will be returning in subsequent issues to Community policy on equality between men and women. In the meantime, here is a report straight from the Beijing Conference.

Between 30 August, when the conference opened, and 15 September when it closed, China, so often the subject of controversy when it comes to human rights, became, willingly or unwillingly, the place for meetings, discussion and reflection on the position, role and rights of women.

China played host to more than 45 000 women and men from the official delegations of the 186 countries represented in Beijing, and from the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and associations who assembled in Huairou, 50 kilometers from Beijing, the site of the biggest conference ever held by the United Nations: the Fourth World Conference on Women.

The European Union, under the Spanish Presidency, was among the delegations. It displayed unity and political commitment by focusing the debates on the active involvement of women in political, economic, social and cultural

decision-making, on the defence of women's economic independence, and on the recognition of their full human rights, including their social and reproductive rights.

### Effective participation

Secure in its convictions and experience in these matters – even if the economic recession has somewhat slowed the pace of positive change – the European Union, through the combined voices of Spanish Social Affairs Minister Christine Alberdi, representing the Presidency, and Pádraig Flynn, Member of the European Commission responsible for social affairs, argued firmly for balanced 'partnership' between women and men.

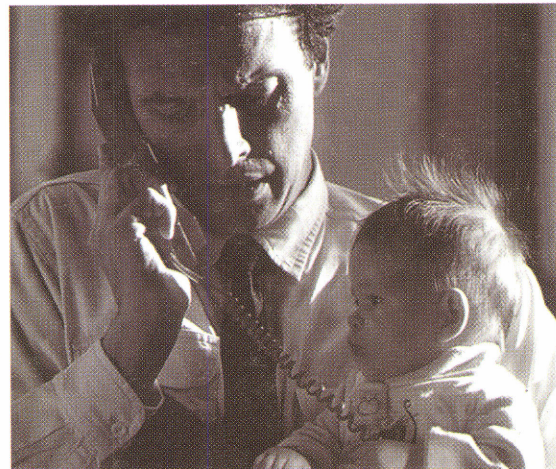
#### Applied in practice?

Equality between men and women is far from a global reality.

The European Union defended women's rights loudly and strongly as an inalienable and inseparable human right in the face of the group of '77' – the group of developing countries divided between traditionalists evoking the incompatibility between women's rights and their national laws and constitutions, and the modernists who recognize the essential contribution made by women to their development drive.

### New ways forward

The Beijing Conference follows other major conferences organized by the United Nations over recent years (the 1993 Vienna Conference on Human Rights, the 1994 Cairo Conference on Population and Development, and the World Social Summit in Copenhagen in March 1995). Coming 10 years after the Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi, which adopted forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women through to the year 2000, Beijing provided the opportunity to assess progress to date. Its task was to look at the current state of progress in implementing these strategies and to open up new ways forward.



After 20 years of international resolutions and undertakings to improve the situation of women, beginning with the First World Conference on Women in Mexico in 1975, the Beijing Conference captured the world's attention for a number of reasons which in fact overshadowed the real conference issues. First there was the choice of host country, even though it was decided more than two years earlier and approved by a vote of sovereign States, and secondly there were the media tactics of groups opposing the emancipation of women on behalf of religious ideals, whether Catholic or Muslim.

No fewer than 40 countries, which during the negotiations had effectively watered down the closing statement and 'platform for action', expressed reservations regarding certain sections of text.

## A compromise

The text of the platform for action and the joint declaration are thus a compromise of a kind. And yet, despite the voices raised, in particular against women's rights in the areas of sexuality, abortion and inheritance, these texts nevertheless constitute significant progress in the long march of women towards the recognition of equality between the sexes. Especially as they are accompanied by undertakings on the part of governments, public and private authorities, and the NGOs.

Ensuring that every woman has the right to govern all aspects of her own health, including fertility, represents undeniable progress on the road to human dignity and women's rights. Combating the feminization of poverty, the violence committed against women in their private lives or in the aftermath of armed conflict, and all forms of discrimination based on religious or social conditioning which deny women any right to decide – that is the nature of the challenge we are facing.

The legitimate and precious principle of equality between women and men as proclaimed in so many documents and at so many meetings are far from being applied in practice around the world. As the Norwegian President Mrs Brundland said in her closing address at Beijing, 'there is not a single country anywhere in the world where men and women have equal opportunity.'

Governments, international organizations, NGOs and every individual, man or woman, all bear a great responsibility in the face of history for the development of our societies towards a shared and greater well-being. It is now up to the driving forces at work in our societies to compel governments to take the action agreed in Beijing this autumn ... in China and elsewhere.

Commissioner Flynn stressed the need to promote new partnerships between men and women, but also between North and South and between the institutions and NGOs which represent civil society. After all, were we not gathered together in the land of Yin and Yang, where the principle of complementarity in social harmony takes precedence over the verity of the isolated individual?



**45,000 women in Beijing:**  
September 1995, the largest  
U.N. conference ever held.

Racism and xenophobia

# A tale of violence and exclusion

The European Commission is preparing an action plan against racism and xenophobia and 1997 is to be European Year against Racism: two good reasons for taking a close look at what is being hatched at Community level to combat this scourge which, 50 years after the end of the Second World War, is once again rearing its head in Europe.

Over the last few years, Europe has seen victims of racism on a scale you would never have thought possible since the end of the Second World War. Racist attacks in Germany, Portugal, Austria and Italy, the desecration of the Jewish cemetery in Carpentras, France, the murder of young immigrants in the middle of the French presidential election campaign ... such events have certainly alerted the public authorities to the problem, but are in fact just the tip of the iceberg.

We should also remember that violence is simply the most extreme form of the racism and xenophobia which denies an individual's right to be in a certain place, or even to be that individual at all. It is not enough to simply repress the violence; we must also prevent these most odious manifestations of such attitudes from arising in the first place. Every day, racism denies its victims access to health, education, employment and public services. In a fast-changing society, undermined by unemployment and exclusion, wounded by a crisis of values, it hits harder and excludes harder than ever before.

## An action plan

Concern has been growing among the European institutions. So much so that in June 1994 the European Council decided to set a Union-wide strategy

designed specifically to combat acts of racist and xenophobic violence. In the meantime, the Commission has decided to take the initiative and to draw up an action plan which it will soon be submitting to the Council and European Parliament.

But what can be done to combat racism and xenophobia? Legislation is no doubt required. But this will have little effect as long as our societies do not have a much more widely-shared understanding of the threat which racism and xenophobia presents for democracy. This is why it is also important – if not most important – to convey the message that everybody is a potential victim. Immigrants and gypsies today – but whose turn will it be tomorrow?

## To do what?

So while we must warn against prejudices and convince people of their futility, we must also propose new ways of living together and arriving at solutions together. In other words, we must show that the victims of prejudice in fact make a vital contribution to our societies. Although everybody knows that cultural diversity is inevitable, we do

### What kind of Europe do we want?

The European Commission intends to clarify the question of competence in the field of racism.

not seem to pay enough attention to the question of what we should do to ensure that everyone benefits from this and understands that this is the case.

What specific contribution can the European Commission make? What measures will it be able to promote?

