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COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES
GENERAL SECRETARIAT

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PRESS RELEASE

345th meeting of the Council

- Social Affairs -

Luxembourg, 17 June 1975

President: Mr Michael O'LEARY
Minister for Labour of Ireland

749/75 (Presse 63)

Luxembourg:

Mr Benny BERG

Minister for Labour and
Social Security

Mr Maurice THOSS

State Secretary to the Minister
for Labour and Social Security

Netherlands:

Mr J. BOERSMA

Minister for Social Affairs

United Kingdom:

Mrs Barbara CASTLE

Secretary of State for Social
Services

Lord HARRIS

Minister of State,
Home Office

Mr John FRASER

Parliamentary Under-Secretary
of State,
Department of Employment

Commission:

Mr Patrick John HILLERY

Vice-President

PRINCIPLE OF THE 40-HOUR WEEK AND 4 WEEKS' ANNUAL PAID HOLIDAY

The Council agreed to the Recommendation addressed to the Member States regarding the application before 31 December 1978 of the principle of the 40-hour week and 4 weeks' annual paid holiday.

The main aspects of the Recommendation are as follows:

- the normal working week should be a 40-hour week, apart from exceptions for certain specific sectors;
- the application of the principle may not entail a reduction in earnings;
- the minimum duration of annual paid holidays should be four weeks, and the paid public holidays falling within the period of annual paid holidays should be compensated in the form of an equivalent number of days to be added to the annual paid holidays;
- all provisions governing payment for holidays should be amended where necessary to take account of the application of the principle of 4 weeks' annual paid holiday, and the application of this principle should have no detrimental effect for workers in respect of holiday pay.

The Recommendation provides that the two principles shall be applied by 31 December 1978 at the latest, and if possible before that date. Member States are called upon to take appropriate measures to attain the objectives of the Recommendation in conformity with prevailing national practice and conditions, either by means of legislation, by encouraging employers and labour to conclude collective agreements or by any other means.

Member States shall inform the Commission of developments in the situation with regard to working hours and annual paid holidays to assist it in preparing its annual report on social developments in the Community.

FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY

The Council agreed in principle to the Decision concerning the programme of pilot schemes and studies to combat poverty.

The aim of this Decision, which was one of the priority measures in the Council Resolution of 21 January 1974, is to enable the Commission to promote or provide financial assistance for pilot schemes which:

- test and develop new methods of helping the poor and those threatened with poverty in the Community,
- are planned and carried out so far as possible with the participation of those concerned, and
- and of interest to the Community as a whole in that they deal with problems common to more than one Member State,

and also to promote, carry out or provide financial assistance for pilot studies which aim at improving understanding of the nature, causes, scope and mechanics of poverty in the Community.

Under the terms of this Decision, the Commission will be able to grant Community assistance normally amounting to 50% of the cost of the projects recommended. This percentage may be exceeded in the case of certain pilot studies.

The Commission will be assisted in its tasks by an advisory group composed of independent experts and representatives of the Governments of the Member States.

In 1976 the Commission will submit to the Council and the European Parliament a report on the available results of the operations carried out with the financial assistance of the Community.

COMMISSION COMMUNICATION TO THE COUNCIL ON WORK IN THE FIELD
OF EMPLOYMENT

Confirming the importance which it attaches to co-ordinating employment policies and aware of the need to develop work in the fields of employment forecasts and research, the Council took note of the communication submitted to it by the Commission on 21 April 1975 on work in the field of employment and of the comments of the various delegations, which it requested the Commission to take into account in the work to be undertaken.

In particular, as regards

- Annex I to the Commission communication (Co-ordination of employment policies), the Council took note of the initial guidelines outlined by the Commission and requested it to strengthen their content and further evolve the methods for applying them;
- Annex II to the Commission communication (Employment forecasts), the Council confirmed its interest in the matter and emphasized the need to step up co-operation between the national departments and the Commission in this field;
- Annex III to the Commission communication (Research programme on labour markets), the Council considered that the research programme as it was outlined should be implemented following the discussions in the Council.

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The Council noted that the work referred to in the abovementioned Commission communication complemented the employment statistics programme requested by the Council from the Commission before the enlargement of the Communities.

