



trade union information

NO. 1 - JANUARY 1975

COMMUNITY JOURNAL FOR TRADE UNIONS
produced by the trade union division
(information directorate-general)

REPRODUCTION AUTHORISED

Contents:

1. Commission aims to play more political role in 1975
2. European Social Conference
3. European Labour ministers make progress
4. Action programme for migrant workers and their families
5. E.T.U.C. seminar for editors of trade union journals
6. Activities of the trade union information division in 1974
7. Staffs of international organisations in Europe unite
8. Danish LO employment plan
9. Irish unions seek further national wage agreement
10. Unions of ABECOR multinational bank group meet.

OFFICE ADDRESSES:

Dublin: 29 Merrion Square
Dublin 2, Ireland

London: 20 Kensington Palace Gardens
London W8 4QQ, England

New York: 277 Park Avenue
New York
N.Y. 10017, U.S.A.

Washington: 2100 M Street, N.W.
Suite 707
Washington 20037, U.S.A.

1. COMMISSION AIMS TO PLAY MORE POLITICAL ROLE IN 1975

In a New Year's speech to European journalists on 10 January 1975, François-Xavier Ortoli, President of the European Commission, laid emphasis on the political role to be played by the Commission in 1975.

For him 1974 had been characterised by a setback for European independence and even for future prospects of gaining independence. This was due to the reversal of world economic order in favour of producers of oil and other primary products. But also "responsibility for Europe's inability to exert any clear influence on the major decisions which have repercussions for our countries and our peoples rests firmly on our own shoulders". The present world crisis had enhanced the U.S. position and Europe, because of lack of coordination, lack of initiative and lack of courage, had become a mere spectator.

A further characteristic of 1974 from the Commission's point of view had been a certain malfunctioning of the European institutions, particularly the Council of Ministers. The Paris Summit Conference through the conception of regular meetings of heads of government had aimed to provide a body with real authority for Europe, but this could bring about an intergovernmental approach to solving Europe's problems, leading away from the building up of Europe.

President Ortoli defined the Commission's tasks in these circumstances in the following way:

"During its first year in office the Commission concentrated on integrating the new Member States and conscientiously tackling the tasks entrusted to it by the Paris Summit of 1972.

During its second year the Commission worked entirely - and occasionally successfully - to prevent the Community foundering.

This is no longer enough. A new approach is needed to handle a new situation.

The Commission is convinced that in the present world crisis Europe's salvation lies in Europe. But it recognizes that, as time goes on, fewer and fewer people are prepared to share this conviction.

It is determined to make every effort to ensure that this conviction will inspire the decisions which must be taken by Governments.

The absence of political will has been a feature of the Community for two years or more. The Commission therefore intends to take the fight for Europe into the political arena.

It will of course continue to do what it is required to do by the Treaties; indeed it would like to be asked to do more, particularly in the administrative field.

But it is determined to exercise its right of initiative rigorously and energetically. It is determined to keep in touch with reality, to keep its proposals clear-cut and to the point. It will not be content with sketchy proposals, with built-in compromises.

The Commission must play its role in the new scenario approved at the Paris meeting. If certain decisions are to be taken by Heads of Government from now on then it is at this political and legal level - which is accepted and proper, - that the Commission must act".

After defining the Commission's immediate priorities in respect of energy, the economic situation and an action programme in favour of the third world, President Ortolini outlined the Commission's attitude towards Europe's future:

"The Commission also agreed yesterday that the Community should resume its journey towards a more structured and a more coherent organization.

This journey, agreed on by Governments and institutions at the Paris meeting, must begin at once if Europe is to move out of danger. Europe needs to advance along two converging paths, one leading towards economic union, the other towards European union.

1. We have begun to rethink our approach to economic and monetary union. There is no question of re-establishing a phased programme: I feel that the initial prospects no longer correspond to present realities and that the easy stages approach has failed. What we must do is consider priorities and the instruments of coordination and integration to be created and of course implemented if we are to achieve our goals.

Reflection is called for but that will not be enough. We must act in two specific fields; the creation of such European financial instruments as are needed and the creation of the European unit of account.