The first job of the action plan will be to take stock of all the activities which the Commission services have supported in the past or are developing at present. For example, for a number of years DG V (Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial, Relation and Social Affairs) has been supporting many local projects run by the NGOs, ranging from information and awareness-boosting campaigns to training projects for public service employees, including action in the media. It has also assisted the social partners in their effort to draw up a text to prevent racial discrimination at work.

One project being launched at present is that of towns against racism. This will support local partnerships designed to consolidate the commitment of actors from the public, private and non-profit-making sectors to anti-racist citizenship. The results will be disseminated widely across Europe for the benefit of all those interested.



At the request of the European Parliament, for a number of years now the Commission has been supporting the independent European association known as the 'Migrants Forum'. This is designed to give an audible voice to immigrant communities, some of whom do not have political rights. The Forum has also developed its own action plan against racism.

Other Commission services have also been active, and in areas as diverse as education, youth policy, culture, regional policy, etc. All of this must certainly be better coordinated in future – but above all further developed and extended. This is one aim of the action plan.

## Non-discrimination requirement

And after that? It would be premature to speculate on what the action plan will bring. One of the ideas floated by Commissioner Flynn is to introduce a non-discrimination requirement as one of the criteria for European Social Fund eligibility. So are we moving towards a European version of the 'affirmative action' policies as practiced in the United States? This is far from certain. These policies have come in for some sharp criticism of late and the Commission is not about to repeat other people's mistakes. But what if the criticisms aimed at these policies were in fact proof that they worked?

DG V is closely following the unfolding US situation, together with the few examples being tested in certain EU Member States.

It is an open debate. Although nothing is decided as yet, one thing is certain: whatever the outcome of the internal debates, there will be no blind imitation of experiences conducted in other circumstances. But there is nothing wrong with learning from the successes and failures of others. And Commissioner Flynn will also have other strings to his bow.

## A Treaty amendment

One question remains. What competence do the Community institutions have in the area of racism? Neither the Maastricht Treaty nor its predecessors make any mention of racism. Some Member States, fearful as ever for their sovereignty, believe that the Community institutions should refrain from meddling in this area. But the Commission for one is acting and is committed to acting further in the future. However, while assuming its responsibilities in this respect, it is also committed to clarifying the question of competence. It is already putting the finishing touches to its arguments in preparation for the 1996 Intergovernmental Conference. Because that is when the question of a Treaty amendment must be settled. The question is too important for the Union to continue to leave it shrouded in legal uncertainty.

We must realize that this is an issue of absolutely crucial importance. The defence of human rights lies at the very heart of European integration. This inevitably implies defence of the individual against any kind of racial discrimination. To deny the Union competence in this area would be to deny it its very soul, and do little to bring it closer to the citizens. Once again, an apparently technical debate begs the question: what kind of Europe do we want?

The Member States must give their reply at the Intergovernmental Conference.

### Never again?

Fifty years after the end of the Second World War, racism is killing again in Europe.





Safety, health and hygiene at work

# A fourth Community programme

First launched in 1978, the Community programmes for health and safety at work have produced a substantial legal framework.

The fourth programme, which will run from 1996 to 2000, places the emphasis on information for business managers in order to convince them that safety improvement measures are an effective long-term investment.

Accidents at work result in the deaths of 8000 people in the European Union every year. A further 10 million workers suffer from the effects of an accident at work or of occupational diseases.

Since the Single Act entered into force in 1988, the Commission has enjoyed new competence in the field of health and safety at work. The internal market and the freedom of movement of workers requires the greatest possible harmonization of regulations in this area.

## Informing the SMEs

The programme drawn up by the Commission for the period 1996 to 2000 is the fourth in a series dating back to 1978. Previous programmes served to create a solid European legal framework. The fourth programme concentrates on information, and in particular information for small and medium-sized enterprises through SAFE, the European safety action programme.

SAFE accurately reflects the underlying philosophy of this fourth programme. The aim is to allow companies to benefit from the experience of others. Special attention will be paid to innovative initiatives in risk sectors. The



### Information society:

what is the impact on the health of workers?

final message addressed to business managers is that safety improvement measures at the workplace are a sound long-term investment. The Commission estimates the direct cost to the economy of accidents at work in 1992 at around ECU 27 billion.

Protecting the workers of the European Union is of course an absolute priority in itself. At the same time, it can also serve to boost competitiveness. Not only because it reduces the costs linked to the absence of effective protection, but also through its psychological contribution: a worker who feels safe and who feels that proper consideration is given to his

state of health, is going to be more motivated. And that means greater productivity.

## Infringement procedures

This protection obviously requires a faithful transposition of European legislation into national law. As guardian of the Treaty and Community law, the Commission will do everything in its power to ensure that this happens. This means, if necessary, instituting infringement procedures against Member States who persist in failing to fulfil their obligations in this area. Also, the Commission has just officially set up two new committees to assist it in its work. The first, a committee of senior work inspection officials, is a forum for the exchange of information and experience on the effective and uniform application of Community law. The second committee will be assisting the Commission in scientific matters.

European legislation also has to constantly adapt in line with new technologies which bring new risks for workers. The Commission is to assess these risks and agree measures to reduce them. One example is the information society, the impact of which on the health of workers is one area the Commission will be looking at.

Other studies will focus on specific cases, such as violence at the workplace, especially in shops, or the effect of stress on accidents at work or occupational diseases.

All of this is only able to function thanks to the participation of the social partners. The existing advisory committees will continue to lend their assistance over the next four years, as they have done during past programmes.

## Employment

# Maintaining the dynamic

In December 1994, Europe's Heads of State or Government earmarked employment as the number one priority for the European Union. In practical terms, they undertook to set up simultaneous and multiannual programmes. They also identified five areas of crucial importance in the fight against unemployment.

The European Commission is determined to ensure that this dynamic is not allowed to flag.

For a time, no doubt too long, it seemed almost as if the European Union had resigned itself to the fact that 'the unemployed will always be with us' rather like, in the past, it was accepted that 'the poor will always be with us'.

Month after month, most of the Member States simply drew up the grim figures of tens of thousands of new 'unemployed' – now diplomatically described as 'job-seekers'. According to the seventh annual report on employment published by the European Union on 26 June, this terrible toll of social failure currently stands at over 18 million, an appalling figure which condemns almost 11% of the Union's working population to the dole queue.

Intolerable? Most certainly. But perhaps it is when you hit rock bottom that you find the energy to climb back up. Within the Union at any rate, real energy is now being exerted – driven on by the Commission – to strike at the roots of the evil.

### Awareness

The first step lies in awareness of the true nature of the problem. At first, the Member States tried to grapple with unemployment alone, applying stop-gap solutions with varying success based on the instruments provided by their history and their social culture.

But there are some storms which lay to waste everything which lies in their path. And the storm which has raged on Europe's labour markets since 1992 is one such storm. Its very ferocity meant that there could be no hiding yourself away until it had passed.

As the European Commission stated in its report on employment policy in the Member States which it submitted to the Essen European Council in December 1994, today's unemployment contains 'a fundamental structural component which requires a total rethinking of national employment measures'.

Also, as recently explained by Pádraig Flynn, Member of the Commission responsible for employment and social affairs, we have passed the point when the structural mass of unemployed can be viewed as some kind of 'recruitment pool'. We are now speaking about a 'two-stream society'. Nothing more and nothing less.