It requested the Commission to expedite its work on this programme.

PRINCIPLE OF EQUAL TREATMENT FOR MEN AND WOMEN WORKERS.

The Council conducted a detailed discussion on the Directive on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women workers (access to employment, vocational training and advancement and working conditions).

The Council discussions dealt in particular with the problems of defining the scope of the Directive, specifically those of including social security in the immediate future in view of the state of the social laws and social conditions in the Member States.

Concluding the discussion, the Council instructed the Permanent Representatives Committee to reconsider all the problems posed by this Directive in order to prepare the decision which the Council will have to take at its next meeting on social affairs.

INTERVENTION BY THE SOCIAL FUND TO ENCOURAGE STRUCTURAL
ADJUSTMENT MEASURES

The Council held a policy debate on the proposal for a Decision on intervention by the Social Fund to encourage structural adjustment measures.

The Council discussions dealt mainly with the choice between the various possible approaches for ensuring that intervention by the Social Fund had genuine impact. In this connection, the criteria to be adopted to determine the sectors or categories and the fixing of any priorities were discussed in detail.

For this purpose the Council had before it the Commission proposal, the Opinion of the European Parliament and a report on the initial discussions in the Economic and Social Committee.

The Council also bore in mind the guidelines evolved on the matter by the Standing Committee on Employment at its last meeting on 3 June, which showed a clear preference for concentrating these measures on young workers in particular,

In conclusion, and pending the final opinion of the Economic and Social Committee, the Council agreed that during an initial period aid should be made available from the Social Fund for specific operations likely to facilitate the geographical and vocational mobility of young people under 25 years of age who are unemployed or seeking employment, on the understanding that priority would be given to young people seeking employment for the first time.

The Council also undertook to discuss by 30 November 1975 a proposal submitted by the Commission under Article 4 of the Council Decision of 1 February 1971 intended to facilitate the geographical and vocational mobility of people who are or have been employed in the sectors particularly affected by the recession-related employment imbalance, taking due account of the regions hardest hit by employment difficulties.

PROGRESS TO DATE: SOCIAL ACTION PROGRAMME

The Council took note of a Commission communication on progress to date in implementing the Council Resolution of 21 January 1974 concerning a social action programme.

Bruxelles, le 13 juin 1975

JC/md

remis au télex à : 12h30

PRIORITE P1

Note BIO (75) 187 aux Bureaux nationaux
cc aux membres du Groupe et à MM. les Directeurs généraux DG I et X

CONSEIL AFFAIRES SOCIALES

Le Conseil consacré aux affaires sociales qui aura lieu à Luxembourg le 17 juin a un programme de travail assez chargé qui donnera une nouvelle impulsion à la mise en oeuvre du programme d'action sociale. Les principaux points à l'ordre du jour sont les suivants:

1) Projets pilotes pour combattre la pauvreté

La proposition originale de la Commission transmise au Conseil le 8 janvier 1975 était une Communication.

Voir SEC(74) 5225 et P-4. Le 16 avril la Commission à la suite du débat au Parlement a transformé sa communication en proposition de décision (COM (75) 172) tout en gardant le contenu de sa proposition originale. On avait attaché à cette proposition une liste provisoire des projets pilotes déjà soumis par les gouvernements et les organisations compétentes des pays membres. Il faut souligner que le Conseil n'aura pas à se prononcer sur cette liste provisoire. C'est à la Commission elle-même d'approuver ou non les projets soumis. Le budget prévu pour l'exercice 1975 et de 2,5 MUC et pour 1976 un montant de 2,8 MUC. La Commission et la plupart des délégations voudraient qu'on envisage la possibilité de continuer le concours financier de la Communauté en faveur des projets choisis au-delà de 1976 mais la délégation allemande maintient une réserve à ce sujet.

2) Recommandation concernant la semaine de 40 heures et 4 semaines de congés payés

La proposition originale de la Commission (COM(73) 1979) date du 26 novembre 1973. Elle était légèrement amendée le 3 octobre 1974 (COM (74) 1623). Pour la situation actuelle et les congés annuels payés dans les Etats membres voir "L'exposé sur l'évolution de la situation sociale dans la Communauté en 1974" pp 254-258. En ce qui concerne les 4 semaines de congés payés, il reste quelques réticences de la part de quelques délégations sur la possibilité d'introduire le 31 décembre 1976 comme préconisé par la Commission.

