

# Social action programme 1998-2000



Employment & social affairs



European Commission



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**European Commission**  
Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations  
and Social Affairs  
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## **I: The renewal of European social policy: a solid foundation on which to build**

In 1993, the Commission launched a wide-ranging consultation on the future of European social policy. The purpose of this exercise - which was driven forward by the Green and White Papers on Social Policy in 1993 and 1994 - was to develop a blueprint for the renewal of social policy in a period of dynamic change. This in turn led to the medium-term Social Action Programme 1995-1997, which sought to develop a more broadly-based, innovative and forward-looking approach to European social policy.

This approach has evolved further over the past few years and has borne fruit.

- ⇒ **Employment policy has moved decisively to the top of the European agenda.** The new employment Title in the Treaty of Amsterdam makes employment a matter of common concern. The Luxembourg Jobs Summit followed by the adoption of the 1998 Employment Guidelines and the submission of national employment action plans has brought forward the co-ordination of Member States' employment policies through the development of an integrated employment strategy.
- ⇒ **A number of key legislative proposals has been adopted by the Council,** helping to complete and consolidate the framework of minimum social standards needed to underpin the Single Market. This progress has been facilitated by the use of the more collaborative form of decision making, involving the social partners, introduced by the Agreement on Social Policy.
- ⇒ **A set of detailed and ambitious work programmes has been adopted by the Commission.** These policy initiatives - for example the Action Plan for free movement of workers and the Green Paper on work organisation - provide the building blocks for the ongoing renewal of social policy. They are listed in Annex 1.
- ⇒ **The social policy debate has been broadened and deepened** to areas of mutual concern - such as demographic trends, modernising social protection and the fight against racism - where there is clear value-added in common European debate, co-operation and exchange of information and best practice.
- ⇒ **The social dialogue is yielding solid achievements and the civil dialogue has matured,** helping to reinforce the legitimacy and effectiveness of European-level activity.
- ⇒ **The linkages between social policy and other Community policies have been strengthened,** reflecting the conviction that social progress must be promoted across the board. Examples of this are the commitment to mainstreaming equality of opportunities between women and men, the integration of health protection requirements into other Community policies, and the 1997 Communication on environment and employment.

## II: Meeting the challenges of a changing world

These achievements provide a solid foundation on which to build. However, the Union continues to face significant social challenges which this action programme aims to meet.

- ⇒ **Unemployment remains stubbornly high**, particularly for young people, women and the long-term unemployed, and employment rates are too low in many Member States. There is a considerable labour reserve that can be drawn on to boost participation and employment rates, but a growing skills gap risks undermining Europe's competitiveness and people's employability, and labour mobility remains low.
- ⇒ **The world of work is changing rapidly** as globalisation and the emerging Information Society bring major changes in working patterns, work organisation and the skills people need. In the future, the key to success will be greater adaptability. Achieving this means striking a new balance between the need for flexibility for enterprises and security for employees so as to harness the potential of new forms of work organisation and new technology and promote decent, safe and healthy working conditions.
- ⇒ **Poverty and social exclusion** exist side by side with prosperity and wealth, and many people continue to suffer from discrimination, inequality and poor health. Europe's social protection systems are a cornerstone of the European social model, but the challenge now is to adapt systems so as to better meet existing demands in a cost-effective way while responding to new needs and changing circumstances.

Within a wider context, Europe is facing into a period of further significant change. These broader factors will have an important influence on the future development of social policy, and are taken into account in this action programme.

- ⇒ **The completion of the Single Market and the introduction of the single currency** are transforming Europe from a group of separate economies into an integrated economic entity. The realisation of economic and monetary union will bring advantages for Europe in terms of greater macro-economic stability, sustainable growth and a stronger voice on the world stage. This new economic framework will make the interplay between social and economic policy even more important, accentuating the need to strengthen the links between EMU, a well-functioning Single Market, cohesion policy, and employment and social policy. In particular, EMU will help to reinforce transparency and competition, thereby contributing to more dynamic growth, and employment, helping to underpin social progress.
- ⇒ **Demographic trends** mean that the workforce and the population of the European Union are, on average, getting older. The changing balance between the working and the retired population poses a major challenge to economic and social cohesion. Further efforts are needed to spread awareness of and get to grips with the full implications of this



transformation, which - coupled with increased female participation in the workforce and changing patterns of family life - has profound implications for Europe's employment and social protection systems. In particular, it puts an even greater emphasis on the need to pursue policies to boost employment rates, improve the sustainability of social protection systems and meet emerging needs, such as the long-term care needs of dependent older people.