### Message received

At the Cannes Summit in June, the EU Heads of State or Government made it perfectly clear in their conclusions that the message had been received: 'The Union must provide a better response to the legitimate concerns of the citizen, which first of all means using all resources, including those of

**A genuine turning point:**  
in December 1994 in Essen,  
the European Council made employment  
the number one priority.



the Member States, in order to effectively combat the scourge of unemployment.'

They were also prepared to assume the consequences: 'This involves implementing a wide range of measures at national and Community level', they stated, going on to say that 'as an economic entity, the European Union provides additional room for manoeuvre and specific added-value in permitting the creation of permanent jobs'.

### A radical rethinking

Europe's political leaders therefore accept that the present challenge is on such a scale that the only solution is to join forces within a coherent 'employment mobilization' strategy deployed across the Union.

This is why, as the Intergovernmental Conference approaches, Commissioner Flynn is calling for a 'radical rethinking of social policy', as 'national legislation has largely responded to the concerns expressed in the present Treaty and – perhaps even more importantly – these concerns are no longer those of today's average citizen, whether working or unemployed'.

But the Commission refuses to count its chickens before they have hatched: we must ensure that the political

dynamic to promote employment does not flag and that it remains a priority. It was the Commission which first generated this dynamic in December 1993 with its White Paper proposing a series of schemes to increase competitiveness, boost economic growth and then translate this into extra jobs as a result of structural changes in the Member States.

### A genuine turning point

This approach – which it saw as long-term with no dramatic results expected in the short term – was taken up by the Essen European Council in December 1994.

Essen marked a genuine turning point as the Heads of State or Government made employment the number one priority and charted the way forward by identifying five priority fields of action in

submit their multiannual programmes setting out planned or implemented schemes as part of this crusade for employment. Similarly, at the Madrid European Council in December – and every year at the same time thereafter – the Economic and Finance Ministers on the one hand and the Social Affairs Ministers on the other will have to report on progress achieved on the labour market since Essen.

The European Commission has been charged with the same task of closely monitoring employment trends. In early October, it was to produce a first brief report on progress to date by the Member States in creating jobs and reducing unemployment, especially among young people and the long-term unemployed.

This assessment will be submitted for the opinion of the European Parlia-

ment lining present and probable future labour-market trends and recording the progress achieved to date by the Member States in implementing the five priority fields of action identified in Essen.

### Five crucial areas

The first is investment in vocational training. As Commissioner Flynn is constantly pointing out, this is particularly crucial as the new jobs created on the eve of the millennium generally require a high level of qualification.

The second concerns measures to be taken to ensure that the renewed economic growth is able to create more jobs. This means, among other things, developing a more flexible work organization and encouraging new jobs at local level, in environmental protection and the social services for example.

The third involves efforts to reduce indirect wage costs, in particular for those with a low level of skills.

The fourth area is the way of making national labour-market policy more effective so that it is more focused on permitting the unemployed to find work than providing them with financial support.

Fifth, further measures to assist those groups which are hardest hit by unemployment, including young people, the long-term unemployed, women and older workers, etc.

There is therefore no doubt that the fight against unemployment has taken on a whole new dimension over recent months. It will be a long and difficult process, but European citizens can count on the Commission to ensure that this renewed effort is not allowed to flag.



#### New job opportunities:

in the environmental field and social services.

which the Member States would have to make real progress by adopting whatever measures were appropriate to the respective economic and social context.

In the autumn of this year, the Member States were subsequently invited to

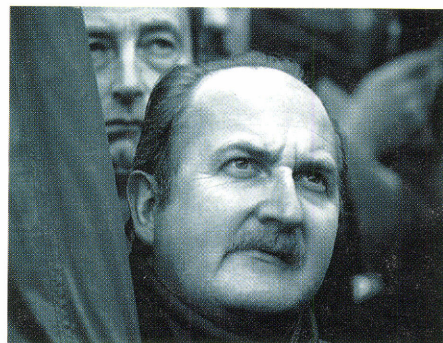
ment and the social partners, before serving as the basis for the Commission's report to the Madrid European Council.

In this context, the recently published report on employment in Europe is an essential instrument of analysis, out-

European Social Fund

## Preventing unemployment

Since 1993, the field of action of the European Social Fund, the European Union's principal instrument in combating unemployment (see article in *Social Europe magazine*, N° 1), has been enlarged to include the adaptation of workers to industrial change, the famous Objective 4. A preventive measure then, but what exactly does it involve?



### The threat of restructuring?

Don't wait until you lose your job before you start retraining.

This is in fact nothing more and nothing less than improving the qualifications and employment prospects of those already in employment, so that they are equipped to tackle the vicissitudes of technological change, for example.

### Anticipating needs

The architects of the reformed European Social Fund have focused firmly on anticipating needs. In seeking to identify trends at work in Europe's labour markets and thus the future development of occupations and qualifications, Objective 4 is designed to provide companies and their workers with an improved ability to manage the processes of change in production systems.

Specifically, the ESF intends to prepare schemes to advise, guide and train workers, together with schemes to support and adapt training structures at the appropriate level.

On this basis, and with a firm sense of direction, the training, orientation and advice can then begin in order to prevent workers in firms facing industrial change from losing their jobs. This is a phenomenon which affects us all, in one way or another, and this anticipation of needs can

An effective instrument for human resources development and thus in the fight to promote employment: that is what the European Social Fund is today, following the fundamental reforms implemented by the Commission in July 1993.

The European Social Fund now operates on the basis of a wider and more clearly defined strategy which will enable it to devote the ECU 47 billion allocated for the period 1994-99 to measures which will bring genuine hope – in human as well as employment terms – to Europe's tens of thousands of unemployed citizens.

First set up 35 years ago, the European Social Fund (ESF) underwent its first radical reform in 1989, together with the other Structural Funds (European Regional Development Fund, European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund). This was at a time when the Commission had finally convinced the Member States that the creation of the single market had to be accompanied by increased efforts to strengthen the Community's economic and social cohesion.

### Twice as much money

The acceptance of the 'Delors I package' brought a doubling of the budget allocation to the Structural Funds in 1993 compared to 1987, coupled with more precise strategic objectives.

Facilitating the integration into working life of young people threatened by long-term unemployment and helping young people in their search for a job are now firmly defined as essential priorities for the Fund which also helps promote equal opportunities between women and men on the labour market.

The Fund also helps to promote the growth and stability of employment in regions lagging behind in development or seriously affected by industrial decline and to increase their human potential in the field of research, science and technology.

Finally, it helps improve education and training systems in certain less-favoured regions, including facilities for civil servants charged with implementing structural adjustment and development policies.

### Preventing the scourge

Since 1993, the field of action of the ESF has been further enlarged and its Objective 4 is now firmly aimed at preventing the scourge of unemployment arising in the first place. As Pádraig Flynn, European Commissioner responsible for employment and social affairs, explained, it now has the ambitious task of 'facilitating the adaptation of workers to industrial changes' and of 'contributing to the strengthening of companies' competitiveness'.

## Employment report

also draw attention to industrial sectors which are going to be facing the same problem most acutely in the future.

The ultimate purpose of training is to stabilize employment and avoid social wastage. Depending on the circumstances, it will be designed to make it easier for workers to switch to new jobs within the same company or to increase their employability in other companies or sectors.

