

2.1. Finally, the Committee, while recognizing the practical difficulties faced by the Commission and the need to adopt the proposed Regulation in good time for the sowing of the 1977 tobacco crop, regrets

that the Council has consulted it at extremely short notice and not given it enough time for such an important matter.

Done at Brussels, 26 January 1977.

*The Chairman of the
Economic and Social Committee*

Basil de FERRANTI

Opinion on the draft Commission recommendation on vocational preparation for young people who are unemployed or threatened by unemployment

The text referred to the Committee has not been published in the *Official Journal of the European Communities*.

A. LEGAL BASIS FOR THE OPINION

On 24 September 1976, the Commission referred the abovementioned proposal to the Economic and Social Committee in accordance with Article 198 of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community.

B. OPINION OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

The Economic and Social Committee prepared its opinion on the above matter at its 145th plenary session, held in Brussels on 26 and 27 September 1977.

The full text of the opinion is as follows:

THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, and in particular Article 198 thereof,

Having regard to the request for an opinion made by the Commission of the European Communities on 24 September 1976,

Having regard to the decision taken by its Bureau on 29 June 1976, instructing the Section for Social Questions to draw up an opinion on the matter,

Having regard to the opinion issued by the Section for Social Questions at its meeting held on 13 January 1977,

Having regard to the oral report made by the Rapporteur, Mr Carroll,

Having regard to the discussions at its 145th plenary session held on 26 and 27 January 1977, sitting of 26 January 1977,

Whereas the Economic and Social Committee has always emphasized that vocational preparation is useful and necessary for social, economic and technical development in Europe;

Whereas vocational preparation is important for all young people, of both sexes, especially those who have left school at the minimum school-leaving age without an educational qualification; and who live

in depressed areas and areas with industries which have few job openings;

Whereas special measures need to be taken so that the teaching of skills and abilities to young people who have left school is done with methods other than those used in school;

Whereas the preparation of young people for their later working lives should include equipping them with basic knowledge of economic and social organization and the world of work,

HAS ADOPTED THE FOLLOWING OPINION

by a unanimous vote:

1. Introduction

1.1. The Commission recommendation is concerned with young people who are unemployed or threatened by unemployment because they have not received adequate vocational training. Young people without adequate vocational training (those under 25 years of age) account for a very big proportion of the unemployed young people in the Community who in the summer of 1976 totalled approximately 1 742 135 — 925 000 males and 817 000 females. Though eligibility is already restricted to the group defined above, the recommendation assigns certain priorities by asking for precedence to be given in the schemes to those who have left school at the minimum school-leaving age without an educational qualification.

1.2. The Commission wishes to encourage the provision of means and resources to enable young people between the end of compulsory school attendance and the age of 25 who are unemployed or threatened with unemployment to receive appropriate vocational preparation. This move is a follow-up to the previous action of the Community in the vocational training field. The vocational preparation is to consist of the following, as appropriate:

- vocational guidance:
- consolidation of basic skills and practice in using them;
- imparting a basic knowledge of economic and social matters, including social legislation, the respective roles of employers and trade union organizations and organizations representing other economic and social interests, the world of work, job safety and hygiene, industrial relations, etc.;

— practical training in a broad skills area;

— practical experience of work.

1.3. The Committee underlines the recommendation's call for the involvement of the two sides of industry in the elaboration of vocational preparation measures and the actual operation of vocational training courses.

1.4. The Committee notes that job creation schemes are at least mentioned in the 'Basis of action'. Nevertheless, it calls upon the Commission to devote greater and more urgent attention in future to the question of organizing job creation schemes. Without job creation schemes the ultimate success of the training measures cannot be guaranteed. The Committee wishes to draw attention to the fact that youth unemployment cannot be solved by vocational training measures.

1.5. The Committee considers that the young people must be encouraged by means of publicity, provision of financial support, etc. to avail themselves of the improved vocational preparation which is provided.

1.6. The Committee supports the Commission's draft recommendation and endorses the urgency with which the Commission has carried out the preparatory work.

2. General comments

2.1. Basically, the Committee feels that a Directive on vocational preparation measures for young people who are unemployed or threatened by unemployment would have been much better. In view of the difficulty and time involved in passing a Directive, however, the choice of a recommendation seems acceptable at the present juncture.

2.2. The Committee expects the Member States to implement the recommendation as a matter of urgency and to take steps providing vocational preparation for young people who are unemployed or threatened by unemployment.

2.3. The Committee also hopes that a Directive dealing with the solution of the whole range of problems raised by youth unemployment will be issued as soon as possible. Furthermore, it is neces-

sary that steps be taken to coordinate the policies between the various European Funds in the area of youth unemployment (e.g. European Social Fund, European Agricultural Guarantee and Guidance Fund, European Regional Fund).

2.4. The basis of the present recommendation is the fact — to which the ESC has testified in many opinions — that vocational training increases a young person's chances and smooths his entry into working life. To have chances on the labour market is particularly important for young people, because the experience of unemployment can have quite a disastrous effect on young people's attitude to work, and — what is more important still — on their attitude to democratic society. This important fact should be stated in the Commission's document. Vocational training must of course be relevant to actual openings on the labour market and in other productive activities, having particular regard to the likely future developments. This also applies to vocational preparation measures as proposed in the recommendation.

