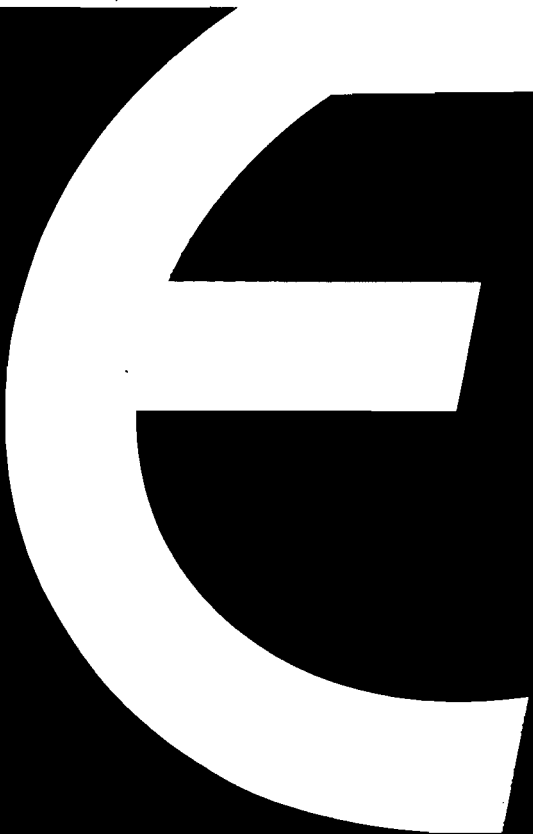


Young people in the European Community



European File

Out of a total population of 273 million, the European Community has roughly 100 million citizens less than 25 years old. Of these, 60 million go to school or places of higher education. When their education is completed, they increasingly face the bleak prospect of unemployment. About 26% of people aged from 14 to 24 are now out of work. Of the 12 million registered unemployed in the Community, 4.5 million are less than 25 years old. Young people account for 20% of the working population but 40% of the unemployed.¹

It is clear that young people are particularly vulnerable to the effects of the world recession and that special measures are needed to help them. The Community has an important role to play here. Young people make up a large part of its population and carry its hopes for the future in all fields. The objectives of the Community are not purely economic. The European treaties have other aims, of concern to young people: the improvement of living and working conditions, the strengthening of bonds between nations, and the preservation of peace. A recent opinion poll showed that a majority of young people are in favour of the unification of Europe. The European Community is being built partly around a common parliament and young people are involved either as electors or future electors. The shape of their world in the future is being partly fashioned by decisions taken at Community level on cooperation with and the development of the Third World, the protection of the environment, new technologies and scientific research.

Community institutions place great importance on the involvement of young people in the construction of the European Community as well as the adoption of specific Community measures for young people. At their summit in The Hague in 1969 the Community Heads of State or Government issued a declaration along these lines. In 1976, Community education ministers agreed on a series of joint initiatives. An important European Parliament resolution in March 1982 called for more systematic cooperation in education policy. The aims were to encourage the development of the Community, strengthen mutual understanding between the peoples of Europe and to deepen awareness of the plight of young people during the recession. The European Commission has made a number of proposals to help young people, notably in calling for the creation of greater training and job opportunities for people under 25. At their summit in Brussels in March 1982 the Community Heads of State or Government gave a commitment to the vocational training of young people. In June 1983 at Stuttgart they expressed their concern about the high levels of unemployment amongst young people and called for action to stimulate greater job opportunities for the young.

Community measures for young people fall into three categories: action to help young people to find employment by creating new job opportunities and new training facilities; action, both in their own interest and that of society at large, to help young people to develop their personal skills, especially youngsters from the

¹ This file updates and replaces our No 3/81.

