



*European Parliament*  
*Press Release*

*20 Kensington Palace Gardens*  
*London W8 4QQ*  
*Telephone: 01-229 9366*

June 21, 1974

Seminar on "Action against Poverty"

The Commission is organising a seminar in Brussels on 24-27 June 1974 on the theme of "Action against Poverty". About 60 persons, including representatives of Government services and private organisations and research and social workers in the field of poverty in the nine Community countries will take part.

The results of the seminar discussions will help the Commission, in accordance with the Council resolution of January 21, approving the Social Action Programme, to implement in co-operation with the member states, specific measures to combat poverty by drawing up pilot schemes before the end of this year.

The seminar is not open to the press but the basic documents from Government and voluntary groups will be available.

Among the British groups attending will be the Child Poverty Action Group, the National Council of Social Services, the claimants and Unemployed Workers Union, the Confederation of British Industry, and representatives of local and central Government.

The seminar will be opened by Mr. Michael Shanks, Director-General of the Social Affairs Directorate, on behalf of the Commission. The first part of the seminar will deal with the existing situation in the member states and involve a discussion on reports prepared by Government experts and on reports from the National Committees of the International Council on Social Welfare (European office). The second part of the seminar will be devoted to discussion on possible pilot projects based on a draft set of criteria for the selection of projects prepared by the services of the Commission with the advice of a working party of 10 experts in this field set up in consultation with government officials from the member states.

The Social Action Programme approved by the Commission in October 1973 listed "Action against Poverty" as one of its objectives whereby the Member states could be assisted in their efforts to ensure that the chronically poor are aided and equipped to increase their share in the economic and social well-being of the Community. Examples of this chronically poor minority are certain elderly, unemployable persons and their families, the socially maladjusted, large families with excep-

tionally low incomes, and others.

In spite of the sustained history of economic growth and high levels of employment in the Community over the past 25 years, poverty still remains a major concern and persists even in the most fortunate nations. Many important questions can no longer be avoided:

- (a) Why have the needs of certain sectors of the population not been met ?
- (b) To what extent is there a "Quart Monde" = "Fourth World" = excluded from the benefits received by the rest of society ?
- (c) Have the non-poor failed to recognise the persistence of poverty : have they failed to make the changes necessary to end it ?
- (d) How is it that the attempted solutions to social problems still leave a residuum of poverty and may even provoke further poverty ?

No limited programme of pilot projects can by itself resolve these problems but it can sharpen understanding and lead to more effective policies.

An important aspect of the Community's programme should be to see how the existing systems serve the population, looking at the situation from the grass roots rather than from above.

---

Further information from Michael Lloyd at this office or Mr. Joe Carroll of the Spokesman's Group at the Commission in Brussels (tel. 010-322-35.00.40).