



No. 3/1977

trade union information

TRADE UNION INFORMATION

PRODUCED BY THE "TRADE UNION" DIVISION OF THE SPOKESMAN'S GROUP
AND THE DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR INFORMATION

C O N T E N T S
=====

1. The Commission presents the Council with proposals for increasing the effectiveness of the Social Fund
2. Results of the seventh session of the European Council in Rome, on 25 and 26 March 1977
3. Statement by the Chairman of the European Trade Union Confederation to the European Council of Heads of Government of the Community: Rome, 25 March 1977
4. Summary of the Commission communication to the Council on the adjustment of the economic policy guidelines for 1977
5. European Vocational Training Centre in Berlin
6. Meeting of Western and Eastern European trade unions in Geneva on 5 and 6 March 1977
7. The Ghana TUC and the Lomé Convention
8. European information in trade union training centres: audio-visual information kit: "Why Europe Today?"

*

*

*

X/234/77 - E

1. THE COMMISSION PRESENTS THE COUNCIL WITH PROPOSALS FOR INCREASING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SOCIAL FUND

The main activity of the Social Fund to date has been to improve the chances of employment for workers in the Community by covering 50% of the cost of vocational training programmes in the Member States. In this way, workers found employment more easily and their vocational and geographical mobility within the Community was improved. Since the Fund was reformed, more than two million individuals have benefited from assistance for vocational retraining and the annual appropriations have been increased from 235 million to 617 million u.a. in 1977. The 1971 reforms made the Fund a more flexible instrument for coping with employment problems. A series of decisions progressively enlarged the Fund's scope and the following categories of workers became eligible for assistance: those leaving agriculture; workers in the textiles and clothing industries whose vocational skills needed adaptation; migrant workers; the handicapped; unemployed persons under 25 years of age; workers in underdeveloped areas or regions with declining activities; workers whose vocational adaptation is made necessary by technical progress; and workers in certain groups of undertakings in difficulty. In the last three areas of intervention, women of over 35 and elderly workers were among the categories which could benefit from retraining aid.

This rapid extension of the Fund's activities has led to certain problems, such as the danger of fragmentation of the Fund's aid, delayed adjustment to the demands of the labour market, and certain delays in processing applications and the payment of aid.

AIMS OF THE COMMISSION'S PROPOSALS

1. An improved attention to job requirements, and a concentration of action on the most pressing Community problems;
2. increased effectiveness of the Fund.

1. Adjustment of Fund intervention to job requirements

When the Fund was reformed in 1971, it was decided to make a distinction between two types of intervention. The first, under Article 4, can take place when the employment situation in specific areas (which the Council has to define) is affected or in danger of being affected by Community policies. Examples are agriculture, textiles, migrant workers. The second, under Article 5, can take place without further Council decision, in order to fight unemployment and long-term under-employment of a structural nature, especially at a regional level.

In view of its budgetary limits, the Fund is not in a position to solve all the employment problems in the Community; therefore it is absolutely necessary that the Fund's aid should be more concentrated than in the past. That is why the Commission's new proposals seek to place a greater emphasis on aid for regions with chronic unemployment problems, and introduce the possibility of a variation in the Fund's intervention rate from 50 to 65% for a limited number of regions; these are to be defined by the Council on the proposal of the Commission and are characterized by a particularly serious and prolonged imbalance in employment or by a decline in one or more vitally important economic sectors. Emphasis will also be placed on regional aspects of schemes to aid specific sectors of the economy (Article 4 interventions).

In future the Commission wishes to place more emphasis on Article 4 interventions than on Article 5, because they enable Social Fund aid to be directed more precisely to those sectors of the economy and those regions which need it most. Therefore the Commission proposes to delete the clause which states that at least 50% of the Fund's resources should be spent on Article 5 interventions.

Nevertheless the Commission wishes to emphasize that in implementing these aims it will also try to accentuate the regional aspects of Article 4 operations so that the regional impact is no less than at present. In its annual report on the activities of the Social Fund the Commission will verify, each year, the regional impact of the Social Fund interventions.