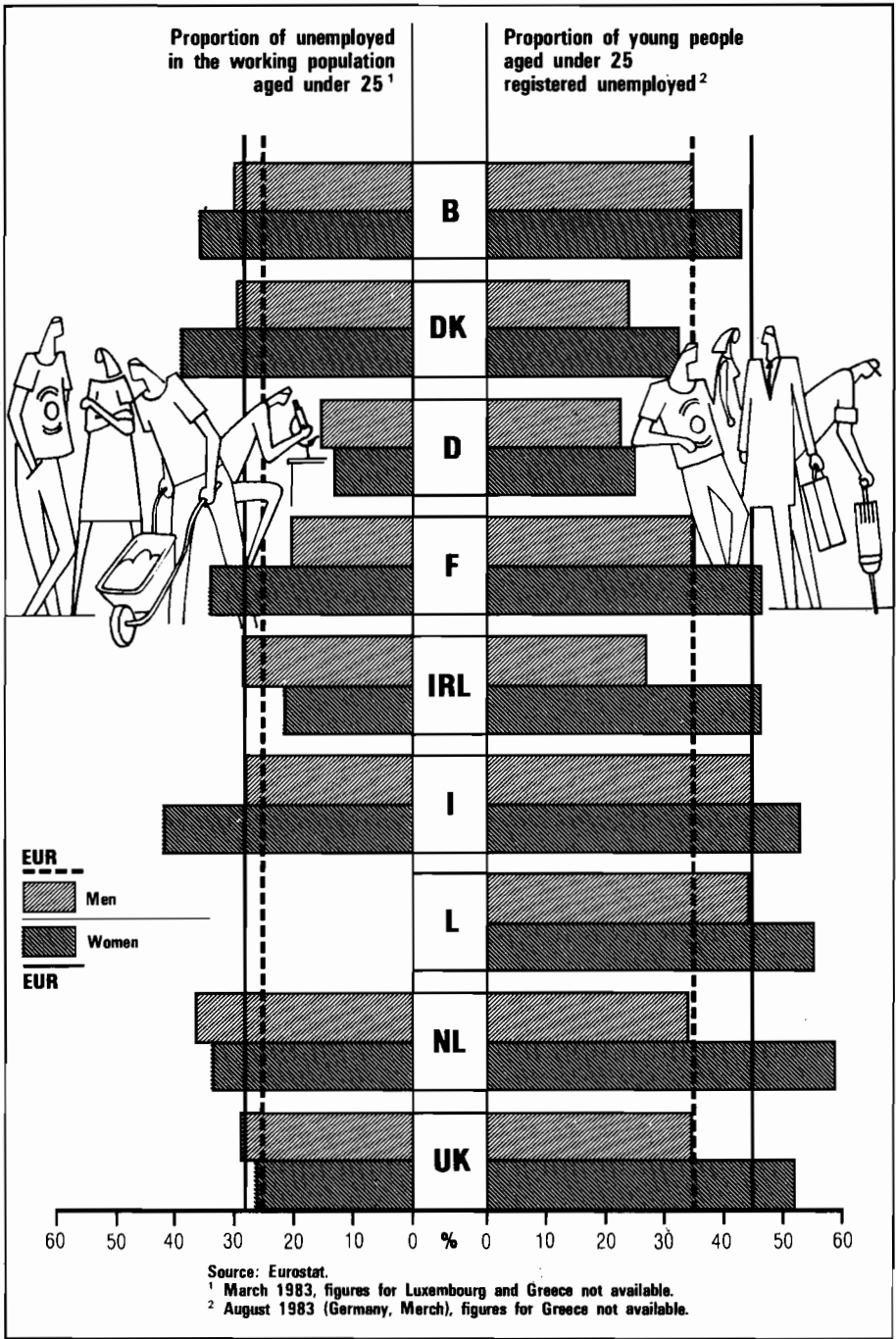
least favoured groups in society; and action to broaden knowledge of young people about other European countries and prepare them for their role as citizens of the Community.

