

News • Dossier • Publications • Coming up

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forum

Dossier:
European Social Policy
Forum 98

Employment & social affairs



European Commission

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Editorial



by Pádraig Flynn

Welcome to this third edition of Forum magazine, which is devoted to the Second European Social Policy Forum which took place in Brussels in June 1998.

This exciting event, a highlight in the calendar of the European Commission, brought together over 1 500 people from all the corners of Europe, including the countries of central and eastern Europe. They represented community groups, voluntary organisations, NGOs, trade unions, employers, governments, the public sector, private companies, foundations and research institutes. Above all, the participants at the Forum represented European citizens – from within and outside the Union – and their interests, opinions and concerns on the most important social issues on the European agenda.

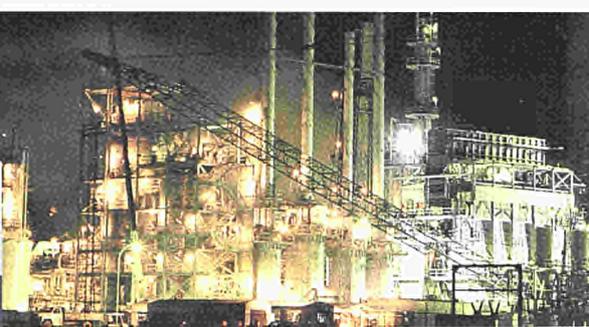
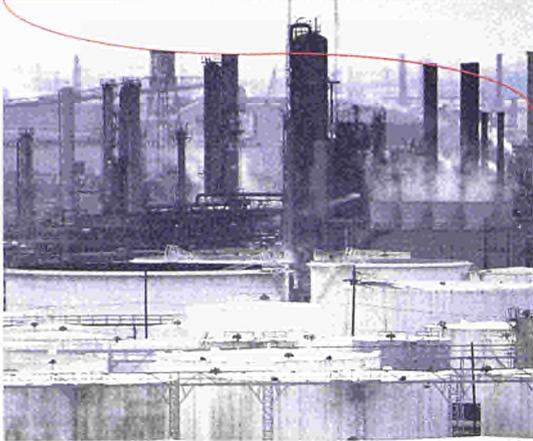
It is the mix of different voices which made the Forum such an important and successful event. This edition of Forum can only give a brief, but I hope stimulating, overview of the numerous different debates, discussions and indeed arguments which took place on a wide range of issues over the course of three days.

The Platform of European Social NGOs and the European Trade Union Confederation jointly produced one of the most innovative parts of the event – the Open Forum. This helped to give a more interactive role in the debates to all organisations, thus ensuring that the views of as many people as possible were heard at the Forum.

The Social Policy Forum perhaps raised many more questions than it answered. The social policy challenges we face in Europe – to create jobs, to guarantee social protection for all and to promote participation in society – are complex. It is only through continuous debate and exchange of experience that we can hope to ensure that all the relevant views and opinions are considered.

The Forum is an excellent example of civil dialogue in action at the European level, but it is not the only example. I will continue to work with the representatives of the NGOs and the social partners to enrich the dialogue which we already have on a myriad of issues. For this reason, I will ensure that our civil society partners have a continued role in the development of social policy at the European level.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pádraig Flynn', written in a cursive style.



Progress in the EU employment strategy

Union's employment strategy has made much headway. Back in November 1997 at the extraordinary jobs summit in Luxembourg, EU leaders agreed to put in hand an integrated strategy for employment based on sound macroeconomic policies, a well-functioning single market and labour market modernisation. They also endorsed the 1998 employment guidelines.

These guidelines provided the framework for national employment policies in 1998. The Member States' national action plans (NAPs), setting out how they intend to implement each of the guidelines, were submitted to the European Commission and evaluation of the plans provided the backdrop to the Commission's communication 'From guidelines to action — The national action plans for employment'. This served as the basis for discussion at the Cardiff European Council of Member State leaders last June.

Mid-October saw the Commission adopt three important documents. The proposal for the 1999 employment guidelines maintains the four-pillar structure of employability, entrepreneurship, adaptability and equal opportunities; the main aim being to consolidate the path mapped out in the 1998 guidelines. Five issues were emphasised as in need of greater attention: proactive tax and benefit measures; the need for lifelong learning; barriers to the employment of disabled groups and ethnic minorities; the jobs potential of the services sector; and difficulties in reconciling work and family life.

The joint employment report, which reviews the state of the labour market in every Member State, weighs up what each has done to put into practice the 1998 employment guidelines. In a comprehensive review, the report assesses each country's progress in the four pillars of the European employment strategy. While not shying away from

criticism, the report is upbeat about the headway made across the Union as a whole, highlighting examples of current good practice that other Member States might usefully adopt.

The 1998 employment rates report — the first of its kind — offers a statistical overview of the size and make-up of the workforce in the Member States and examines the EU's performance against that of its major partners. The main point to emerge is that the Union's overall employment rate is well below that for the USA and has actually fallen over the past two decades. The report examines the reasons for this and offers suggestions for closing the gap and harnessing fully the employment potential of the labour force.

On 11 and 12 December, EU leaders meeting at the Vienna Council adopted conclusions on the basis of the joint employment report and on the implementation of the guidelines for employment. It also agreed the employment guidelines for 1999.

All three papers are available in full on-line at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg05/index_en.htm and are summarised in press releases at: <http://europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh> (references: IP/98/887, IP/98/888 and IP/98/889)





Equality is the future

In May, the European Commission adopted its 1997 report on equal opportunities for women and men, presenting the most important national and Union-wide developments over the year (COM/98/302 final). Three points get special mention. The first, the agreement of the Amsterdam Treaty, introduces new powers relating to equal opportunities: Article 13 will permit appropriate action to combat all discrimination while Article 141 extends the scope of the former Article 119 by giving equal treatment a specific legal base. Next is the progress made in the mainstreaming strategy to integrate gender issues into all other relevant policy areas. The European Commission itself has appointed 29 officials to ensure the various directorates-general do just that and proposals were tabled to include equality in Structural Fund and development cooperation schemes. Finally, in recognition of the fact that a higher number of women in the labour market will contribute to the employment growth the EU needs to secure its prosperity and welfare systems, the new employment strategy (see above) establishes equal opportunities as one of the four pillars which must underpin Member State employment policies.

These and other matters were discussed at a conference on 21 and 22 September in Brussels, which attracted 500 participants from across the EU and the applicant countries. An exhibition on equal opportunities and good practice in Europe was on show, featuring stands from the Community action programme, DG V and organisations working for equality across Europe. In a number of workshops, specialists presented their views and visions, and the sometimes controversial debate that ensued was rounded off with a session entitled 'The added value of European equality policy'.

Unit D.5 of DG V deals specifically with equal opportunities.

You can find the relevant website page at:

http://www.dg5b.cec/en/temp/equ_opp/index_en.htm

The report on equal opportunities for women and men has been published (see publications section on page 29).

Industrial change — the economic and social implications

In November, a high-level group chaired by Per Gyllenhammar delivered its final report on the economic and social implications of industrial change. The report looks at ways in which change can be anticipated and pre-empted, and offers suggestions for dealing with the effects of company and sectoral restructuring. The importance of effective studies and forward planning is stressed as is the shift towards a more adaptable, entrepreneurial culture. Also highlighted is the need for strong links between government, business and academia to generate an ongoing process of skill updating. Among the innovations mooted in the report

is the creation of a Europe-wide 'observatory' to act as a social dialogue forum, gathering and disseminating information and best practice. The report also floats the possibility of sanctions against firms that respond to industrial change by downsizing without proper retraining or chances of future employment for their employees.

The report is available as a publication – see page 30



Europe direct — Strengthening the dialogue with citizens and business

A major event at the Cardiff Summit was the launch by Commission President, Jacques Santer, and UK Prime Minister, Tony Blair, of 'Europe direct', a new service which gives people user-friendly telephone and Internet access to information and advice about the EU and their rights in it. Seven Commission Directorates-General, including V, contribute to the service, which offers five main facilities:

- (1) a mailbox service for questions about general EU issues;
- (2) a new 'EU-routemap for jobseekers' and other guides, which give a general overview of your rights and opportunities in the single market;
- (3) a jobs database, backed up by the personalised information and advice provided to mobile jobseekers by the EURES network and its Euroadvisers;
- (4) topical fact sheets on, for example, how to obtain a residence permit or recognition of a diploma;

- (5) a 'signpost service' to help people overcome practical problems in exercising their single market rights. A multilingual expert team directs callers to an EU, national or local body that can provide further assistance.

If you have any questions, contact Europe direct at:

<http://europa.eu.int/citizens> or telephone your national line on:

B:	0800 (F) 920 38, (W) 920 39	
DK:	8001 02 01	NL: 0800 80 51
D:	0130 85 04 00	A: 0660 68 11
EL:	00800 321 22 54	P: 0800 22 20 01
E:	900 98 31 98	FIN: 0800 11 31 91
F:	0800 90 97 00	S: 020 79 49 49
IRL:	1800 55 31 88	UK: 0800 581 59
I:	167 87 61 66	
L:	0800 25 50	



'Adapting and promoting social dialogue at Community level' — Commission adopts communication

After a major consultation exercise involving social partners and public authorities, the Commission adopted a communication (COM(98) 322) on 20 May to create an effective framework for information, consultation and negotiation procedures within the Union. The communication, which is designed to enable dialogue to play its full part in modernising and strengthening Europe's social dimension, is based on four strands:

Information: The Commission has established more efficient channels for exchanging information with all the social partners and it encourages the European social partners to follow up the outcome of the European social dialogue with their affiliates at national level.

Consultation: Alongside the communication, the Commission adopted a new framework to introduce more flexible social dialogue bodies which can be easily extended to new sectors. Participation requires a joint request by representative organisations from both sides of industry in a given sector. Similarly, at cross-industry level, the advisory committees will be streamlined and the Commission will ensure that all social partners are consulted on policy developments.