3) Fonds social - mesures anti-crise

Il s'agit de la proposition de la Commission du 16 avril 1975 concernant une nouvelle intervention du Fonds Social en faveur d'opérations d'adaptation structurelle (COM (75) 126 et IP (75) 73). On avait proposé que la priorité soit donnée aux opérations effectuées dans les régions les plus touchées par le chômage et aux jeunes de moins de 25 ans et aux femmes. La réunion la semaine dernière du Comité permanent de l'Emploi avait révélé tant de divergences de vues parmi les Etats membres sur le champ d'action de cette nouvelle intervention (Voir BIO (75) 176) que le sort de la proposition de la Commission devant le Conseil reste incertain.

4) Egalité de traitement entre travailleurs masculins et féminins

Le Conseil est invité à adopter la directive annexée à la Communication de la Commission du 12 février 1975 sur ce sujet. Voir COM(75) 36 et P-11.

On ne s'attend pas à ce que le Conseil adopte définitivement la directive à cette occasion vu que le Comité Economique et Social n'a pas encore donné son avis. Néanmoins le Conseil essayera de résoudre quelques problèmes qui sont apparus au cours des discussions au COREPER, tels que l'inclusion ou non du domaine de la sécurité sociale dans les dispositions de la directive.

5) Travaux en matière d'emploi

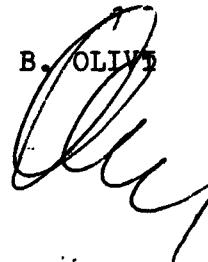
Il s'agit de la Communication de la Commission du 16 avril dernier. (COM(7) 427 et P - 21) concernant la concertation des recherches en matière d'emploi. Le Conseil prendra note de la communication et ajoutera un certain nombre de commentaires.

6) Rapport sur la mise en oeuvre du programme d'action sociale

S'il reste assez de temps le Vice-Président Hillery présentera oralement une mise au point à ce sujet.

amitiés,

B. OLIVE



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COPIE AU CHEF DE LA DELEGATION

AVEC PRIERE DE TTEEE TRANSMETTRE A NEW YORK

NOTE B I O (75) 187 (SUITE 1) AUX BUREAUX NATIONAUX
CC. AUX MEMBRES DU GROUPE ET A MM. LES DIRECTEURS GEN. DG I ET X

SOCIAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL

THE COUNCIL BEGAN AT 10.30 UNDER THE PRESIDENCY OF THE IRISH MINISTER FOR LABOUR, MR. O'LEARY. THE FIRST ITEM ON THE AGENDA WAS THE PROPOSED DECISION TO AUTHORISE PILOT PROJECTS TO COMBAT POVERTY. THE MAIN OBSTACLE PREVENTING THE COUNCIL'S APPROVAL WAS THE OPPOSITION OF THE GERMAN MINISTER, MR. ARENDT, TO ALLOWING COMMUNITY FINANCING FOR THE PILOT PROJECTS TO CONTINUE AFTER 1976. IN SPITE OF THE COMPLETE ISOLATION OF THE GERMAN DELEGATION ON THIS POINT, MR. ARENDT RESISTED ALL ATTEMPTS TO MAKE HIM COMPROMISE EVEN THOUGH IT WAS POINTED OUT REPEATEDLY BY THE CHAIRMAN AND BY VICE-PRESIDENT HILLERY THAT THERE WERE SAFEGUARDS TO ENSURE CONTINUED CONTROL OF EXPENDITURE BY THE COUNCIL. IN SOMETHING LIKE DESPAIR, THE CHAIRMAN POSTPONED FURTHER DISCUSSION ON THIS ITEM UNTIL AFTER LUNCH.