### A major challenge

This is therefore a major challenge. First of all, it involves setting up effective training systems inside companies in order to maximize their potential in terms of human capital. The ESF can thus contribute to the development of internal training structures, the drawing up of training plans, and the development of the management and mechanisms to anticipate labour-market trends. The Commission pays particular attention to the difficulties which face small businesses in providing their staff with training at the place of work.

The challenge also involves improving the quality and relevance of the training provided, ensuring that it is perfectly adapted to the needs of the people in question. It is consequently important to improve and develop training systems and structures, which is why the ESF favours model and innovative practices with a multiplier effect.

### Self-training

One option is to set up decentralized networks of approved training centres to provide continuing training for workers. Another solution is to set up 'self-training' centres providing workers with access to information by electronic means and to telematics learning services. The flexible and economical facilities of such distance-

learning techniques are likely to be particularly advantageous to small businesses.

But is it possible to meet this challenge without a general mobilization? No! This is why the Commission has obtained an undertaking that the national and regional public authorities will also play their part in the effort, adding their funds to those provided by the Community and by the companies themselves. This is also why the Objective 4 activities are to be based on on-going dialogue with the national and regional authorities and the social partners. This is what general mobilization is ultimately all about!

### No future?

The European Social Fund to the rescue of industrially declining regions.



Human resources

## Two Community initiatives

Economic growth alone is not going to be enough to eradicate unemployment. Nor will a drop in unemployment in itself mark the end of social exclusion. This is why the European Commission has launched two Community initiatives: employment and human resources development (Employment) and adaptation of workers to industrial change (Adapt). These focus specifically on technological change and the population groups which are hardest hit by unemployment, i.e. women, young people and the disabled.

Two new Community initiatives to promote human resources development have been launched by the European Commission for the period 1994-99, each one allocated ECU 1.4 billion. These adopt a transnational and innovative approach to the problem and seek maximum involvement on the part of those active in the field on a day-to-day basis.

The first of these initiatives, Employment, consists of three targeted programmes. NOW is concerned with unemployment among women, who make up 51% of the population of working age but just 33% of the actual labour force employed. Also, as many as three quarters of all part-time jobs are held by women and 75% of all working women are employed in the services sector. These inequalities are an infringement

of one of the founding principles of social Europe: equal opportunities for men and women. Despite the considerable efforts already made, the gap is proving very slow to close. NOW has the priority task of helping to promote equality by combating unemployment among women, drawing attention to the value of their work, and promoting their access to positions of responsibility while at the same time reconciling work and family life. NOW concentrates on training and employment promotion by placing the emphasis on projects in partnership with the local authorities, employment and training bodies, women's NGOs, the social partners and companies.

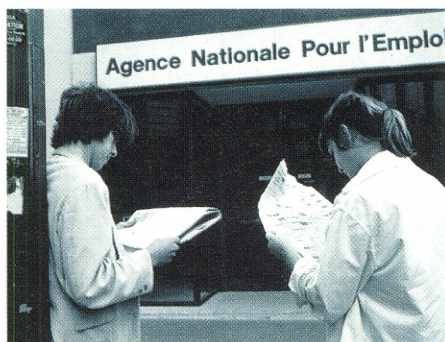
### Equal opportunities

The Employment-Horizon programme, which receives more than 50% of the total resources allocated to the employment initiative, is similarly devoted to equal opportunities in the fight against the exclusion of socially disadvantaged or disabled people. There are an estimated 52 million people living below the poverty line, with an income of less than half the average wage. Poverty and social exclusion affect as many as 25% of the population in Portugal, 20% in Greece, and 19% in Ireland. Horizon draws extensively on the local actors who are most familiar with the situation in the field.

#### Adapting:

women, young people, and disabled people are the prime targets for the Adapt Community programme.





### Working:

to make it easier to get that first job, the European Community has launched the Employment programme.

## Young people aged under 20

Youthstart, the third element in the Employment initiative, is designed to combat youth unemployment. Young people are finding it increasingly difficult to enter the labour market. One of the main reasons for this is lack of training. More than 5 million young people between the ages of 16 and 25 living in the European Union have no official training and no occupational qualifications. Youthstart is targeted at the under-20s in particular. In the partnership between the Commission and the Member States, it is the individual countries which determine the specific approach to be adopted.

France, Ireland and Belgium have decided to concentrate on training, for example, while Germany is laying particular stress on young immigrants. Greece organizes mobile training units which travel outside the main urban centres. Youthstart also seeks to allow young people to acquire practical work experience which is seen as one of the keys to labour-market access.

These three Employment projects must be innovative and transferable – the latter regarded as crucial to any initiative designed to have a multiplier effect. Also, in order to promote co-operation between regions at different levels of development, the initiative

encourages projects which include three partners, one of them based in a less-favoured area.

## Profound change

Whereas Employment is designed to facilitate access to the labour market for vulnerable sections of the population, Adapt, the second initiative, is concerned with the changes at work in this market. These changes are profound and vary greatly from one region to another. This is why isolated and poorly coordinated schemes are ultimately ineffective. What is needed is the pooling of practical experience in order to spread the message of successful projects and sound a warning against failed projects. That is the objective of the Adapt Community initiative.

Growing international competition, the revolution in production methods following the introduction of computer technologies, and the need to preserve the environment, are all factors which are currently shaping the labour market and management models. Workers must adapt to these changes – or else risk losing their jobs.

Adapt seeks to help the workforce to keep pace with this industrial change and to improve the way the labour market operates. At the same time, action in these areas can also serve to boost the competitiveness of companies and avert unemployment. The imaginative nature of the projects developed by Adapt should promote the creation of new jobs and occupations.

## National priorities

Adapt leaves each Member State the freedom to set its own priorities. The national operational programmes adopted by the European Commission provide us with a picture of the various approaches adopted.

Germany awards priority to improving the qualifications of workers, especially in small and medium-sized

enterprises and in the construction sectors, the retail trade, distribution and environmental protection. Portugal has decided to concentrate on projects to improve basic qualifications. Ireland is concentrating on in-company training and links between companies and training establishments. The UK is targeting small businesses with fewer than 50 employees in growth sectors such as services, tourism, art and culture. The Netherlands is adopting a similar approach while Luxembourg is focusing on improving systems for human resources development.

## Decentralized budgets

France is seeking a better anticipation of industrial change coupled with a strong regional emphasis as 80% of budgets will be decentralized. This is also characteristic of the Italian projects which are seeking to establish a modern system of continuing training. In Belgium, the Flemish-speaking community is concentrating on boosting the qualifications of workers while the French-speaking community wants to raise the general level of qualifications and promote new jobs. Spain is establishing an indicator of industrial change based on public assistance granted to workers within restructuring operations.

All these projects, the precise number of which has not yet been determined, must be transnational and innovative. They will be supported by the national support structures and the European Support Bureau for the Adapt/Employment programmes.

Disabled people

## A competition to increase public awareness

The official prize-giving ceremony for the winners of the Helios competition was held on 5 December 1995 in Brussels. Helios is the Community action programme to promote equal opportunities for, and the integration of disabled people. So why hold a competition for the best organization or initiative? Because it is quite simply an excellent means of increasing public awareness!