The struggle against youth unemployment

Despite efforts at Community, national and local level in recent years, young people have found it harder and harder to find jobs as the recession has deepened. To deal with this problem, special Community measures are needed to create new jobs, improve the training of youngsters and make their transition to working life easier.

- Promotion of job opportunities for the young: youth unemployment is a symptom of a stagnant economy. To avoid the increasing alienation of young people, the European Commission proposed an action programme in April 1983 to cut youth unemployment by half. The aim was to create 2.5 million new jobs in five years and bring the level of unemployment among young people down to the overall average. The first method suggested was to intensify efforts to tackle unemployment of all kinds by stimulating economic recovery, generating investment, innovation and increased competitiveness and reducing and reorganizing working time. Secondly, the Commission proposed an increase in specific measures to boost employment of the young.

These were to include: a commitment to two years job experience, combined with training if necessary, for the worst-off youngsters, particularly the one-and-a-half million out of work for more than a year; giving young people the first choice of jobs created by the reorganization of working time; encouraging more employers to create new jobs and recruit the young; promoting job-opportunities in the public and allied sectors; helping young people to set up local employment initiatives, private enterprises or cooperatives; supporting other positive developments, both through the provision of equipment and sponsoring organizations, to help young people to develop their vocational skills and non-vocational interests. To avoid the risk of pushing young people out of the mainstream of economic life, care must be taken to provide them with worthwhile and stable jobs, without necessarily ignoring the opportunities presented by part-time work. Special efforts should also be made for the least favoured groups: the long-term unemployed, and girls who find themselves excluded from certain jobs. The European Council of Ministers has just taken a decision on these proposals. Their application will mainly be the responsibility of Member States and the two sides of industry. It is hoped that they will underpin national efforts to promote the recruitment of young people. The Community will, at the same time, take a more active coordinating role and increase its cash aid towards recruitment subsidies for young people. It will also finance a range of experimental projects, which, it is hoped, will serve as examples for possible new initiatives.



- Improvement of training facilities: in June 1983 Community ministers passed a resolution setting out the broad lines of their vocational training policy for the 1980s, including specific measures for the young. The Member States agreed to increased vocational training opportunities for youngsters with inadequate qualifications, especially those out of work. They said they were ready to give a 'social guarantee' of some form of training up to 1988 for all youngsters who asked for it. On leaving school, young people will be given the opportunity of a full-time course of at least six months and up to one year of basic training and/or job experience.

The updating of training programmes is another major objective of the Community. A number of studies on this subject have been undertaken by a Community institution, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) in Berlin. In March 1982 and June 1983, Community ministers stressed the need to speed the introduction of new information technologies into schools and vocational training programmes. The aim was two-fold: to bring educational facilities up to date, and to give youngsters a basic training in an area where the likely needs of the economy would provide good job opportunities in the future. A range of initiatives is planned before 1987: seminars on the teaching of latest technologies (especially their impact on the teaching profession, the link with vocational training and the involvement of girls); programmes of exchange visits for trainers of teachers; and comparative studies on available equipment. Studies already carried out on vocational training are to lead to pilot schemes, notably for the young unemployed.

- Smoothing the transition from school to work: between 1977 and 1982, the Community supported about 30 pilot projects which aimed to ease this difficult period. Hundreds of schools took part in these schemes. They included projects which aimed to improve cooperation between schools and employers, careers advice projects, and the temporary release of schoolchildren from their classrooms to apprenticeships in factories and business offices. This idea received specific backing in a resolution adopted by the Council of Ministers at the end of 1979. Other projects covered the special problems of schoolgirls and ways of helping disadvantaged youngsters and those in some kind of trouble. The results of these pilot schemes were so encouraging that the Community is coordinating a second series of projects (1983-87). These range from promoting the use of training opportunities outside the schoolroom, the participation of parents, employers and trade-unionists in activities inside the school, careers guidance for youngsters aged from 14 to 18, cooperation and exchanges of information between teachers and employers and refresher courses for teachers.

