

EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND BOOSTS YOUTH PRIORITY

The main aim of the European Social Fund (ESF) last year was to fight youth unemployment. This year three quarters of the Fund's resources will be concentrated in the same field.

Last year the Fund spent approximately 1.9 billion CAD \$, 23% more than in 1982, according to the ESF's 12th annual report, which has just been published in Brussels.

Fund spending as a proportion of the EC budget also grew - from 5.82% in 1982 to 6.39% last year - because of the continuing deterioration of the job market. But the increase in money available wasn't enough to cope with increased demand.

The employment situation in Europe is deteriorating. Over a million jobs have disappeared, unemployment has risen from 10.4% at the end of 1982 to over 12.5%, more than one unemployed person in three has been out of a job for over a year and more and more women are joining the dole queues. Almost half the unemployed are under 25 and the percentage is growing.

Growing youth unemployment prompted EC Social Affairs Ministers, meeting in October 1983, to agree that at least 75% of future ESF spending should be devoted to training young people. The money will be used to improve their professional qualifications, to help them to adapt to technological change and to reduce regional imbalances in the job market.

In 1983 about half of European Social Fund spending went to help the young, while 30% went to provide training in particularly depressed regions. In 1982 there was a roughly equal split between the two. Last year's increase in youth assistance reflects the worsening problem of youth employment.

Other ESF beneficiaries shared the remaining 20% of 1983 funding. They included the disabled, immigrants, women, textile workers, people seeking retraining in new technologies, firms wanting to cooperate and agricultural workers.

For further information, please contact Darlene Nowlan at our Press and Information Office, (613) 238-6464.

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Délégation de la Commission des Communautés européennes Bureau de Presse et d'Information- OTTAWA