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**Social action  
programme**

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**EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES**

**Commission**

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## contents

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Resolution of the Council of 21 January 1974 concerning a social action programme . . . . .	5
Social action programme submitted by the Commission to the Council on 25 October 1973 . . . . .	11
Social action programme . . . . .	13
— Annex I: list of actions on which immediate proposals will be put to the Council . . . . .	20
— Annex II: details of the priority actions on which the Commission considers that the Council should decide in the period 1974-1976 . . . . .	21
— Annex III: details of other supporting actions . . . . .	29
— Annex IV: list of actions for which proposals are already being discussed in the Council . . . . .	36

**Resolution of the Council  
of 21 January 1974  
concerning a social action programme**

*The Council of the European Communities,*

Having regard to the Treaties establishing the European Communities;

Having regard to the draft from the Commission;

Having regard to the Opinion of the European Parliament;

Having regard to the Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee;

Whereas the Treaties establishing the European Communities assigned to them tasks with relevance to social objectives;

Whereas, pursuant to Article 2 of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, the European Economic Community shall have as a particular task to promote throughout the Community a harmonious development of economic activities, a continuous and balanced expansion, an increase in stability and an accelerated raising of the standard of living;

Whereas the Heads of State or of Government affirmed at their conference held in Paris in October 1972 that economic expansion is not an end in itself but should result in an improvement of the quality of life as well as of the standard of living;

Whereas the Heads of State or of Government emphasized as one of the conclusions adopted at the abovementioned conference that they attach as much importance to vigorous action in the social field as to the achievement of Economic and Monetary Union and invited the Community institutions to draw up a social action programme providing for concrete measures and the corresponding resources particularly in the framework of the European Social Fund on the basis of suggestions put forward by the Heads of State or Government and the Commission at the said Conference;

Whereas such a programme involves actions designed to achieve full and better employment, the improvement of living and working condi-

tions and increased involvement of management and labour in the economic and social decisions of the Community, and of workers in the life of undertakings;

Whereas actions described in the above programme should be implemented in accordance with the provisions laid down in the Treaty, including those of Article 235 of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community;

Having regard to the wishes expressed by management and labour;

Whereas, irrespective of serious threats to employment which may arise from the situation obtaining at the time of adoption of this resolution, and without prejudice to the results of any future studies or measures, the Community should decide on the objectives and priorities to be given to its action in the social field over the coming years;

*Takes note* of the Social Action Programme from the Commission,

*Considers* that vigorous action must be undertaken in successive stages with a view to realizing the social aims of European union, in order to attain the following broad objectives: full and better employment at Community, national and regional levels, which is an essential condition for an effective social policy; improvement of living and working conditions so as to make possible their harmonization while the improvement is being maintained; increased involvement of management and labour in the economic and social decisions of the Community, and of workers in the life of undertakings,

*Considers* that the Community social policy has an individual role to play and should make an essential contribution to achieving the aforementioned objectives by means of Community measures or the definition by the Community of objectives for national social policies, without however seeking a standard solution to all social problems or attempting to transfer to Community level any responsibilities which are assumed more effectively at other levels,

*Considers* that social objectives should be a constant concern of all Community policies,

*Considers* that it is essential to ensure the consistency of social and other Community policies so that measures taken will achieve the objectives of social and other policies simultaneously,

*Considers* that, to achieve the proposed actions successfully, and particularly in view of the structural changes and imbalances in the Community, the necessary resources should be provided, in particular by strengthening the role of the European Social Fund,

*Expresses* the political will to adopt the measures necessary to achieve the following objectives during a first stage covering the period from 1974 to 1976, in addition to measures adopted in the context of other Community policies:

**Attainment of full and better employment in the Community**

(i) to establish appropriate consultation between Member States on their employment policies, guided by the need to achieve a policy of full and better employment in the Community as a whole and in the regions;

(ii) to promote better cooperation by national employment services;

(iii) to implement a common vocational training policy, with a view to attaining progressively the principal objectives thereof, especially approximation of training standards, in particular by setting up a European Vocational Training Centre;

(iv) to undertake action for the purpose of achieving equality between men and women as regards access to employment and vocational training and advancement and as regards working conditions, including pay, taking into account the important role of management and labour in this field;

(v) to ensure that the family responsibilities of all concerned may be reconciled with their job aspirations;

(vi) to establish an action programme for migrant workers and members of their families which shall aim in particular:

