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Report

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Social Affairs, Employment and
Education

on the resolution of the Council and of the Ministers of Education meeting within
the Council of 13 December 1976 concerning measures to be taken to improve
the preparation of young people for work and to facilitate their transition from
education to working life

Rapporteur: Mr M. PISTILLO

v

PE 51.037/fin.

By letter of 11 January 1978 the Committee on Social Affairs, Employment and Education requested authorization to draw up a report on the resolution of the Council and of the Ministers of Education meeting within the Council concerning measures to be taken to improve the preparation of young people for work and to facilitate their transition from education to working life.

Authorization was given by the President of the European Parliament in his letter of 19 January 1978.

On 18 January 1977 the Committee on Social Affairs, Employment and Education appointed Mr PISTILLO rapporteur.

It considered the draft report at its meetings of 17 May 1977, 23 November 1977 and 24 January 1978 and unanimously adopted the motion for a resolution on 24 January 1978.

Present: Mr Van der Gun, chairman; Mr Pistillo, rapporteur; Mr Albers, Mr Bertrand, Mr Bouquerel, Mrs Cassanmagnago Cerretti, Mr Dinesen, Mr Lezzi, Lord Murray of Gravesend and Mr Pisoni.

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The Committee on Social Affairs, Employment and Education hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution together with explanatory statement:

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

on the resolution of the Council and of the Ministers of Education meeting within the Council of 13 December 1976 concerning measures to be taken to improve the preparation of young people for work and to facilitate their transition from education to working life.

The European Parliament

- having regard to the resolution of the Council and of the Ministers of Education meeting within the Council of 13 December 1976 concerning the measures to be taken to improve the preparation of young people for work and to facilitate their transition from education to working life,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee of Social Affairs, Employment and Education (Doc. 513/77),
1. Welcomes the fact that the attention and interest which it has constantly shown towards the relationship between young people's education and their employment has now found practical expression in the resolution of the Council and of the Ministers of Education meeting within the Council;
 2. Regrets, however, that a matter of such importance, the ultimate aim being to combat the ever-increasing unemployment among young people, should be treated in general terms at a time when new guidelines and practical proposals are needed so that young people will not despair of their future and lose all faith in the ability and will of society to implement an effective employment policy;
 3. Considers that the measures taken so far in connection with the preparation of young people for work, the transition from school to work and the creation of opportunities for further studies after the period of compulsory schooling have been too limited, badly coordinated and ineffective in finding a solution to a problem which now affects two million of the Community's young citizens;
 4. Is of the opinion that vocational training schemes should give priority to the needs of young people whose inadequate schooling or lack of diplomas makes them especially vulnerable to changing conditions on the labour market and to those of young people who encounter difficulties during the transition to working life because they are not adequately qualified;

5. Is surprised that the resolution limits the field of action to the period of compulsory schooling and subsequent vocational and general training since the ultimate objective must be to extend the measures to all categories of young people who require better preparation for their working lives irrespective of the length of their education;
6. Considers that tangible results will not be forthcoming until there is effective coordination and shared responsibility between the organizations responsible for education, vocational training, counselling and employment policies acting in collaboration with the social partners and the authorities, local and regional authorities included;
7. Considers therefore that an integrated policy for young people should be initiated in which the aspects of education, vocational training and integration into working life are closely combined on the basis of
 - cooperation and coordination at national level between the various ministries concerned,
 - cooperation and coordination at Community level between the various governmental services concerned,
 - the setting up by the European Parliament of a committee on education, vocational training and youth,
 - meetings at the highest level between those with responsibility for education, vocational training and employment;
8. Welcomes the adoption by the Council and the Ministers of an appropriation of approximately 11 million u.a. for the period up to 1981, while judging this sum to be altogether inadequate to ensure that the scope and effectiveness of the measures envisaged will be commensurate with the seriousness of the problem of unemployment amongst young people;
9. Suggests therefore that there should be coordination of the amounts already allocated to youth projects by the Social Fund, the Regional Fund, the Guidance Section of the EAGGF and the appropriations on the Community budget for implementing integrated educational programmes, total appropriations being at the same time considerably increased;
10. Requests accordingly that an annual report be presented to the European Parliament on the general situation as regards projects undertaken for young people with the assistance of these Funds;
11. Instructs its President to forward this resolution and the report of its committee to the Council and Commission of the European Communities.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENTI. INTRODUCTION

1. This resolution on measures to improve the preparation of young people for work and to facilitate their transition from education to working life has its origin in the action programme in the field of education of 9 February 1976¹, point 22 of which fixes the following as priority matters at Community level:

- (a) the measures to be taken in the field of education to prepare young people for work, to facilitate their transition from study to working life and to increase their chances of finding employment, thereby reducing the risks of unemployment;
- (b) the provision, in a context of continuous education and training, of further education to enable young workers and young unemployed persons to improve their chances of finding employment.

2. In this connection the Education Committee was instructed to draw up an initial report for the Council before 1 July 1976 on the problems arising under (a) and (b) above, and the measures which could help to resolve them within the educational systems.

Before this report was completed, a lively debate began throughout the Community on professional training for young people.