Whenever that impact would appear to be inadequate, the Commission will take the appropriate measures in the framework of the annual budgetary proposals, the annual guidelines, or the proposals under Article 4.

It is also proposed to introduce certain measures designed to remove or alleviate restrictions which at present affect the aid which certain categories of workers can receive from the Fund. These changes will ensure that the scope of Fund interventions is greater in the case of unemployed women and self-employed individuals who wish to learn how to run a small craft concern. The existing measures intended to help migrants to be trained and integrated into the domestic labour force and young people to find a first job are to be extended.

2. Increasing the effectiveness of aid

The complexity of the existing aid system and administrative procedures is one of the main reasons for the delays that deprive the Fund of its effectiveness. For instance the current rules provide that assistance from the Fund should be granted on the basis of the real cost of retraining or resettlement procedure. But in the checking and payment procedure, that involves knowing the real cost in fact incurred for every individual covered by the operation. The new proposals in this area are intended to simplify the present

system of aid without involving too great a departure from the "real costs" principle. The following are among the proposed changes:

(a) Aid granted on a "real costs" basis would be replaced by a fixed unit cost system to be determined by the Commission on the basis of data supplied by Member States;

(b) presentation by Member States of requests for aid grouped by area of intervention instead of individual applications. That will make for a better appreciation of Member States' employment policies in the areas of Fund intervention. Individual applications will still be permitted but there should be much fewer of them than at present;

(c) approval, at the start of the financial year, of a major portion of the budget, especially for grouped projects. That will make it possible for Member States to estimate well in advance the amount of aid that can be counted on from the Fund;

(d) granting of advances as soon as operations have begun and stringent verification procedures in close collaboration with Member States to ensure satisfactory completion of operations before the balance is paid;

(e) establishment of a follow-up procedure and checking of the effectiveness of the aid.

The possibility of new aids

The abovementioned proposals will be restricted in immediate scope to Fund intervention in support of aid centred mainly on vocational training and the geographical and vocational mobility of the labour force. But, in addition to the direct application of certain rules, the proposals contain ideas for the future: namely:

(a) the possibility for the Council, on a proposal from the Commission, to introduce new aids extending beyond the area of vocational training and mobility. This could be aid (at a Fund intervention rate of 35%) for the maintenance or creation of employment or other types of intervention to enable workers to obtain stable jobs in economically sound sectors. They could also, analogously to existing European Coal and Steel Community measures, provide income support for certain persons who have lost their jobs or whose activities have been reduced or suspended and who are waiting for training or employment;

(b) the possibility of modifying the basic decision as necessary and entrusting new tasks to the Fund.

Such new aids and tasks could be defined, for instance, in debates in the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee, the Standing Committee on Employment or the Tripartite Conference.

2. RESULTS OF THE SEVENTH SESSION OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL IN ROME,
ON 25 AND 26 MARCH 1977

This session of the European Council was preceded by the celebration at the Capitoline Palace of the twentieth anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome.

During that ceremony, President Roy JENKINS made the following main points in the course of his speech:

"Determined to lay the foundation of an even closer union among the peoples of Europe. These were the words, which twenty years ago, gave a new momentum to uniting Europe in the signature of the Treaty of Rome. On this anniversary it is right that we should praise and remember the achievements of those who built so well in the fifties. Their example of enthusiastic and realistic leadership overcame the damaging divisions between nations which had so disfigured the past. It struck a positive response in the younger generation of the time whose memories of a Europe of division were sharp. Impelled by a determination to remake a European Unity, that generation of younger people is now itself in positions of power and influence in Europe. It is not enough for us simply to remember and celebrate.

The challenge of Europe is now ours. We must ensure that our policies carry forward the aims of the Treaty of Rome, persuasively and practically. We must fashion in the lives of our peoples full awareness of the need for, and progress towards, European Union. Above all we must make this historic occasion the springboard for a new advance that can attract the enthusiasm and commitment of those who will be responsible for Europe in twenty years time."

Following on the deliberations of the European Council, the Council Secretariat issued the following declarations:

Downing Street Summit Conference

The President of the Council and the President of the Commission will be asked to take part in those sessions of the Downing Street Summit at which items within the competence of the Community are discussed. Examples of such items are negotiations on international trade and the North/South Dialogue.

