

European Communities

4-15

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Working Documents

1976 - 1977

25 June 1976

DOCUMENT 164/76

Report

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

on the report from the Commission of the European Communities on the
development of the social situation in the Communities in 1975 (Doc. 44/76)

Rapporteur: Mr C. MEINTZ

"

PE 44.648/fin.

English Edition

59/121-9/6/117

1.2.1

The Commission of the European Communities forwarded to Parliament the report on the development of the social situation in the Communities in 1975 (Doc. 44/76).

On 6 April 1976 the European Parliament referred this report to the Committee on Social Affairs, Employment and Education as the committee responsible and to the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection for their opinions.

On 23 March 1976 the Committee on Social Affairs, Employment and Education appointed Mr Meintz rapporteur. It considered the report at its meetings of 20 May and 3 June 1976 and unanimously adopted the motion for a resolution together with explanatory statement at the latter meeting.

Present: Mr van der Gun, chairman; Mr Nolan, vice-chairman;
Mr Meintz, rapporteur; Mr Bermani, Mr Bouquerel, Mrs Dunwoody,
Mrs Carettoni Romagnoli, Mr Carpentier, Mr Kavanagh, Mr McDonald
(deputizing for Mr Creed), Mr Normanton (deputizing for Sir Brandon
Rhys Williams), Mr Radoux (deputizing for Mr Albers), Mr Rosati,
Mr Schwabe (deputizing for Mr Dondelinger), Mr Thornley (deputizing
for Mr Prescott).

The opinion of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection is attached to this report.

C o n t e n t s

	<u>Page</u>
A. MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION	5
B. EXPLANATORY STATEMENT	8
GENERAL OBSERVATIONS	9
MAJOR PROBLEMS OF THE CRISIS	9
Unemployment	9
Youth unemployment	10
Vocational guidance	11
Female employment	11
Migrant workers	11
Family policy	13
 Opinion of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection	 14

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 report from the Commission of the European Communities on the development of the social situation in the Communities in 1975

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the report from the Commission of the European Communities on the development of the social situation in the Communities in 1975 (Doc. 44/76),
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Social Affairs, Employment and Education and the opinion of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection (doc. 164/76),
1. Thanks the Commission for submitting such an exhaustive and detailed document;
 2. Regrets that in view of the steady deterioration in the economic situation in 1975 the European Council was unable to decide on joint action, although in each of its meetings since the end of 1972 - particularly that in December 1974 - it recognized that 'above all, vigorous and coordinated action must be taken to deal with the problem of employment', while reserving its decision as to whether and to what extent it would be necessary to increase the resources of the Social Fund¹;
 3. Realizes how little a report on a period now ended, in this case the year 1975, can say about the current situation, and therefore refers to the continuing preparatory discussions for the tripartite conference on 24 June 1976².

¹ MARRAS report on the development of the social situation in 1974, OJ No. C 239, 20.10.1975, p.29

² GLINNE report on employment and stability (Doc. 160/76)

4. Notes with astonishment that despite steadily increasing unemployment throughout 1975 (an average increase of 50% compared with the same period in the previous year), a fall in the number of vacancies (approximately 5.5 million unemployed to 500,000 vacancies) and persistent inflation ranging from less than 10% up to 26%, the proposals and demands already made have not been firmly acted upon;
5. Urges immediate implementation of the proposal on extensive coordination of employment policy in Community Member States submitted to the Council in April 1975;
6. Supports the Commission in its efforts to coordinate exchange of information on unemployment problems, prospects and priorities in each country and advocates joint research into the employment problems of particular groups of workers with special emphasis on opportunities offered by existing national employment policy instruments;
7. Notes that, apart from the disturbing overall situation, consideration of methods of overcoming the crisis in the short or medium term is made all the more difficult by the fact that the crisis is a structural rather than cyclical one, all the more serious because of its unequal effects on different sectors and social groups;
8. Stresses that in addition to older workers the social groups most seriously affected are young persons, women and migrant workers and that youth unemployment in particular will give rise to long-term social problems, bearing in mind that in some countries of the Community half the unemployed persons are under 25 and are seeking their first job after leaving school;
9. Therefore urges the Commission and the Council to take immediate steps to provide Social Fund aid for the training and employment of unemployed youth to adjust the resources of the fund accordingly and to investigate possibilities for voluntary early retirement, if necessary on an experimental basis;
10. Considers it particularly important that cooperation between national employment authorities be improved with a view to clarifying the situation on the labour market through SEDOC, the European system for circularizing vacancies and jobs wanted under international clearance;