⇒ **The prospect of enlargement** presents challenges both for the EU and the applicant countries. In particular, social policy has an important role to play in helping the citizens of the applicant countries make the transition to a market economy. Within a balanced macro-economic strategy, applicant countries will need, for example, to review their employment policies, bring their legislation into line with that of the EU, and develop adequate systems of social protection and health.

### III: The next steps: pursuing an agenda for change

The task now facing European social policy is to build on these achievements and respond to the challenges of a fast changing world. The adoption of the Treaty of Amsterdam has provided a platform for the strengthening of social policy by introducing a new employment title to complement EMU, new provisions on equal opportunities, exclusion, anti-discrimination and public health, and by incorporating the Agreement on Social Policy, which gives a key role to the social partners. This clearly demonstrates a renewed political commitment at the very highest level to address these issues at European level.

Against this background, this Communication sets out the next steps for the future development of European social policy. Its starting point is that economic and social progress go hand in hand and that the whole point of economic progress is to raise people's standard of living, within the context of a balanced macro-economic strategy. Within this framework, social policy should promote a decent quality of life and standard of living for all in an active, inclusive and healthy society that encourages access to employment, good working conditions, and equality of opportunity.

Employment is central to fulfilling this vision, because it is a Europe at work that will sustain the core values of the European social model. At the same time, social policy - in fulfilling the tasks set out in the Treaty - has an important role to play in helping to promote an inclusive society and to equip individuals for the changing world of work in an era of globalisation and rapid technological change. Building on the achievements of the previous action programme and the fresh impetus provided by the employment process and the Treaty of Amsterdam, this document sets out a framework for the future development of European social policy. It draws together the key lines of action under three main headings:

- |                              |
|------------------------------|
| ✓ Jobs, skills and mobility  |
| ✓ The changing world of work |
| ✓ An inclusive society       |

In pursuing this agenda, the Commission will use a balanced mix of policy instruments:

- **Partnership and policy development:** making available the information needed to deepen the debate on social policy and using the political, social and civil dialogue to build co-operation and setting frameworks for the achievement of common objectives. Considerable progress has been made in recent years in developing this collaborative approach, which is a prerequisite for achieving real change, and this will continue in the future. In particular, the Commission has a specific role to play in the monitoring of commonly agreed objectives, for example within the European employment strategy. Furthermore, the Commission will shortly present proposals for the renewal of the social dialogue. The European Social Policy Forum 98 will also offer an opportunity to advance the debate on the future of social policy.

- **Financial support and incentives:** the Structural Funds, and in particular the European Social Fund (ESF), are the most important financial instrument available at European level to invest in people and promote social progress. In the proposed reform of the ESF particular emphasis has been placed on supporting the adaptation and modernisation of policies and systems of education, training and employment. Moreover, an explicit link is made with Member States' employment action plans under the European employment strategy. This financial support will be channelled through the following outlets:
  - activities under mainstream Structural Fund programmes to promote human resource development;
  - a Community Initiative which will focus on combating discrimination and inequalities in access to the labour market;
  - a limited number of innovative projects in order to develop and test new approaches.

In addition, the Treaty of Amsterdam has provided for incentive measures in the fields of employment and combating social exclusion, and appropriate proposals will be considered following ratification of the Treaty. Other actions will be taken forward as appropriate, within the framework laid down by the Budgetary Authority.

- **Legislation:** a continuing emphasis will be placed on encouraging fair and decent social and working standards in areas where action is required for new or updated rules, as well as ensuring full implementation and enforcement of existing rules in order to provide a level playing field of minimum standards across the Union. Annex 2 provides an update of the pending legislative proposals in the social field. In order to encourage progress on these items, the Commission will hold periodic discussions with the European Parliament and the Council to identify those proposals on which progress can be made and those which should be withdrawn because they are no longer relevant or now have no prospect of being adopted.