Employment partnership: The Commission adopted a proposal to reform the Standing Committee on Employment. The proposal aims to strengthen exchanges between the Commission, the Council and the social partners, on the basis of the Council resolution on the employment guidelines.

Negotiation: The Commission confirms its support for the development of real collective bargaining at European level within the legislative framework laid down under the agreement on social policy. This framework will now be incorporated into the Amsterdam Treaty.

Budget lines for NGOs unblocked

On 10 June 1998 the European Commission temporarily suspended some 100 budget headings, following a ruling by the European Court of Justice of 12 May 1998 (C-106/98), which set out a number of rules for implementing the EU budget. They state that any expenditure on Union activities requires both a budget entry and a legal basis i.e. a piece of secondary legislation (regulation, directive or decision) authorising it (the only exceptions are non-significant operations). The Commission took charge of verifying budget lines without such a basis. By mid-July, about three quarters of the budget lines were totally or partially unblocked, when the Commission was satisfied that they fulfilled the criteria laid down in the Court's ruling.

For most of the headings still blocked, a proposal for a legal basis was pending with the Council and the European Parliament. The remainder could not be implemented in accordance with the Court ruling. Only where there were existing legitimate expectations would operations go ahead in 1998 (for example, if a contract had already been signed).

The budget Council and tripartite meeting between the Council, European Parliament and Commission of 17 July 1998 arrived at a long-term solution to the problem of legal bases



Participants at the European Social Policy Forum initiating a red card campaign for the unblocking of several budget lines

and reached an ad hoc agreement on implementation of the 1998 budget. In addition, the Council and the European Parliament reinforced their commitment to speeding up the adoption of pending legal bases.

As part of this solution, the Commission resumed implementation of politically sensitive budget lines. Furthermore, a Commission communication of 16

September 1998, redirected measures for combating social exclusion to prepare new operations under the Amsterdam Treaty. Most of the 1998 budget lines have now been unblocked.

The Commission also empowered Commissioner Erkki Liikanen, responsible for budget and administration, to sign a draft inter-institutional agreement between the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission as a long-term solution to the issue. The agreement specifies that only appropriations for pilot projects, preparatory measures and autonomous operations can get the go-ahead without legal bases. The cost of pilot projects and preparatory measures cannot exceed ECU 107 million per year.

Free movement of workers

On 22 July, the Commission adopted three legislative proposals to update and clarify citizens' rights to move about the EU to take up work. The first two amend and update Regulation 1612/68 and Directive 68/360, the two core pieces of EU legislation that have guaranteed freedom of movement for workers within the Union for the past 30 years. The amendments support the European employment strategy by removing obstacles to greater labour market mobility. They deal with equal treatment for workers who choose employment in another Member State, clarify and simplify the rules on residence and set out the rights of families who move to join a migrant worker. The third proposal is for a decision to merge two existing tripartite consultative committees — one on free movement of workers, the other



on the coordination of social security schemes — into a single tripartite advisory body with a clearer policy focus.

For more details, see:

<http://www.dg5b.cec/en/temp/news/fmoveen.htm>

Advancing the debate on the future of social policy: the second European forum on social policy

The forum, which was held in Brussels from 24 to 26 June, was an opportunity for some 1 500 representatives of the European institutions, governmental and employers' organisations and public authorities to debate the future of social policy in Europe.

The highlights and various activities of the three-day event are set out below.



Chairman Wim van Welzen and rapporteur Peter Townsend talking to participants at session A

The future world of work — Parallel session A

Rapporteur: Peter Townsend, University of Bristol

On 24 June in the afternoon, in the orange room, built like a modern cinema and able to hold several hundred people, the big screen flickered: sparks flying during precision welding; cut: computers and modern communication technologies; cut: a group of elderly people. The European Commission's video set the scene for the workshop's discussion of the range of topics revolving around the future of work. The message: rapid technological development was transforming Europe's economy, while the growing number of older people and persistently high unemployment demanded political solutions. What could Europe do, what could the Member States do, to retain their social character despite social systems creaking at the limits of their capacities? And could the crisis on the labour markets be resolved?

These questions were debated intensively by participants and speakers in the workshop 'The future world of work' during the first two days of the social policy forum. The speakers on the podium reflected the various social actors involved. Renate Hornung-Draus was there on behalf of the European employers' association UNICE, while Mike Allen represented the NGOs, Karl-Johann Lönnroth the European Commission and Penny Clarke the European trade unions, with Professors Peter Townsend and Carlo Borzaga as the scientific experts.

After a few brief words of introduction by the Chairman, Wim van Welzen, Member of the European Parliament, the discussion focused directly on the crucial question: where are the obstacles to more employment? Renate Hornung-Draus highlighted over-restrictive and over-complicated labour legislation as a major obstacle. 'Anyone who wants to start a business and employ people is forced to get a lawyer. This is not on!' The laws governing night work or work on screen were too restrictive for businesses, so deregulation was urgently required. And employees would have to get used to lifelong learning in future. 'The pressure on workers is constantly increasing. We're again supposed to work more, be flexible and learn, learn, learn. Only to be burnt out at 45 and no longer wanted anyway?' A member of the European association of the unemployed had taken up the microphone, with his image projected on screen at three times normal size so everyone could see him. Chairman Wim van Welzen thought too that employability, i.e. getting the right qualifications for the labour market, was certainly an important point. However, only four out of every 10 unemployed people in Europe didn't have suitable occupational training. 'This also shows that there is not enough work to go round!', he stated, attempting to steer the discussion towards government support measures. The problem of excessive indirect labour costs was then quickly raised.

'Our system punishes labour and favours capital investment', argued a Finnish participant, 'we have to look together for new tax models with a neutral impact on the labour market.' Denmark had tried to finance social insurance from VAT but had failed to get this past the European Court of Justice. Karl-Johann Lönnroth, on the podium representing the European Commission's DG V, then intervened and, citing the imminent arrival of the single currency area, called for closer coordination between social and labour market policies in Europe 'to prevent unemployment being exported from one EU Member State to another.' He also mentioned the European employment strategy, recently adopted at the Luxembourg Summit, which called for coordinated action by the Member States following precisely defined guidelines.

Speakers and participants wondered whether high economic growth would be enough to eliminate the problems. However, the answers were fairly sceptical: growth alone would do little to improve matters. Work had to be redistributed, felt Penny Clarke, and cutting working hours could create new jobs.

Could salvation be found in the service society, should Europe follow the model of the US jobs miracle with its low wages? 'We'd then have more work, for, say, self-employed porters or attendants — but would end up with a poverty problem!' argued an Austrian. According to a Portuguese lady, 'the problem is that services such as care for the elderly or children are in principle urgently needed, but hardly any money can be earned from them.' This babel of tongues posed no problem, since an entire team of interpreters was busy explaining what was said. Even the hard of hearing could follow the discussion, with interpreters familiar with sign language hurrying over, stool in hand to sit next to them.

Again and again, Wim van Welzen bravely had to remind contributors to keep it short. Many in the audience had something to say, and the chairman had to squint against the light to make out the raised hands and call people to speak.

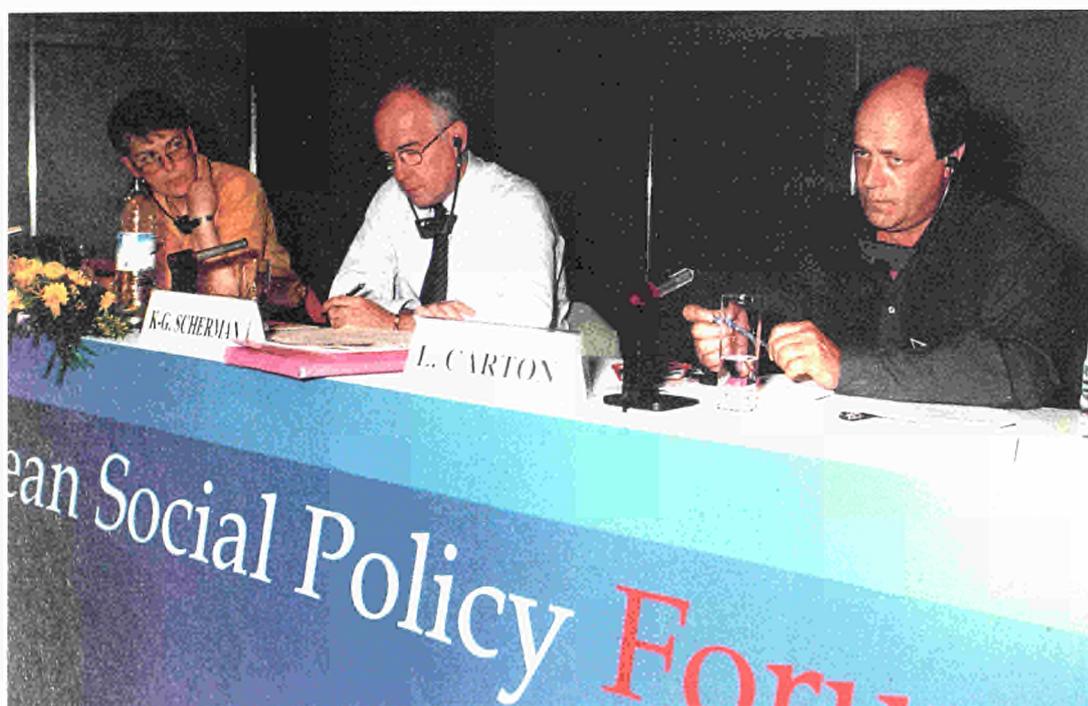
The numerous contributions were not just confined to analysing and assessing the problems. A man high up in the audience introduced himself as a Spaniard and wanted just to say that the 'First employee programme', launched by the Spanish government to help the self-employed recruit their first employees, had already created two million jobs in Spain.

Professor Carlos Borzaga pointed to another employment-intensive but little considered area: 'social' enterprises such as co-operatives, foundations and societies. 'Just because they are not intended to make a profit, we get the impression they are inefficient. But they are not.' His position was supported by participants who pointed out that governments all channelled economic aid and subsidies to companies that cut employment,

while social organisations were left empty-handed even though they kept or even created jobs.