11. Hopes for a concerted policy in the field of general education and vocational training and at the same time an improvement in the quality of vocational guidance, to afford a clearer picture of opportunities on the labour market, and lays particular emphasis on the need for employment authorities to cooperate on cross-frontier movement;
12. Insists that the Commission and the Council should take steps to put an end to discrimination against women at work through an explicitly formulated policy of equal treatment for men and women, taking into account the relevant judgments of the European Court of Justice;
13. Points out that in view of the structural divergences on the national labour markets, the employment of migrant workers on the present scale will continue to be necessary, and urges the Commission and the Council to put a stop to the distinctions and the occasional discrimination found in national regulations regarding migrant workers, and to afford migrant workers the humanly and economically adequate treatment that is their due;
14. Urges the Council and the Commission to ensure that in the event of any amendments to national regulations on family allowances, the purchasing power of lower income groups is not affected;
15. Fears that the discussions already held in 1974 and 1975 cannot be continued indefinitely in the same way without overtaxing the patience of the people of Europe, given the paucity of tangible political results so far achieved;
16. Therefore makes a most urgent appeal to the Council and Commission of the European Communities to pay heed to the generally held view that solutions to the problems of growing structural, regional and sectoral friction can only have relevance at Community level, and to refrain from further repetitive declarations of intent.

'17. Instructs its President to forward this resolution and the report of its committee to the Council and the Commission of the European Communities."

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The Committee on Social Affairs, Employment and Education does not wish to deny the merits and the goodwill of the Commission of the European Communities, but in view of the differing evaluations, in this Commission document on the social situation in 1975 and in national publications, of Community success in coping with increasingly strained social and economic situations, feels compelled to break with custom and, instead of praising what has been achieved, to ask what has actually happened at national and Community level.

In committee discussions and Parliament debates on the Commission reports on the social situation in 1973 and 1974, the Commission's efforts to submit proposals were well received. This much is clear from the speeches made when the Marras report of 18 February 1975 on the social situation in 1974 was discussed; a further example of this approach may be found in Dr Hillery's speeches in plenary sitting on 18 February 1975 and 6 April 1976. Today the committee feels compelled, without wishing to overstrain a discussion which has already lasted two years with the same arguments and facts, and to allow the discussion on the development of the social situation to degenerate completely into the repetition of previous reports,

- (a) to ask what practical political effects at national and Community level the proposals to cope with the present situation put forward by the Commission and approved by Parliament, and perhaps also adopted by the Council, have produced;
- (b) to call for careful analysis of the ideological sub-structure and practical coherence of the Community as it now stands, instead of presenting reams of paper produced in a vacuum as an actual political result.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

1. The concept of parallel development of the national economies has proved an illusion. Between 1960 and 1970 the inflation rates in the European Community were still fairly close together (up to about one percentage point difference), and it was not until the last three years that the inflation gap widened with West Germany showing an annual rise in consumer prices of 7% between 1973 and 1975 and Ireland in the lead with 19.3%. While over this period West German industry showed a rise in unit wages costs of 25%, the figure for the other Community countries was never less than 40%. In France unit wages costs rose by 55% and in Italy by as much as 83%. There have been similar developments on the employment market too. The Commission is very well aware of this unfortunate fact from its own statistics, without having it pointed out by the committee. But what conclusions does it draw? Anyone sharing Dr Hillery's belief in the need for Europe to unite, even if the process is 'slow or difficult', must nevertheless ask himself whether this process as such has any self-healing properties.

MAJOR PROBLEMS OF THE CRISIS

Unemployment

2. Going back again to Dr Hillery's speech on 6 April 1976, the question arises whether the measures contemplated by the Community - if and when approved by the Council - can actually produce tangible results in the Member States. It should be recalled that the Social Fund, available for this purpose, was again drastically cut for 1976.

As against the Community unemployment figure, which in 1975 rose to roughly 5.5 million with 500,000 vacancies, we have predictions of upward trends that by raising hopes for a reduction in unemployment undermine the awareness gained in 1975 that the present unemployment is largely non-cyclical. And it should be remembered that in present circumstances higher investment does not mean new jobs.

