

SUMMARY OF STATEMENT OF VICE-PRESIDENT HILLERY
ON OCCASION OF DISCUSSION WITH ITALIAN MINISTER
FOR LABOUR, MR. MARIO TOROS, AND STATE SECRETARY
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, MR. LUIGI GRANELLI.

ROME, 12th September 1975

The Commission welcomes the moves for a tripartite conference bringing together the Ministers for Economic Affairs with the Labour Ministers and the Social Partners. In accordance with its mandate from the European Council, the Commission is working on a proposal concerning the organisation of the conference which will be sent to the Council of Ministers in the next few days.

The holding of such a conference is particularly necessary in the light of the serious unemployment situation.

The latest available figures for unemployment in the member States indicate that despite some small signs of improvement to come, the trend in unemployment in the Community is still strongly upwards. The most recent Community figures show 4,675,000 persons registered as unemployed: this compares with 4,495,000 a month earlier and 2,880,000 a year ago.

The only signs of improvement are indications that the trend may not be so unfavourable as recently in Germany and Denmark. But the signs are still weak and we cannot count on a general improvement of the situation.

A marked improvement in the situation, while depending basically on national measures, will require co-ordination at Community level.

The Conference is, moreover, seen by the Commission as an important development in the field of increasing the degree of participation of the social partners in the decision-making process - an objective adopted at the first Paris Summit.

The most important instrument at the disposal of the Commission in the fight against unemployment is the European Social Fund. A significant proportion of those who are unemployed do not possess the skills needed to do the jobs that are or may be available. The building up of a skilled and mobile labour force is therefore a prerequisite for the success of expansionary measures. Much has already been achieved with the aid of the Fund in the expansion of training facilities in the member States. In 1974 the scope of the Fund was expanded to include training of migrant workers and of handicapped workers. Earlier this year the Commission proposed a further extension of the Fund's operations.

The Commission welcomes the Council's decision to extend the use of Social Fund grants for the training of young people. We are particularly concerned at the high level of unemployment in this age group, since over one-third of the unemployed in the Community are under 25 years of age. The first projects aimed at helping young people's employment should be approved before the end of the year.

The Commission is at present working on a proposal - for submission to the Council in the next few weeks - to help employment in the sectors most affected by the present crisis.

The increases in the scope of the Fund have been accompanied by a substantial increase in its financial resources. The budget of 267.8 muc for 1974 has been increased to 355.9 muc for 1975. The Commission would like to see a further substantial increase in the Fund's resources next year to enable the Community to make a contribution of growing significance to the training facilities of member States.

Apart from the new Social Fund opening, the Commission is actively engaged in discussion with governments and the social partners about other steps which can be taken to reduce unemployment of young people, such as the creation of new jobs for young people and means of giving them easier access to the employment opportunities which already exist.