

Result of the voting

For: 19, against: 31, abstentions: 10.

Add to point 4.2.1.2

'However, it needs to be recognized that financial institutions may be unwilling to initiate or threaten litigation or even to query the legality of "general good" restrictions on their activities because banks are conscious that the balance of power is weighted very heavily in favour of their host country supervisors.'

Reason

Self explanatory.

Result of the voting

For: 18, against: 51, abstentions: 4.

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the 'Working document of the Commission entitled "Towards a European voluntary service for young people"'

(96/C 204/19)

On 24 April 1996, the Economic and Social Committee, acting under the third paragraph of Rule 23 of its Rules of Procedure, decided to draw up an Opinion on the 'Working document of the Commission entitled "Towards a European voluntary service for young people"'.

The Section for Social, Family, Educational and Cultural Affairs, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its Opinion on 12 April 1996. The Rapporteur was Mr van Dijk.

At its 335th Plenary Session (meeting of 24 April 1996), the Economic and Social Committee adopted the following Opinion by 39 votes to one, with four abstentions.

1.1. The European Commission recently published a working document setting out proposals for a European voluntary service for young people. This pilot action is intended to provide the foundation for the multi-year voluntary service programme which the Commission hopes to present at the end of 1996.

1.2. The Commission aims to promote transnational voluntary service by involving the national organizations already participating in the Youth for Europe scheme. They will act as intermediaries between host organizations abroad and potential volunteers.

1.3. The Commission believes that this programme can help to provide its young participants with work experience. On completion of their activities, they will receive a certificate serving as evidence of participation for future employers.

1.4. The Commission acknowledges that prospective participants still face a number of problems. Volunteers have neither student nor employee status. They fall somewhere between two stools. This is particularly important for their social security coverage.

2. General comments

2.1. The Committee is pleased to have been involved at an early stage of the procedure. This enables it to play an effective part in the formulation of efficient programmes. The Commission is asked to make such early referrals more often.

2.2. The Committee endorses the Commission's initiative. In its Opinion on youth unemployment, the Committee called for establishment of a programme to provide young people with work-experience oppor-

tunities. With this pilot action, the Commission is implementing that proposal and helping to increase work-experience opportunities at national and international level⁽¹⁾.

2.3. As the working document makes clear, the Commission has adopted a pragmatic approach by launching the pilot action without waiting for all the many problems to be ironed out. This approach is endorsed.

2.3.1. At the same time, the Committee thinks that certain minimum conditions must be satisfied before such an action can be initiated. In the first place, volunteers must have expressly guaranteed social coverage for health and disability hazards. In the Committee's view, this should be the responsibility of the host organization supervising the volunteers' activities. The Commission must verify that their cover is indeed provided.

2.3.2. A further condition concerns liability insurance. Volunteers must be fully covered against the

financial risks of potentially serious mistakes. This cover can almost always be provided through insurance, for which the Committee again thinks the host organization should be responsible.

2.3.3. Although the working document indicates that the Commission will pay the insurance costs, the Committee thinks that its contribution should be purely supplementary. Where national authorities already bear these costs, the Commission should not have to contribute.

2.4. The Committee recommends maximum involvement of the social partners in the formulation, development and execution of the programme. The involvement of workers' and employers' organizations is particularly important to prevent the replacement of normal employment by voluntary work. It is now clear that the Committee can endorse the Commission proposal only on condition that full-scale employment is not replaced by voluntary activity. This applies to both new and existing jobs.

2.5. The Committee also asks the social partners to discuss with NGOs the best way of involving volunteers in their humanitarian projects.

⁽¹⁾ ESC Opinion on youth unemployment, October 1995 (OJ No C 18, 22. 1. 1996, p. 37), points 4.2 to 4.4.1 inclusive.

Done at Brussels, 24 April 1996.

The President
of the Economic and Social Committee
Carlos FERRER