FOURTY-HOUR WEEK AND FOUR WEEKS'S HOLIDAY

AFTER A LABORIOUS DISCUSSION ON THIS POINT THE COUNCIL FINALLY AGREED ON A RECOMMENDATION THAT MEMBER STATES WOULD INTRODUCE BOTH THE FOURTY-HOUR WEEK AND THE FOUR WEEKS'S HOLIDAY BY THE 31ST OF DECEMBER 1978 OR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE BEFORE THAT DATE. THE ITALIAN DELEGATION WHICH PREFERRED THE COMMISSION'S ORIGINAL PROPOSAL OF SEPARATE DATES (END OF 1975 AND END OF 1976) ABSTAINED BUT AS THIS IS A RECOMMENDATION, THE ABSTENTION HAS NO REAL EFFECT. VICE-PRESIDENT HILLERY REGRETTED THAT THE COUNCIL HAD NOT FOLLOWED THE COMMISSION'S PROPOSAL AND POINTED OUT THAT THE SOCIAL PARTNERS AND THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE WOULD ALSO BE DISAPPOINTED AT THE POSTPONEMENT OF THE TIME LIMIT.

SOCIAL FUND - ANTI-CRISIS MEASURES

AFTER AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON THIS ITEMS BY THE DELEGATIONS THE COMMISSION AGREED TO DRAFT A PROPOSAL DURING THE LUNCH BREAK WHICH WOULD REFLECT THE OVERWHELMING CONCENSUS EXPRESSED THAT PRIORITY SHOULD BE GIVEN TO HELPING YOUNG UNEMPLOYED WORKERS.

AMITIES

J. CARROLL

17.6.75

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NOTE BIO (75) 187 (SUITE 2) AUX BUREAUX NATIONAUX
CC. AUX MEMBRES DU GROUPE PORTE-PAROLE ET MM. LES DG I ET X

SOCIAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL

THE COUNCIL RESUMED ITS WORK AT 15H30 BY A DISCUSSION OF THE PROPOSED DIRECTIVE FOR EQUALITY OF TREATMENT FOR MEN AND WOMEN WORKERS (ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND WORKING CONDITIONS).

THE BRITISH REPRESENTATIVE, MRS. BARBARA CASTLE, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOCIAL SERVICES, IMMEDIATELY ASKED FOR A DISCUSSION OF THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THE DIRECTIVE SHOULD APPLY TO THE FIELD OF SOCIAL SECURITY OR NOT.

THE COMMISSION'S POSITION WAS THAT THE PHRASE "WORKING CONDITIONS" AUTOMATICALLY INCLUDES SOCIAL SECURITY UNLESS IT IS EXPRESSLY EXCLUDED. IN VIEW OF THE FINANCIAL BURDEN WHICH INCLUSION OF SOCIAL SECURITY WOULD ENTAIL ON MEMBER STATES (INCREASE IN WOMEN'S PENSIONS ETC.) THE COMMISSION PROPOSED THAT THE COUNCIL AT THIS STAGE APPROVE OF THE PRINCIPLE OF INCLUDING SOCIAL SECURITY AND OF ITS GRADUAL INTRODUCTION OVER A PERIOD OF TIME. MOST DELEGATIONS

FAVOURED THIS APPROACH.

MRS. CASTLE, HOWEVER, QUERIED THE CONCEPT OF "EQUALITY OF TREATMENT" AS DEFINED IN THE TEXT OF THE DIRECTIVE POINTING OUT THAT SOME NEW BRITISH LEGISLATION DISCRIMINATED DELIBERATELY IN FAVOUR OF

THE DISCRIMINATION IN THE PAST AGAINST WOMEN.

AFTER A LONG DISCUSSION ON THIS ASPECT THE CHAIRMAN WAS OBLIGED TO REFER THE POINT BACK TO COREPER WITHOUT ANY FIRM DECISION ON THEM

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AFTER A LONG DISCUSSION ON THIS ASPECT THE CHAIRMAN WAS OBLIGED TO REFER THE POINT BACK TO COREPER WITHOUT ANY FIRM DECISION ON THE PRINCIPLE OF INCLUSION OF SOCIAL SECURITY BEING TAKEN. MRS. CASTLE DID PROPOSE AN AMENDMENT, HOWEVER, INDICATING THAT BRITAIN COULD ACCEPT THE PROGRESSIVE INTRODUCTION OF SOCIAL SECURITY IN THE DIRECTIVE AFTER THE COMMISSION HAD MADE A THOROUGH EXAMINATION OF THE PROBLEM AND HAD MADE APPROPRIATE PROPOSALS.