The Helios programme, managed by the 'Integration of disabled people' division of DG V (Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs of the European Commission), makes available to organizations of disabled people and related experts a series of measures designed to facilitate a Europe-wide exchange of information. The ultimate aim is the transfer within the European Union of innovative and effective practices which not only permit a better integration of disabled people but also improve their quality of life.

One example is the practice of 'peer counselling'. In some EU countries, organizations of disabled people have adopted the practice whereby disabled people are advised or assisted in their working, social or private lives by other disabled people. This practice has not necessarily spread to all EU countries and the activities of the Helios programme are helping to popularize it. However, if activities were limited to these exchanges of information, Helios would remain confined to a relatively small circle of experts in what would largely amount to preaching to the converted.

It is of course the disabled people themselves who must ultimately retain

control over their own lives at all times. But this does not change the fact that politicians, employers, teachers, architects, journalists, doctors, families and citizens in general all have a part to play in encouraging a better integration of disabled people.

### Old prejudices

We must fight against the continuing tendency to ignore the particular needs of disabled people and combat old prejudices which condemn disabled people to the fringes of our society. Going to the swimming pool, a show or a restaurant remains to this day something of an ordeal for certain categories of disabled people: a physical ordeal due to a lack of access and a psychological ordeal due to people staring at them. The fact that the disabled

person is still not accepted as a full citizen is evident from expressions of fear or rejection on the one hand, and patronizing or pampering on the other.

This is why the Council Decision of 25 February 1993, establishing the Helios II programme, provides for 'wide distribution of information to publicize activities and campaigns to increase the awareness of the public and the media of the possibilities for integrating disabled people'. The text also stipulates that 'the Commission will contribute to raising public awareness through the organization of competitions, the award of annual prizes for model projects in the various fields relating to the integration of disabled people, and through media activities.'

### In the spotlight

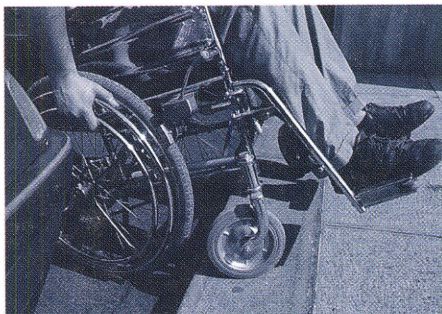
The aim of the competitions is not, of course, to encourage any kind of rivalry between disabled people or the initiatives in which they are involved. The aim is to highlight and bring to the public's attention those initiatives which are particularly successful in integrating and promoting equal opportunities for disabled people. Also, although it is of course the 18 winners in the 1995 Helios competition which are very much



**A victory!**

Over general indifference and in the field.





**A double challenge:**

physical, to overcome material obstacles, and psychological, to cope with staring eyes.

in the spotlight, we should also remember the great effort which went into organizing the event, in terms of determining the competition entry conditions and the basis for selecting the winners.

The first step was for the Commission to draw up in cooperation with government representatives from the Member States and representatives of organizations of disabled people – a list of seven conditions which the candidate organizations or projects were required to satisfy. These were:

- (I) the implementation of practices promoting equal opportunities;
- (II) access to the project for disabled people and their integration within it;
- (III) full involvement of disabled people or their legal representatives in the debates and decisions on the life of the organization or project;
- (IV) evidence that the candidate project or organization takes into account the need to effectively 'increase public awareness';
- (V) innovative nature of the project;
- (VI) transferability, i.e. the ability to apply the underlying principles of the candidate project in another Member State;
- (VII) quality confirmed by a reliable assessment.

Six categories were also selected in order to better define the scope of the competition:

- (I) educational integration: transition between levels of education;
- (II) social integration: transition towards independence;
- (III) functional rehabilitation: measures

making it possible for disabled people to remain in their familiar environment;

- (IV) new technologies: distance activities;
- (V) economic integration: vocational training;
- (VI) economic integration: employment in an open environment.

### 300 candidates

The next step was to publicize the event in order to attract entries. Candidates had to contact members of the Helios Advisory Committee, which is made up of their respective government representatives to the Helios programme. Members of this committee, in cooperation with the National Committees of Disabled People, then made an initial selection from the 300 entries received. Each government had to select one candidate per category, resulting in 90 entries being submitted to the European jury at the Commission following extensive discussion, involving, in particular, European organizations of disabled people.

The jury consisted of 16 people selected from some 60 applicants. There was one delegate per Member State and one President, Mr Gommers, former Director at DG V. Two thirds of jury members were disabled people. Other members represented special education, associations and families of mentally ill people, mentally handicapped people, or disabled children.

Finally, a short list of 18 potential prizewinners was drawn up, each one being visited by two jury members. It had been agreed to award one gold medal, one silver medal and one bronze medal to each category. Each prizewinner was also to receive a diploma and commemorative plaque. The medals and plaques were designed by Cesar Delgado, a Spanish artist who has been blind since the age of 13. The list of prizewinners in the 1995 Helios competition was announced on 15 September 1995 in Seville but it was at an academic session on 5 December in Brussels that the medals and plaques were officially awarded to the representatives of the prizewinning organizations.

## European Day of Disabled Persons

The third European Day of Disabled Persons was held on 3 December 1995 on the theme of 'full citizenship'. It was organized by three non-governmental organizations who are members of the European Forum for Disabled People – Autism Europe, the European Regional Council of the World Federation for Mental Health (ERC-WFMH) and the European Association of the International League of Associations for Mentally Handicapped Persons – with the assistance of the European Parliament and the European Commission (DG V.E.3), in the framework of the Helios programme.

### Non-discrimination

At an official meeting of the European Parliament on 7 December, the NGOs submitted a report on non-discrimination to the President of the European Parliament and Commissioner Flynn. This report will enable disabled persons to make their views known in the debates to prepare for the Intergovernmental Conference on the review of the Maastricht Treaty.

For further information contact:  
Secretariat of the 1995 European Day of Disabled Persons, Boulevard Clovis 7, B-1040 Brussels.  
Tel. and fax: (32-2) 280 14 12.

## European works councils

# A resounding success

For at least 15 years, all proposals for Community legislation granting workers in European multinationals the right to be informed and consulted had met with a firm refusal by the Council of Ministers.

The procedures laid down by the Social Protocol adopted by 11 of the 12 Member States (later joined by the three new members) and annexed to the Maastricht Treaty on European Union, finally allowed this deadlock to be broken. An initial assessment, one year after this historic Directive.

The European works council Directive was adopted on 22 September 1994. Just one year later, with the ink scarcely dry on the paper, it is true to describe it as a resounding success. As European Commissioner Pádraig Flynn correctly pointed out, the reason for the success is, paradoxically, that it has never been necessary to impose enforcement measures.

On a voluntary basis, and before the deadline set for the transposition of the Directive into national law, many European companies have concluded agreements granting their workers the right to be informed and consulted on their plans and activities.

### 1500 potential works councils

The Directive is the first practical measure to result from the social chapter of the Maastricht Treaty. Its aim is to adapt information and consultation procedures to the growing internationalization of companies and the constant restructuring which results. The Directive should ultimately result in the creation of more than 1500 works councils in European companies. With an average of 30 members per council, this would involve some

50000 representatives in 17 countries. The Directive applies to the Union as a whole, with the exception of the United Kingdom but including the European Economic Area (which includes Norway and Iceland). It concerns companies with 1000 or more workers and with operations in at least two countries, each one employing at least 150 workers.