It is clear from available employment statistics on the age groups, social groups and regions most severely affected that the unemployment is structural, and is only camouflaged but not cured by an economic upturn. The Commission should be asked how it intends to use the resources it has available to help the groups concerned, which are:

- (a) young people, both the underskilled and the over-qualified,
- (b) women, especially older ones,
- (c) migrant workers.

Youth unemployment

3. The European Parliament considered this question on 18 February 1975, on the basis of a written question by Mr Adams. The information given then by Dr Millery¹ today raises the question of what positive measures the Commission should take following the Council decision of June 1975 opening up the Social Fund for specific measures to promote the geographical and occupational mobility of young people under 25, especially those still looking for their first job. These problems should be seen in perspective. Educational opportunities shrink while the pressure from above increases, i.e., those with better education drive out the 'ordinary' school leavers. There are already 33 applications for every unskilled opening.

An added difficulty is that the bulge years from 1962 to 1972 will be crowding the market from 1977 to 1987.

In several countries half the unemployed are under 25, though their social status differs in the various Member States. Thus, for example, in West Germany they mainly have no occupational skills, whereas in Italy youth unemployment also severely affects highly skilled young people.

Anyone who followed the debate on the vocational training law recently passed in the Federal Republic of Germany, to mention only one example, must wonder whether national legal provisions to protect young trainees can induce employers in the Community to train apprentices, in other words, can actually achieve their objective or whether the number of training openings will restrict the market still further.

It is obvious that the question of education in general and the role of schools deserves an important place in Community policy. It has become increasingly evident that the interdependence between general education and subsequent vocational training on the one hand and economic and social

¹ OJ No. 186/75, p. 79-84

policy on the other must be taken far more into account, as must the fact that in future the mutually overlapping policies of education and vocational training must be planned and implemented within a common framework.

Vocational guidance

4. Another factor not to be overlooked is the growing importance of the possibilities of vocational guidance. Available information suggests that in this area, both cooperation between Community countries and quality and qualifications in them, which differ sharply from region to region and from country to country, leave much to be desired. The Commission is asked - with particular reference to previous statements on the problem of youth unemployment - what specific results the Commission working group on this problem set up in 1972 has produced.

Female employment

5. The above-average unemployment rate for women, particularly older women, gives cause for concern, especially since the Council has so far not been able to reach a decision opening up the Social Fund to women and the disabled. The decisions on equal pay in accordance with Article 119 of the EEC Treaty¹ and on equality between men and women in access to employment², which the Commission views as successes, also give rise to serious doubts. It is common knowledge that although the first of these demands was made 18 years ago and has been incorporated by most Member States - except Ireland - in their legislation, wage inequality contrary to the law are still very much the rule in all Member States (e.g. low wage earners).

Furthermore, the Commission is certainly aware what the effects of a ban on discrimination can be, as shown by the example of the United Kingdom, where such a ban became law on 1 January 1976.

A case in point is the job advertisement asking for building workers of either sex, on condition that they work stripped to the waist.

Migrant workers

6. The Commission has drawn up an action programme for migrant workers giving them equal rights to join trade unions and have their children educated, and the Council has adopted both the action programme and the directive on the extension of trade union rights to workers moving

¹ See also the Hürzschel report, European Parliament Doc. 21/74/rev.

² See also the report by Lady Elles, European Parliament Doc. 24/75.

within the Community - though only to migrants from Member States. However, the Council has still not adopted the directive on the education of migrant workers' children¹ although this problem, which has been thoroughly researched and publicized, is one of the priority problems in employing migrant workers in the medium and long term. What does the Commission intend to do about this uneven development, especially since despite high unemployment in Member States, the number of migrant workers has fallen less than proportionately? It should also be pointed out that according to both sides of industry and to employment offices, the employment of migrant workers will long continue to be necessary, because of the structural divergences already mentioned.

For example, the 1.35 million unemployed in the Federal Republic of Germany break down as follows:

- some 200,000 are in the construction industry and therefore seasonally unemployed,
- more than 530,000 are women, over half of whom are seeking only part-time work or are not fully employable for health reasons (probably not at all in blast furnaces, foundries or mines and the like),
- 120,000 unemployed men with some degree of disablement,
- 130,000 unemployed young people, likewise unsuitable for physically strenuous work.

