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**PRESSE-MEDDELELSE  
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PRESS-RELEASE**

**INFORMATION A LA PRESSE  
INFORMAZIONE ALLA STAMPA  
MEDEDELING AAN DE PERS**

Brussels, 16 March, 1979

EXTRACTS FROM A SPEECH BY MR H VREDELING, VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE  
EUROPEAN COMMISSION, TO THE FNV (DUTCH TRADE UNION FEDERATION)  
IN EINDHOVEN ON SATURDAY, 17 MARCH

"Today we have a chance such as we have never had before to raise for serious discussion and negotiation an important question such as worksharing in the nine countries of the Community. If after all that we again fail to make full use of the opportunity then it is our own responsibility. It is the responsibility of us all, the Commission, the Trade Union Movement and the employers and particularly of all the Governments to introduce a European system of work sharing."

"The attitude adopted by the Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs and the Heads of Governments a week ago was positive enough. Their communiqués offer at least hope that a European approach to this problem will be launched. But the communiqués are no more than words. All I can do is express my hope that these words will be transformed into deeds. If this does not happen then the outlook, on the eve of the European elections, will be very bleak indeed."

"Work sharing also involves wage sharing. Pushing up together a little in the factory to make room for the unemployed means also that the wage packet will grow a little more slowly and in some cases - mainly for the higher earners - it might become a little lighter. But the sacrifice does not need to be quite as dramatic as used to be thought. The increasing costs arising from a reduction in working time in industry can be offset in part by a reduction in costs for society as a whole - a reduction resulting from the fact that unemployment benefits no longer have to be paid to those who used to be unemployed and have now obtained work as results of measures to reduce working time."

The Commission is working on the following measures in the field of work sharing:

- a reduction in the systematic use of overtime;
- measures to restrict the use of workers from temporary employment businesses;
- measures to facilitate part-time work. (At the same time, however, ensuring that not only women find their way into part-time jobs);
- improvements in the shift system and, more generally, a reduction in working time for workers engaged in heavy or unpleasant work;
- the introduction of an early pension, although on a flexible and non-compulsory basis;

- the periodic alternation of training, work and retraining by means of educational leave, for example.

"Priority among these measures will depend on the effect they are likely to have on the availability of employment. This means that we are not free to choose among these measures. The Trade Union Movement, too, will have to put aside any preference it may have and leave the final choice to the free interplay of social forces and to negotiations."

"This series of ideas to be realized at Community level is no more than a modest beginning. Nevertheless, and certainly in this area, small steps inevitably lead to great consequences - particularly now that, as in the Commission plan, the small steps cover such a wide range. The means and possibilities which we have in mind can combine to form a kind of closed front which mean that even a modest initial policy move can produce widespread and significant effects."