By September 1995, 60 such agreements had been concluded with more being signed all the time. Dozens – if not hundreds – of these agreements are likely to have been concluded by September 1996.

Half of these agreements predated the Directive – but it had taken 10 years to achieve this figure. The fact that as many agreements again have been concluded in one tenth of the time shows just how necessary it was to promote a European legislative framework, despite the opposition from European employers – an opposition which has since disappeared. Article 13 of the Directive states that an agreement applicable to all workers and concluded before 22 September 1996 is sufficient and releases the company from any further obligation.



Even before the Directive, companies such as Volkswagen and Airbus Industries decided voluntarily to set up European works councils.

This allows flexibility, consensus and effectiveness. The flexibility allows companies to adapt the information and consultation mechanisms to their particular situation. The consensus allows the social partners to conclude the agreement they want. The effectiveness lies in the assurance that workers are able to exercise the acquired rights.

The Directive's success is all the more laudable as it has dispelled the opposition of employers, most notably that of the UNICE. European employers feared that a European legal framework in the field of works councils would jeopardize competitiveness.

### Lack of understanding

Pádraig Flynn believes that there is no evidence to link good practice in informing and consulting workers with a loss of competitiveness. 'There is a lack of understanding of the fundamental link between productivity and competitiveness', stressed the European Commissioner. On the contrary, it is the existence of good information and consultation mechanisms which allows companies to succeed and adapt to a changing business environment.

Glaring proof of this lies in some of the 30 multinationals which voluntarily concluded an agreement before the Directive was adopted – companies which are among the high-fliers in European industry, such as Airbus Industries, United Biscuits, Volkswagen or Bayer.

## Subsidiarity

In addition to flexibility, consensus and effectiveness, the Commission also stressed that the Directive should be characterized by subsidiarity. It is this subsidiarity which allows Member States to adapt the Directive to national practices. Transposition to national level is not always easy as it can generate conflicts or contradictions in the legislation. A group of experts were therefore charged with assisting the national authorities, giving rise to practical cooperation between the authorities and the Commission.

Such cooperation is essential if the Directive is to be simultaneously applied across Europe – a simultaneity which is essential given the Directive's transnational nature. The group of experts also stressed the importance of a mutual recognition of voluntary agreements. Finally, they arrived at a set of criteria for the purposes of identifying the parent company of a multinational, the one which, at the top of the pyramid, is ultimately responsible for applying the Directive. But the Directive's success is not solely to be measured in terms of the accelerated pace at which agreements have been concluded.

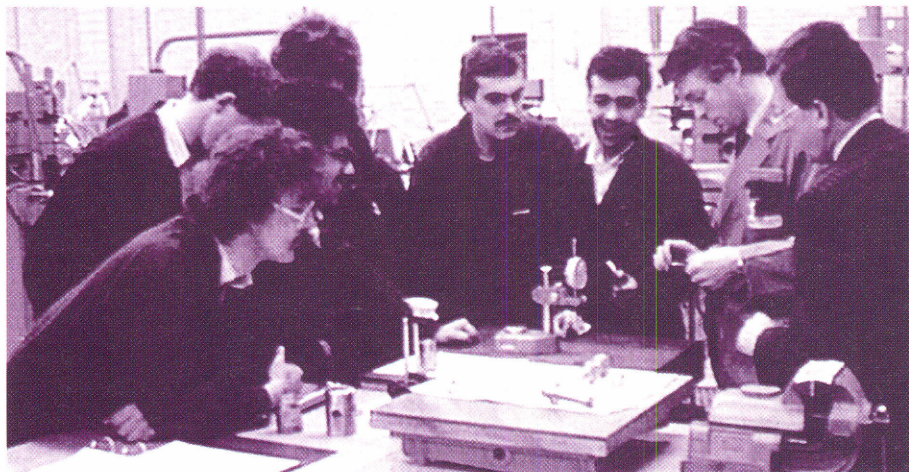
Another remarkable fact must also be stressed. The United Kingdom chose the opt-out clause when the Directive was adopted. This is the only aspect of European social legislation on the subject of which the UK has expressed such reservations. Yet all the agreements concluded to date have included British workers, thereby confirming the predictions of Commissioner Flynn. What is more, a growing number of British firms are deciding to conclude agreements of their own

accord. United Biscuits, as we have already said, and also BP Oil had both concluded agreements before the Directive was adopted. They have since been followed by Coats Viyella.

## Historic breakthrough

Non-Community companies such as CPC (USA) or Honda Europe (Japan) have also followed suit. General Motors (USA) has announced its intention to start negotiations and other multinationals, such as Toyota, IBM or Unilever, intend to conclude an agreement before September 1996.

The long and difficult path to the European works councils Directive, stretching over 24 years, has not been in vain. Pádraig Flynn sees the Directive as a 'historic breakthrough'. For the first time in the social history of Europe, a binding legal instrument for multinational companies has been created. It is an example of a European social policy which is working.



**50,000 representatives from 17 countries :**  
the Directive should lead  
to the creation of 1,500 works councils  
in European companies.

Social dialogue

# Labour and management committed to European integration

The European Commission has always sought to involve the social partners in European integration and to encourage them to assume an increasing share of responsibility. The Maastricht Treaty further reinforces and defines their role. The present concept of European social dialogue involves a twofold process: on the one hand, consultation with European trade unions and employers' organizations – interprofessional or sectorial – on the policy the Commission is drawing up; on the other hand, negotiations between the social partners with a view to arriving at the conclusion of agreements.

Right from the very start, the European Community made a clear choice in favour of a consensus society in which dialogue between the two sides of industry (labour/management) and their involvement in its continued development would replace conflict. The European model of social relations was to organize this pact between the world of production and society as a whole.

This was not an arbitrary choice, but one founded on the common principles of the systems of labour relations which had grown up – usually through conflict – throughout the 20th century in all the Member States.

## Round tables

The public authorities share this desire to replace the power struggle, born of the market-place, with dialogue and to structure this dialogue in the form of round tables between the social partners, the joint management of certain

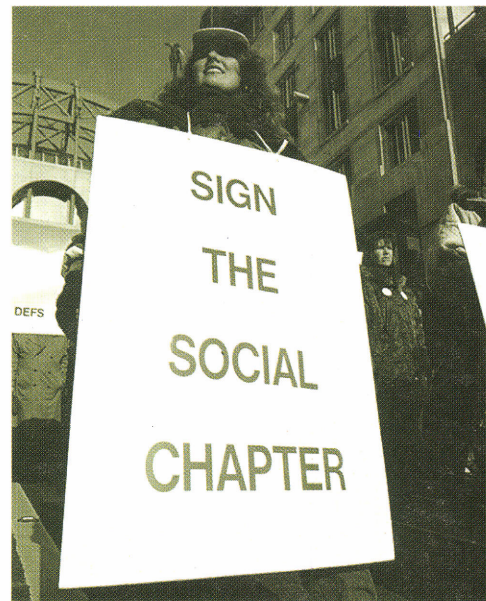
systems, and the creation of consultation bodies.