Of the remaining 400,000 men, many come from office jobs and are therefore not really suitable either for jobs needing physical strength or manual skill. This is not counting those who are over 55 and therefore not in great demand by industry.

Account must also be taken of the geographical immobility of those who own houses and land. That means that the sectoral demand for migrant workers cannot be met by the German labour market in either the medium or the long term.

The Commission should therefore be called upon to take steps to put discussion of this question in Member States back where it belongs in economics, and away from the polemics of domestic political infighting.

¹ See also the Carrettoni Romagnoli report, European Parliament Doc. 375/75.

Family policy

7. Until very recently family policy was treated as nationally important in all the Community countries, on the ground that healthy development of society was only possible if this, the smallest unit of society, were assured of a financially and legally secure and protected position. It is apparent both from the Commission's report on the social situation in 1975 and from current publications that there is an increasing trend in the present phase of economic recession to cut back these provisions. This is particularly surprising considering that in view of both the above-mentioned negative developments on the labour market and the actual fall in real wages brought about by high inflation rates and lower rates of wage increase, a situation has arisen that threatens precisely those families for whom state aid seems absolutely essential. The Commission should use its political weight to oppose or forestall such measures as those it mentions in its report¹.

¹ Report on the social situation in 1975, p. 130, para 183

Opinion of the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection

Draftsman : Miss B. BOOTHROYD

On 26 April 1976 the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection appointed Miss B. Boothroyd draftsman.

It considered the draft opinion at its meeting of 24 June 1976 and adopted it unanimously.

Present: Lord Bethell (acting chairman), Miss Boothroyd (draftsman),
Mr Bourdelles, Lady Fisher of Rednal, Mr Guerlin,
Mr Hunault, Mrs Kruchow, Mr Martens, Mr Ney, Mr Noè,
Mr Rosati and Mr Schulz

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection has been authorised to deliver an opinion for the Committee on Social Affairs, Employment and Education on the sections of the statement by the Commission of the European Communities on the development of the social situation in the Community in 1975 falling within the committee's terms of reference.

Safety, hygiene and health protection at work

The committee is concerned to note that, despite all efforts, the number of accidents at work shows no sign of diminishing. It welcomes, therefore, the Commission's decision to draw up an action programme on the prevention of accidents at work. This programme will be presented shortly, with the aid of the Advisory Committee for Safety, Hygiene and Health Protection at Work. The committee shares the Commission's view that joint action does not necessarily mean success, but that it can mean a pooling of research findings and experience which makes the task of those involved in accident prevention considerably easier.

One of the actions to be undertaken will be the improvement of the system of data collecting on accidents at work. At the moment, the only sector providing reliable accident statistics is the Iron and Steel Industry. The collection of statistics on accidents should not, however, become an end in itself, nor should health protection at work be confined only to accident prevention. The committee would like to see more research being done on occupational diseases and on aspects of work humanization such as research into noise pollution.

Protection of Health and of the Environment

The committee is pleased to note that the Commission has concentrated much attention on radiation protection, drawing up studies, holding seminars and drawing up recommendations. It particularly welcomes the draft recommendation proposed requesting Member States to restrict the exposure of patients to ionizing radiation used for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes. This is an important step, considering the widespread and, at times, indiscriminate use of X-ray equipment in the Community.

The committee is particularly interested to note that asbestos figures in the list of first category pollutants and that the Commission has conducted a study on the criteria for man.

The committee requests the Commission to pay particular attention to this pollutant about which there has been considerable speculation in certain Member States recently. Inhalation of asbestos fibres can cause mesothelioma, a form of cancer and even the slightest exposure to asbestos can be potentially lethal.

The committee considers that the Commission has initiated many worthwhile studies, but reiterates its opinion that the findings of such studies must be published and acted upon as soon as possible.

Handicapped Persons

The committee notes that the action programme on the occupational rehabilitation of handicapped persons is now being implemented. It is hoped that the Commission's action in this field will continue and diversify in 1976.

Conclusion

1. Welcomes the numerous actions taken by the Commission in the field of public health and the environment in 1975;
2. Expresses its concern at the number of accidents at work which is still frighteningly high and hopes that the action programme envisaged by the Commission will soon be presented;
3. Emphasises that research into other aspects of health protection at work should not be neglected;
4. Notes with satisfaction the attention being focussed on radiation protection while reiterating its opinion that the findings of the studies being undertaken must be acted upon as soon as possible.