In the end, it was clear to everyone that something could be done, but this required governments to make changes to their tax and aid systems. Danièle Meulder of the Free University of Brussels mentioned just some examples currently under discussion in Europe: a CO₂ tax, a 'bit' tax on computers — all opportunities for reducing taxes on labour. But nothing had come of them. As Mike Allen put it succinctly: 'There are any number of good ideas, but also a lot of interests that block change.' A member of the audience added: 'We should be clear about one thing: if we want to change anything, we'll need enormous perseverance.'

Elke Bröder



Chairman Karl-Gustav Scherman and rapporteur Luc Carton at session B

Social protection: adapting to changing needs — Parallel session B

Rapporteur: Luc Carton, Fondation Travail-Université, Brussels

Main issues

This session aimed to examine the future of social protection and the roles of those responsible for managing and providing public social services at the national, regional and local level.

Gabrielle Clotuche of DG V considered that the key words in the preparatory report were employability, demographic ageing and social exclusion. There was a call for a working group to follow up this report, involving in particular the NGOs, the public social services and the social partners, to study best partnership practices and how to better integrate the users or clients of social services in policy formulation.

Debate

Rapporteur Luc Carton considered there was agreement among participants on a wide definition of social protection including not only social security schemes and social policies, but also services and benefits to ensure the well-being of all members of society: in particular housing, education, health and social services.

The prevention of exclusion was unanimously recognised as the highest priority of social policy. For most participants, adapting social protection in the context of a changing European society means maintaining or restoring current mechanisms of solidarity as well as developing this protection: new needs must be recognised, defined with the populations themselves, and addressed by new services and benefits. It also requires a reinforcing of the bonds between civil and social dialogue and greater involvement by employer organisations in the process.

Approaches to the general principles of social protection varied. The platform of European social NGOs and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) emphasised 'equality' and collective responsibility, whereby revenues and benefits must, in every case, guarantee dignity for each individual. In contrast, the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE) recommended a new balance between individual and collective responsibility, in particular through the development of supplementary insurance for the most solvent part of the population. Social protection should therefore, in certain cases, redefine its scope to target people most exposed to social risks.

All present conceded that in most Member States, financing social protection relies too heavily on employment. Contrary to the employers' position, the NGOs and ETUC proposed lowering social charges by spreading the load on all revenues and factors, especially on deductions reserved for savings, income revenues and energy.

The majority of participants perceived the development of the social dimensions of European integration as the vector of regulation and democratisation: the decisive progress of economic, and monetary integration makes the emergence of a European social policy indispensable, through the establishment of coordination procedures, positive convergence and gradually, common standards. The recent strengthening in the coordination of employment policies was seen as a key element in the emergence of a European social policy.

Despite agreement on the need to reach a new socioeconomic compromise, there was intense discussion on the meaning of this compromise and the interpretation of subsidiarity. A small minority of participants considered that the exclusive competence of the Member States in social matters could be a guarantee against the risks of deregulation and greater commercialisation of social protection at the European level.



Having a break at Cybercafé

More generally, some saw the reinforcement of social protection, not only as the necessary redistribution that imposes values of equality and solidarity, but also as a factor of economic growth. Others, however, believed that economic recovery could not be obtained except at the price of more selective solidarity, allowing for more competitive European economies.

Several participants emphasised that some of the broad economic guidelines, discussed at the Cardiff Summit in June, appeared to diverge from the objective of the development of social cohesion and the thrust of the forum.

The notion of employability was widely debated. The NGOs and ETUC in particular stressed how essential it was to affirm workers' rights to training — with or without employment — and not to introduce new conditions limiting the right to unemployment benefits. Many interventions highlighted the risk of placing the responsibility for unemployment on workers without employment, without considering employer responsibility as regards quality, security and volume of work.

Indeed, unemployment cannot be attributed wholly to a lack of training among the active population, especially when qualified work is unavailable and many workers are obliged to accept jobs for which they are overqualified, as ETUC asserted. Similarly, the notion of employability suggests greater respect for workers' rights: today, however, too many older workers, descendants of immigrants, women and young people have irregular or atypical work.

Finally, numerous strategic themes linked to the emergence of new needs were addressed. The strong presence of the European and national networks fighting against poverty mobilised attention towards proposing that actions to combat exclusion should be comprehensive and preventive, and centred on the structural causes of instability and impoverishment. Listening to and using the language of these vulnerable groups are key ways to fight poverty. The networks called on the Commission for the means to carry out a European study on the social situation of these groups.

Socio-demographic changes affect benefits in relation to people with long-term illnesses, the very old, or people with a

disability, as well as benefits and services concerning children. These new demands call for close involvement in the daily lives of individuals, families and local communities. The European network of directors of social services emphasised the central role of the users of social services in their design and management.

Because of the increase in working women and the changes in family structures we need to develop, at all levels, factors to ensure effective equality between men and women and, according to the platform of European social NGOs, accurate individualisation of social rights.

Conclusions

Despite the diversity of opinions, common threads including the new complexity of social issues — in particular the interdependence between territories, areas and actors — are based at all times on the enhancement of democracy. The establishment of new social indicators, to report on trends in inequalities, and systematic procedures to evaluate public policies were regarded as invaluable instruments, allowing for expression, analysis and debate by all relevant actors, an explicit condition of social cohesion, which the participants agreed to define as the capacity of a society to desire equality.

Lesley Kilmurray

Promoting participation and citizenship — Parallel session C

Rapporteur: Maria-Grazia Giannichedda, University of Sassari

As proposed in the background report drawn up by Ms Giannichedda, the participants at this workshop focused debates on four key issues:

- maximising active participation and citizenship, by removing barriers, addressing challenges and seizing opportunities;
- mobilising actors and promoting cooperation between NGOs, the social partners and the public authorities;
- supporting participation and citizenship by promoting rights and flanking measures, in particular via the new provisions of the Amsterdam Treaty;
- promoting integrated and sustainable development and mobilising to this end all Community policies, including the Structural Funds.

Debate

In her summary account of this workshop the rapporteur, Ms Giannichedda, began by highlighting the two key focuses of the session: the promotion of rights and partnership. 'Citizenship' and 'participation' are key to the idea of building Europe 'as a Europe of citizens, a Europe of rights and a Europe for all its citizens'. All participants stressed the need to speed up the process of achieving this goal. Though this may be obvious to people working in the field, it was stressed that not everybody is aware to the same degree of the suffering of those whose rights are denied and those who have difficulty gaining access to their rights.

There are doubts that this goal can be achieved in the short term, and we need to look at the reasons for and sources of these doubts. If we are to build a social Europe we have to increase our commitment and develop new compromises between the economic and the social spheres. Participants stressed that the time was now right to establish a legal basis for the promotion of rights and the necessary measures at strategic level, medium-term level and in response to the achievements of the Amsterdam Treaty.

Building on the work of the Comité des Sages, the participants provided tangible examples of the interdependence of social, civic, cultural and economic rights. Without social rights for all, political rights become restricted to the privileged few and depend, as they once did, on succession. There was consensus on the importance of working on civil and social rights together, at present social rights merely constitute a general principle. Getting social rights acknowledged by the Amsterdam Treaty was set as a priority.

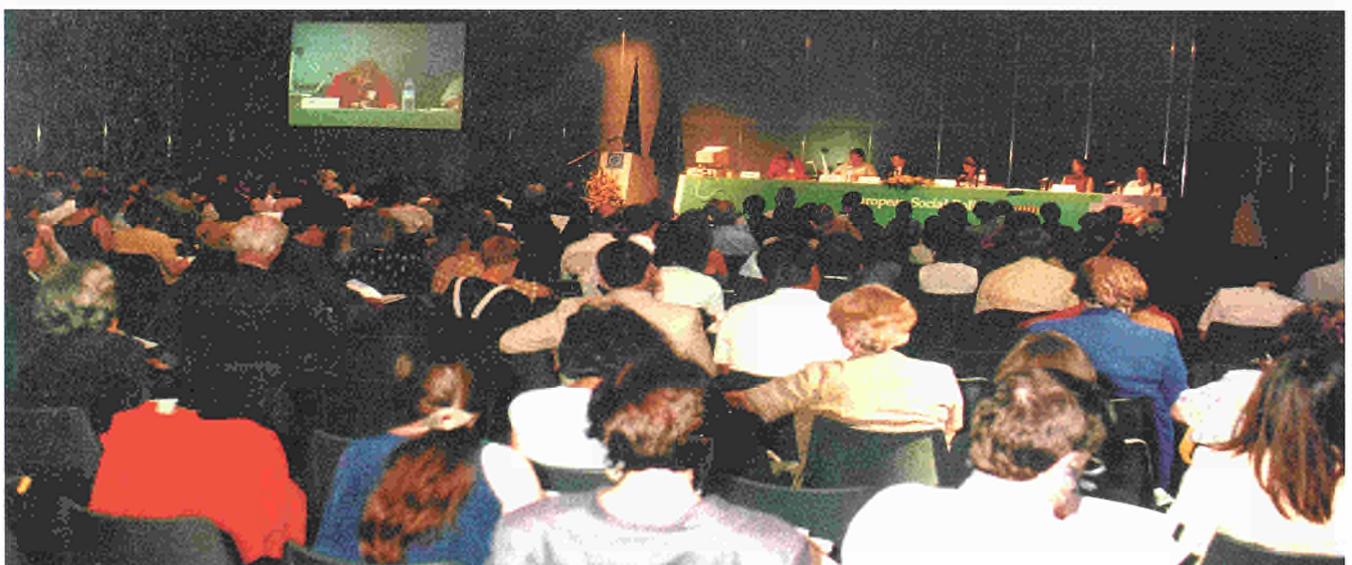
The NGOs and ETUC officially launched a campaign for a bill of rights. Such a proposal, which should receive Commission backing, would fall under Article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty allowing the Commission to take action to fight discrimination.