(a) to improve the conditions of free movement within the Community of workers from Member States, including social security, and the social infrastructure of the Member States, the latter being an indispensable condition for solving the specific problems of migrant workers and members of their families, especially problems of reception, housing, social services, training and education of children;

(b) to humanize the free movement of Community workers and members of their families by providing effective assistance during the various phases, it being understood that the prime objective is still to enable workers to find employment in their own regions;

(c) to achieve equality of treatment for Community and non-Community workers and members of their families in respect of living and working conditions, wages and economic rights, taking into account the Community provisions in force;

(d) to promote consultation on immigration policies vis-a-vis third countries;

(vii) to initiate a programme for the vocational and social integration of handicapped persons, in particular making provisions for the promotion of pilot experiments for the purpose of rehabilitating them in vocational life, or where appropriate, of placing them in sheltered industries and to undertake a comparative study of the legal provisions and the arrangements made for rehabilitation at national level;

(viii) to seek solutions to the employment problems confronting certain more vulnerable categories of persons (the young and the aged);

(ix) to protect workers hired through temporary employment agencies and to regulate the activities of such firms with a view to eliminating abuses therein;

(x) to continue the implementation of the Council's conclusions on employment policy in the Community and particularly those concern-

ing the progressive integration of the labour markets including those relating to employment statistics and estimates.

**Improvement of living and working conditions so as to make possible their harmonization while the improvement is being maintained**

(i) to establish appropriate consultations between Member States on their social protection policies with the particular aim of their approximation on the way of progress;

(ii) to establish an action programme for workers aimed at the humanization of their living and working conditions, with particular reference to:

(a) improvement in safety and health conditions at work;

(b) the gradual elimination of physical and psychological stress which exists in the place of work and on the job, especially through improving the environment and seeking ways of increasing job satisfaction;

(c) a reform of the organization of work giving workers wider opportunities, especially those of having their own responsibilities and duties and of obtaining higher qualifications;

(iii) to persevere with and expedite the implementation of the European Social Budget;

(iv) gradually to extend social protection, particularly within the framework of social security schemes, to categories of persons not covered or inadequately provided for under existing schemes;

(iv) to promote the coordination of social security schemes for self-employed workers with regard to freedom of establishment and freedom to provide services;

(vi) to invite the Commission to submit a report on the problems arising in connection with coordination of supplementary schemes for employed persons moving within the Community;

(vii) progressively to introduce machinery for adapting social security benefits to increased prosperity in the various Member States;

(viii) to protect workers' interests, in particular with regard to the retention of rights and advantages in the case of mergers, concentrations or rationalization operations;

(ix) to implement, in cooperation with the Member States, specific measures to combat poverty by drawing up pilot schemes.

**Increased involvement of management and labour in the economic and social decisions of the Community, and of workers in the life of undertakings**

(i) to refer more extensively to the Standing Committee on Employment for the discussion of all questions with a fundamental influence on employment;

(ii) to help trade union organizations taking part in Community work to establish training and information services for European affairs and to set up a European Trade Union Institute;

(iii) progressively to involve workers or their representatives in the life of undertakings in the Community;

(iv) to facilitate, depending on the situation in the different countries, the conclusion of collective agreements at European level in appropriate fields;

(v) to develop the involvement of management and labour in the economic and social decisions of the Community.

*Lays down* the following priorities among the actions referred to in this Resolution:

**Attainment of full and better employment in the Community**

1. The establishment of appropriate consultation between Member States on their employment policies and the promotion of better cooperation by national employment services.

2. The establishment of an action programme for migrant workers who are nationals of Member States of third countries.

3. The implementation of a common vocational training policy and the setting up of a European Vocational Training Centre.

4. The undertaking of action to achieve equality between men and women as regards access to employment and vocational training and advancement and as regards working conditions, including pay.

*Improvement of living and working conditions so as to make possible their harmonization while the improvement is being maintained*

5. The establishment of appropriate consultations between Member States on their social protection policies.

6. The establishment of an initial action programme, relating in particular to health and safety at work, the health of workers and improved organization of tasks, beginning in those economic sectors where working conditions appear to be the most difficult.

7. The implementation, in cooperation with the Member States, of specific measures to combat poverty by drawing up pilot schemes.