Statement by the European Council on relations with Japan

The European Council, recalling its statement of 30 November 1976,

- reaffirms the importance it attaches to maintaining good relations between the Community and Japan;
- notes that some progress has been made over the past 4 months towards resolving certain specific trade problems;
- observes however that not all the problems have yet been solved and considers that efforts have to be continued particularly with a view to the sustained expansion of exports from the Community to Japan;
- invites accordingly the responsible Community Institutions to continue the intensive discussions with the Japanese authorities with the aim of resolving outstanding difficulties as rapidly as possible.

Declaration on the situation in the steel sector

The European Council has considered the situation in the steel sector, on the basis of a communication from the Commission. This sector is experiencing a depression more serious than at any time in the history of the Coal and Steel Community. The Heads of State and Heads of Government have taken this opportunity to reaffirm their resolve to restore to the steel industry through the appropriate measures, the viability and competitiveness essential to the maintenance of a truly European industrial potential.

The European Council expresses its appreciation of the efforts being undertaken by the Commission to put forward at an early date practical proposals and initiatives for short term remedial measures to stabilise the market, for a longer term structural reorganisation of the European steel industry and for measures in the social field to assist workers adversely affected by such reorganisation.

The European Council expresses the wish that the Council of Ministers gives its urgent attention to the Commission's proposals and initiatives on these issues.

Statement on growth, inflation and employment

1. The European Council considered the prospects for economic development within the Community and agreed that, in order to promote sustained economic recovery and mitigate the severe unemployment being experienced in Member countries, without risking the renewal of inflation, there is a need for intensified co-operation at the Community as well as the international level.

2. The European Council recognized that such action must in large part be undertaken on a world scale in which the Community has an important role to play. In this connection they noted first that Community Finance Ministers have reached a large measure of agreement on the views they will put forward on international financing problems at the meeting of the IMF Interim Committee in Washington at the end of April, and secondly that ways of encouraging a stronger, but still balanced, growth of world economic activity will be a major theme of the London Summit in early May.
3. The European Council further agreed in particular to seek action at the Community level in three directions: firstly to promote measures to help resolve specific labour market problems, especially in improving training and employment opportunities for young people and women: secondly to encourage higher levels of investment in the Member States: and thirdly to halt divergence and promote convergence in their economic performance. To this end, the European Council invites on the one hand the Commission, in particular by the better use of Community instruments, and on the other hand the Board of Governors of the European Investment Bank to seek ways of improving the effectiveness of their activities.
4. The European Council emphasized the importance of co-operation between the social partners in these matters and have agreed to the holding of a further tripartite conference in the first half of this year, at a date to be agreed, at which progress and possibilities could be renewed. The European Council agreed to reconsider progress on this range of problems at its own projected meeting in June.
5. The European Council agreed to conduct at its meeting at the end of the year an examination of the results obtained in the fields of growth, employment and the fight against inflation, and to assess the Community's prospects of making progress towards Economic and Monetary Union.

3. STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE EUROPEAN TRADE UNION
CONFEDERATION TO THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL OF HEADS OF GOVERNMENT
OF THE COMMUNITY:
ROME, 25 MARCH 1977.

The meeting of the European Council of Heads of Government now enjoys an historic status. The twentieth year of existence of the Treaty of Rome is an event which demands that conclusions should be drawn regarding the development of the European Community to date; but it should also be the occasion to work out new ideas and initiatives aimed at the political and economic integration of Europe, to reach that objective more speedily.

For a long time before the conclusion of the Treaty of Rome, many Western European Trade Unions had come out in favour of European political union. They repeatedly declared that if Europe were politically strong and united, this would not only favour its economic development but also, and in particular, help to improve the social and economic situation of the workers.

The European trade unions were deeply distressed by the fact that the Treaties of Rome stressed only the economic aspects of European integration, clearly neglecting the social policy aspects.

Therefore the ETUC gives the greatest importance to the decision by the European Council of Heads of Government of October 1972 to adopt a social action programme for the European Community. The EC is much better able to look after the direct interests of workers through Community action and increasingly enables them to share in the Community's economic and social policy decisions.