The partnership approach is seen as a way of bridging the gap between civil and social rights and bringing them closer together. The initial debate at grass-root level in all Member States would stress the importance of European citizenship and rights. A collective campaign would also help to address subjects related to rights and citizenship such as the problems of the poor, young, dispossessed, and severely disabled — those whose voices are not heard.

Ms Murrant, who experiences poverty on a daily basis, worked with the ATD movement to produce a paper analysing her own situation. She pointed out that representation never really corresponds exactly to the true situation: representation is all too often only partial and some people are left out.

Ms Lisa Chatfield from County Durham Youth Council spoke about young people's participation. She put forward the notion that participation by young people should increasingly involve them in making decisions which affect their lives, thus giving them the opportunity to learn from the experience over time.

Mr Brunoldi gave a detailed account of Italy's experience of territorial pacts. Initially projects concentrated on SMEs, tourism,



the food industry and business services; more recent pacts, however, focus on training and links with the social economy. New, alternative forms of working are being exploited. Though difficulties have arisen, these initiatives, which set up wide-scale partnerships, are doing well and progress is being made.

Experience shows that citizenship and participation are feasible goals so long as citizens can access their rights. Action is necessary at both strategic and legal level and through the revision of the Treaty, taking existing texts as a basis.

Many were of the opinion that participation was a means and not an end in itself. The difficulties in managing partnerships stem from different methods of governing; hence the need to exchange information, best practice and tangible experiences. NGOs often find civil dialogue does not gain proper recognition so progress in institutionalising it is slow. What is required, therefore, is action to make civil and social dialogue complementary. The rapporteur called for everyone to take part in the revision of the Treaty by making representations to their local and national governments as well as to relevant organisations.

'The Commission and Member States must urgently resolve current difficulties over funding non-governmental organisations and social policy initiatives and should enhance the resources available to NGOs so that they can develop appropriate democratic and accountable structures at European level and participate fully in policy making debates.'

Hugh Fraiser, Combat Poverty Agency, Ireland

Conclusions

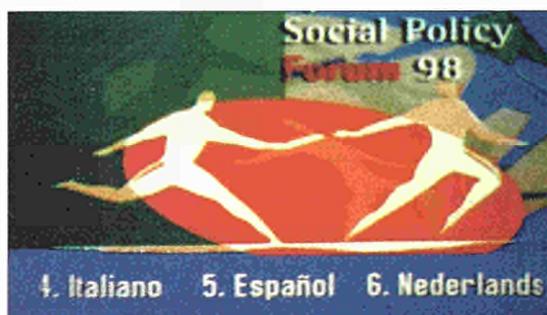
The EU should encourage and promote the development of examples of good practice to facilitate participation by marginalised groups and 'invisible' citizens. We need to examine barriers to citizenship and participation and the different means and opportunities to bring them down.

Two Spanish girls gave an account of their youth organisation which raises awareness locally of various issues, especially racism. Their example highlighted the parallel between fraternity and interdependence. Ms Giannichedda saw this as an important message and emphasised that by working together in a fraternal way we can move closer to political ideals.

'This debate on participation and citizenship cannot be removed from the reference to values of justice and solidarity. Exclusion and discrimination are inconsistent with Europe's democratic ideal'.

Odile Quintin, DG V, European Commission

Caomhan Mc Kernan



On stage at session C





Open forum at the forum

On 25 June 1998 in the afternoon, visitors to the European social policy forum thronged into the central hall. After one glance at the clock and another at the floor plan, they disappeared to the left and right behind the stands. The open forum of non-governmental organisations was now under way, with the presentation and discussion of 48 projects run by European non-governmental organisations (NGOs) concerned with social issues.

With only 15 to 20 minutes set aside for each topic, including the ensuing discussion, the speakers briskly began their talks in the eight booths arranged by theme behind the stands. At 2.50 p.m. in booth 2, Heinz Stieb of Austria's *Volkshilfe* took his place in the quarter-circle. His topic: 'NGOs and police against prejudice'. The goal of this campaign, said Stieb, was to improve the human climate, i.e. to learn from one another and eliminate prejudices about both migrants and police work. Superficial knowledge gained from the media and own subjective experiences needed to be supplanted by factual knowledge and face-to-face encounters. The Austrian briefly outlined the history of the project. The initiative launched in 1997 by the *Volkshilfe* in Austria — bringing together police and public officials and migrant representatives — was now a network stretching across 11 European countries. From Barcelona to Bologna, Saint Denis, Rotterdam, Frankfurt, Berlin, Greenwich and on to Copenhagen, public authorities and NGOs had joined together to offer their police forces training in contacts with migrants.

The measures differed, since each country had a differently organised police force and different ethnic minorities. But the goal was the same: not to convert, but to provide information about the other side. The methods and results of all individual projects were scientifically evaluated, and the network was coordinated by the *Volkshilfe*.

'How have the police responded?' one visitor wanted to know. 'Very well,' replied Heinz Stieb. 'We have also had positive feedback from the interior ministries.' The audience was particularly interested in the training methods. However, time was running out and at booth 2, devoted to the theme 'Combating racism and xenophobia', a colleague from the migration policy group was already waiting. Now it was his turn to present European projects devoted to the fight against racism. There was a little jostling as the visitors wanting more information started to leave behind Heinz Stieb while others with the migration policy group pushed into the small arena, closed off by black curtains yet still open to the outside. Outside at the *Volkshilfe* stand, Stieb replied to questions that could not be answered in detail during the meeting. Visiting cards were exchanged, details scribbled quickly on paper. 'All people working in the field', said Stieb afterwards. There were people active in the social professions right across Europe, who were just as interested in contact addresses in their own countries as in the approaches adopted in neighbouring countries.

An ideas marketplace, information transfer, an exchange centre: the contributions at the open forum were all these things. Some were also more: a demonstration of own initiative. Booth 6 was entitled 'Doing it for ourselves'. Ushers helped people find their way in. A glimpse through the curtain, behind it a



One of the half-hour workshops
at the open Forum

flickering television set. But no advertising beauties or people heavily made up for the camera. Only faces marked by the hard grind of daily life: homeless people in Scotland. End of video. Alex Lowe and Ricky Turner explained how the pictures came about and what they had achieved for the homeless. What was special about this was... they did it all by themselves.

Both speakers were familiar with life in the rough. They were there back in 1994 when the 'Speakout group' was founded in Glasgow. The first Scottish conference of the homeless was now their theme, an event attended by 250 people living on the streets. The main problem had been getting there. How could homeless people with no income and nowhere to live pay for their trip to Glasgow? Some support had been forthcoming, from Oxfam among others, but the funding all had to be organised — there was no generous backing. At the conference, the homeless had expressed their concerns, needs and demands on a graffiti wall and in front of a video camera. A committee they themselves elected had summarised what was said as a basis for drawing up the 'Homeless charter', which was adopted at a second meeting. Main points: the right to accommodation, better management in hostels for the homeless, access to medical care, financial aid, and an end to the massive discrimination that was 'worse than for any other social group'. It was extraordinary to see homeless people explaining their own situations, demonstrating social abilities not normally associated with the homeless in the public mind. Alex Lowe went on to say that several members of the committee had died during the work on the charter: a young woman had committed suicide, another had succumbed to a heroin overdose, while a man aged just 41 had 'died of natural causes.'

What were Speakout's achievements, the audience wanted to know. Alex Lowe thought there were quite a few, mentioning that the Homeless charter was now part of the syllabus at colleges for social workers. The group had set its sights on lobbying and fund-raising. A homeless man had just produced a CD, called 'Young girl on the street', with all proceeds going to the movement. And when the Scottish Parliament was to be elected next year, said Lowe, Speakout and the homeless would be knocking at their door.

'Testimonies' formed part of many contributions. While NGO representatives were speaking, the people they were talking about were usually present too on video — whether old people, destitute women, families with problems, the disabled or gypsies and travellers. The idea was not just to talk about those with problems in society — they should and could also speak for themselves. The range of themes and projects discussed covered nearly all social interests. This concentrated presentation of the social problem areas of Europe could have been overpowering. However, this was not the impression at all. In the booths and at the NGO stands, the focus was more on approaches designed to provide hope and achieve success.

At 4.30 p.m. in booth 3, ideas and projects for creating new jobs were on the agenda. And now the experts were having their say. There were hardly enough seats to go round, and some of the audience were having to stand. Karl Birkholzer and Günther Lorenz of the European network for economic self-help and local development were presenting the findings of a study. Its aim was to identify model social enterprises in France, Italy, Sweden, Germany, the UK and Spain and examine the reasons for their success. 'The context is: away from social



The NGOs and ETUC officially launched a campaign for a bill of rights during the Forum

policy towards social economy,' explained Günther Lorenz. For 'social security can no longer be built just on economic growth', i.e. on rapid economic growth filling the coffers of national governments, which could then distribute their largesse among the socially disadvantaged. In its search for exemplary models, the team focused principally on the link between social enterprises and the community. Here is where strawberries came into the picture. The 'strawberry field strategy' of social cooperatives in Italy involved providing social welfare or training in cooperatives with 10 to 30 workers in close collaboration with the local administration. No cooperative ever grew any bigger, instead it created new small units. Just like strawberries propagated when they could grow no further, explained Karl Birkholzer.

The slides on the overhead projector showed the social enterprises found by the experts to work in practice: for example, the local district enterprises in France. Politicians, local inhabitants and housing associations played a big role in these 'Régies de quartier'. They set up the enterprises and their workers then maintained the green areas, the community areas and the housing stock. Another example is the job creation enterprise Atlantis, from Brandenburg in the structurally weak eastern part of Germany. With this firm, the focus was on high-technology. It offered environmental services and supplied solar and photovoltaic equipment. And trained previously unemployed people for new jobs and a new market. In Sweden's Jämtland, an entire village had taken an initiative — against the 'greying' of the population. Young families would not stay in such a remote area without any industry nearby, so a village cooperative had been set up to promote the local economy: attracting businesses and stimulating tourism.