The main weapon of the Community in fighting unemployment — whether through training or the promotion of job-opportunities — is the European Social Fund. The funds at its disposal for helping young people have more than doubled between 1979 and 1982 and they are scheduled to increase sharply in the next few

years. In 1982, almost 40% of the resources of the Fund were reserved for people under 25. It gave 457.2 million ECU ¹ towards training programmes (sometimes combined with school studies) and projects for vocational training and retraining which benefited 501 910 young Europeans. The Fund also gave 146.5 million ECU – benefiting 290 500 youngsters – towards recruitment subsidies, both in the private sector (79% of the total) and in the public sector and Community activities (21%). Priority is given to projects in the least favoured regions of the Community. It was decided in 1983 that the Social Fund should reserve 75% of its resources in future for people aged less than 25. The Fund will therefore be able to give even more solid backing to the ‘social guarantee’ of training or a first job. Priority will be given to youngsters in the least favoured regions, the long-term unemployed, and those whose job prospects, whether on leaving school or later, are reduced by poor vocational qualifications.

Equal opportunity for all

In employment and in education, the Community is striving to achieve equal opportunities for all its citizens. It promotes equal job chances for boys and girls and tries to help the least favoured groups in society to overcome their difficulties.

- Girls: Community directives enshrine the principle of sex-equality in vocational training and employment but education and careers advice are still frequently coloured by traditional prejudices. Girls are under-represented in technical studies, finish their education earlier and aim all too often at the classic female jobs. The result is an increased risk of unemployment and poor pay.
 - The new Community action programme for the promotion of equal opportunities for women (1982-85) places particular importance on careers advice and vocational training. Projects include attempts to encourage a wider jobs choice by girls, the teaching of new technologies to women and the education of girls in their training rights.
 - The European Social Fund gives a priority to the training of women aged less than 25, who wish to take up a new job or enter a profession where women are traditionally under-represented. About 35 000 people were helped by these schemes in 1982, a 51% rise on 1981.
- Migrant workers: Community regulations guarantee a migrant worker, from another Community country, the right to bring his or her family to settle in the host country. The family is guaranteed full social security rights and children are guaranteed education and vocational training on the same terms (family allowances and education grants) as local citizens. The children of migrant workers nevertheless encounter problems, at school and in finding jobs, which require special action:

¹ One ECU (European currency unit) = about £0.57, Ir. £0.73 or US \$0.80 (at exchange rates current on 10 January 1984).

- In 1977 a Community directive on the education of migrant children obliged Member States to set up special classes, to give specialized training to teachers and to provide for education in the original language and culture.
 - The European Social Fund finances 'integrated programmes' (which continue to operate at the different stages of integration into the host community) as well as language and vocational training courses for migrants, whether or not they come from another Community country. In 1982, the Fund gave 50.7 million ECU towards the education of 95 000 young immigrants, the language training of 180 000 young people and adults and the specialized training of 3 500 teachers and social workers dealing with migrants.
 - The Community education programme and the Social Fund finance and coordinate a series of pilot projects on the improvement of methods for integrating and educating migrants.
- The handicapped: ranging from the blind to the physically or mentally handicapped, between 5 and 9% of Community citizens have some form of disability. The Community action programme for the handicapped gives priority to their integration into society and the workforce and the problems of handicapped workers, including the young. The aim is to promote the independence of handicapped people in employment, housing, access, mobility, education and training. In 1982, the Social Fund gave 121.7 million ECU towards the training of about 66 000 handicapped people, with a high proportion of youngsters. The Community also supports a range of pilot projects which allow exchange visits by handicapped youngsters, especially those with the most severe disabilities. The European Commission has undertaken two studies. The first concerns the impact of new technologies on the education and training of handicapped children. The second deals with the adaptation of vocational training courses for handicapped youngsters to developments in the job market. Practical conclusions are to be drawn from these studies in 1984, when the Commission will present draft guidelines on the employment of handicapped people, and especially handicapped youngsters.
- Orphans: The Community has used its special powers in the coal and steel industries to launch a range of social action programmes. One thousand children of workers who have died through work accidents or occupational diseases receive annual education grants from the Paul Finet Foundation.
- The poor: following a first experimental poverty action programme, the Community is considering a number of measures to help young people from the so-called 'Fourth World'. These are likely to include action to improve health and basic education, to combat illiteracy and to prepare youngsters for working life.