*Increased involvement of management and labour in the economic and social decisions of the Community, and of workers in the life of undertakings*

8. The progressive involvement of workers or their representatives in the life of undertakings in the Community.

9. The promotion of the involvement of management and labour in the economic and social decisions of the Community.

*Takes note* of the Commission's undertaking to submit to it, during 1974, the necessary proposals concerning the priorities laid down above;

*Takes note* of the Commission's undertaking to submit to it, before 1 April 1974, proposals relating to:

- (i) an initial action programme with regard to migrant workers;
- (ii) the setting up of a European Vocational Training Centre;
- (iii) a directive on the harmonization of laws with regard to the retention of rights and advan-

tages in the event of changes in the ownership of undertakings, in particular in the event of mergers;

*Notes* that the Commission has already submitted to it proposals relating to:

(i) assistance from the European Social Fund for migrant workers and for handicapped workers,

(ii) an action programme for handicapped workers in an open market economy,

(iii) the setting-up of a European General Industrial Safety Committee and the extension of the competence of the Mines Safety and Health Commission;

(iv) a Directive providing for the approximation of legislation of Member States concerning the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women,

(v) the designation as an immediate objective of the overall application of the principle of the standard 40-hour working week by 1975, and the principle of 4 weeks annual paid holiday by 1976,

(vi) the setting up of a European Foundation for the improvement of the environment and of living and working conditions,

(vii) a Directive on the approximation of the Member States' legislation on collective dismissals.

*Undertakes to act*, at the latest five months after the Commission has informed the Council of the results of its deliberations arising from the opinions given by the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee, if such consultations have taken place, or, if such consultations have not taken place, at the latest nine months from the date of the transmission of the proposals to the Council by the Commission;

*Takes note* of the Commission's undertaking to submit to it before 31 December 1976 a series of measures to be taken during a further phase.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 13 of 12.2.1974.

**Social action programme**  
(submitted by the Commission to  
the Council on 25 October 1973)



1. Since its inception the European Community has achieved a substantial increase in the rate of economic growth, which has literally transformed the life and the face of Europe and brought to the great majority of its people higher living standards and wider horizons.

2. But greater prosperity has not resolved the social problems of the Community, and indeed in some cases it has exacerbated them. There are the problems of those regions and groups which have not fully participated in the general advance, and which, in some cases, find themselves falling further and further behind. There are continuing, and in some cases worsening, problems over the distribution of income and wealth within the Community, and over worker participation within industry. There are problems caused by the failure of the infrastructure in some sectors to keep pace with the demands on it. And then there are the problems caused by growth itself—problems of industrial pollution, of a deteriorating environment, of a conflict of values in some cases between industry and society, disruptions to the pattern of life, and a growing dependence on migrant workers whom society is not always ready to accept as citizens while it continues to require their services to maintain its standard of living.

3. Unless these problems—of inequalities and of the unacceptable by-products of growth—can be resolved, economic growth will fail to provide the improved quality of life which our peoples rightly expect from it. Indeed, it may be impossible to maintain the rhythm of growth itself in face of the social pressures and resistance it generates. Economic growth and an active programme of social reform are not antithetic. The purpose of economic growth should be to widen the range of social options available to the peoples of the Community by bringing about a continuing rise in living standards and the quality of life. Unless the process of growth can be put more fully at the services of society, growth itself may become politically unacceptable.

4. It is not the Commission's aim to centralize the solutions of all the social problems of the

Community, nor would it wish to see introduced a single social policy tackling all social problems in the Community in a uniform manner. Nor does the Commission propose the transfer to Community level of responsibilities and functions carried out more appropriately at other levels. Equally, the proposals in this Action Programme are not intended as a substitute for national policies. Rather, each Action is envisaged, and will need to be examined, in the context of what individual Member States are doing and can be expected to do within the limits of their resources.

Nor does this Action Programme seek to mitigate the responsibilities of Member States within the social field.

5. On the other hand, there are problems in the social field which are common to all Member States and which could best be dealt with on a Community basis rather than in isolation; the number of these problems will grow with the increasing integration of the economies of the Member States as progress is made towards economic and monetary union. The Community's economic relations with the rest of the world produce their own internal reactions. As the liberalization and expansion of world trade goes steadily forward, and our relations with the developing countries are enabled to grow by policies of trade and aid, so structural adjustments come about in the Community economy itself. It has been recognized in all Member States that this whole process demands a more active Community social policy if the well-being of all the peoples of the Community is to be maintained. Furthermore, without Community solidarity, the less-favoured Member States and regions will find it increasingly difficult to solve their problems; serious disparities in the rate of social progress and social standards between Member States could distort competition and thus retard the development of full economic union. It is, therefore, clear that close and continuous collaboration between national administrations and Community institutions is going to be increasingly necessary in the months and years ahead. Similar collaboration, as

already stated, is necessary between the Social Partners and the Community institutions, both globally and in individual sectors.