What social enterprises all have in common, said Lorenz, is that their work had social goals and was not aimed at maximising profit. These cooperatives, social enterprises and job-creation firms preferred to work with the unemployed and the socially disadvantaged. 'But what about money?', a lady in the audience wanted to know. 'Can these social enterprises manage on what they earn from their services and products?' 'Not at all.' Günther Lorenz made it clear that none of these firms was profitable. Without public subsidies, these not-for-profit businesses could not manage. 'How do normal companies view

the existence of public service enterprises, which indeed compete with them?', asked another in the audience. That ranged, replied Lorenz, between slight irritation and acceptance. Just because of this irritation, however, 'social enterprises in Europe need a legal framework, which they have not had so far.' And they needed social auditing to identify more closely the social benefits and efficiency. Two in the audience then both wanted to know more about the financing. 'There are institutions that finance social enterprises, even if it is only pump priming. If anyone wants to find out more, I will be outside in a moment.'

Even while the discussion was continuing, a few participants crept shyly from their seats to grab the information on display. A young Italian post-graduate was happy to find — at last — something she had been seeking unsuccessfully for nine months: useful information on social enterprises in Europe. Responding to a request, Günther Lorenz took a thick book out of his briefcase: the price being DEM 39. However, the Briton wanting to buy it had only Belgian francs in his wallet. A bit of calculating was now required, via UK pounds. Some people rushed off elsewhere, but others with important questions buttonholed the two speakers in front of the booth.

Outside, at the display stands, there were small gathering points. Solidaridad, the umbrella organisation of European welfare associations, and the NGO platform constantly drew small groups of people. As did Commissioner Pádraig Flynn. When the champagne glasses clinked, the moment had arrived. By pressing a button, Commissioner Flynn had just launched EURES, the European job mart, onto the Internet. So now information on jobs in the EU Member States could be called up on-line.

When the last of the discussions at the open forum began, focusing afresh on the fight against racism, equal rights for all, and new ideas and services, the European social policy forum

too availed itself of a new service. It went chatting on-line. The cybercafé, a regular haunt of weary coffee and information addicts, had been turned at short notice into a huge Internet centre, with more than 20 PCs. Staff of the Commission's DG V and Pádraig Flynn stood by to receive questions from the World Wide Web. A number of surfers took this opportunity to have pressing queries answered.

Question put by 'Christian' to Flynn: 'Are both men and women entitled to time off work when a child arrives? Or are only women entitled to parental leave? Is this regulated at all at European level?' It took a little while for the question and then the response to be translated. Christian received his answer from Flynn: 'Yes, of course, both men and women are entitled to parental leave, under European regulations as well.' Thomas then questioned whether there was still any place for social policy 'in the age of the hard euro, for which all Member States are tightening their belts?' And a friendly football fan regularly reported from the depths of the Internet the latest scores of the two World Cup first-round games going on at the time. That too was the European social policy forum. Part of life, not outside looking on.

Elke Bröder





Marie-Claude Vayssade, Chair,
Honorary Member of
the European Parliament



Thérèse de Liedekerke
UNICE

Panel discussion

The Chair, Marie-Claude Vayssade, honorary Member of the European Parliament, introduced the following topics for panel discussion, based on questions contributed by forum participants:

- the kind of cohesion existing between economic and social policies in the EU/the effect of the structure of monetary union on the development of social Europe;
- the concept of partnership and the need to give greater priority to the security enshrined in procedures in certain Member States;
- the Structural Funds after 2000 and how to ensure the involvement of all social players in the decisions and operation of policies and funds, for example, should the Funds be redirected to combat increasing exclusion by way of poverty and geography?;
- equality between men and women and how to help single parents, 90 % of whom are women.

Individual conclusions from the panel

Quintin Oliver, former director, NICVA

Mr Oliver considered that seven or eight years ago social issues were a latecomer to the debate with respect to economic issues, but now there is the beginning of a creative interaction which reflects the significance and indivisibility of the social and the economic. 'However, there is still much progress to be made. There is political dialogue. There is social dialogue. Yet there is no meaningful civil dialogue because the mechanism to implement it is missing'. Since the first forum there has been little interaction and no negotiation to parallel the political dialogue between governments and the social dialogue between trade unions. He proposed a stronger structural connection between NGOs and decision makers. Furthermore, the concept of partnership is overused, sometimes misused. He called for more structure, appropriate budgets, and decision making powers to filter down to the lowest level. 'Only at the local level can you change things within a framework of standards and equalities'.

Thérèse de Liedekerke, UNICE

The creation of wealth together with redistribution are key questions at the root of all topics. 'The problem in Europe is that the systems of redistribution worked for a number of years but they are no longer in line with current realities. We need reform to enable us to effectively reconcile economic requirements with the need for fair social measures'.

On the Structural Funds, she agreed with the ETUC, that combating exclusion coincides with combating poverty. However, on behalf of UNICE, she expressed concern about their reform, particularly of the European Social Fund (ESF). If the ESF helps increase social protection, by making people more employable as a result of training, then this is positive. Concerns arise, however, when different measures are intended.

'Equal opportunities have developed more rapidly than other areas and there has been a lot done at the EU level. The challenge now is to derive the full advantage from the legislative framework.' She referred to the social partners' success in negotiating European agreements on parental leave and part-time work, as well as securing the principle of non-discrimination at the EU level.



Quintin Oliver,
former director, NICVA



Emilio Gabaglio,
Secretary General, ETUC

'However, I'm struck by the negative image of part-time work. It is important for employers and for women because they are at a juncture where it is difficult to reconcile working and family life'.

Ms de Liedekerke acknowledged the semantic problem of the term 'European social model' and the diversity of ways social partners are involved in the various Member States masked by the term. In the social dialogue, what is negotiated on are issues within the social partners' field of competence, leaving social protection matters to the representatives at the EU level. 'There is hence a difference in tasks: the NGOs are active in fields where UNICE has no role outside the workplace.'

Emilio Gabaglio, Secretary General, ETUC

Emilio Gabaglio also considered what the European social model should be. 'The mix of economic and social policy is now breaking down. The model is becoming vulnerable because the face of Europe has changed. We need to adapt. We are more vulnerable because politicians are exploiting this vulnerability.'

More immediately, the introduction of the social chapter into the Amsterdam Treaty meant that Europe had gone some way to redress the balance but not far enough. He referred to the need to develop in parallel with the economic and monetary convergence strategy. 'Whilst EMU is strong, the European employment strategy is just beginning. Social convergence is of the essence too.'

He agreed with Ms Wilkinson on the importance of the employment guidelines, whilst also recognising that they are not fully in line with basic policy lines as regards social matters. He noted a contradiction between certain guideline proposals and a recommendation by the Council of Ministers in 1992 regarding social protection. 'Discussions on social protection should be open, all-inclusive and on the basis of transparent procedures. I am not opposed to reform provided it is well founded on

principles of solidarity, fairly negotiated and respects the rights of citizens'.

As a trade union movement, ETUC's response to social exclusion is seen in the light of fighting unemployment and creating jobs. On the question of whether Europe is responsible for generating exclusion, Mr Gabaglio believes there is a link with the present rate of unemployment for which Europe is responsible. 'The guidelines are still backward looking so the euro has to be used as a springboard to create jobs and growth on a sustainable basis — I just don't know if it will succeed.'

The next guidelines should reinforce the chapter on equality. 'It is necessary to strengthen policies which invest in childcare, the care of the elderly and to introduce structures to enable women to have full access to the labour market.'

He gave ETUC's support of the move to open civil dialogue at the EU level, calling it a logical result of the structure used at all levels. 'ETUC further supports any measure to increase democracy and citizen participation. The EU needs a fresh intake of air as regards social policy with support through the organisations. We need proper democratic social rights at the European level.' He recalled the campaign for a European charter for a bill of rights, launched by the platform of European social NGOs and ETUC, due to the fact that various proposals had not been taken into account by the IGC.



Miguel Angel Cabra de Luna
Fundación ONCE



Marie-Françoise Wilkinson,
Chair, platform of European social
NGOs

Miguel Angel Cabra de Luna, Fundación ONCE

Mr de Luna agreed on the need for a convergence between economic and social policy and emphasised that the NGOs should not be outside the debate. At the same time he maintained that the fight against unemployment was not the NGOs' main task.

He saw the fight against social exclusion as one of the major challenges facing Europe. The Structural Funds should concentrate more on preventative measures as opposed to purely giving assistance.

He expressed satisfaction about the European agreement on part-time work, pointing out that it was not just for women, and that unless there was automatic social protection for part-time workers covered by the agreement the sector would not function properly. 'We need a proper framework to ensure part-time work is a choice rather than an imposition, a right and not just the second best option.'

Mr de Luna referred to the 1995 Copenhagen Summit where parties from civil society, particularly vulnerable groups were consulted on designing a measure related to social development. He maintained that the structures of representative democracy and social dialogue were not enough and that it was necessary to take account of the points of view of civil society for the new social pact. He called for the draft regulations on a European status to be adopted as soon as possible.

Marie-Françoise Wilkinson, Chair, platform of European social NGOs

Ms Wilkinson also appreciated the need to seek a compromise between economic and social aspects. She emphasised that so far the Treaties had recognised economic, financial and budgetary matters but that social issues had little regulation at the EU level. She continued by saying that the balance therefore needed to be redressed. 'The NGOs believe the social should dominate over the economic. Social issues are not merely dependent on economic ones, as a properly functioning society is crucial for the economy as well. Unless we take measures in the future, the social aspect will play second fiddle and competitiveness will continue to take precedence over solidarity, whereas it should be the other way around.'

Ms Wilkinson believed that Europe deals with social protection in an indirect fashion. She underlined the seriousness of the lack of public debate on the tendency towards cutting public expenditure as per the guidelines. 'The recommendations have indirect consequences for social protection and like it or not Europe must learn to deal with social protection openly and democratically. We need to re-discuss statutory changes and include public debate in the next revision of the Treaties.'

She viewed the revision of the Structural Funds as an opportunity to ensure they are used more in combating exclusion, and although this objective is part of the Funds it is not in the text at the moment. 'One of the ways the excluded population can be taken account of better in the Structural Funds is to support and encourage partnership with the NGOs in the planning and implementing of the programmes. You simply can't fight exclusion if you don't include the relevant people and organisations in the discussions.'