In the last few years the social component has been considerably strengthened. It is to be hoped that it is implicitly acknowledged that effective economic and political integration in Europe is impossible without a firm basis of social policy. The ETUC hopes that practical policy measures will be decided on that basis, allowing the content of the Treaties of Rome to take concrete form in a more comprehensive European unity.

The weight of the EEC was reinforced within and without after its extension to three new Member States. We must stress the very active part played by the UK since joining the Community. This applies both to the Government and to the British TUC.

This European Council meets in the middle of a serious economic crisis which is continually worsening and must face the growing doubts of the workers who ask whether the European Institutions are capable - or ready - to take effective measures to deal with the unemployment problem.

At the Tripartite Conference of June 1976 in Luxembourg the Governments, the employers' organizations, the ETUC and the European Commission agreed that the primary goal of economic policy should be the re-establishment of full employment by 1980, an average growth rate of 5% from 1976 to 1980 and a reduction of the inflation rate to 4-5% at the latest by 1980.

At the last European Summit in November 1976 in the Hague, it was already clear that the Community had failed to appreciate the situation, and in spite of a Commission document forecasting a new recession in 1977 after the weak recovery of 1976, the Governments decided to take no action.

As a result, the Community is now even farther from its objectives. Conservative estimates set the number of unemployed in the Community at more than five million (more than half of them under 25 years of age). This figure will rise considerably if the Commission's growth forecasts for 1977, i.e., 3,5% (as again 4,3% in 1976) are indeed realized. Inflationary pressure is still strong and experience has confirmed the argument long put forward by the ETUC: namely, that unemployment is in no way a solution. On the contrary, we are now faced with the danger of seeing the entire Community in a condition of economic equilibrium based on high unemployment, a weak growth rate, and relatively rapid inflation. In spite of repeated governmental statements, according to which the crest of the wave should soon have been passed, the present recession has already lasted more than three years.

It is obvious that the measures taken to date have not been satisfactory in the case of any Member State or for the Community. The ETUC is convinced that action has to be taken, on both the demand and the supply side.

The ETUC believes that it is urgently necessary to reinforce cooperation between EEC countries so that national goals can be made compatible with Community objectives and, above all, with those of the Tripartite Conference. In this spirit, these countries which are economically the most powerful should pursue an expansionary policy aimed at a general restimulation of Community economies.

It is also necessary to safeguard the purchasing power and social benefits of workers and even improve them for in that way a contribution will also be made to maintaining the levels of demand and employment.

In the medium term, structural measures must be taken to ease the pressure on regional employment markets, combined with specific measures to alternate the disproportionate unemployment level among young people, women and the elderly.

Several Governments have decided to restimulate the economy by means of investment subsidies and the reestablishment of a firm growth rate; it cannot be said that this policy has failed to achieve results. Nevertheless, workers have been laid off when rationalization measures were taken to the detriment of their jobs.

Hence, investment policy must be so conceived that the private interests of business concerns become compatible with those of society as a whole, especially in regard to job creation.

In addition, more investment in the public sector is required, above all directed to the improvement of health, housing, training and education, and the general quality of life.

A socially oriented economic and employment policy requires Governments and business concerns to observe the laws and facts of the employment market in times of economic crisis.

We believe, therefore, that adequate instruments must be provided for the application of this policy, or alternatively, existing instruments must be modified in time with the requirements of structural, economic, social and employment policy.

An important means to that end is the reform and coordination of the different EEC funds, which should be used to resolve regional structural employment problems; another would be an improvement in the working methods of the Standing Committee on Employment, which should seek ways of solving present problems.

Price increases should be checked by strengthening competition policy and by price policy measures, not by restricting overall demand.

The ETUC is convinced that the European Council of Heads of Government has the duty of taking responsibility for necessary EEC decisions, in order to escape from the vicious circle into which the Community has fallen.