6. The preamble to the final declaration of the Conference of Heads of State or Government in Paris in October 1972 states:

'Economic expansion is not an end in itself. Its firm aim should be to enable disparities in living conditions to be reduced. It must take place with the participation of all Social Partners. It should result in an improvement of the quality of life as well as in standards of living.'

and further:

'The Heads of State or Government emphasize that they attach as much importance to vigorous action in the social field as to the achievement of the economic and monetary union. They thought it essential to ensure the increasing involvement of the Social Partners in the economic and social decisions of the Community. They invited the institutions, after consulting the Social Partners, to draw up, between now and 1 January 1974, a programme of action providing for concrete measures and the corresponding resources, particularly in the framework of the Social Fund...'

In the light of this communiqué, the need for a continuing commitment of all Member States to an active programme of social reform at Community level is clear and inescapable.

This Action Programme represents a response to the Summit mandate, following the 'Guidelines' drawn up by the Commission on 18 April 1973 and subsequently discussed with the Council of Ministers and Social Partners.

7. Of course, this Action Programme does not represent the first writing on a '*tabula reserata*'. The establishing Treaties contain *specific social provisions* on the strength of which a number of actions are now in hand or planned, as earlier outlined in the Commission paper 'Preliminary Guidelines for a Social Policy Programme in the Community',<sup>2</sup> published in February 1971. The Treaties' *powers of action*

on the social side, however, appear inadequate for some of the purposes of this Programme, and the Commission accordingly feels the Article 235 procedure should certainly be resorted to if need be. As for the *financial instruments* of the policy and the terms of reference of the Social Fund, these were deliberately expanded in 1972 to enable the Fund to act as a more positive instrument for employment policy. As matters now stand it remains the main instrument in social policy, and its resources must therefore be increased to be commensurate with the Summit aims. Other financial instruments at the Community's disposal include the ECSC Treaty's retraining and redevelopment provisions, the operations of the European Investment Bank and the EAGGF Guidance Section, Community-aided social and medical research under the ECSC and Euratom Treaties, and the future Regional Development Fund. Furthermore it may be recalled that among the proposals in the Science and Technology Action Programme which the Commission submitted to the Council in August 1973 is one for an outline research programme on the medical side.

8. Nevertheless, it is the case—as the Summit Conference communiqué indicates—that there is now a greater sense of priority and urgency about social policy in the Community. The reasons are those set out in the paragraphs above: the fact that the Community has now reached a stage in its economic and social development when it can, and indeed must, afford to question more critically the pattern and the costs of economic growth and the distribution of its resources. One must also bear in mind that our Community is today not only richer, but also better educated and informed. With better education and information come increased, and entirely legitimate, demands for a more just society and a better quality of life.

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<sup>1</sup> Supplement 4/73 - Bull. EC.

<sup>2</sup> Supplement 2/71 - Annex to Bull. EC 4-1971.

9. The three main objectives of an autonomous Social Action Programme which emerged from the discussions at the Summit Conference and which were spelt out in the 'Guidelines for a Social Action Programme' are:

- (i) full and better employment;
- (ii) improvement of living and working conditions;
- (iii) greater participation of workers and employers in the economic and social decisions of the Community.

The relationship between the different Actions in the Programme is set out below under each of these three headings.

#### Full and better employment

10. Full employment must be a primary aim. It is the responsibility of governments and the Community to ensure full employment through adequate economic and financial policies. The objective must be to create enough jobs for the present and future working population of the Community, so that no worker is forced by economic pressures to migrate in search of work. This is why the Commission, on the one hand, envisages in its proposals in the field of regional policy the setting up of incentives for the creation of new jobs and, on the other hand, seeks to emphasize, in this present programme, the vigorous role of social policy in this field through the development of the necessary corresponding actions.

But job creation by itself will not be enough to achieve and maintain full employment in the Community. The European integration process, technological developments and many other factors will continue to cause many structural changes in the employment market, bringing about the disappearance of many existing jobs and the demand for new skills. Without an active social and employment policy there is a danger that the structural imbalances which exist at present will become more serious.