A better knowledge of Europe and Europeans

As electors or future electors of the European Parliament, young people should be given the opportunity to broaden their understanding and experience of a Community which will have a profound influence over their lives. In March 1982, Community Member States signed an agreement setting up a European Foundation in Paris the aim of which is to increase the mutual understanding of the peoples of the Community, in particular through promoting the learning of languages and cultural and professional exchange visits. The Community has already taken a number of steps to help young people to study in another Member State or learn about the activities of the European Communities.

Exchange visits and travel grants:

- Each year since 1964, 1 000 young workers aged from 18 to 25 have been able to obtain Community grants for professional training courses, lasting from 3 weeks to 16 months, in other Member States. The aim is to allow them to broaden their professional knowledge and range of personal contacts.
- The Community does not play a direct role in exchange visits between primary and secondary schoolchildren, but the European Commission has suggested measures to allow all young people, and especially the least favoured — the poor, handicapped and children from peripheral regions — to take part in such schemes.
- In June 1983 European education ministers approved plans for the promotion of exchange visits in higher education. The 'common study programmes' launched in 1976, allowing the Community to finance exchanges between academics and students, are to be extended. So far 335 programmes have been established, linking more than 500 seats of higher education. Regulations on the recognition of university studies undertaken in another Member State are to be made more flexible and information on the rules made more widely available. The possibility is also to be examined of allowing students to use grants and loans from one Member State for courses of study in another Community country.
- The European Commission has also published guides to higher and secondary education in Europe. It is preparing a guide to exchange visits by pupils and young people, aimed at schools, parents' associations, cultural groups and the young people themselves. The slow development of cooperation and information exchanges between Member States in the field of education has led to the creation of 'Eurydice', a computer network which diffuses useful information on European educational systems.

Education in European affairs: young people are interested in the problems of the Community, to the extent that 70% of them complain that they do not

receive sufficient information on European affairs. To answer this need, the European Commission supports the activities of a range of organizations committed to providing a European dimension to the education and information of young people. Within the means available to them, the Commission's information services also provide literature aimed especially at young people, disseminated through schools, youth organizations and, sometimes, the mass media. The Commission finances a number of European documentation centres and European studies institutes founded at several universities.



To gain a better understanding of the needs and aspirations of young people, the European Commission recently organized the first ever opinion poll covering all young people aged from 15 to 24 in the Community. Questions raised included relations between children and their parents, what young people thought of school, vocational training, work and unemployment, the hopes, fears and interests of young people, as well as politics and the European Community. Free copies of the results of this poll, published in a weighty 175-page document entitled *The Young Europeans*, are available from the information offices listed on page 12 of this file.

Looking to the future, the Community is striving to create a genuine dialogue with the young. It has increased its contacts with the Youth Forum of the European Communities created in 1978 to link all forms of national and international youth organizations within the Community. The Forum represents these groups in contacts with Community institutions. Its aim is to boost the participation of young people in the development of the Community, to increase mutual understanding and to promote the equal rights of all citizens and the democratization of Community institutions. It has mainly been preoccupied with youth unemployment, vocational training, the rights of young people, exchange visits, education in other cultures, equality of opportunity between men and women and cooperation in the development of the Third World.

In the years to come the Community intends to strengthen its work for young people. A range of new initiatives are under preparation to coincide with the International Youth Year, organized by the United Nations in 1985 ■

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