COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

of 6 July 1977

to the Member States on vocational preparation for young people who are unemployed or threatened by unemployment

(77/467/EEC)

I

BASIS FOR ACTION

The employment problems of young people

1. Youth unemployment in the European Community has grown continuously since 1970. The level of youth unemployment has more than doubled since 1973. In the spring of 1977 approximately 2 000 000 young people under 25 in the European Community were unemployed.

2. The outlook is uncertain. The expected improvement in the economic situation should result in some increase in employment. In most Member States the increase in demand for output is leading to a revival in the demand for labour. It remains to be seen whether this demand will be adequate to absorb the available labour.

3. In addition the potential labour supply in Member States is expected to increase by about two million people between 1976 and 1980 owing to a significant increase in the number of people entering the labour market and a fall in the number of those retiring. Unemployment as a whole will remain a serious socio-economic problem, and youth unemployment may become more acute. In the longer term (from about 1985 onwards) the situation should become easier as the young people born in the years of low birth rates since 1968 start entering the labour market.

4. Youth unemployment is not caused solely by quantitative factors. It is also the outcome of a growing difference between the characteristics of the young people entering the labour market and the nature of the jobs which the economy provides for them, particularly in terms of the level of qualifications and the conditions of work.

5. It is always a serious matter for young people to find that work cannot be obtained when they enter the labour market. The traumatic effect of being rejected from active participation in economic life before one has even had the experience of a job and the independence which this gives tends to warp the attitude of young people to work itself, to job mobility and to society at large for many years ahead.

6. To solve the unemployment problems of young people calls for action over a wide range : economic policy, education policy, labour-market policy, in which the Communities have already started a number of actions.

However, in the Commission's opinion, the most urgent task is to help those young people who are unemployed or threatened by unemployment and who have no opportunity for vocational training. Hence the Commission has decided, as a first step, to draw up a recommendation concerning the vocational preparation of young people in this specific category. The Commission concurs with the opinion expressed by both the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee that this recommendation should be supplemented by additional (and possibly more binding) measures to promote the employment of young people.

7. The decision as to priority meets the wish of the Social Partners as it was expressed at the meeting of the Standing Employment Committee of 3 June 1975, and the concern expressed on numerous occasions by Ministers of social affairs. There have been intensive consultations with the national authorities and with the Social Partners ; the experience of certain Member States in this field was also taken into account.

8. During the preparatory work, it became apparent that it was helpful to distinguish young people in employment difficulties according to their situation :

— the situation of young people who are unemployed and who have never received adequate vocational training,

— the situation of young people who have found employment without having received vocational training, and for this reason are threatened by unemployment,

— the situation of young people who have received a vocational training but who have either been unable to find a job or have lost their job.

9. In agreement with the Social Partners, the present recommendation is aimed at the first of these situations, which covers, in most Member States, a substantial proportion of the unemployed. The second situation is also covered in the present recommendation in so far as the problems of these young people are the same as those of the young people in the first situation. On the other hand, the problems of young people who have received vocational training are of a different character and, for this reason are not covered in this recommendation.

The relation of this recommendation to other action of the Community

10. This recommendation is situated in the context of the previous actions of the Community in the field of vocational training. The 1963 Council Decision on the *General Principles for Implementing a Vocational Training Policy* provides that 'in conformity with these general principles and in order to obtain the objectives stated therein, the Commission may propose to the Council or to the Member States, within the framework of the Treaty, such appropriate measures as may appear to be necessary' (1).

11. The *General Guidelines for the Development of the Programme of Vocational Training at Community Level* (2) accepted by the Council on 26 July 1971 reinforced the Council's intention that vocational training should be used as an instrument of an active employment policy. The *Recommendation of the Commission on Vocational Guidance* (3) has already called upon Member States to develop vocational guidance for young people and adults ; to adapt the organizational development of vocational guidance and its means of action to the needs of the population ; to be concerned with better continuity in vocational guidance and its close cooperation with employment offices, and to strengthen the general coordination of the vocational guidance and other services ; and to strengthen cooperation within the Community.