### ***III.1 Jobs, skills and mobility***

The Treaty of Amsterdam and the Luxembourg Jobs Summit have underlined the Union's shared determination to make progress on employment and tackle unemployment, and have provided the tools to do so. The objective is to seize the opportunities afforded by growth and macroeconomic stability to strengthen structural reforms and significantly increase Europe's employment rate, bringing it into line with those of its main competitors, and thereby underpinning Europe's prosperity and the long-term sustainability of the European social model. This convergence of employment policies will complement the convergence process leading to economic and monetary union. The Union can promote employment by creating the conditions for sound and sustainable growth, encouraging entrepreneurship and promoting active policies to improve the employability of all – school leavers, workers and the unemployed – so as to meet current and future job and skill demands and give people opportunities to work.

- **Creating jobs and preventing unemployment:** the Employment Guidelines set clear objectives and targets and provide the co-ordinating mechanism through which Member States have drawn up national action plans to implement the new employment strategy based on the four pillars of employability, entrepreneurship, adaptability and equal opportunities. There is already strong evidence that this process is bringing valuable results. In particular, it has led to better co-ordination within national administrations and ensured that employment policy at national level is being dealt with in a co-ordinated way at the very highest level, involving also the social partners and regional bodies. For its part, the Commission will:

- ✓ in accordance with the political agreement reached at the Amsterdam and Luxembourg summits, ensure the full implementation of the employment strategy, centred around annual presentation and assessment of the Employment Guidelines and, where appropriate, the formulation of Recommendations to Member States
- ✓ ensure that the Broad Economic Guidelines and the Employment Guidelines are mutually reinforcing and promote a consistent economic strategy for growth, stability and employment designed, among other things, to raise employment levels and provide a solid and sustainable base to improve living standards in the Union
- ✓ enhance exchange of best practice and innovation and the provision of analytical material on the employment and labour market situation in the Member States, including through proposals for incentive measures once the new Treaty is ratified
- ✓ assist in the development of an agreed comparable database in Member States, and agreed indicators, in order to monitor implementation of the Employment Guidelines
- ✓ building on its recent Communication, launch a debate in 1998 on how to tackle the problem of undeclared work and promote exchanges of good practice on how to encourage such work into the open
- ✓ stimulate a Europe-wide debate on the modernisation of Public Employment Services as a tool for tackling unemployment

More specifically, in so far as the employability, entrepreneurship and equal opportunity pillars of the Guidelines are concerned<sup>1</sup>, the Commission will:

- ✓ continue to promote the development of innovative forms of job creation through local development measures, including territorial employment pacts and the social economy, under the Structural Funds

<sup>1</sup> Measures related to adaptability are set out in section III.2

- ✓ continue its efforts to develop a culture of entrepreneurship, in particular through the priority actions identified in its recent Communication on fostering entrepreneurship in Europe
- ✓ encourage Member States to further increase the level of investment in human resource development and lifelong learning under the Structural Funds, particularly the ESF, in line with the Commission's proposals for reform
- ✓ present proposals in 1998 for the new generation of education and training programmes to replace LEONARDO DA VINCI and SOCRATES to meet new needs in these areas
- ✓ encourage the social partners, at their various levels of responsibility, to conclude as soon as possible agreements with a view to increasing the possibilities for training, work experience, traineeships and other employability measures in Europe's workplaces
- ✓ ensure that equality of opportunity is mainstreamed within the Guidelines
- ✓ seek to develop, in co-operation with the Member States, family-friendly employment strategies to bring about real and rapid progress in care provision both for children and adult dependants
- ✓ present a Communication in mid-1998 on raising employment levels of people with disabilities

- **Promoting free movement:** in order to remove the remaining obstacles to free movement of workers and improve labour market flexibility - a key employment objective - the Commission will press forward with the implementation of its 1997 Action Plan for free movement of workers. This includes:

- ✓ presenting by mid-1998 a package of proposals to adapt and update the key legislation in this area
- ✓ the further development of EURES (European Employment Services) as a Europe-wide job vacancy and labour market information tool
- ✓ developing co-operation with national authorities and the social partners so as to ensure the efficient functioning of the existing legal framework

### **III.2 The changing world of work**

Competing in a global economy requires high performance enterprises with a high performance workforce. New technology, fast changing markets and the growth of the service sector accentuate this need. Adapting to this new environment means striking the right balance between flexibility and security. Employers need greater flexibility, in particular more interchangeable skills among their employees and adaptable working patterns, while employees need assurances about their own employability and job prospects. Better organisation of work can offer workers increased security through greater involvement in work organisation, a greater choice of working arrangements, more job satisfaction and the possibility of developing skills and long-term employability. In turn, this provides employers with increased flexibility in the form of a more skilled, motivated and versatile labour force, better able to take the initiative, to cope with change and to be more deeply involved in the economic health of the company. Social dialogue has a key role in achieving the right balance.