There is a shared commitment, albeit to varying degrees, to allowing the wealth creators (workers/employers) to decide on the form work organization and working conditions should take. In Denmark, for example, 95% of working conditions are determined by negotiation.

Although the desire to apply these general principles at European level has existed since the 1960s, there are many obstacles to be overcome and the methods and structures are still to be defined.

## Four principal stages

We can identify four principal stages in the process of increasing involvement of the social partners in the decision-making processes, a process initiated at the birth of the European Community.



**A European phenomenon:** trade unions and employers are negotiating increasingly at European level.

In the 1960s, social dialogue developed at two levels. The implementation of the first joint actions at European level produced the first interprofessional consultation bodies. The social partners appointed by the Member States were consulted on the main lines of Community policy (vocational training, European Social Fund actions, free movement of workers, etc.).

At the sectorial level, the Commission decided to set up joint committees (equal representation for management and labour) in those sectors where 'integrated' common policies were developing (coal and steel, agriculture, road transport, inland waterways, sea-fishing, the railways). The Commission also sought to involve the social partners as closely as pos-

sible in drawing up policy which had an inevitable social impact.

## Tripartite conferences

The 1970s saw the beginnings of genuine social dialogue with the organization of tripartite conferences bringing together the Council, the European Commission and the social partners. The dialogue meant that the social partners would be involved in arriving at concerted conclusions. The subjects discussed at these conferences were potential material for legislation. Employment now became the subject of particular attention as a Standing Committee on Employment was set up. This Committee continues to meet every three months.

At the sectorial level, a more 'informal' social dialogue developed. As the statutes of the joint committees proved too rigid in certain cases, informal working parties were set up to reinforce dialogue in a growing number of sectors.

During these two periods, the 'social partners' involved in the processes of consultation and dialogue acted like pressure groups in putting forward their views but not entering into any commitments.

## A new era

In January 1995 a new era in social dialogue began with the meeting organized at Val Duchesse on the initiative of Commission President Jacques Delors.

Gathered around the table were three major European organizations: the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE), and the European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation (CEEP). Representatives of the European Commission acted as mediators.

The Commission saw the meeting as a means to get these three organizations to commit themselves to an

autonomous process of dialogue and negotiation. At the same time, the social partners became fully-fledged players alongside the European institutions. In case of agreement, this partnership became binding as the signatories to the agreement were themselves committed to its implementation.

Finally, in 1993 the Agreement on social policy (annexed to the Maastricht Treaty on European Union) brought a new dimension as, in addition to negotiation initiated by the social partners – which to date has produced 12 opinions, two recommendations and two agreements – it opened up a new field of 'stimulated negotiation' initiated by a Commission proposal.

The Agreement renders consultation with the social partners obligatory before any Community initiative in the social field (Article 3.2 and 3). It also allows the social partners to negotiate a text which can subsequently be implemented in accordance with the procedures and practices specific to the social partners and the Member States (Articles 3 and 4). The agreement concluded is then binding solely on its signatories. Conversely, when they reach agreement on a text, they can jointly request the Commission to propose a Council decision to implement it.

## An initial example

The negotiations which recently began on parental leave are the first example of the social partners using the new provisions of the Agreement on social policy.

It was back in 1983 that the European Commission submitted a Directive proposal designed to grant the right to a minimum of parental leave following the birth or adoption of a child or for other family reasons. After lengthy debates in the Council, the proposal never obtained the unanimous support which its legal basis required, despite the subsequent changes to the text. After consultation, the social partners decided to open negotiations on the subject. The first meeting was held on 12 July of this year and they now have nine months to reach an agreement. Social dialogue has thus entered a new age, the age of maturity.

Community social dialogue is a rich and complex affair. Explaining this dialogue is one of the Commission's aims in publishing a communication on sectorial social dialogue in October 1995. Also, the achievements of social dialogue at professional and sectorial level will be set out in an issue of *Social Europe* to be published in early 1996.



**Reconciling working and family life:** the first round of European collective bargaining is about parental leave.

Public health

## A new role for the European Union

'The Community is helping to ensure a high level of protection of human health.' Strengthened by the new role which the European Union intends to play in public health, the Commission has drawn up a strategy based on two pillars: a general action programme for health promotion and several specific programmes for the prevention of certain diseases or health scourges – including cancer, drug dependence, AIDS and other transmissible diseases.



### Major scourges:

the prevention of drug dependence is a priority for the European Community.

Article 129 of the Treaty on European Union provides a solid legal basis for Community action in the area of public health. At the same time, it clearly confines such action to a given framework: while strictly respecting the principle of subsidiarity, the Community's mission is to encourage cooperation between Member States and, 'if necessary, lend support to their action'. Any idea of harmonizing national legislation is excluded.

In this context, the Treaty stipulates that 'Community action shall be directed towards the prevention of diseases, in particular the major health scourges, including drug dependence, by promoting research into their causes and their transmission, as well as health information and education'.

### Information and prevention

In November 1993, the European Commission published a communication on the framework for action in the field of public health which sets out the strategy it intends to pursue in regard to the new Treaty provisions. This strategy is based on general measures designed to promote health through

information, education and training on the one hand, and on specific actions to warn against certain health scourges or diseases on the other.

During 1994, four detailed proposals were subsequently submitted to the European Parliament and the Council according to the co-decision procedure<sup>1</sup>. These were: a health promotion programme, a (third) European programme to combat cancer, a programme to prevent AIDS and other transmissible diseases (tuberculosis, hepatitis B, sexually transmissible diseases), and a programme to prevent drug dependence. These were all five-year programmes.

To date, only the first three of these programmes have resulted in the adoption of a joint position<sup>2</sup> by the Council. The EU budgets for the period 1996 to 2000 are ECU 64 million for the fight against cancer, ECU 49.6 million for the prevention of AIDS and other transmissible diseases, and ECU 28 million for health promotion. These funds will be used to support prevention schemes in the various Member States.

### Healthier living

The main aim of the new Community programme for health promotion is to encourage Europeans to adopt healthier lifestyles. Poor diet, alcohol and drug consumption, smoking and a lack of physical exercise are all important factors in the onset of ill health.

The programme to combat cancer follows on directly from Community actions undertaken by the Community since 1987 in order to reduce cancer deaths – from the present 840 000 a year – by the year 2000.

Its main aims are to improve knowledge of the causes of cancer and of the possible means of prevention. The programme informs the public on habits to be adopted or abandoned, cooperates in the training of health professionals in the field of cancer, and supports networks of pilot screening projects.