3. In May 1976 the Committee on Social Affairs, Employment and Education held a meeting at which it was stressed that, on the question of action to help unemployed young people, priority should be given to those who had not received adequate professional training. The meeting urged effective coordination between the various placement services in order to encourage young people to seek employment in sectors where job opportunities existed. Finally, the committee advocated the retraining of workers in firms under a job-creation programme financed from public funds.

4. However, reaction to this document from both sides of industry was once again tinged with disappointment that the question of practical measures to create new jobs had been left unresolved.

The ETUC proposed that young unskilled workers threatened with unemployment should receive professional training under the same conditions

¹ OJ No. C 38, 19.2.1976, p.1

as unemployed young people. It was also proposed that retraining schemes in firms should be controlled by the unions, and not only by the government.

Employers felt that such retraining schemes would build up false hopes among unemployed young people.

5. Over the last few years the European Parliament too has given close attention to the problem of preparing for work young people who are unemployed or threatened with unemployment.

For example, an oral question by Mr Terrenoire¹ to the Council, on the need for an 'overall Community policy giving priority to the employment of young people and expediting their professional training' was debated in plenary sitting at the July 1976 part-session².

All speakers agreed that the grave unemployment situation called for rapid and effective action.

The horrifying statistics available at that time showed that since the end of 1975 - in barely two years - the number of young people without jobs had increased by 64% in Belgium, 405% in Denmark, 77% in France, 210% in Germany, 121% in Ireland and 61% in the Netherlands.

The latest figures, according to which about 2 million young people are unemployed, underline the deterioration of the situation and the urgent need for practical measures.

Several specific proposals were made in the 1976 debate which are as valid today as ever. Mr Yeats, deputizing for Mr Terrenoire, stressed that 'the acquisition of extra skills, which bear a direct relation to market needs, is still the best way, not only of limiting the demand, but also of gearing it to the potential supply of jobs'. Specifically, he proposed an increase in grants for technical studies to encourage further practical training; an extra term for less successful students who inevitably experienced greater difficulty in finding a job; attractive salaries for those undergoing vocational training; financial aid to increase mobility in regions suffering from disequilibria; a school programme designed to inform pupils of these measures and to encourage their use. The European Social Fund, which many speakers singled out as the most effective weapon with which to combat unemployment among young people, should also be brought into play.

¹ Doc. 185/76

² Debates of the European Parliament, OJ No. 205, July 1976, p.140

6. The European Council has also showed a welcome concern in the preparation of young people for work.

This is clear from the statements issued to the press after its meeting in Rome on 25 and 26 March 1977¹, point 3 of which states that the European Council agrees to 'promote measures to help resolve specific labour market problems, especially in improving training and employment opportunities for young people and women'.

II. THE RESOLUTION UNDER CONSIDERATION

7. Although the Committee on Social Affairs, Employment and Education naturally welcomes any measure likely to relieve unemployment in the short or long term, it is nevertheless disappointed by the form of this particular resolution - particularly in the light of the practical proposals and formally declared objectives mentioned above.

8. The resolution is divided into two main parts, one of which is addressed to the Member States, who are required to take account of the conclusions and measures suggested in the Education Committee's report². Briefly, these concern the development of curricula and teaching methods to provide suitable preparation for working life; promotion of a system of continuing educational and vocational guidance; provision of continuing education and training opportunities for all young people; the particular needs of especially vulnerable categories; continuing training of teachers so that young people may receive better counselling and preparation for work; improved compilation of information on the employment of young people and their aspirations; closer coordination between education, vocational guidance and placement services.

9. The second part of the resolution concerns measures to be implemented at Community level during the period up to 31 December 1980, and lists five main actions. The first is the implementation of pilot projects to assist in the evaluation of national policies in the following fields: educational and training requirements of young people leaving school who have difficulty in finding personally satisfying work; stimulation of young people's interest in education and work; specific actions benefiting girls, migrants and groups with special problems; development of a continuing process of educational and professional counselling; the improvement of vocational preparation in the final years of schooling and improved training of teachers.

¹ PE 48.692/Ann.

² PE 47.567

The second action is the preparation of a report analyzing the Member States' experience in strengthening coordinated planning of education and other sectoral policies for the benefit of the less-favoured regions, together with provisions and measures to assist young persons who wish to resume their studies.

The third action consists of the organization of study visits for specialists in the fields of vocational education and guidance, together with seminars for teachers.

The last two actions concern the compilation of statistics, with a view to preparing guidelines for the comparison of existing statistical information regarding the transition of young people from education to working life, and to providing regular information on trends and developments relating to vocational guidance and preparation for working life.

Finally, the resolution instructs the Education Committee to draw up a report on the measures which have been taken, and specifies that the financing of those measures will be decided in accordance with the Community budgetary rules and procedures.

10. In contrast with the cursory style of the resolution, the more substantial report by the Education Committee analyses the question of the transition from school to work and considers the problems which this transition poses for the educational system. It also provides a summary of measures designed to improve the preparation of young people for work which have been adopted by the education bodies of the individual Member States.