Ms Wilkinson acknowledged the point made by Mr Oliver on the call for a deepening of democracy at all levels. She stressed the urgency of developing civil dialogue, as something that should come about independently of the revision of the Treaties. She noted the platform's proposals to the European Commission



Jytte Fredensborg, Secretary General, CEEP



and expressed the hope of receiving replies soon in order to begin serious discussions. 'However, it's not just a question of approaching the political authorities. We must remember our own responsibility in seeing that rights of expression prevail in our own organisations and that we are ensuring a voice from the grass-roots level right up. But we can't carry this out unless we have the practical and financial means to do so. This is why we are hoping for a positive solution to the problem of the budgetary lines — otherwise all the preparatory work will be in vain.'

Jytte Fredensborg, Secretary General, CEEP

'In Denmark the word 'social' creates confusion when one discusses European matters. Social is something decided and is the responsibility for government and local authorities, as is the case for labour market policies', attested Ms Fredensborg.

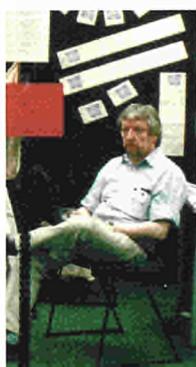
Like Mr Cabra de Luna, Ms Fredensborg considered that the key to fighting exclusion lies in prevention. For example, the way in which new production systems cause exclusion should be examined. The fight against exclusion should also be considered in all EU policies: in competition, CAP etc. Furthermore when the Amsterdam Treaty is ratified, Article 137 will enable the Council to adopt measures on a qualified majority basis and this can be used to introduce legislation to fight exclusion.

'Legislation is very much influenced by people's language, so there still remains a lot to be done'.

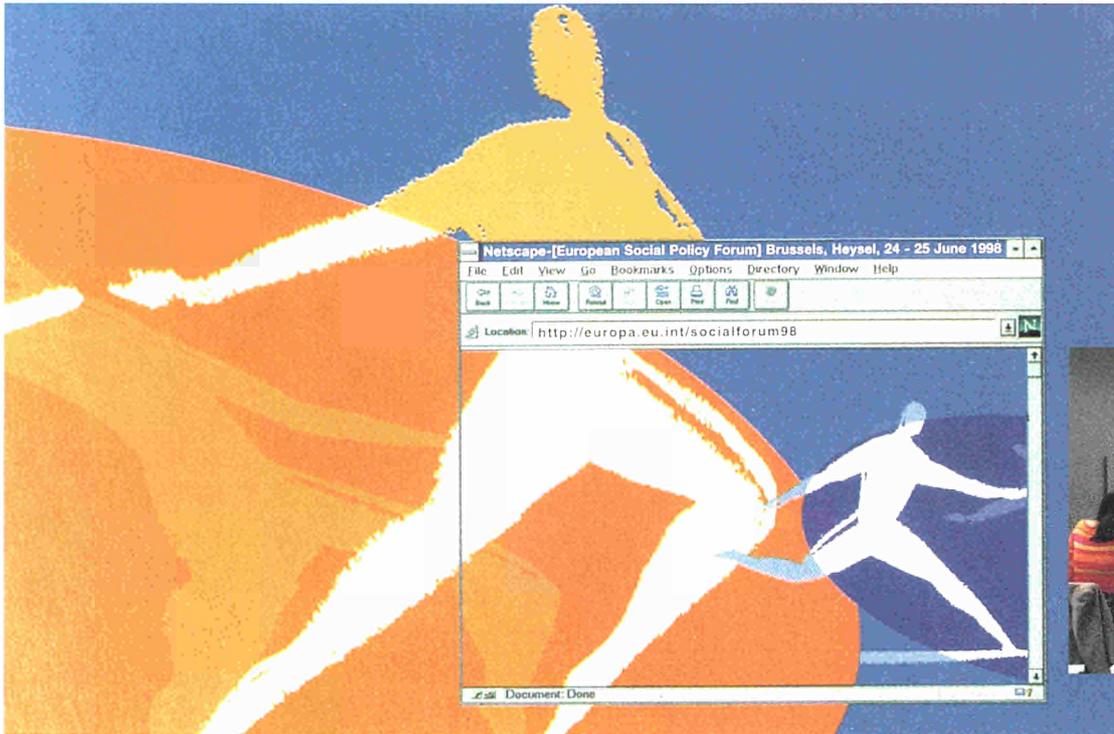
Speaking about partnership, Ms Fredensborg also highlighted the importance of local involvement.

'We care about our role as a social partner. I believe labour market partners discussing and negotiating on labour market issues obviously has great value. Indeed, I am a great fan of all democratic systems in Europe and I note the wish of the NGOs that they are all included in the democratic process. The one thing that worries me, however, is that we are always trying to create ways for new decisions when we should work in the systems we already have.'

Lesley Kilmurray



A lively Internet chat



A live Internet chat took place on Thursday 25 June in the cybercafé. It was the first time the Commission had used this particular communication tool at a conference. Commissioner Flynn, DG V officials and occasionally representatives of NGOs answered questions from the public and from people attending the forum who were able to follow the chat on PCs around the hall.

The chat lasted an hour and a half and proved lively and useful. About 70 people took part at one time or another in the discussion which was largely in English but with questions also being asked and answered in French, German, Spanish, Italian and Dutch.

Sometimes the number of participants in Internet chats is so great that it can be difficult to follow the questions and answers. It can be a little like listening to a radio programme where several people are talking at the same time. The degree of difficulty is multiplied when the chat that takes place is in more than one language and the replies therefore take longer. Often it will take a minute or two for a question to be translated and replied to and in the meantime further questions and answers appear on the screen, making it difficult to relate answers to the original question without a lot of scrolling up and down. On this occasion, however, the number of participants was sufficient to have a wide-ranging discussion but not so great that it became too difficult to follow.



Some of the participants displayed a healthy sceptical attitude towards European social policy, which made for a lively chat with some straight talking and a little gentle banter. Questions ranged from detailed ones about employment and social policy, to more general ones about food aid. The following exchanges were typical of the spirit in which the chat was conducted, and the wide range of issues raised:

<NL1> NL Paul – How social is Europe, if you look at what happened with Renault?

<ES2> from ES infopoint to Flynn: I agree with NL1

<Flynn> to NL1: Re Renault we should emphasise the recent developments after the adoption of the Treaty of Amsterdam. After the new employment title in the Treaty it is clear that social policy has a greater role in European policy than before.

<FR2> <Eric> to Flynn: How can training for employment help if there are no jobs to go into?

<Flynn> FR2, Eric: We must identify the new sources with job potential. The technological age brings many new job opportunities. The key is to have people trained to meet the new requirements.

<IT1> If social policy is a priority for Member States, why can't they find a legal basis to unfreeze finances? In the absence of European financial support, what should NGOs do?

<heysel3227> Commissioner: How will the Commission ensure that the ratification of the Amsterdam Treaty will be accelerated... especially in the light of the European court ruling?

<NL1> NL Jan: When are you going to deblock the financing for the NGOs?

<Flynn> To NL1 – Jan – On 17 July the Council, Commission and Parliament will be looking at this issue together. We hope that the results will be positive.

<Flynn> to Heysel 3227: Could you please specify which court case you are referring to?

<heysel3227> Flynn: the court ruling concerning social exclusion.
<ES2> from ES infopoint2: Why is it we always have to wait so long for answers to the difficult questions? <Flynn> to Heysel 3227: Do you mean the Court case referring to the legal basis of the budget headings?

<heysel3227> Flynn: Yes

<Flynn> to Heysel 3227: The ratification of the Treaty of Amsterdam and the legal basis of a given budget heading are clearly two separate issues. The Commission services are currently undertaking a thorough examination with a view to clarifying the problems relating to a number of budget headings.

<heysel3227> Flynn: I don't think these are different issues, because the 1999 budget would go without problems if the Treaty is ratified!

<Flynn> to Heysel 3227: The Court in the case mentioned earlier required that a budget heading have a basis in Community secondary legislation, i.e. a regulation, a directive etc... The ratification of the Treaty is therefore not related to the Court case.

<NL1> NL Karel: Will the accession of new Member States not diminish what they have already achieved in the social field? Or will the accession mean the social bankruptcy of Europe? And who is going to pay for all this? The taxpayer again?

<Flynn> NL1, Karel, Accession: No, the aim is to use the period of negotiations to bring the candidate countries up to the same standards

as we have in the EU. Funds are earmarked from the PHARE and the Structural Funds' budget for this purpose.

<ES2> from ES infopoint: As a result of the common agricultural policy, tonnes of butter, milk and cereals are thrown away or rot in store houses. Why not send it to the countries where they need the food?

<Flynn> ES2 to ES infopoint: The Commission aims to have humanitarian policy geared towards structural changes in developing countries. As pointed out earlier, the Commission does send food when necessary. It does not have responsibility for situations like the one you described at national level.

<ES2> from ES infopoint2: Why does European Union money go to regulating the agricultural sector and not to manufacturing or research? I think that these sectors will produce the jobs of tomorrow.

<Flynn> ES2, ES infopoint2: We know that the budget for the agricultural sector is too high and we are trying to bring about the necessary reforms. But you must remember that we are not alone with the problem – the USA also has major budget spending on agriculture. As regards spending more on manufacturing or research, I agree on research. We need to invest more in knowledge and technology. But I do not agree about manufacturing. The best policy there is the one we are following.

<FR2> <Anna> Would it not be useful to analyse the environment in national action plans – environmental tax is an example, but there are geographical, cooperation and other aspects? This is from the point of view of non-EU Member States or associated countries.

<Flynn> FR2, Anna: Promoting sustainable economic growth is very much present in the employment guidelines which require an integrated approach to employment promotion. The Commission is working to implement a recent communication on employment and the environment which would provide for concrete action to implement the employment strategy in this field.