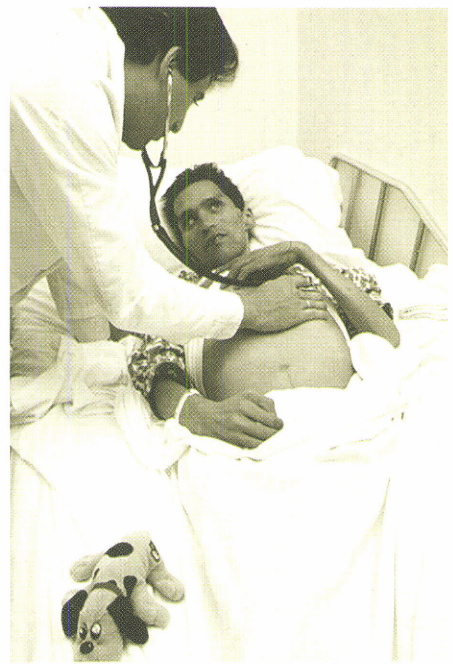
## Keystones

Finally, the programme for the prevention of AIDS and other transmissible diseases will also concentrate on assessing attitudes among certain groups and on information and education in order to prevent HIV transmission. The programme also envisages measures aimed at young people and children together with women at particular risk of contamination. Information gathering, social and psychological assistance, and the fight against discrimination are

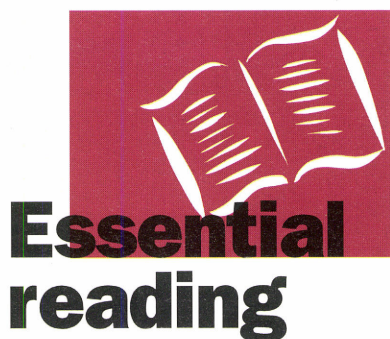
all keystones for the programme. Networks of organizations are to be set up for the purposes of implementing these schemes and thus developing the 'Community added-value'. At the end of 1994, there were more than 120 000 recorded cases of AIDS in the European Community and half a million people were considered to be HIV positive.

The joint position on the first programme to prevent drug dependence should shortly be adopted by the Council. The Commission has proposed a concrete approach, notably with a view to increasing public awareness and supporting actions aimed specifically at young people.

- 1 Co-decision: by the terms of the Maastricht Treaty on the European Union, in certain areas the European Parliament can reject a proposal by the Council of Ministers by an absolute majority of its members.
- 2 Joint position of the Council: the initial agreement between the ministers concerned, submitted to Parliament for second reading.



**AIDS prevention:**  
the European Community concentrates on assessing attitudes among certain groups, information and education.



## Employment

### Identifying good practice

The European Commission has published a report on trends and developments in the European Union's labour systems which it describes as 'an initial contribution to the process launched in Essen'. It was in Essen that the Heads of State or Government of the European Union assembled for a European Council in December 1994. They undertook to draw up a multiannual employment programme on the basis of five jointly-defined priorities (see the first article in the 'Employment'

section of this issue). EU Social Affairs and Employment Ministers on the one hand and economy and finance officials on the other, were instructed to examine, together with the European Commission, the respective policies of the Member States and report annually to the European Council on progress achieved in the labour market. They were also instructed to look at a number of specific questions, such as the effects of tax systems and benefit systems on employers to provide jobs and on employees to fill them. Or the relationship between economic growth and the environment. The Commission's report analyses the major trends and principal features of recent policy by the Member States in the priority fields set at Essen with the aim of identifying good practice and promoting its dissemination. 'Report on trends and developments in the European Union's labour systems'. European Commission, DG V, 200 rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels.

## European Social Fund

### An information brochure

What is the European Social Fund? What does it do? How does it work? What groups does it target? What schemes does it fund? The answers to all these questions and others on – the Community Employment and Adapt Initiatives for example (see article in this issue) – are to be found in an information brochure intended for the general public and just published by DG V (Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial relations and Social Affairs) of the European Commission. This full-colour, 16-page brochure is very well illustrated and provides a particularly clear presentation of the oldest of the Community Structural Funds, the one which co-funds human resources development programmes throughout the 15 Member States of the European Union. On the back page you will find particulars of the national authorities responsible for



## ... Essential reading

selecting projects financed by the European Social Fund.

'*Employment and human resources development in the European Union 1994-99, the European Social Fund*', available free of charge from the European Commission, rue de la Loi 200 (J27,2/111), B-1049 Brussels.

### Eurobarometer opinion poll

#### A better understanding of poverty

How do today's Europeans regard poverty and social exclusion? How many of them see themselves as poor or excluded from society? What is essential for a decent life? How do they see the processes and circumstances of poverty and exclusion? Have these phenomena increased? What are the causes and what chances are there for the poor to improve their lot? What kind of global and/or priority action is required to combat these phenomena and who should organize it? To what extent are Europeans themselves prepared to join in the common effort? And finally, what should be the European Union's role in combating poverty and social exclusion? These are just some of the questions answered by 12 800 Europeans as part of a Eurobarometer survey on poverty and social exclusion. Conducted by the European Commission in 1994, this opinion poll sheds interesting light on matters such as the way Europeans look upon poverty and social exclusion, express their hopes and fears for the future, and view who should take what kind of action at what level in

order to combat this scourge. The survey results are now available in the form of a document entitled 'Awareness'. Compared with previous polls in 1976 and 1989, this survey shows that more Europeans, and especially the least favoured among them, are aware of the existence of poverty and extreme poverty and of the danger of themselves falling victim to it. More of them now also believe that poverty is a relatively recent, structural and lasting phenomenon. Finally, 67% of Europeans (against 59% in 1989) state that they are prepared to devote some of their time to helping underprivileged people, even if 47% have never done so. All 89% of Europeans are also in favour of the European Union becoming involved in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. 'Attitudes to poverty and social exclusion in Europe 1994', report prepared in cooperation with the European Commission by Nathalie Rigaux, lecturer at the Facultés Universitaires Notre-Dame de la Paix, Namur, Belgium. Available from Eurobarometer, European Commission, DG X, 200 rue de la Loi, B-1040 Brussels.

### European social policy 1993-95: an initial appraisal

A series of crucial developments took place in European social policy between July 1993 and June 1995: ratification of the Maastricht Treaty on European Union with an appended agreement on social policy; Jacques Delors' White Paper on growth, competitiveness and employment; the Commission's wide-ranging consultation with all levels of society in order to prepare its Green Paper on social policy; the publication in July 1994 of a White Paper on the same subject; the Essen European Council and its strategy for employment; and the launch by the European Commission, in April 1995, of a new social action programme for the years 1995-97. The latest issue of *Social*

*Europe*, produced by the European Commission, provides an insight into this crucial period from four different angles. The first is employment and deals with the social aspects of Jacques Delors White Paper on growth, competitiveness and employment, as adopted by the European Council (summit of Heads of State or Government) in December 1993, together with the implementation of the employment strategy adopted one year later by the European Council and continued in Cannes in June 1995. Unemployment is the European Union's current political priority. Secondly, there are the Commission's proposals and achievements in social policy, whether in terms of flexible working hours, informing and consulting workers within European works councils, the protection of young people at work or equal pay for men and women. The third angle is jurisprudence, with details of the principal judgments of the European Court of Justice in the social field. Finally, we come to public health, which since the Maastricht Treaty is also an area within Community competence. The reader will find appended a very useful table on the state of progress of initiatives of the action programme on the implementation of the fundamental social rights of Community workers, as adopted in December 1989; a list of initiatives and texts adopted by the Council of Ministers of the European Union between July 1993 and June 1995; the joint opinions adopted by the social partners (European Trade Union Confederation, Union of Industries of the European Community and the European Centre of Public Enterprises) in the framework of Community social dialogue during this period; and the list of Commission initiatives and Council Decisions in the area of public health. *If you wish to order this issue of Social Europe, assessing two years of European social policy, please write to the European Commission (DG V.E.5), 200 rue de la Loi, B-1040 Brussels.*