2.5. The Committee trusts that the Commission will make use of all available facilities for forecasting the future labour requirements of the various sectors of the EEC economy, so that the recommended vocational preparation facilities are geared as closely as possible to the development of the labour market. Here the Committee would recommend that the Commission work together with the occupational research institutes that exist in various Member States, with demand forecasting institutes, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training in Berlin and the employers' and trade union organizations. It is also necessary that the forecasting work be done at regional level in liaison with representatives of economic and social groups.

2.6. The Committee thinks it important that vocational preparation measures should enable insufficiently qualified young people later to choose the occupation they prefer out of a number of different occupations within a given sector, and to train for the preferred occupation. In the Committee's view, the question of the possibility of basic training should be given consideration.

2.7. The practical work experience suggested in the Commission's recommendation could be a useful back-up to the other vocational preparation measures. Such work experience must include special

training courses so that it really benefits the young people. Concrete incentives must be provided to encourage employers to organize spells of work experience for young people.

2.8. The Committee is aware of the numerous difficulties surrounding the organization and running of work experience schemes. Nevertheless, it does not think these difficulties are insuperable.

2.9. At all events, the recommendation's provisions on consultation and participation of the two sides of industry should also include the possibility of the two sides of industry checking such work experience schemes, in line with the various national practices.

2.10. The Committee regards expert vocational guidance at an early stage as extremely important. It would also be desirable for young people's abilities to be assessed in the course of this vocational guidance, independently of the school record. This could bring to light practical abilities, such as an aptitude for a certain manual skill, which are not, or only to a small extent, taught and exercised at school. The Committee thinks that cooperation between school teachers and vocational guidance officers must be improved as quickly as possible so that the latter's recommendations to young people can be based on prolonged observation of their school careers. It wonders on what basis such an assessment of the aptitudes and abilities of young people can be made unless they have received vocational preparation at school and unless the vocational guidance officer has had the opportunity of observing them closely several times during school. The tests of aptitude and ability used in individual Member States would probably be inadequate for such unquestionably important assessments.

2.11. The possibility of Social Fund assistance for vocational preparation schemes has been established by the Council Decision of 22 July 1975. The Social Fund should, however, also have financial arrangements to enable the vocational training centres to plan their work for several years ahead.

2.12. The training centres and institutes which are to run the vocational preparation schemes must be carefully selected, particularly as regards the quality of the instructors. Because of the type of young

people who will be attending the courses, very high standards in teaching and psychological approach will have to be required of these instructors.

2.13. The vocational preparation measures should be of real assistance to the young people concerned and should also be understood by them to be in their interest. Therefore, steps must be taken to encourage young people to make the effort required. These would include publicity and concrete, e.g. financial, incentives. Though both these aspects are mentioned in the recommendation, the Member States will have to translate them into more concrete form.

2.14. The recommendation leaves the final choice of priorities and the final decision on specific measures to the Member States. However, the Committee calls upon the Commission to send the Member States a list of the measures that have already been taken in some countries, indicating the degree of success, so that the Member States can draw the appropriate conclusions. The Committee expects that the Member States' reports to the Commission a year after the issue of the recommendation will also be made available to all the Member States.

2.15. The Committee regrets that the Commission's original plan to issue the recommendation in the autumn of 1976 could not be realized, but trusts that the recommendation will take effect in 1977.

3. Specific comments on individual sections of the recommendation

3.1. *The introduction* should be amplified as follows:

'... take the measures set out below; it would be advisable to work out the broad lines of these measures in cooperation with the two sides of industry.'

3.2. Insert at the end of paragraph 2 (Section A, 'Vocational preparation'):

'Among these young people, priority should be given to those who left school at the minimum school leaving age without a formal educational qualification.'

3.3. *Subparagraph 3 d)* should read:

'Practical initial training in a broad skills area which provides a basis for several occupations and which enables the trainees to do a specific job in the chosen area or to undertake more advanced training at a later stage.'

3.4. *Paragraph 4:* delete.

3.5. *Paragraph 5* should read:

'Vocational preparation should use modern teaching methods.'

3.6. *Paragraph 7* should read:

'The public authorities which provide the funds for vocational preparation schemes should ensure, in conjunction with the two sides of industry, that the training and work experience are of good quality and relevant to the needs of the young people.'

3.7. The last sentence of *paragraph 9* should read:

'The maintenance allowance should be large enough to ensure that young employed persons, or those threatened by unemployment, attending such forms of vocational preparation are financially better off than young unemployed persons or those threatened by unemployment, who do not attend them.'

3.8. *Paragraph 11, Section C,* should be amplified as follows:

'Use should be made here of the experience of the occupational research institutes of individual Member States and of the findings of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training in Berlin, and the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions in Dublin.'

3.9. *Paragraph 12, Section C (new):*

'The Member States should provide detailed information, specifically directed at the young people in question, about the measures they have taken and the opportunities opened up as a result.'

Done at Brussels, 26 January 1977.

*The Chairman of the
Economic and Social Committee*

Basil de FERRANTI