12. The *Social Action Programme* approved by the Council in 1974 (4) includes the examination by the Commission of the possibility of developing Community initiatives to help, among others, unemployed school leavers. The Council Decision of 22 July 1975 (5), to make grants from the European Social Fund available to young unemployed people, particularly those seeking their first employment, represents an initial step in this direction. The proposed recommendation represents another. The Commission intends as far as possible to take into account the terms of the recommendation in the allocation of Social Fund grants to training programmes for young people.

13. The problems of transition from school to work are also being tackled in the *Action programme in the field of education* approved by the Council and the Ministers of Education meeting within the Council on 9 February 1976 (6).

The specific measures to be taken were enumerated in a subsequent resolution in December 1976 (7). At Community level they include pilot projects, studies and visits, as well as the preparation of reports and statistics.

14. Certain aspects of the employment problems of women and girls are dealt with in the Council Directive of 9 February 1976 (8) on the equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training, and promotion. This Directive lays down the principle of non-discrimination between men and women in, *inter alia,* vocational training. In accordance with this principle, the present recommendation applies with equal force to young men and young women without discrimination. However the special problems of young women in the field of vocational training require additional measures which the Commission is currently preparing.

The target category of young people

15. The specific concern of this recommendation is the large number of young people who enter the labour market every year without adequate preparation for the world of work. They leave school at the minimum school leaving age (which in the Community ranges from 14 to 16 years), often with a poor effective command of the basic skills. Since at present they receive little guidance or training, they have difficulty in finding employment at times when the general level of unemployment is high. Thus it is this category of young people which needs the help of well integrated guidance, training and placement services.

(1) Decision 63/266/EEC ; OJ No 63, 20. 4. 1963 — Fourth principle.
(2) OJ No C 81, 12. 8. 1971, p. 5.
(3) OJ No 154, 24. 8. 1966, p. 2815/66.
(4) Council resolution of 21. 1. 1974 ; OJ No C 13, 12. 2. 1974, p. 1.
(5) OJ No L 199, 30. 7. 1975, p. 36.
(6) OJ No C 38, 19. 2. 1976, p. 1.
(7) OJ No C 308, 30. 12. 1976, p. 1.
(8) OJ No L 39, 14. 2. 1976, p. 40.

16. The recommendation should provide help for those young people who, without any prior vocational training, have found work of an unskilled type. Such work is often subject to redundancy at short notice. The recommendation therefore also covers young people who have or have had a job of this type. The aim is to improve their chances of keeping their jobs or of finding new jobs.

17. The action proposed in this recommendation should in no way be regarded as affecting the efforts of Member States to expend their general vocational training system.

Vocational preparation

18. The principal object of this recommendation is to promote, in the Member States, means of providing, at the end of compulsory schooling, an appropriate vocational preparation for young people who have no other opportunity to receive vocational training either at school or with an employer. The term 'vocational preparation' is used in this recommendation to designate those activities that aim to assure for young people a satisfactory transition from school to work by providing them with the minimum knowledge and skills necessary for working life.

19. Despite the progress made in recent years in the area of vocational training, a large proportion of school leavers in the Community still receive little or no vocational training either before or after leaving school. Even at times of full employment the transition from school to working life is often a painful and frustrating experience. When work is difficult to find this experience of unemployment in the early years may affect the attitude to work of young people throughout their lives.

20. Hence governments should assume the responsibility for ensuring that unemployed young people receive effective vocational preparation. The form and content of such preparation will vary according to the content of the compulsory education provided by the individual Member State, the needs of its labour market, and the needs of the young people concerned.

21. The young people who have the greatest difficulty in finding jobs are often those who also have benifited least from what the school system was able to offer. They may therefore already have begun to consider themselves failures and be lacking in confidence. Their knowledge of career opportunities is also likely to be limited. Hence the provision of vocational guidance becomes more important and should include the assessment of aptitudes and abilities using methods that do not rely solely on the school record, so that advice on appropriate job opportunities and the appropriate training for them may be given.