In all these fields the Commission intends to act quickly and keep to a strict timetable when preparing its studies and proposals.

2. The Commission's intentions with regard to European union are clear. They are twofold, firstly, to participate fully in conjunction with the European Parliament in the debate on European union requested by the Heads of Government and to give every support to Mr. Tindemans (Belgian Prime Minister, invited to report on this subject before the end of 1975).

Secondly, to participate fully in and give unreserved support to the concrete moves towards European union such as the convention on the election of Parliament by universal suffrage and its corollary the definition of increased legislative powers for the Assembly."

Finally, President Ortolini offered the Commission's authority for rallying "all the latent forces in Europe, the energy and voices of all those who feel that an organized and independent Europe is the only way of solving the problems to which our society is prey but who do not know how to make themselves heard."

2. EUROPEAN SOCIAL CONFERENCE

A Conference on future European social policy was held in the Palais des Congrès in Brussels on 16 December 1974, under the chairmanship of Michel DURAFOUR, Minister for Labour of the French Republic, with the participation of the ministers of labour of the Member States of the Community, representatives of trade union and employers' organisations and representatives of the Commission. Also present, at the request of the Chairman, were delegations from the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee.

In a frank and thorough discussion, the Conference examined the present labour situation and the prospects for a European social policy. In view of current international economic conditions, with particular reference to the problems posed for the economies of the Member States by the rise in the prices of raw materials, especially oil, it was generally agreed by all those who attended the Conference that the maintenance of employment and of the standard of living and the fight against inflation were of prime importance for employers and labour and the Community.

The structural and economic causes of the existing labour situation as well as the effects of inflation and balance of payments difficulties were thoroughly discussed during the Conference; repercussions of the rise in the price of oil and regional problems also came under review. The Conference voiced grave concern at the rise in unemployment, and unanimously agreed that the restoration of economic equilibrium should be one of the main aims of the Community and the Member States.

The Conference also stressed the need to further the interests of certain groups of workers - particularly the old, the young, women, and migrant workers - who were likely to be most affected by the present crisis.

A number of other topics were brought up in the course of the discussion - such as the problem of collective redundancies, the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women, the European Centre for Vocation³⁴ Training and the possible reorientation of the Social Fund (See also item 3 about the meeting of Labour ministers held on the following day.)

The Conference unanimously agreed that the Standing Committee on Employment should be reactivated as soon as possible. The Chairman noted the firm intention of all parties concerned to surmount the obstacles which until recently had prevented the Committee from meeting.

The Conference also favoured employers and labour holding joint sectoral meetings to coordinate their position with regard to the problems arising in the various sectors of economic activity.

Finally the Conference expressed the strong wish that both sides of industry should play a greater part in the preparation and implementation of social policy.

3. EUROPEAN LABOUR MINISTERS MAKE PROGRESS

Employers envisaging mass dismissals of their workers will be obliged to make consultations with the representatives of the workers. Any plan to effect mass dismissals will have to be transmitted to the public authority, and for a period laid down (30 days, subject to prolongation) dismissals cannot be put into practice. This delay should be put to use for avoiding or reducing the number of the dismissals and for attenuating the consequences. This decision on mass dismissals was taken by the Council of Ministers of Labour, held in Brussels on 17 December 1974.

The Ministers worked out a precise definition of the circumstances: "Dismissals carried out by an employer for one or more reasons not connected with the personal conduct of the workers, when the number of dismissals concerned is, by choice of Member States:

- either, for a period of 30 days: at least ten persons in establishments habitually employing between twenty and a hundred workers; at least 10% of workers in establishments habitually employing between 100 and 300 workers; at least 30 persons in establishments habitually employing at least **300 workers**;
- or for a period of 90 days: at least 20 persons in the establishments whatever the number of persons habitually employed".

The Council has also agreed in principle on a directive aimed at securing respect for the principle of equal pay for men and women. Once adopted in final form, the directive will nullify any disposition of an agreement or contract which is contrary to this principle, which was already set out in the Rome Treaty. This is the first time that Member States will be compelled to adapt their internal legal situation so as to allow any worker feeling wronged on this point to obtain his or her rights by legal means after exhausting recourse to other competent instances.