The questions and answers have been grouped together to make the transcript easier to read. The full transcript of the chat is on the DG V Internet site at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg05/jobs/forum98/en/chat_en.htm

All in all, the Internet chat was considered to be a useful complement to the forum, and probably worth repeating in the future.

Joe Hennon



An inviting exhibition area

'Inviting' is the first word that comes to mind to describe the exhibition area occupied by Forum 98 on social policy.

The word would also describe the layout of the exhibition space of around 1 600 m², which not only offered visitors an excellent overview but also made for easy access to the individual stands.

The same, once again, could be said of the cybercafé offering general access to the Internet sites of various organisations exhibiting and to the Forum 98 site.

The exhibition, which was officially inaugurated at 18.00 on 24 June by Pádraig Flynn, Member of the European Commission responsible for employment and social affairs, and which is open to the public for the entire duration of the forum, has given more than 60 organisations in the social field a unique opportunity to introduce themselves and acquaint people with their work and the services they offer.

Although the exhibition area was very quiet during the various sessions, which were also attended by some of the exhibitors, more than a thousand visitors passed through nevertheless.

While many of them simply moved from one stand to another taking the magazines and publications put out, some of them used the opportunity to ask very specific questions and establish useful contacts.

The exhibitors

The various participating organisations were distributed over four separate areas.

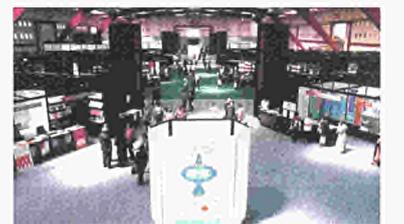
The attention of the visitors making their way to the conference rooms was first of all attracted to a number of stands on either side of the central aisle which were devoted to the European Commission (and more specifically the programmes and activities of DG V), the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee.

A few yards further on was the stand set up by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC).

The visitor then reached the heart of the exhibition area, in which the open forum's eight dialogue areas were surrounded by the stands of 26 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) belong-

ing to the platform of the European NGOs in the social field. These organisations included the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), the International League of Societies for the Mentally Handicapped (ILSMH Europe) and the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless.

Finally, a much larger area accommodated the stands of almost 40 associations, foundations, companies and NGOs not represented by any of the partners in the forum. These included Eurogip, the Kuratorium Deutsche Altershilfe, the Saumon group, IGLOO, the Ligue des Familles, Autisme Europe, the Forum bruxellois de lutte contre la pauvreté, Fracaritatis, etc.



A new website for the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

Many visitors converged at the Foundation's stand at 17.00 on 25 June to attend the official launching, in the presence of Commission Member Mr Flynn, of the Foundation's new website (<http://www.eurofound.ie/>). This site provides comprehensive and up-to-date information on the role of the Foundation, its research projects, its publications and the events in which it is involved.



Myriam Leruth



Employment and social affairs series: the theme titles have changed!

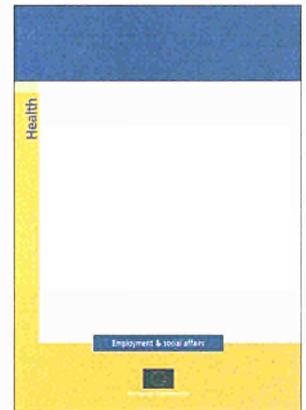
Employment and social affairs is the blanket title of DG V's series of publications. The series incorporates all DG V's publications and consists of six themes whose titles were revised in spring 1998 to bring them more into line with DG V's areas of activity. They are as follows: 'Employment and European Social Fund', 'Equality between women and men', 'Health', 'Social security and social integration', 'Industrial relations and industrial change' and 'Fundamental rights and anti-discrimination'.



*Employment and
European Social Fund*



*Equality between women
and men*



Health



*Social security and
social integration*



*Industrial relations
and industrial change*

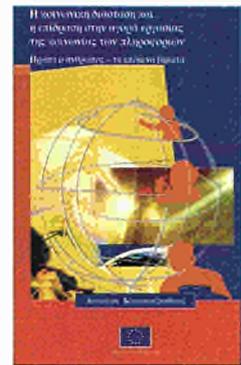


*Fundamental rights and
anti-discrimination*

Employment and social affairs publications produced between June and December 1998 include:

General publications

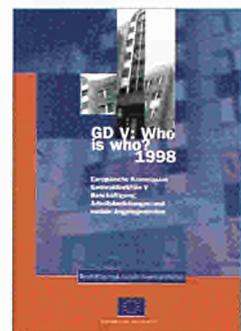
- 'The social and labour market dimension of the information society — People first — The next steps': this publication reproduces the text of the Commission communication of 23 July 1997 summarising the progress made in incorporating the social dimension into information society policies and listing the challenges to be met in reconciling social, economic and technological goals with each other. Available in the European Union's 11 official languages. Price: EUR 15; catalogue No: CE-09-97-672-**-C, ISBN 92-828-2702-X (EN).
- The 'Free movement and social security' bulletin deals with latest developments concerning the rights of citizens moving within the European Union. The first issue of this newsletter is available free of charge in the European Union's 11 official languages and can be obtained from the Representation of the European Commission in any Member State — catalogue No CE-AL-97-001-**-C.
- 'DG V: Who is who? — A guide 1998': this small leaflet presents DG V's programme and its organisational set-up (organisation chart) for implementing the programme. Available free of charge in the European Union's 11 official languages, it can be obtained from the Representation of the European Commission in any Member State — catalogue No CE-08-97-622**-C.



The final report on the European social policy forum will soon be available free of charge in the European Union's 11 official languages from the Representation of the European Commission in any Member State (English version: March 1999 — other languages: May 1999) — catalogue No CE-17-98-621-**-C.

Theme: Employment and European Social Fund

- 'ESF InfoReview': this quarterly newsletter of the ESF gives an exhaustive overview of the Fund projects in progress and the Community's initiatives. Available free of charge from the European Commission, ESF Information Section, DG V/02, rue de la Loi 200/Wetstraat 200, B-1049 Brussels; fax (32-2) 295 49 18.
- 'The ESF in...': these leaflets outline ESF funding in Member States are objective and highlight examples of good practice. They are published in the relevant national language(s) and in English. Available free of charge from the Representation of the European Commission in any Member State — catalogue No: CE-96-96-0**-**-C.
- 'Fighting exclusion from the world of work — ESF project examples': this brochure describes how the ESF sets about offering, via Objective 3 and the Community's *Employment* initiative, new prospects for some of the most disadvantaged people in our societies — catalogue No: CE-12-98-691-**-C, ISBN 92-828-2961-8 (EN).
- 'Helping young people along the path from school to work — ESF project examples': the ESF co-funds actions to combat unemployment among young people under Objective 3 and the *Youthstart* strand of the Community's *Employment* initiative. This brochure presents a number of projects in various European Union countries — catalogue No: CE-12-98-700-**-C, ISBN 92-828-2955-3 (EN).
- 'Promoting equal opportunities for men and women — ESF project examples': this brochure describes several projects (run under Objective 3 and the *Now* strand of the *Employment* initiative) intended mainly for women with no vocational qualifications or wishing to go back to work after a period of absence — catalogue No: CE-12-98-683-**-C, ISBN 92-828-2964-2 (EN).





- 'Fighting long-term unemployment — ESF project examples': a wide range of projects funded by the ESF (Objective 3 and the *Integra* strand of the *Employment* initiative) has been launched in Member States with the specific aim of helping the long-term jobless to re-establish contact with the world of work. This brochure presents some projects showing how this ESF priority is put into practice — catalogue No: CE-12-98-699-**-C, ISBN 92-828-2958-8 (EN).

These last four publications are available in English, French and German. Price: EUR 15.

Community initiatives

- 'The ability to work — Employers, employment and people with disabilities': the content of this publication is largely based on the experience of the Horizon projects. It reflects some of the barriers encountered by people with disabilities in their search for employment and the solutions found by various training, guidance and mediation or social welfare agencies. Available free of charge in Spanish, German, English, French and Italian — catalogue No: CE-13-98-031-**-C, ISBN 92-828-3220-1 (EN).
- 'Telework: tomorrow's form of work': this report looks at the world and European background against which ADAPT telework projects are working, how the Member States set out to use ADAPT and project approaches and innovations in telework. Available free of charge in Spanish, German, English, French and Italian — catalogue No: CE-16-98-045-**-C, ISBN 92-828-4152-9 (EN).

These publications are available from: Europas, place du Luxembourg/Luxemburgplein 2-3, B-1050 Brussels; fax (32-2) 511 19 60.

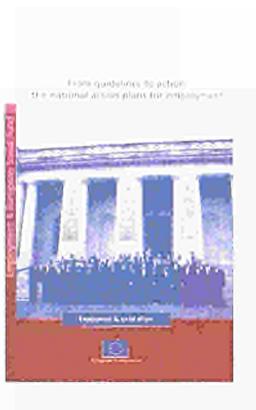


- 'From guidelines to action: the national action plans for employment': this small publication reproduces the text of the Commission communication of 13 May 1998 which looks at the commitments Member States entered into in their national action plans and assesses whether these commitments are in keeping with the tenor and aims of the 1998 employment guidelines. Available free of charge in English, French and German from the Representation of the European Commission in any Member State — catalogue No CE-14-98-162-**-C, ISBN 92-828-3916-8 (EN).

Employment Observatory publications

- 'Policies' is the bulletin of the MISEP (mutual information system on employment policies) network. It reports four times a year on recent labour market policy developments in the Member States. The main section contains the national reports as supplied by the correspondents; an introductory summary reviews them in the light of the five recommendations adopted for achieving an integrated employment strategy.
- 'Trends' is the bulletin of the Sysdem (Community system of documentation on employment) network. It appears twice a year and provides a comparative and in-depth overview of policies and developments in Member States' labour markets.
- The 'Basic information reports' provide information on public labour market institutions, the statutory bases for labour, labour market and employment policies and, in particular, 'active' and 'passive' labour policy measures in individual Member States. The most recent reports published cover France, Belgium, Spain, Finland and Ireland.