This calls for a more imaginative approach to the concept of full employment. Training to enable a worker to realize his full potential is in any case a basic human need and right, and an essential aspect of the educational objectives of the Community. This need is highlighted by the risk of insecurity arising from the changes listed above, and the opportunities for better employment that these changes can provide. At the same time, better training facilities will also benefit industry in the Community in helping it to adapt more efficiently to a rapidly changing technological and market situation, while the provision of a trained labour force is essential for the successful development of the regions. Social policy instruments must be especially concerned with the human aspects of the overall strategy for full employment, that is, they must ensure access to the employment best suited to individual capacities and to the collective well-being. A more dynamic Community policy on vocational guidance, vocational training, retraining and rehabilitation is therefore of great importance.

The Commission envisages a number of new initiatives in various fields to give vocational training a wider importance. The proposed *European Centre for Vocational Training* (Action II<sub>2</sub>) will provide an essential operational instrument for developing a common policy on vocational training, in particular by improving the exchange of information, promoting research and coordinating training standards and qualifications. Apart from the expansion of training facilities where the need is greatest, improvement of training methods must depend not only on the workers' acceptance that training is necessary but on the solution of the problems posed by possible loss of earnings during a period of vocational training or retraining. That is why the Commission attaches so much importance to the introduction of *general training incentives* involving income guarantees (Action II<sub>3</sub>).

For improving the situation of *women at work*, better vocational training and initial vocational guidance and more retraining facilities later on represent an indispensable but only partial solution. It is necessary to create facilities at

Community level to provide not only for an intensive information campaign, but also to encourage initiatives in all related fields, aimed at gradually achieving equality between men and women on the Community labour market including measures to enable women to reconcile family responsibilities with job aspirations (Action II<sub>4</sub>).

The main instrument available to the Commission for an active labour market policy is, as already indicated, the *Social Fund*. Expansion of the Social Fund must be seen as an essential precondition of this Social Action Programme. While the Regional Fund will have the possibility to part-finance capital schemes and assist the creation of employment opportunities, the Social Fund's task will be to help ensure the acquisition of appropriate skills by the labour force in the regional development areas.

In addition to its specific contribution in this field and to its role in promoting retraining schemes, the Social Fund will, over the coming years, be increasingly involved in dealing with the problems of specific categories of workers. The need for concerted efforts on behalf of migrant workers and handicapped people, in particular, warrants an extended use of the Social Fund on their behalf (under Article 4 of the Council Decision of 1 February 1971) (Action I<sub>1</sub>). Special consideration will also be given to the problems encountered by elderly workers, unemployed school leavers and women seeking to take up employment after a period away from work (Action III<sub>2</sub>). The Commission plans in addition to have recourse to Article 4 of the Social Fund in connection with measures to deal with the structural problems of some industries.

The *handicapped* constitute a group which deserve immediate consideration by the Community as a whole. In addition to those handicapped from birth, there is a growing proportion of the working population who, because of disabilities acquired since birth, are unable to lead an independent existence and earn their own living. Their physical or mental disabilities make them vulnerable not only to severe psy-

chological pressures of adjustment but also to a serious reduction in earning capacity and job opportunities. As a first step, the Commission is making immediate proposals to the Council for an action programme for handicapped workers in the open labour market (Action I<sub>2</sub>) which will be closely linked to the opening up of Article 4 of the Social Fund for handicapped workers (Action I<sub>1</sub>). In the longer term, there will also be a wide programme of specific actions to improve the chances of social integration of all handicapped people (Action II<sub>6</sub>).

A special responsibility of the Community must be towards the *migrant workers*, who now exceed 6 million and with their dependents probably 10 million. The existing instruments of Community social policy are inadequate to deal with the immense issue of migration. Industrial, regional and external investment policies must be used to deal with the fundamental causes of the imbalance between rich and poor countries and regions. But immediate social problems encountered by migrant workers and their families must be tackled as an urgent Community issue. As a first step the Commission is making immediate proposals to the Council for the opening up of Article 4 of the Social Fund to alleviate the problems of migrant workers (Action I<sub>1</sub>). A programme of action on the social and living conditions of the migrant population is a major priority, as is the coordination by the Member States of their policies towards the movement of migrant workers from third countries to and from the Community (Action II<sub>2</sub>). This programme must gradually be integrated into an overall Community strategy, embodying clearly defined objectives to coordinate action at all levels, in Member States and in relation to third countries. Equal treatment, equal rights and equal opportunities for migrant workers must not merely be seen as objectives but also as a practical reality in a Community of social progress.

A number of important actions are required in the field of the *European Labour Market* to protect workers. These include the regulation of the activities of private employment services to eliminate wherever possible abuses arising in