Still within the framework of the social action programme, the Council of Ministers decided on the creation of a European vocational training centre and a European foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions. Both these bodies have been given a legal personality permitting them to have a considerable degree of autonomy.

The European vocational training centre has a scientific and technical vocation. A small but specialised staff will facilitate the exchange of information and experience, will put out documentation and will undertake research and pilot schemes. The administrative board will be made up of representatives of the governments, workers' organisations, employers' organisations and the European Commission.

The European foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions will have the task of developing and deepening, in the light of practical experience, reflections on this theme and picking out factors leading to change. In addition the foundation will give guidance to the Community on possible objectives and policies, notably by transmitting scientific data and technical facts. It was decided that the foundation should have a governing structure similar to that of the vocational training centre.

The Council also decided to reactivate the standing committee on employment, which will meet on 3 February 1975. It will be composed of eighteen representatives of workers' organisations, eleven representatives of the employers' liaison committee, four representatives of agricultural trade associations and three representatives of the European centre of nationalised industries. There will be eighteen substitute representatives, so as to ensure overall representation of the interested organisations.

4. ACTION PROGRAMME FOR MIGRANT WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

The Commission has approved and sent to the Council of Ministers for adoption an action programme in favour of migrant workers and their families. It has been drawn up in the framework of the Community's social action programme for the period 1974-76.

Two of the principal goals which the Commission has set itself in this programme concern social security for migrants from third countries and political rights for all migrants regardless of origin.

Social Security: The aim is to grant non-Community migrants equality of treatment with their Community colleagues. The Commission advocates an intermediate stage which will ensure family allowances for children who remain in the country of origin. In addition, it urges the aggregation of periods of insurance, both in the home country and in the Community, so that pensions can relate to the total period of employment. Moreover, it also advocates the right to export to the home country sickness and old-age pensions.

Political rights: The Commission has taken up a position in favour of giving political rights at local level by 1980 to migrants irrespective of origin. These rights would be subject to reasonable residence requirements yet to be worked out. This is the most effective way of giving migrants real influence over their living and working conditions. As an immediate step, the Commission envisages the setting up of a system of consultative organisations which would ensure for migrants a voice in decisions taken at local level.

The number of migrant workers has increased sharply over the past decade. In 1973 over six million migrant workers were estimated to be employed in the Community, about three quarters of whom were from non-Community countries. If the families of these workers are taken into account the total migrant population in the Community is probably over ten million or 4% of the total population. It is estimated that about 10% of total immigration is carried out illegally.

This influx of migrant workers has had various effects on the countries concerned. The availability of foreign labour has contributed to a faster rate of economic growth than would otherwise have been possible, and has allowed the national economies to adjust more easily to short-term changes in demand. On the other hand the ready availability of a relatively cheap source of unskilled manpower has often retarded the search for greater productivity in Community industries.

Migration has also had important and adverse effects on the regional balance in the Community as it has encouraged the continuing concentration of resources and manpower in the Community's central and already heavily

industrialised areas at the expense of the peripheral regions such as southern Italy, western Ireland, Brittany, Scotland, etc. The poorer regions can thus be said to subsidise the richer ones by supplying them with the better qualified and more dynamic elements of their population.

In the industrialised areas, on the other hand, the constant influx of migrants has aggravated urban problems by putting an increasing burden on social facilities. The introduction to the present programme states that "there can be no permanent solution to the problems caused by migration within the Community without an effective Community regional policy to redress the existing imbalances and reduce the necessity for migration which at present exists."

Third country migrants

As the great majority of today's migrants come from outside the Community, it is essential to consider also the socio-economic repercussions of migration on the third countries most affected. As with the poorer regions of the Community, these countries also are suffering a growing loss of manpower. A long-term programme for migrants cannot confine itself to the social problems caused by migration but must embrace the whole range of economic, regional, industrial and development policies which affect migration.