- **Modernising work organisation and promoting adaptability:** in 1997 the Commission presented a Green Paper that launched an ambitious debate on the modernisation of work organisation. The importance of this issue was endorsed by the Luxembourg Job Summit, which made adaptability and the renewal of the organisation of work one of the four pillars of the employment strategy. It called on the social partners to develop a partnership to meet the challenges of the new world of work and on the Member States to examine the possibility of incorporating more adaptable forms of contract into their law. Building on this, the Commission will continue to promote a new framework for the modernisation of work organisation and a better balance between work and family life. In particular, it will:

- ✓ present a Communication on work organisation and adaptability at the end of 1998 to facilitate and complement implementation of the adaptability pillar of the Employment Guidelines by:
  - consulting social partners on a possible framework agreement on all elements of work organisation, including, inter alia, working time flexibility
  - identifying the issues to be addressed at EU level to adapt the legal frameworks to encourage more adaptable contractual arrangements, including the link between social protection and changing working patterns
- ✓ present a Communication in mid-1998 on adapting and promoting social dialogue at Community level
- ✓ consult the social partners in 1998 on the need for Community action on the protection of teleworkers
- ✓ present proposals in mid-1998 to protect workers currently excluded from the working time directive, further to the 1997 White Paper, and the subsequent consultation of the social partners

- ✓ launch an initiative to encourage greater employee financial participation in companies by highlighting good practice and identifying obstacles, building on the 1992 Council Recommendation
- ✓ bring forward clear guidelines concerning state aids for training

- **Anticipating industrial change:** in Europe, as elsewhere, enterprises are undergoing a period of fundamental restructuring. The Commission has a role to play in supporting this process, for example by promoting discussions between the social partners and through support under the ESF. It will continue to encourage adequate information and consultation of workers in respect of decisions affecting them, and maintain a coherent policy on state aids and on Structural Funds. Moreover, in response to the mandate of the Jobs Summit, the Commission has established a High Level Group to examine the economic and social implications of industrial change. This Group will present its first report to the Cardiff Summit. The Commission will:

- ✓ follow up the High Level Group's recommendations in developing future policies in this area
- ✓ pursue the adoption of minimum standards for national information and consultation
- ✓ present a report in 1999 on the operation of the European Works Council Directive

- **Seizing the opportunities of the Information Society:** the development of the Information Society offers enormous opportunities to improve the way in which Europeans live and work and create new jobs. But the scale and pace of technological change in an increasingly global economy also present challenges. In 1997, the Commission presented a Communication setting out its strategy to develop further the social and labour market dimension of the Information Society. Building on this, it will:

- ✓ present a report to the Vienna European Council on the prospects for the development of electronic commerce, open networks and multimedia tools and their impact on training and employment
- ✓ develop specific actions to maximise the contribution of the Information Society to promoting employment, equal opportunities and social inclusion – for example, for disabled people - and build awareness of the social and labour market implications of the Information Society
- ✓ continue to build an Information Society dimension into other policies and actions: for example, the Commission's proposal to take account of the Information Society in the reform of the Structural Funds

- **Creating a safe and healthy workplace:** over the past decade a legislative framework for minimum European health and safety standards has been put in place, underpinned by successive Community programmes on health and

safety at work. Attention now needs to be focused, first, on the effective implementation of this framework and, secondly, on adapting these standards to new risks and changing work practices brought on by technological developments and scientific advances. Each year there are at least 5 million accidents at work, including almost 6500 fatal accidents, and studies show that work accidents and occupational diseases cost national economies between 1.5 and 4% of GDP. Safe workplaces and healthy workers are essential ingredients of the European social model and contribute to improving European competitiveness and productivity. These social and economic benefits need to be brought home to employers and employees. The European Agency for Health and Safety at Work in Bilbao has a particular role to play in this respect. The Commission will:

- ✓ focus on the effective implementation and application of existing legislation and complete the current Community programme on health and safety at work (1996-2000)
- ✓ present proposals to update and complete existing legislative instruments (e.g. scaffolding; carcinogens), adapt standards to technical and scientific progress (e.g. limit values for occupational exposure to chemical substances; exposure to biological agents at work), and examine the need to cover risks that are not presently covered (e.g. musculo-skeletal disorders, new working patterns)
- ✓ seek to improve statistical data on occupational health and safety in Europe so as to identify the most significant risks
- ✓ promote Europe-wide dissemination of information on best practices, in particular through the European Agency for Health and Safety at Work and the social partners, especially relating to SMEs and risk management

### ***III.3 An inclusive society***

Social policy is the mechanism that helps to ensure that economic progress and European integration work to the benefit of all. Surveys show that people want a cohesive and inclusive society, based on solidarity and equality, as well as a high quality of life and health. Public policies have a crucial role to play in helping to achieve this by boosting employment rates and helping to maintain and develop the capacities of people during their working life cycle, by promoting income redistribution and alleviating poverty, by providing a safety net for those genuinely in need, and by fighting discrimination and inequality. The common challenge is to reform and modernise these policies so as to sustain the core values of the European social model for the future.

- **Modernising and improving social protection:** Spending on social protection accounts for, on average, 28% of Community GDP. This reflects the shared conviction that social protection is a productive factor, underpinning the economic growth and increased competitiveness that, in turn, sustain social progress. However, Europe's social protection systems now need to adapt so as to better meet existing demands and respond to new needs, changing



circumstances and the increasing pressure to contain costs. The Commission's 1997 Communication on modernising and improving social protection took forward a process of joint European debate on these issues, focusing on four challenges: making social protection more employment-friendly; adapting systems to the consequences of an ageing population; adjusting to the new gender balance in working life and reforming the system of social security co-ordination for people moving within the EU. The Commission will:

- ✓ pursue the agenda for joint reflection set out in the 1997 Communication and present, in early 1999, an evaluation of the progress made. This will include an assessment of the implementation of the 1992 Council Recommendation on convergence of social protection systems, with a view to updating it and linking the convergence process more closely with the employment strategy
- ✓ in the context of the Employment Guidelines, focus in particular on making tax and benefit systems more employment friendly and on overcoming the difficulties faced in making the transition to self employment
- ✓ present proposals before the end of 1998 for the reform and simplification of Regulation 1408/71 on the co-ordination of social security schemes
- ✓ present a proposal in 1999 to update and complete the legislative framework for equal treatment in social security schemes between women and men taking into account, in particular, the case law of the European Court of Justice
- ✓ provide further analysis of demographic trends and deepen the debate on their implications for economic, social and employment policies, in particular at a major European Symposium on demographic change to be held in Vienna in October 1998
- ✓ follow-up the 1997 Green Paper on supplementary pensions

- **Promoting social inclusion:** despite the successes of Europe's social model, poverty and social exclusion remain significant problems in the EU. The new employment strategy - underpinned by the new Community Initiative under the ESF - will contribute to overcoming these problems by targeting those at risk of exclusion from the labour market and by encouraging the reform of social protection systems to enhance people's employability. Beyond this, greater efforts need to be made to move from passive to active policies in general and develop a preventive approach to social exclusion. The Treaty of Amsterdam introduces a new mandate for the Union to act to combat exclusion through incentive measures and incorporates the provisions of the Agreement on Social Policy into the Treaty. Efforts to build a more inclusive society must involve all relevant players, especially at local level. Social economy organisations, for example, have a vital role to play. The Commission has actively supported the development of the Platform of European Social Non-Governmental Organisations and organised the European

Social Policy Forum to provide a focus for the civil and social dialogue and to stimulate greater involvement of all concerned. The Commission will:

- ✓ present a Communication on social inclusion during 1998
- ✓ present a report on the implementation of the 1992 Recommendation on minimum income during 1998
- ✓ building on the experience gained, examine the possibility of presenting a proposal setting out a framework to promote the integration of those excluded from the labour market and of proposing incentive measures to combat social exclusion, once the Treaty is ratified
- ✓ develop at EU level statistical indicators on poverty and social exclusion
- ✓ present, as part of its contribution to the 1999 United Nations Year "Towards a society of all ages", a Communication on issues affecting older people
- ✓ propose a programme for the integration of refugees, building on the successful pilot actions implemented in 1997 and 1998

- **Achieving equality and fighting discrimination:** the new Treaty reinforces the European Union's capacity to promote equality, guarantee fundamental rights and fight against discrimination. In particular, the new Article 13 will enable the Community to take specific measures to combat discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation. Moreover, as the Employment Guidelines underlined, promoting equality and fighting discrimination is not simply a question of social justice. There are sound economic reasons for promoting equality of opportunity, so as to enable everyone to participate in – and contribute to – the economic well-being of our societies. This is all the more important given the impact of demographic trends and the consequent need to boost participation rates.

The Commission will:

- ✓ promote equality between women and men through a dual strategy:
  - ensuring that equal opportunities is mainstreamed into all relevant Community policies, and in particular that it is a central concern of the employment strategy and the reformed Structural Funds; and
  - developing specific actions to improve the situation of women, including actions to combat the problem of sexual harassment in the workplace; further activity in 1999 in support of gender-balanced participation in decision-making; and a number of actions during 1999 focusing on the problem of violence against women

- ✓ present a proposal for legislation to combat racial discrimination once the new Treaty is ratified, and launch a broad debate on the use of Article 13, including the possibility of a framework programme to combat all forms of discrimination
- ✓ pursue the strategy set out in its 1996 Communication on equality of opportunity for people with disabilities and implement the commitment made in the Declaration annexed to the Treaty of Amsterdam to take account of the needs of people with disabilities in measures taken under Article 95 (formerly Article 100a)
- ✓ implement the 1998 Action Plan against racism, building on the success of the 1997 European Year against racism and ensure the successful start-up of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia in Vienna
- ✓ carry forward the debate on fundamental rights, building on the report of the Comité des Sages

- **Encouraging a healthy society:** the promotion of a high level of human health protection for all is a Community priority, further enhanced in the Treaty of Amsterdam. This priority is pursued through all Community policies, and particularly in the field of disease prevention, food safety, consumer protection, freedom of movement, pharmaceuticals, research and development and the environment. There are still wide variations and inequalities in health status in the European Union, with a significant relationship between health and employment status and isolation from the mainstream of society. The principal future challenges will be to meet public expectations regarding higher health protection and improved health care and to plan for an ageing population. The Community response will continue to focus on prevention and in particular the promotion of healthier lifestyles as the most efficient and cost effective means to improve health. There is also a need to consider how best to respond to emerging health threats and increasing pressures on health systems. The Commission will:

- ✓ take forward the debate on the development of public health policy as set out in its 1998 Communication on public health, drawing on the experience of the existing framework programme and addressing the emerging demographic challenges and new threats such as communicable diseases
- ✓ pursue the strategy on combating tobacco consumption set out in the Commission's 1996 Communication
- ✓ implement the existing health programmes (AIDS, communicable diseases, cancer, drug dependence, health monitoring and health promotion) and press for the adoption of the outstanding proposals (rare diseases, pollution-related diseases and accidents and injuries)
- ✓ deepen the exchange of experience on efforts to improve the efficiency, cost-effectiveness and quality of health systems

#### IV: The external dimension of social policy

While the primary focus of this Communication is inevitably on progressing the social agenda within the Union, there is also an external dimension which is assuming increased importance. The success of the European social model in combining social progress with economic prosperity has undoubtedly influenced the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in seeking membership of the Union. In a similar way, Europe's relative success in avoiding excessive poverty gaps and promoting an inclusive society has attracted the attention of other developed countries and the social agenda is increasingly discussed in the context of the Union's bilateral relations as well as in international fora.