As the instrument of concerted action by the Governments, the Commission, the employers and the trade unions, the Economic and Social Tripartite Conferences have undertaken to attempt to define common objectives and methods of solving problems in the present crisis. At present a new Tripartite Conference is in preparation. It can hardly be said that success has been achieved in realizing the goals decided at the Luxembourg Tripartite Conference above all in the matter of employment. Therefore the demands put forward at the time by the European Trade Union Confederation remain the same.

The success of the next Tripartite Conference depends essentially on the quality of the preparatory work. Therefore the ETUC expects, from Governments, the European Community, and the employers, concrete information on action taken to date to realize the goals laid down at Luxembourg.

The European trade unions have yet again demonstrated the stability of their tariff policy. On the other hand it will not be easy - as social unrest in some Community countries has indicated - to pursue this stable policy of collective negotiation in the future, in view of the continuously rising inflation rates, and above all since no effect on the employment market situation has yet been seen.

It is a matter of urgency that on the occasion of the next Tripartite Conference, the Governments and the Commission should make concrete policy proposals designed to resolve the unemployment problem and tackle the question of economic stability. They should give greater attention than hitherto to the structural and regional problems of Community employment markets.

The ETUC and its member organizations are ready to give their support to the search for solutions to the unemployment problem and the pursuit of balanced economic growth.

We hope that the European Council of Heads of Government will discuss these questions together with the Commission, which is currently engaged in preparatory work for the Tripartite Economic and Social Conference to be held before June of this year.

4. SUMMARY OF THE COMMISSION COMMUNICATION TO THE COUNCIL OF THE ADJUSTMENT OF THE ECONOMIC POLICY GUIDELINES FOR 1977

I. THE RECENT SITUATION

At the beginning of 1977 there were few signs that the recovery was consolidating. This weakness is attributable to stock reconstitution, the lack of dynamism in fixed investment and the absence of stimulus from public investment. Employment was affected by the gloominess of the business climate. The unemployment rate (seasonally adjusted) remained at around 4.6% for the Community. Although the inflation rate was lower, the rise in consumer prices was still much faster than in most of competitor countries, although considerable disparities could be seen from one member country to another. In the past few months the uncertain trend of the world economic situation has limited export expansion. Imports have continued to grow and the trade balance has deteriorated.

II. OUTLOOK

In the Community, the chances of achieving a healthy expansion of the economy in 1977 remain dubious. The efforts made to correct the imbalances brought about by the energy crisis have not as yet produced adequate results, whilst the continuing lack of confidence in the business sector does not allow of any hope of a recovery in investment and employment - essential conditions for ensuring steady demand and economic growth.

On the world market, if the present tendency continues, sales to the OPEC countries may be a dynamic factor in 1977 but member countries' exports to other areas will be restricted by the size of deficits and the scale of indebtedness. Overall, the expansion of Community exports should be less lively than in 1976.

The decline in inflation rates in 1977 looks as if it will be inadequate to increase the margin for manoeuvre in anti-unemployment policy. The increase in prices (10% at present) could be brought back to 7 or 8% towards the end of the year if strains of outside origin - especially new exchange rate disturbances - do not compromise the recovery process.

Given the lack of dynamic interior demand, the growth of the gross domestic product by volume for the Community (assuming unchanged economic policies) is unlikely to exceed 3.5% in 1977. This rate is far below that which the Community should reach in normal circumstances.

This expansion rate is liable to create new difficulties on the employment market. A slight increase in the number of persons in employment may be expected in several Member States, but not enough to reduce the number of job seekers in view of the fact that a greater number of young people will enter the labour

market for the first time at the beginning of the summer.

III. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR ECONOMIC POLICY

Given the unchanged economic policies, the objectives for 1977 are unlikely to be attained. Therefore, the Community must make further efforts; since a massive stimulation of the conjuncture is out of the question, the basic guidelines in the annual report for 1977 should continue to vary according to the Member State in question.

Recovery should be firmly supported in Member States where the balance of payments is favourable and the inflation rate relatively low. On the other hand, economic policy should be as restrictive as possible in countries where the balance of payments is in deficit and the inflation rate is high. Since inflationary pressure caused by an excessive rise in internal costs persists, a social consensus regarding action to reduce the rise in household incomes and increase productivity in several Member States must be sought. Governments should promote this consensus with appropriate measures, especially in regard to prices, taxation, working conditions, asset formation, and workers' participation in decision-making.