THE COUNCIL THEN DECIDED TO RESUME DISCUSSION OF OTHER ASPECTS OF THE DIRECTIVE LATER IN THE EVENING. IT WAS CLEAR THERE WOULD BE NO DECISION AT THIS MEETING APPROVING THE DIRECTIVE.

A SUIVRE.

AMITIES

PRIERE DE TRANSMETTRE A NEW YORK

COPIE AU CHEF DE LA DELEGATION

NOTE B I O (75) 187 SUITE 3 ET FIN AUX BUREAUX NATIONAUX
C.C. AUX MEMBRES DU GROUPE ET A MM. LES DIRECTEURS GEN. DG I ET X

SOCIAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL

PILOT PROJECTS TO COMBAT POVERTY

AT A LATE STAGE IN THE EVENING THE COUNCIL FINALLY APPROVED THE DECISION TO INSTITUTE A SERIES OF PILOT PROJECTS AND STUDIES TO COMBAT POVERTY. THE GERMAN INSISTENCE ON LIMITING COMMUNITY FINANCING TO 1975 AND 1976, EVEN IF THE PROJECTS CONTINUE LONGER, AND ON REQUIRING THE COMMISSION TO FINANCE THE 2 DECIMAL 8 MILLION UNITS OF ACCOUNT EXPENDITURE FORSEEN FOR 1976 BY MAKING ECONOMIES IN OTHER AREAS OF THE 1976 BUDGET, WAS SEVERELY CRITICISED. THE IRISH DELEGATION LED BY MR. CLUSKEY EXPRESSED SOME BITTERNESS AT THESE STRINGENT CONDITIONS AND VICE-PRESIDENT HILLERY EXPRESSED RESERVES ON THE QUESTION OF MAKING ECONOMIES IN A BUDGET NOT YET DECIDED. SOME LESSER PROBLEMS WHICH HAVE TO BE SETTLED WERE REFERRED BACK TO COREPER SO THE FINAL TEXT OF THE DECISION SHOULD BE ADOPTED AS AN "A" POINT AT A FUTURE COUNCIL.

SOCIAL FUND - ANTI-CRISIS MEASURES

AT 23.00 HOURS THE COUNCIL APPROVED A COMPROMISE TEXT DRAWN UP BY THE COMMISSION WHICH WILL PERMIT THE SOCIAL FUND TO GRANT ASSISTANCE UNDER ARTICLE 4 OF ITS RULES TO FACILITATE THE EMPLOYMENT AND GEOGRAPHICAL AND VOCATIONAL MOBILITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE UNDER 25 YEARS OF AGE WHO ARE UNEMPLOYED OR SEEKING EMPLOYMENT. PRIORITY SHALL BE GIVEN TO PERSONS SEEKING EMPLOYMENT FOR THE FIRST TIME.

THE COMMISSION INTENDS TO USE THE 50 MILLION UNITS OF ACCOUNT NOT SPENT UNDER ARTICLE 4 OF THE SOCIAL FUND LAST YEAR TO FINANCE THIS NEW AID IN 1975. IT HAS ALREADY ASKED THE COUNCIL TO AUTHORIZE THIS TRANSFER OF CREDITS.

IN ORDER TO RESPOND TO THE ITALIAN INSISTENCE THAT THE SOCIAL FUND SHOULD ALSO BE USED TO HELP THE RETRAINING OF PERSONS EMPLOYED IN SECTORS DIRECTLY AFFECTED OR LIABLE TO BE AFFECTED BY STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT MEASURES, THE COUNCIL AGREED TO DISCUSS BEFORE 30TH NOVEMBER 1975 AN APPROPRIATE COMMISSION PROPOSAL.

EQUAL TREATMENT FOR MEN AND WOMEN WORKERS

FATIGUE RESULTED IN THE COUNCIL REFERRING FURTHER STUDY OF THE PROPOSED DIRECTIVE BACK TO COREPER WITH A VIEW TO HAVING IT APPROVED BY A FUTURE COUNCIL OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS.

FIN.

AMITIES

J. CARROLL

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