These publications are available free of charge in English, French and German from IAS, Novalisstrasse 10, D-10115 Berlin; fax (49-30) 282 63 78.



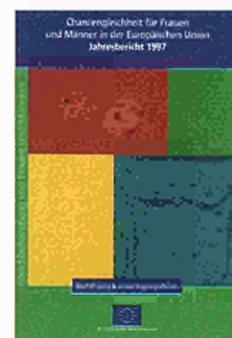
Theme: Equality between women and men

- 'Equal opportunities magazine': quarterly publication of the medium-term Community action programme on equal opportunities for men and women (1996-2000). Issue No 5 is available free of charge in English, French and German.
- 'New ways' is the newsletter of the EU network on families, work and intergenerational solidarity. It appears four times a year in English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish.
- 'Equal opportunities for women and men in the European Union — Annual report 1997': this second report provides an overview of current activities and problems, and reviews the progress made along the main avenues of action set out in the fourth medium-term social action programme on equality between women and men. The annexe to the main report contains a plethora of data detailing the progress made and the remaining gaps in equal opportunities between women and men. The full version of this 144-page document is available in English, French and German. Price: EUR 15, catalogue No: CE-13-98-823-**-C, ISBN 92-828-3931-1 (EN).

A 28-page version consisting of the main report only is available free of charge in 11 languages — catalogue No: CE-13-98-815-**-C, ISBN 92-828-3922-2 (EN).

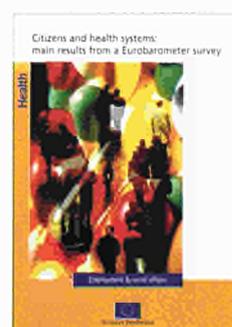
- 'A guide to gender impact assessment': this small brochure outlines some of the concepts fundamental to the gender mainstreaming strategy. It also sets out the process for evaluating gender impact and lists the criteria that need to be taken into account. Available free of charge in 11 languages — catalogue No: CE-16-98-788-**-C, ISBN 92-828-4590-7 (EN).

Unless otherwise specified, all the free publications on equality between women and men can be obtained from the European Commission, DG V/D.5, rue de la Loi 200/Wetstraat 200, B-1049 Brussels; tel. (32-2) 296 85 61; fax (32-2) 29-63562.



Theme: Health

- 'Prevention' is the quarterly newsletter of the public health programmes. Available free of charge in 11 languages from: Cives Europe, bd Clovis 12A/Clovislaan 12A, B-1000 Brussels; fax (32-2) 232 23 92.
- 'Prevention of drug dependence – European networks': in a series of factsheets, this publication gives details of drug prevention networks. Each sheet describes the activities of these networks, which are funded through the programme to prevent drug dependence. Available free of charge in English, French and German from the Representation of the European Commission in any Member State — catalogue No CE-17-98-952-**-H, ISBN 92-828-5013-7 (EN).
- 'Citizens and health systems: main results from a Eurobarometer survey': this publication presents the conclusions from a Eurobarometer survey conducted in 1996 to find out how Europe's citizens view their country's health care systems. Available free of charge, in English only, from DG V's information centre — catalogue No: CE-12-98-570-EN-C, ISBN 92-828-3621-5.
- 'Occupational exposure limits – Recommendations of the Scientific Committee for Occupational Exposure Limits to Chemical Agents 1994-97': this consists of 40 or so factsheets listing those substances for which this committee has issued recommendations. It will be regularly updated and added to. Available in English only. Price: EUR 40; catalogue No: CE-NO-18-216-EN-C, ISBN 92-828-4270-3.





- 'Occupational exposure limits': this small brochure lists the occupational exposure limits already included in Commission and Council directives, plus the recommendations on limit values already adopted by the Scientific Committee for Occupational Exposure Limits. It also contains the limit values which are the subject of scientific debate as well as the substances on the Committee's priority list. It is available, in English only, from DG V's information centre — catalogue No: CE-13-98-144-EN-C, ISBN 92-828-4220-7.

Theme: Social security and social integration

- 'Social protection in Europe 1997': the third report on social protection in Europe traces the progress made in achieving the aims set out in the Council recommendation of July 1992 on the convergence of social protection objectives and policies, and updates the analyses contained in the 1993 and 1995 reports. It is also meant to contribute to the debate on the future of social protection in Europe launched by the Commission in 1995 through its communication 'The future of social protection: a framework for a European debate'. The full version of this 160-page document is available in English, French and German. Price:EUR 15; catalogue No: CE-12-98-312-**-C, ISBN 92-828-4248-7 (EN).

A short version (32 pages) entitled 'Social protection in Europe 1997 — Modernising social protection and adapting systems to change' is available in the European Union's 11 official languages from the Representation of the European Commission in any Member State — catalogue No: CE-12-98-328-**-C, ISBN 92-828-4038-7 (EN).

- 'Employment and people with disabilities': this publication presents the report of the special meeting of the high-level group on disability held in Brussels on 15 October 1997. The purpose of the seminar was to bring together current policy developments on a range of issues that ultimately affect employment prospects for persons with work disabilities. The report is available in English, French and German. Price: EUR 15; catalogue No: CE-16-98-279-**-C, ISBN 92-828-4448-X (EN).

Theme: Industrial relations and industrial change

- 'European social dialogue': this newsletter reports five times a year on the results of the social dialogue between the social partners in different sectors. Available free of charge in the EU's 11 official languages from the European Commission, DG V/D.1; fax (32-2) 299 24 66.

A special edition takes stock of the social dialogue in 1997. Available free of charge in English, French and German from the same department — catalogue No: CE-AK-98-006-**-C.

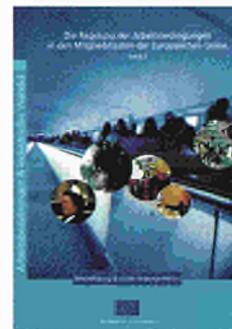
- 'Managing change – Final report of the high-level group on economic and social implications of industrial change': further to its interim report (June 1998), the group, in its final report submitted to the European Council in Vienna, has directed its efforts towards giving guidance on what to do — and what not to do — to promote employment and competitiveness, ensure well-functioning labour markets and prepare for change in these areas. This guidance is addressed to political decision-makers, business leaders and the social partners. The interim report (catalogue No: CE-13-98-588-**-C, ISBN 92-828-3438-7 (EN)) and the final report (catalogue No: CE-17-98-895-**-C, ISBN 92-828-5101-X (EN)) are available free of charge in English, French and German from the Representation of the European Commission in any Member State.



- 'The regulation of working conditions in the Member States of the European Community — Volume 2: The legal systems of the Member States, a comparative perspective — National reports': available in English, French and German. Price: EUR 15, catalogue No: CE-25-97-002-**-C, ISBN 92-3396-8 (EN).

NB: Volume 1 has not yet been published.

- 'Working time: Research and development 1995-97'. This report provides a critical review of 14 studies on working time undertaken for the European Commission and the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions between 1995 and 1997. The review concentrates on the potential employment effects of changes in working time arrangements. In particular it examines the conditions which have to be fulfilled in order for the reduction of working time to have an impact on employment and unemployment. Available in English, French and German. Price: EUR 15, catalogue No: CE-18-98-776-**-C, ISBN 92-828-5591-0 (EN).



Theme: Fundamental rights and anti-discrimination

- 'European Year against Racism – Projects in practice': this publication compiles 24 examples of good practice from the various projects funded by the European Union within the framework of the European Year against Racism. Available free of charge in English and French from DG V's information centre — catalogue No: CE-16-98-627-**-C, ISBN 92-828-4372-6 (EN).
- '1997 European Year against Racism – Closing conference report' (December 1997): this report is available free of charge in English, French and German from DG V's information centre — catalogue No: CE-16-98-376-**-C, ISBN 92-828-4369-6 (EN).
- '1997 European Year against Racism – Racism and xenophobia in Europe': this report presents the results of a Eurobarometer opinion poll carried out between 26 March and 29 April 1997 in the 15 Member States at the request of the European Commission. It is available free of charge in English and French from DG V's information centre — catalogue No: CE-18-98-049-**-C, ISBN 92-828-5042-0 (EN).



Myriam Leruth

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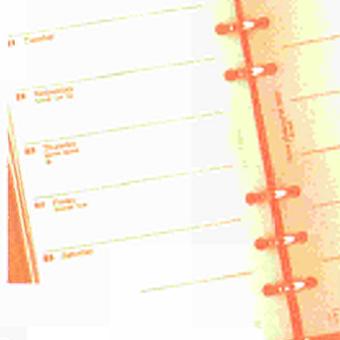
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Certain extracts from our publications can be consulted on the Internet: (http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg05/index_en.htm).

Coming up



March 1999

- 6 and 7 March** Paris: Conference 'Labour law under the conditions of globalisation'
- 9 March** Brussels: Labour and Social Affairs Council
- 18 and 19 March** Dortmund: European Workshop on Health and Safety Management Systems
- 24 and 25 March** Berlin: European Council on Agenda 2000
- 25 and 26 March** Bonn: Conference 'New social policies resulting from the Treaty of Amsterdam – a coordinated employment strategy – Prospects for the further development of the social dimension of the EU'
- 29 and 30 March** Bonn: Conference 'Violence against women: Effective fight against trafficking'

April 1999

- 15 and 16 April** Düsseldorf: Seminar 'Women and family-friendly working environments – incentive systems in Europe'
- 15 to 17 April** Paris: Conference 'Women and decision-making'
- 21 to 23 April** Berlin: International conference 'Competence for Europe, change through learning – learning undergoing change'
- 27 and 28 April** Frankfurt am Main: Workshop 'Internationalisation of labour markets'

May 1999

- 2 to 4 May** Stuttgart: ninth Euroforum 'Summit of the generations'
- 5 and 6 May** Berlin: Conference 'Family education in Europe'
- 6 and 7 May** Luxembourg: Conference on sexual harassment
- 17 May to 3 June** Sweden (27 different locations): 1999 Job Train
- 25 May** Brussels: Labour and Social Affairs Council



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