The reabsorption of unemployment requires the coordinated application of an active policy regarding investment and employment. In all Member States the necessary conditions for the expansion of fixed investment should be supported. Encouragement of investment in certain priority sectors such as energy and combating pollution could help to reconcile needs that are sometimes contradictory.

In employment, public aid to investment must be oriented more effectively towards job creation. In all Member States, budgetary policy should be directed to the reduction of public sector finance requirements in relation to the gross national product. However, this policy should be appropriate to each country. The variety of constraints - especially external ones - affecting Member States implies that monetary policies must be differentiated. Nevertheless, Member States must jointly fix a consistent framework for the development of the main monetary aggregates.

IV. COUNTRY BY COUNTRY GUIDELINES

In Denmark, the restrictive policy decided on by the Government since summer 1976 has resulted, as forecast, in a slowdown in private consumption. However, the upward movement of prices may well show new strength because of the adjustments to be expected after the end of the temporary freeze. Consequently, the general guidelines in the annual report are still valid and a prudent economic policy will continue to be necessary. Sectoral investment support measures may be required in the course of the year.

In the Federal Republic of Germany, the chances of the economic upturn continuing seem better. In 1977 an increase of 5% in the GNP should be achieved - a necessity, both to sustain the economic

recovery in the Community and reduce unemployment. Stimulation of private consumption in the short term hardly seems indicated; it would be preferable to centre economic policy on medium-term support for private and public investment. Selective and appropriate measures should be envisaged with a view to increasing the mobility of the labour force developing, vocational training and refresher courses and helping the disadvantaged.

France is going through a period of adjustment. The success of the programme will ultimately depend on two factors: the agreement of the social partners in regard to wage and price norms and the continuance of a sufficiently firm foreign market. The guidelines in the annual report for 1977 should be maintained. In the present "disinflation" situation, the policy already adopted should be speeded up by pursuing structural reforms aimed at developing potentially dynamic sectors, limiting the energy dependence of the French economy, eliminating economic "rent" situations which distort competition or hold back productivity increases and improving the cooperation of the social partners.

In Ireland, the outlook for 1977 seems slightly more favourable. The budget presented on 26 January is well within the guidelines of the annual report. It comprises increased efforts in the investment area to stimulate activity.

In Italy, the development of economic activity has to a great extent exceeded initial forecast. The exceptionally strong expansion of production has nevertheless reduced the chances of attaining the goal fixed under the balance of payments policy. The restrictive guidelines should be maintained and even stressed. It is above all important that the Government and the social partners should try substantially to reduce the dangerous - and widening - gap between Italy and its trading partners. Hence the agreements recently reached between the social partners are not sufficient in themselves to bring the rise in unit wage costs to a rate comparable to that of Italy's main competitors. Supplementary structural measures in energy, industrial and agricultural sectors, the public sector and the distribution system should help to prepare for a return to balanced growth.

In the Netherlands, the measures taken in the framework of the National budget for 1977 should improve the profitability of concerns and to some extent resolve financing problems. Although an increase in GNP of 3.5-4% is forecast, it remains insufficient to bring about an appreciable increase in overall employment. Since the current balance of payments surplus will again be compensated by capital outflow sufficient to avoid a rise in the value of the guilder within the "snake", interest rates should be kept below those applied elsewhere.

In Belgium, economic development remains uncertain. The measures announced by the Government in February 1977 should allow the budget deficit to be maintained at around the level initially forecast, without excessively slowing down economic growth.

On the other hand, barring a change in the existing index-system for incomes, higher indirect taxes would sharply increase the risk of renewed inflationary pressure accompanied by wage increases, which could compromise readjustment measures at present under way.

In Luxembourg, it would be desirable to hold budgetary expenditure within the estimates and maintain selective measures to support activity and promote employment, all the more since employment problems in the iron and steel industry appear to be increasingly structural in nature.