But in addition to the long-term, global approach to the problem of migration, there is an urgent need for specific social and educational measures to improve the conditions of the migrant workers and their families and it is with these aspects that the present programme concerns itself. The social conditions of migrants give cause for serious concern especially in the case of third country migrants who have no Community protection and rely solely on often restrictive national legislation.

The programme introduction sums up the situation thus: "after more than a decade of benefit from migrant labour, the Community finds itself with a large unassimilated group of foreign workers who share almost all the obligations of the society in which they live and work but, more often than not, have a less than equal share in its benefits and rights. This situation is in the long term intolerable - degrading for the migrant and dangerous for the Community".

The position of third country migrants is regulated mostly by bilateral agreements between the host country and the country of origin so the degree of protection varies throughout the Community. The Commission's view is that one of the basic aims of this action programme must be the progressive elimination of all discrimination against non-Community migrants in living and working conditions. This requires that solutions be found in common, hence the need for coordination of the policies of the Member States towards immigration from outside the Community.

In the case of Community migrants, Italian and Irish workers for the most part, a major step towards the abolition of discrimination based on nationality was achieved in respect of employment, wages and other working conditions by the adoption of Regulation 1612 in 1968. Nevertheless, experience has shown that to achieve full equality of treatment in living and working conditions this Regulation needs to be supplemented.

The Commission intends to implement the various items of the present programme by a series of proposals to the Council during 1975 and 1976, under the headings of free movement of labour, social security, health, vocational training, social services, housing, education of migrants' children, information and statistics, civic and political rights, illegal immigration, coordination of migration policies. The Commission will also submit as soon as possible a Charter for Migrants which has been requested by the European Parliament.

Some proposed actions

Some of the actions for which the Commission will be making concrete proposals in favour of migrant workers and their families are the following:

Free movement of labour

Implementing in 1975 the SEDOC system for the computerised exchange of information about labour supply and demand;

Extension of right of migrants to be joined by other family members;

Fuller exercise of trade union rights, e.g. participation in public law bodies.

Social Security

(a) For Community nationals

Uniform system of payment for family benefits;

Coordination of certain non-contributory schemes;

Regulation concerning schemes for self employed.

(b) For third country nationals

Extension of benefits.

Vocational training, including language

Increased "crash courses";

Extension of paid day release schemes;

Pilot schemes for training and exchange of language specialists.

Social services

Improvement and extension of social services;

Examination of financing of housing for migrants plus pilot schemes.

Civic and political rights

Full participation at local level in the life of the host country.

5. ETUC SEMINAR FOR EDITORS OF TRADE UNION JOURNALS

A European seminar for editors of trade union journals, organised by the European Trade Union Confederation together with the European Commission's trade union information division, took place at the Danish LO school in Helsingør from 18 to 20 December 1974. Participants came from practically all the countries represented in the E.T.U.C.

Peer Carlsen, deputy general secretary of the ETUC, chaired the meeting. Themes of the seminar were the trade union and social situation in Denmark; activities of the ETUC; the situation of the Community following the Paris summit conference of December 1974; results of the tripartite European social conference held just prior to the meeting and the provision of European Community news for the trade union press.

The participants unanimously agreed that seminars of this kind were of great value for the trade union press and that further meetings should be held. They prepared a note for transmission to the ETUC executive committee, stressing that "ETUC information activities internally vis-à-vis the member organisations and externally vis-à-vis the populations of Europe must have a very high priority among the activities of the ETUC"; they accordingly make some suggestions for the intensification of ETUC information work.

6. ACTIVITIES OF THE TRADE UNION INFORMATION DIVISION IN 1974

During 1974 the trade union division (information directorate-general) undertook an intensified programme for conveying information on the European Community to trade unions, both at the level of the European trade union movement and in the nine countries of the Community. The division has a total staff of 10.

Thirteen numbers of the new bulletin "European Communities - Trade Union Information" were published between April and December 1974. The bulletin appears in English, French, German, Italian and Danish; a Greek version, to appear at less frequent intervals, has been started and plans have been made for a Turkish language edition. The publication gives news of Community action of particular interest to trade unionists, reports of European trade union activities and national trade union items which are of wide European interest. The bulletin will shortly appear in Dutch.