22. The school leavers who have the poorest results also often lack basic skills that are taken for granted in the adult world. They find it difficult to understand instructions, to complete forms, to communicate effectively by word of mouth and writing, and to use the social and other services provided by Member States. Hence some reinforcement of basic knowledge and skills, and help with the application of these to practical situations is likely to be needed.

23. Many of those who leave school at the minimum school leaving age do so because they find the school atmosphere uncongenial and unresponsive to their adolescent interests. Therefore the vocational preparation proposed should be set in a context appropriate to young adults and related closely to their practical needs. Formidable tasks remain in developing the right approaches and systems. It is possible that the relevant methods and techniques in the field of adult education and training which have been developed in the Member States since the Second World War may be useful. The preparation should equip young people not only with the social skills needed at work, but also provide basic practical training in a well defined area of skills, such as building, engineering or office-work. This basic training should be so designed as to enable the trainee to undertake a specific job in the chosen area and also qualify him to move into recognized courses of operative or craft training.

24. Since the problems of many young people also stem from ignorance of the world of work, contextual studies and practical experience should form part of vocational preparation :

(i) contextual studies would include material relevant to people at work, such as the basic principles of economic and social organization, the law relating to social security and employment, the roles of management and of trade unions, the nature of the world of work, industrial safety and hygiene, industrial relations and the use of guidance, training and placement services ;

(ii) practical experience of work could be provided by various means which could include one of the following :

(a) encouraging employers, where appropriate by means of incentives, to take on young people for periods of practical experiences without commitment,

(b) simulating work experience in the training context,

(c) organizing a publicly financed work-creation programme.

25. Where vocational preparation involves 'in-plant' training or work experience provided with aid from public funds, it is important that this is organized so as to achieve the greatest benefit for the trainee. There is a danger that the training or work experience will be too limited in scope, restricted to specific skills of immediate utility, i.e. its content will be influenced more by the need of the employer for immediate production than by the broader needs of the trainees. Hence it is necessary for public authorities to take measures to ensure the quality of such 'in-plant' training and work experience.

26. In order to ensure that no obstacles are placed in the way of young people who wish to undertake such vocational preparation, governments should take action in two areas :

(i) young people threatened by unemployment should be given reasonable leave of absence from their work in order to attend such courses, with the aim of enabling them to keep their jobs or to find new jobs ;

(ii) all young people attending these courses (both those who are unemployed and those in employment) should be paid maintenance allowances. The allowance should be related to means and should be sufficient to cover reasonable living expenses, fees (if any) and the incidental costs of the courses, and should be large enough to ensure that young persons attending such forms of vocational preparation are financially better off than they would be if they remained unemployed.

27. In order to achieve the recommended objective of providing adequate vocational preparation for all unemployed young people, it will be necessary to use all existing and potential educational and training resources. The Social Partners have both resources and experience to contribute and should therefore be associated with the planning, organization and implementation of vocational preparation programmes.

The coordination of legislation relating to compulsory school attendance and to access to work

28. In one Member State the minimum school leaving age is lower than the minimum age at which young people may begin work or apprenticeships or attend training courses at institutions run by the employment services, since these activities are classified as work. Clearly this situation is unsatisfactory. Until the school leaving age is raised to close the gap between it and the minimum age for work the law should be changed so as to permit school leavers to undertake vocational training or to take up employment.

The coordination of services

29. It seems necessary to draw attention in this context to the importance (recognized previously in the *Recommendation of the Commission on Vocational Guidance*[1]) to the importance of close coordination of the activities of guidance, training and placement. In particular it is important that the vocational guidance and vocational training services work in close liaison with the placement services. At present this does not always occur since in a number of Member States the responsibility for the different services continues to rest with different government departments or agencies.