In the United Kingdom, unemployment has continued to increase. The main objectives are still a reduction in the inflation rate, improvement of the balance of payments, and support for production and employment. To these ends, the Government has adopted a policy designed to reduce public expenditure and check the growth of the money supplies. In order to reduce the inflation rate, the Government should not only maintain the present guideline for public expenditure but support it by concluding a satisfactory agreement with the social partners in regard to the next phase of the prices and incomes policy. In 1977 North Sea oil will have a considerable effect on balance of payments. Nevertheless, oil production will not help to overcome unemployment problems. In combating unemployment, the Government must avoid stimulating private consumption; it should, on the contrary, reinforce support measures for employment and continue to fight the structural rigidity of the labour market.

5. EUROPEAN VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE IN BERLIN

The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training was opened on March 9 1977 in the presence of the European Commissioner for Social Affairs and Employment, Mr Hendrik VREDELING.

The main purpose of this Centre is to initiate a form of vocational training common to all the countries of the EEC, by harmonizing the various systems used. It will not be restricted to the coordination and spreading of information, but will promote initiatives to facilitate a common approach to vocational training problems. The centre will organize courses and seminars, design model projects and, by issuing a bulletin, distribute documentation, especially in connection with this type of training in the European Community.

The Centre is directed by a Management Board of 30 members. Nine of them represent the Governments of the EEC countries, nine are delegates from employers' organizations and a further nine represent trade union organizations. Three are delegates from the European Commission. With both sides of industry represented on the Management Board, the promoters of the Centre hope that it will be possible to tackle problems in a practical way and prepare decisions to be made by the European Commission more effectively. The grave crisis in employment now being experienced, especially among young people who have hardly had the opportunity for suitable training, has shown quite clearly how important it is to stimulate initiatives and increase efforts in this area. Account also has to be taken of the fact that free circulation of workers within the EEC makes the harmonization of training levels all the more imperative.

Without waiting for a definite action programme to be worked out, a series of projects has already been started in the last few years and the new Centre will now be able to take up these initiatives one by one on its own account and carry them through. Hence, a study has been made of vocational training policy in Member States; information has been exchanged on the administration, cost and funding of this training; cooperation has been achieved in regard to vocational training of the handicapped and the development of vocational training in agriculture and road transport. Hundreds of thousands of workers have been retrained thanks to grants from the ECSC and the European Social Fund.

The ultimate aim of all these efforts is to remove the differences and inequalities at present found between EEC countries so that all young people have an equal opportunity for training and greater social justice results.

6. MEETING OF WESTERN AND EASTERN TRADE UNIONS IN GENEVA
ON 5 AND 6 MARCH 1977

A European East-West trade union conference took place in Geneva on 5 and 6 March of this year at the headquarters of the International Labour Organization. 35 trade union organizations from 28 countries of Eastern and Western Europe were represented.

The meeting was devoted to a study of the following topics: the health and safety of workers - more especially in relation to the effects of toxic environmental substances - and the training of trade unionists.

The first meeting of this kind took place in March 1975.

The statement issued at the end of the session said, among other things: "The Conference believes that efforts should be continued on the same basis and extended to broader environmental questions and the effects of industrial activity;

while recognizing that there are differences between the various social systems and ideological viewpoints, the Conference believes that the reinforcement of exchanges and cooperation between European trade union confederations fits the present state of development of international economic and cultural relations between countries."

7. THE GHANA TUC AND THE LOME CONVENTION

On the occasion of a visit by a delegation from the Ghanaian TUC to the Head Office of the WTUF in Prague, Secretary-General Mr Abdul MUMINI ISIFU gave an interview to a representative of the radio service of the World Trade Union Federation.

In this interview, reproduced in "Flashes sur le monde syndical" - "News from the trade union world", published by the WTUF (No 8, of 8 March 1977, page 20), the Secretary-General of the Ghanaian TUC answered the following question:

Q: " Your country, Ghana, is a signatory to the Lomé Convention. What repercussions has the Convention on your country's economy, and what does your organization think of this treaty, or economic entity ?"