Four numbers of "Trade Union Documentation" (French, German, Dutch and Italian) appeared. (N.B. The "Documentation" will appear on a monthly basis in 1975). "Trade Union News" is published by the London Office.

The division prepared a series of slides with commentaries in French, Danish, German, Italian, English and Dutch, on an experimental basis. These aim to present discussion themes on basic European questions, in a way suitable for trade union audiences. The slides have been shown to various trade union groups and a revised version is being prepared on the basis of their comments.

Meetings for education officers of trade unions and for editors of trade union journals were organised jointly with the European Trade Union Confederation. European meetings of women trade unionists have been held on a similar basis. 15 meetings wholly or partly dealing with Community topics

were arranged for the various European committees of trade unions. In addition the division arranged for halls and interpreters for 14 other European trade union meetings.

53 information visits to Brussels or Luxembourg were made by the national trade union delegations from countries of the Community in 1974. Visits were also arranged for U.S., Swedish, Turkish and Argentine trade union groups.

The division collaborated in European activities run by national trade union organisations in their own countries: examples of such activities are seminars concerning migrant workers, industrial democracy and energy problems, as well as meetings on more general European themes; also pamphlets and articles on various European topics.

7. STAFFS OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN EUROPE UNITE

The founding congress of the Federation of European and International Public Service Unions took place on 16 and 17 November 1974 in Brussels. The unions concerned represent approximately 6,000 staff from the following institutions:

- European Communities and Eurocontrol, Brussels
- European Communities and Eurocontrol, Luxembourg
- Euratom, Ispra (Italy)
- Euratom, Karlsruhe (German Federal Republic)
- Euratom, Petten
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Paris
- Council of Europe (Strasbourg)
- International Patent Institute (The Hague)

The new body will strengthen the cohesion of the staffs concerned and coordinate and harmonise the claims being put forward by the member unions. It aims to participate in the definition and establishment of a genuine public service function at European level. It will act in solidarity with European and world labour, and in this sense adheres to the principles and objectives of the European Trade Union Confederation and the Public Services International. It wishes to be a factor for change, contributing in its own field and within the limits of its means to the transformation of society and the achievement of real democracy.

8. DANISH LO EMPLOYMENT PLAN

The Danish LO considers the employment situation as very serious. At the end of November 1974 official figures showed 83,000 unemployed amongst insured workers (representing 9.7 %), plus 10,000 unemployed among non-insured workers. To this must be added a large number of underemployed, amounting to 20,000 according to a Danish LO enquiry. The latest figures for totally or partially unemployed amount to approximately 113,000.

In line with this development and taking into account seasonal movements, a figure of 150,000 must be expected during the winter. Government experts and the economic council consider that the figure will stay at this level through 1975, if no special decisions are taken.

25 proposals

The LO cannot accept such a situation. At its meeting on 7 November the executive committee finalised an overall plan for improving employment, on the basis of the proposals of the affiliated unions. The committee approved 25 measures necessary for improving the situation.

The measures include: intensifying house building, several national public works schemes, municipal and provincial building operations, works in connection with the environment, regional policy, increased local cooperation, efforts to prevent firms from closing, increased investment in vocational training, special assistance to one-man operations and small firms, increased assistance for exports, a special effort for the stabilisation of external trade, an easing of credit policy, establishment of big traffic projects, a special effort for deficit sectors, intensification of official contracts with Norway and Sweden with a view to increasing Danish exports to them.

Negotiation of agreements

On 25 November labour market negotiations took place between LO and the Danish employers' federation for the renewal of collective agreements as from 1 March 1975. The negotiators decided to deal with the following nine general points (more specific questions were to be discussed by the individual unions with the appropriate employers' body):

- (1) wage questions, particularly low wages:
- (2) wage adjustments to compensate for the reduction of the working week to 40 hours as from 2 December 1974;
- (3) improvement of wages and working conditions for those on shift work;
- (4) increase in holiday payments and paid days of unemployment;
- (5) education fund;
- (6) wage in case of dismissal;
- (7) protection of workers' representatives serving on the boards of companies;
- (8) rises in cost of living indemnities;
- (9) duration of the agreements.

