



*European Communities
Commission
Press Release*

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THE EEC BEGINS WAR ON WANT IN THE COMMUNITY

The European Commission announced today financial support for a programme of pilot projects and studies to combat poverty in the Member States. The Commission's decision follows the Council of Ministers Decision of July 22, 1975 whereby the Commission was authorised to promote or provide financial assistance for pilot schemes which test and develop new methods of helping persons suffering, or threatened with, poverty in the Community. It was also laid down that these schemes should be planned and carried out with the participation of those concerned and that they should be of interest to the Community as a whole. The Commission was also authorised to grant financial aid for pilot studies to improve understanding of the nature, causes, scope and mechanics of poverty in the Community.

The amount of Community aid for the various pilot schemes and studies totals over £1 million from the 1975 budget and over £1.1 million from the 1976 budget. In most cases the Community's financial grants amount to 50% of the cost of the projects. In the case of pilot studies of exceptional Community importance and which are carried out on the territory of more than one Member State, the Community aid can exceed 50%. The total number of projects for which aid has been approved is 23, of which 21 are pilot schemes which have been submitted by the various Member States and two of which are "cross-national" pilot studies involving several countries. Further details are given below.

The pilot schemes to combat poverty introduce a new element in the development of the Community. Its main concern up till now has tended to be with economic advance, and its social policy has focussed mainly on individuals as workers or potential workers. But this attention to the promotion of general prosperity has failed to meet the needs of certain sectors of the population. There remain vulnerable sectors where poverty is experienced by very many individuals at different stages in their lifetime and a significant minority never escape from this condition. A programme of pilot projects cannot itself abolish poverty, but it can serve to develop clearer perceptions of a complex problem and pioneer new techniques for tackling it.

Background

The Council's Resolution of January 21, 1974, concerning the Social Action Programme submitted by the Commission, listed as one of the programme's priorities, "the implementation, in cooperation with the Member States, of specific measures to combat poverty by the preparation of pilot schemes".

When drawing up the programme of pilot schemes the Commission consulted with officials from the governments of the Member States and with representatives of independent social welfare organisations. A working party representative of public and private organisations was formed which drew up a consultative document. This document was debated at a seminar convened in Brussels in June 1974.

Following this consultative stage, the Commission submitted a Communication to the Council in January 1975 setting out the guidelines for the proposed programme, the criteria for selecting the schemes, the provisions for Community aid, the method of cooperation with the Member States, the implementation of the programme, etc.¹⁾ The draft decision was submitted to the Council in April 1975.

Why Community Action?

While the protection of the individuals and families affected by poverty is primarily the responsibility of the Member States themselves, the proposal to promote pilot projects demonstrated that the Community intended to play a role which, although limited in the resources involved, is potentially of great significance.

The particular advantage of a Community-wide programme is that it can co-ordinate projects cross-nationally so that the experiences can be shared systematically and the fundamentals of the common problems identified. In this way the action of the Member States working through the Community can be greater than the sum of their separate efforts and lead to a speedier resolution of this serious human and social problem.

Poverty defined

For the purposes of the programme of pilot schemes and studies, individuals and families are described as beset by poverty when their "resources are so small as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life of the Member State in which they live". Resources cover goods, cash income and services from public and private sources.

In 1976, the Commission will submit a report to the Council and the European Parliament on the available results of operations carried out with financial assistance from the Community. The Commission could if it were judged desirable, also propose that the Council authorise an extension of Community aid for new or existing pilot schemes and studies.

UNITED KINGDOM PROJECTS

1. A group of voluntary organisations from various parts of the country will collaborate on a Family Day Centre project which seeks to experiment with different approaches to the task of helping the poorest families to counter the particular deprivations of extreme poverty - depression, sense of hopelessness, and social and cultural isolation. The organisations concerned are: London Council of Social Service; Gingerbread, Croydon; Aide à Toute Détresse; Defoe Day Care Project Committee; Cambridge House and Talbot; Camden Family Service Unit; Liverpool Personal Service Society.
2. The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Lisbon) is setting up an Area Resource Centre in the United Kingdom which will be located in a major city with areas of deprivation. The centre will help field workers and local groups, particularly self-help neighbourhood groups, with technical aid and equipment, and advice.
3. The South Wales Anti-Poverty Action Centre, which is a consortium of local groups combatting deprivation, are setting up a multi-purpose resource centre. The resource centre will employ a lawyer, community worker, and a research and development officer.

1) See P-4 of January 1975

4. Two projects concerning the Edinburgh area are being organised by the Craigmillar Festival Society and the Lothian Regional Council. The Craigmillar project is an attempt by the people themselves of this poor area of mainly public housing to tackle and solve its physical and social problems. The Lothian project aims at combatting poverty within the areas of Edinburgh where it is most concentrated. It is intended that the work should not be confined to a separate programme, but that its aims and methods should become part of overall local government policy.
5. The National Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux plans to improve the effectiveness of its services in giving advice and information about the rights of appeal to social security tribunals and in organising the provision of lay advocates to appear before these tribunals.
6. The Northern Ireland Department of Health and Social Services plans two surveys studying firstly the extent to which government and other services are being utilised in the fields of housing, health and education, and, secondly, the part played by voluntary organisations in meeting social needs.

The EEC Contribution to the UK projects will be: 1975 - £192,500
1976 - £229,000.

CROSS-NATIONAL PROJECTS

1. The Institute of Community Studies, London, in conjunction with INFAS (Institut für Angewandte Sozialwissenschaft), Bonn-Bad Godesberg, and CREDOC (Centre de Recherches et de Documentation sur la Consommation), Paris, will carry out the first part of a comparative cross-national survey of poverty in Britain, France and Germany to investigate the composition of poverty groups and throw light on the operation of the social services. Community funds will not be committed to the second part of the proposed study until the results of the first part have proved the validity of its methods to the satisfaction of the Commission and the Member States concerned.
2. The EEC Commission is organising a survey of various aspects of the "face of poverty" throughout the Community. The method used will be to add an extra questionnaire to the regular survey carried out by the Commission among consumers in 5,000 homes in each Member State to ascertain their views on the current economic situation. It is proposed to add this questionnaire to the consumer survey of October 1976. The Commission services intend to draw up this questionnaire on the basis of a preliminary questionnaire to be added to the six-monthly survey on public opinion in the Community known as "Euro-Barometer" which will be carried out next April. The surveys in the Member States are carried out by the following organisations: EMNID (Germany), GALLUPMARKEDSANALYSE (Denmark), NIPO (Netherlands), DOXA (Italy), DIMARSO (Belgium-Luxembourg), Irish Marketing Surveys (Ireland), GALLUP (United Kingdom) and IFOP (France). IFOP will coordinate the results of the surveys.

EEC Contribution: The total cost of these two studies will be financed by the Community. In 1975 - £66,700.

NOTE: For further information on specific projects please contact either:
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