In conclusion, the Education Committee optimistically expresses the hope that the report and the resolution will lead to the implementation of an effective policy benefiting young people which, in the longer term, will make it possible to deal with unemployment among young people through training and counselling taking closer account of labour market requirements.

11. The Committee on Social Affairs, Employment and Education fully shares these views, as is evident from the report drawn up by Mr Walkhoff¹ on the preparation for work of young people who are unemployed or threatened with unemployment. This report states, among other things, that urgent measures must be taken to reduce unemployment and, in particular, to facilitate the transition from school to work. It also points out that, in organizing professional training, account should be taken of the fact that young people who have received insufficient school education are often unable to obtain places as trainees.

¹ Doc. 398/76

III. OTHER INITIATIVES IN THIS FIELD

12. June 1977 saw the publication of a report to the European Council drawn up by the Commission on Community action in the field of the labour market (with particular reference to the training and employment of young people and women)¹.

This report contains several passages of relevance to the Council resolution. For example, point 5 refers to 'the mismatch between training opportunities and the needs of the economy', and point 7 states that, 'in the area of vocational training, the most urgent need appears to be the provision of short-term vocational preparation for that proportion of school leavers (between 30% and 50%) which enters the labour market without any vocational training'. With a view to stimulating new measures, point 13 proposes to 'enlarge the range of opportunities available to young people by supporting schemes to extend the general vocational training systems and to provide work experience within firms', not principally geared towards the obtaining of qualifications. The success of such measures 'depends to a large extent on the quality of the national vocational guidance, placement and training systems, in particular those responsible for the introduction of young people to the labour market' (point 14).

13. The ETUC's position on better preparation of young people for work is expressed in its programme for reducing working hours². It proposes an extension of compulsory schooling within the framework of educational reform encompassing measures to prepare young people for the transition to working life.

14. During discussions on the Social Fund³, the Economic and Social Committee favoured greater concentration of resources on a new overall policy covering education and professional training.

15. As regards the European Centre for the development of vocational training, it was said at its opening in March 1977⁴ that professional training should be adapted to available job opportunities. In 1977 the Centre was contemplating organizing a conference to examine ways in which professional training could meet the requirements of industry in the light of technological developments.

16. In November 1976 a seminar was held in Aarhus (Denmark), with participants from all the Member States, on the difficulties facing young

¹ COM(77) 301 final, 15.6.1977

² Agence Europe, 30.4.77, p.12

³ Agence Europe, 27.4.77, p.12

⁴ Agence Europe, 12.3.77, p.13

people in the transition from school to work. The subsequent report¹ emphasizes that one cause of these difficulties is lack of motivation. It therefore proposes that a close study be made of this aspect and that there should be close cooperation between Education and Labour Ministers and between schools and firms at local level.

17. Finally, in 1977 the OECD undertook a detailed study of the problem which was given the title 'Entry of young people into working life'. This comprehensive report states that the difficulties encountered by young people seeking employment are due to the fact that their education and qualifications do not meet the real requirements of industry.

The report also maintains that there is a particular need for further training immediately after compulsory schooling. Employers should assume a greater responsibility with regard to professional training and not merely seek to engage ready-trained workers. However, professional training within firms should be financed by the State, to ensure that young people have a certain freedom of choice. The important thing is that the measures to combat unemployment among young people should take account both of the desires of young people themselves and of the needs of industry.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

18. The Council resolution mainly concerns the contribution and responsibility of education systems in the preparation of young people for work. However, the Committee on Social Affairs, Employment and Education feels that we cannot ignore the whole problem of unemployment among young people. The main purpose of the proposed measures is to eradicate that very problem, as is recognized by implication in the report² of the Education Committee, point 4 of which states that: 'the report is not hinged exclusively on the current problem of youth unemployment'.

19. The committee therefore believes there is an urgent need to launch, by every available means, a new approach and practical measures with a view to effectively combating unemployment among young people. We must not ignore the political significance of Community aid for young people, particularly in view of the impending direct elections to the European Parliament.

20. The committee therefore proposes that the hitherto limited measures to improve the preparation of young people for work should be replaced by an overall policy benefiting young people by ensuring the coordination of education, training and employment policies at both national and Community level.

¹ Agence Europe, 28/29.3.77, p.11

² Bulletin of the European Communities, Supplement 12/76

21. The European Parliament should lead this crusade to help young people, and it is therefore proposed that a new committee be formed to deal with youth policy questions connected with the transition from school to work, the implications of which mainly concern education, professional training and employment problems.

22. Finally, it should be emphasized that the proposed actions must benefit all categories of young people and not be confined, as in the resolution, to the period of compulsory schooling and subsequent general and professional training.

23. The committee considers that initial priority should be given to the needs of young people experiencing particular difficulties in finding work as a result of inadequate schooling or professional training.

24. As successful action in this field largely depends on the size and effective use of available funds, the committee proposes the coordination of all the resources under the individual Community Funds earmarked for the implementation of training programmes, together with a substantial increase in these resources.

25. Finally, to enable Parliament to keep the development of this new policy under review, the Committee on Social Affairs, Employment and Education requests that a report be submitted to the European Parliament each year on actions undertaken for the benefit of young people and financed from the abovementioned resources.