Statutory basis

30. The Commission of the European Communities has therefore prepared the following recommendation to the Member States. The recommendation finds its basis in those provisions of the Treaty of Rome which are directly concerned with the employment and training of young people. These include Article 117 which expressly stresses the need for an improvement in the living and working conditions of workers ; Article 118 which assigns to the Commission the duty of promoting close cooperation between Member States on social problems, particularly on employment, and basic and advanced vocational training ; the general principles for implementing a common vocational training policy laid down by the Council on the basis of Article 128. The recommendation is based on Article 155, which empowers the Commission to formulate recommendations.

[1] See paragraph 11.

II

RECOMMENDATION

Introduction

1. On these grounds and as a first action to promote the employment of young people, the Commission of the European Communities, pursuant to the objectives and terms of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community and in particular to Article 155 thereof, to the Decision of the Council of Ministers of 2 April 1963 and after consulting the European Parliament (1) and the Economic and Social Committee (2) recommends to the Member States that they take the measures set out below.

A. VOCATIONAL PREPARATION

2. Vocational preparation should be made available to young people between the end of compulsory attendance and the age of 25 who are either unemployed or thereatened by unemployment, and who have no other opportunity for vocational training. Where necessary, priority should be given to those who leave school with no formal educational qualifications.

3. The object of vocational preparation should include, as appropriate :

(a) vocational guidance, aimed at relating the aptitudes and interests of the young person concerned to training and to employment opportunities ;

(b) the reinforcement and application of basic skills such as oral and written expression and elementary mathematical calculation, as well as the social skills needed to work ;

(c) understanding the basic principles of economic and social organization, the law relating to social security and employment, the roles of management and of trade unions, the nature of the world of work, industrial safety and hygiene, industrial relations, and the use of guidance, training and placement services ;

(d) practical initial training in a broad skills area which is so designed as to enable the trainee to undertake a specific job in the chosen area and also qualify him to undertake more advanced training at a later stage ;

(e) practical experience of work, either in an enterprise or by such other means as provide equivalent experience.

4. Vocational preparation should use modern teaching methods appropriate to the age and adult status of the young people.

5. In providing vocational preparation full use should be made of all existing training resources and experience including those of employers, trade unions, and other appropriate bodies. The Social Partners should be associated with the planning, organization and implementation of vocational preparation.

6. Where vocational preparation involves the financing from public funds of in-plant training and/or work experience, public authorities should ensure that both the training and the work experience is of good quality and relevant to the needs of the young people.

7. Young people threatened by unemployment should be given reasonable leave of absence from their work in order to undertake vocational preparation, with the aim of enabling them to keep their jobs or to find new jobs.

8. Allowances sufficient to cover maintenance, fees (if any) and the incidental costs of courses should be paid, in accordance with means, to young people attending publicly approved forms of vocational preparation. The maintenance allowance should be large enough to ensure that young people attending such forms of vocational preparation are financially better off than they would be if they remained unemployed.

9. Action should be taken to inform young people of the schemes of vocational preparation available and of the facilities provided to enable them to follow the courses.

B. COORDINATION OF LEGISLATION RELATING TO COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND TO ACCESS TO WORK

10. The Member States shall examine their legislation and take such steps as may be necessary to ensure that young people who leave school at the minimum school leaving age are not prevented by legal restrictions from undertaking vocational training or taking up employment.

(1) Resolution of the European Parliament embodying its opinion on the recommendation : 18 November 1976. OJ No C 293, 13. 12. 1976, p. 48.

(2) Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the draft recommendation : 26 January 1977. OJ No C 61, 10. 3. 1977, p. 25.

C. THE COORDINATION OF SERVICES

11. The Member States should ensure that there is effective coordination between the vocational guidance services, the vocational training services and placement services. In order to ensure full information about the condition of the labour market Member States should ensure that employers and trade unions are associated with these services at both national and local levels.

D. TIMING AND REPORTS

12. (a) The Member States shall inform the Commission before 31 December 1978 and at yearly intervals thereafter of the measures that they have taken to implement this recommendation.

(b) The Commission will periodically publish a report on the action taken by Member States to implement this recommendation.

Done at Brussels, 6 July 1977.

For the Commission

Henk VREDELING

Vice-President