- **Enlargement:** the process of enlargement will bring into the European Union countries which face particular challenges in raising people's living and working conditions to the levels currently enjoyed by Community citizens. Accession to the Union will accelerate the process of rapid social and economic change already in train in these countries, facilitating the introduction of the core values of European social policy, which will play an important role in smoothing the transition and ensuring that accession works for the well-being of all. The Commission will:

- ✓ work to ensure the gradual involvement of accession countries in social policy programmes and activities - and in particular the employment strategy - while promoting the social and civil dialogue as essential pillars of the European social model
- ✓ assist applicant countries, in the context of their preparation for membership and in particular through the Accession Partnerships, to ensure full adoption and implementation of the acquis in the social policy field and contribute through financial assistance, in particular through the Phare programme, to the development and adaptation of the social infrastructure in the candidate countries

- **Promoting social progress on the world stage:** the EU is an increasingly prominent player in the global economy. It is the single largest trading bloc in the world accounting for about 13% of total trade, and this role is likely to increase in the future with the advent of EMU. These developments will give added weight to the EU's efforts to promote economic growth which is both sustainable and equitable and which has a strong social dimension. This is reflected in the EU's position as the largest donor of aid to the developing world.

The Commission will:

- ✓ present a Communication in 1998 on the development of the external dimension of European social policy
- ✓ maintain support in particular in the ILO for the promotion of internationally recognised core labour standards, and seek to enhance co-operation between the ILO and the WTO in this respect
- ✓ maintain an emphasis on co-operation in the field of social policy in the Community's bilateral relations with third countries

## **V: Conclusion**

This Communication has sought to set out the next steps for European social policy as the Union moves into a new and deeper phase of integration. It provides a framework within which the process of social policy renewal will be taken forward, with the aim of reinforcing the core values of the European social model while ensuring that the Union is well placed to respond to new and emerging challenges in a fast changing world. In this way, the social policy agenda can be kept under review by all concerned - the European Institutions, the social partners and civil society - and adapted as necessary, with the aim of ensuring that social policy stays where it belongs, at the heart of a People's Europe.

## **Annex 1**

### ***Main policy initiatives***

Employment Guidelines (Council Resolution of 15 December 1997)

Proposals for the reform of the ESF (COM (1998)131)

Communication on undeclared work (COM (1998)219)

Action Plan for free movement of workers (COM (97)586)

Green Paper on partnership for a new work organisation (COM (97)128)

White Paper on sectors and activities excluded from the working time Directive (COM (97)334)

Communication on the social and labour market dimension of the Information Society (COM (97)390)

Communication on a Community programme concerning safety, hygiene and health at work (1996-2000) (COM (95)282)

Communication on modernising and improving Social Protection in the EU (COM (97)102)

Fourth Equal Opportunities Action Programme (COM (95)381)

Action Plan against Racism (COM(1998)183)

Communication on equality of opportunity for people with disabilities (COM(96)406)

Communication on the development of public health policy (COM (1998)230)

Communication on combating tobacco consumption (COM (1996)609)

### ***Main Reports***

Joint report on employment

Employment in Europe 1997

1997 Equality Report

Social Protection in Europe 1997

1997 Demography Report

1997 report on the State of health in the European Community

Report on the integration of health requirements into other Community policies

## **Annex 2**

### ***Pending proposals***

#### **I. Jobs, skills and mobility**

Agenda 2000: proposal for Council Regulation on the European Social Fund - COM (98) 131 final

Amendments to Regulation (EEC) no. 1408/71 on social security for migrant workers concerning:

- extension to nationals of third countries - COM (97) 561 final (OJ C 6 of 10.1.98, p.15)
- miscellaneous amendments - COM (97) 378 final (OJ C 290 of 24.9.97, p.28)
- early retirement benefits - COM (95) 735 final (OJ C 62 of 1.3.96, p.14)
- unemployment - COM (95) 734 final (OJ C 68 of 6.3.96, p.11), amended by COM (97) 158 final (OJ C 161 of 28.5.97, p.5)
- the extension of personal and material scope - COM (91) 528 final (OJ C 46 of 20.2.92, p.1)

Proposal for a Council Regulation amending Regulation no. 1612/68 on freedom of movement for workers – COM (88) 815 final (OJ C 100 of 21.4.89, p.6), amended by COM (90) 108 final (OJ C 119 of 15.9.90, p. 10)

Proposal for a Council Directive amending Directive 68/360 on free movement for workers – COM (90) 108 final (OJ C 119 of 15.9.90, p. 10)

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