R: " Since the Lomé Convention is an international agreement, it amounts to a compromise. I should not want you to think that we look on it as perfect. But it is a definite improvement on the present situation. The TUC of Ghana believes that we have to study and evaluate it and understand its repercussions in detail before being in a position to make practical suggestions to our Government in regard to an improvement of the Convention when the time comes for its renewal. I should like to make this opportunity to say that the trade unions of West Africa hope to organize a seminar in one of the countries of the region for the purpose of studying the articles of the Lomé Convention.

But, as I have remarked, the Convention is an improvement on the existing situation."

8. EUROPEAN INFORMATION IN TRADE UNION TRAINING CENTRES

AUDIO-VISUAL INFORMATION KIT: "WHY EUROPE TODAY ?"

The trade union division of the Directorate-General for Information has produced an audio-visual kit intended to be used in the training of trade union militants, especially in trade union training centres. The objective is to present, from the perspective of the Commission of the European Communities, some information on certain current problems which directly concern the world of work.

The "kit" does not intend to impose any particular idea of Europe on its users. It merely suggests that the building of Europe should be situated against the background of a changing world in which our Community can and should play a part - but what part ? It is the task of the lecturer to attempt an answer to that question, to which the kit does not provide a ready-made solution. It is intended as a tool and to stimulate discussion; it can in no way replace the lecturer. Its approach is based on the relation between workers' experience of life and what might be called "European problems". It constitutes an active educational tool in the service of those in charge of trade union information and training.

Europe is the concern of all citizens, from bottom to top. That is why it is essential to re-establish dialogue and, to that end, to reinsert the European debate into the training courses and programmes of the trade union centres. In that way, thanks to a lively and continuous information service, the European citizen will be able to associate himself with the creation of a Europe he has chosen. Such is the significance of this audio-visual information kit.

DESCRIPTION OF THE KIT

This kit on the subject "Why Europe Today?" consists of four separate parts:

- | | | |
|----|--|-----------|
| 1: | "The operation of the institutions"; | 18 slides |
| 2: | "The present problems of Europe and the world"; | 35 slides |
| 3: | "The answers of the European Community"; | 16 slides |
| 4: | "The part played by the workers in the European Institutions". | 13 slides |

The entire kit consists of:

- (a) the lecturer's guide;
- (b) a series of colour transparencies, consisting exclusively of original drawings;
- (c) a 45 minute cassette (the programme is recorded entirely on the first side);

- (d) an information booklet for the instructor;
- (e) an information sheet to be sent after each session to:
the trade union division of the Directorate-General
for Information of the European Communities.

The project lasts 40 minutes in all.

METHOD OF USE

The present kit, in its function as an educational tool in the service of those responsible for information, should be treated as an aid and can in no way replace the primary role (as we see it) of the instructor; simultaneously a spectacle, an information session, a manifestation of trade union militants, audio-visual instruction in the trade union setting is no matter of mere improvisation. Whilst there is no call for specialists or professionals, the instructor should have certain qualities:

1. in the present instance, a deep knowledge of European problems, which should be extended depending on the greater or lesser degree of specialization of the audience addressed;
2. a special aptitude for the art of teaching: The instructor, as a good teacher, is radically different from the conventional lecturer in that he must be able to show great flexibility, when necessary interrupting his talk, intervening judiciously, guiding discussions (without directing them); in a few words, he must have an intuitive grasp of group dynamics and collective work.

The kit can be used for:

1. starting a discussion about Europe during an information evening;
2. enlivening a trade union day session on European information;
3. inserting the European question into a trade union training weekend.

For each of these purposes, the basic elements for the instructor are given in the accompanying guide.

TRAINING INSTRUCTORS

Before being presented to leading figures in the trade union organizations, the kit was first of all submitted to those responsible at national level in the member confederations at the ETUC at a colloquium held at Dourdan in France on 24, 25 and 26 November 1976.

Since then, educational seminars have been held in the trade union training centres of several confederations.

Regional day conferences for training instructors have been organized at the request of trade union organizations.

Finally, a network of instructors, appointed by the trade unions, is gradually being established, so that the audio-visual kit can be used with maximum effectiveness.

It should be noted that all the kits produced by the trade union division are available in the six languages of the Community.