As the employers' federation at the outset demanded a freeze on wages and the suppression of automatic cost of living indemnities (demands served at the same time on public services trade unions by the state), the LO formed a united front of organisations representing 1.3 million workers of the private and public sectors. At the meeting for this purpose on 30 November, political interference in free negotiations on the labour market and in the measures concerning the cost of living allowance was condemned. Effective measures concerning employment were called for.

On 3 December the Danish government presented a crisis plan, necessitated by the gravity of the country's economic situation, and calling for prolongation of the agreements without change up to 1 January 1976, a wage freeze, as well as a proposal that the cost of living indemnity should be replaced by a wage supplement exempt from tax, to be financed by the state through taxes.

The LO took a strong stand against this government plan directed solely against wage-earners, and the government decided on elections before the end of the time-period, to take place on 9 January 1975.

Negotiations continued during the electoral period and are continuing in the post-electoral period in which the composition of a new government is not decided. Naturally final results can only be expected after the formation of a new government.

Nordic trade Union summit

The presidents of the Nordic trade union confederations as well as the leaders of public services' unions held a meeting in Denmark on 4 December, to discuss the bargaining situation in the respective countries.

They agreed on reciprocal solidarity among Nordic wage-earners and their organisations.

The Nordic trade union organisations condemned any efforts in the countries to limit the right to undertake free negotiations on the labour market. They strongly defended the right to make collective agreements without interference by political parties.

The presidents of the trade union confederations agreed to work more closely together in the interests of the wage earners of the Nordic countries.

9. IRISH UNIONS SEEK FURTHER NATIONAL WAGES AGREEMENT

At a special delegate conference on 19 December 1974, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions decided to enter into negotiations with Irish employers for a new national wages agreement to succeed the present one, which runs up to June 1975. The conference did not lay down guidelines for the I.C.T.U. negotiators; it is expected that they will report back on the negotiations to a new conference in February 1975.

If an agreement is reached, it will be the fourth successive Irish national wage agreement, the first having been signed with the Federated Union of Employers in December 1970.

Meanwhile the Federation of Rural Workers, backed by the I.C.T.U., is fighting a battle to get Irish farmers to pay the minimum award due to agricultural workers under the 1974-1975 national wages agreement which clearly applies to them. The Agricultural Wages Board decided, with the workers' representatives voting against, to pay an increase of £2 a week from February, while conformity with the national agreement would have required an immediate increase of £2.62 a week, with payment of £176 arrears, followed by payment of a 10% cost of living increase from 1 March 1975. The Agricultural Wages Board has acted within its legal rights and as a way out of the impasse, the Minister of Labour is expected to establish a joint Labour Committee to determine agricultural legal minimum wages, depriving the Agricultural Wages Board of this function.

10. UNIONS OF ABECOR MULTINATIONAL BANK GROUP MEET

The banks section of the Belgian union of office workers, technicians and supervisory staffs (SETCA) held a meeting of trade union representatives covering the different banks which make up the international banking group

ABECOR on 25 November 1974 in Brussels. The participants had a first discussion on the role of multinational banks and stressed the need to bring together the unions of different international affiliations who are active in various banking groups. The meeting requested SETCA to provide an international secretariat for ABECOR, which would collect information on the policies followed by the banks concerned and the situation of their staffs. A new meeting will take place in 1975.

The unions represented were:

Italy: Federazione Italiana Bancari CISL
Federazione Italiana Dipendenti Aziende de Credito CGIL
Unione Italiana Bancari UIB

Austria: Office Workers' Union, section money & credit OGB
Germany: Office Workers' Union DAG
France: Fédération des Employés CCT
Fédération française des Syndicats des Banques CFDT
Fédération des Employés FO
Belgium: SETCA

In a resolution adopted prior to the session the SETCA banks section noted with satisfaction the resolution adopted by the banks section of the International Federation of Commercial, Clerical and Technical Employees (FIET) in May 1974, intensifying work among affiliated banking unions; however, it considered that such work should be supplemented by the establishment of a united front of unions representative of the staffs of multinational banks, whatever the international affiliations of the unions concerned.