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Comments by O.E.E.C. on Recommendation 121 relating to resettlement of refugees and surplus agricultural workers

Communication

1.

1. At the 14th Session of the Committee of Deputies of the Ministers of Agriculture and Food, held on 12th December 1957, the Vice-Chairman of the Committee on Agriculture of the Council of Europe presented Recommendation 121 of the Consultative Assembly on the resettlement of refugee and surplus agricultural workers, which had been transmitted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to the Organisation for an opinion. M. De Kinder stressed the importance of the problems referred to in Recommendation 121 and laid special emphasis on the demographic problems in the Mediterranean countries, particu-lary in Southern Italy and Greece, and on the problem of refugees in Turkey. He hoped that the Committee of Deputies would itself undertake the study of the technical and economic aspects of these problems.

2. The Committee of Deputies made a detailed examination of Recommendation 121, which covers three main categories of questions:

a. general economic development of the area concerned and financial assistance;

b. provisions to facilitate emigration to other countries and resettlement or employment, both in these countries and in the country of origin;

c. technical assistance.

3. The Committee of Deputies noted that much had already been done by O.E.E.C. in these fields.

2.

Work already done by O.E.E.C.

2.1. General economic development and financial assistance

4. For a number of years, O.E.E.C. has been interested in the problems arising in these areas and has been considering, how to improve their economic and social conditions and, in particular, how to reduce under-employment. Early in 1955, the Council of O.E.E.C. instructed a special Working Party to study the Italian development programme and to report periodically to the Council on the application of the Plan and on the measures which might be taken by other member countries or by the Organisation to further its implementation.

5. In May 1957 the Council established an Advisory Group on Under-developed Areas which, at the request of the Council, the E.P.A. or other bodies of the Organisation, studies and advises on problems relating to less developed areas in the member countries.

6. As part of the work on a European Free Trade Area, the economic problems of countries in course of economic development and the arrangements which will have to be made to enable them to participate in the Area are now being examined. One of the main problems is that of investment.

2.2. Provisions to facilitate emigration to and employment in other countries

7. Problems relating to a greater mobility of manpower between member countries have been studied for several years past by the appropriate bodies of O.E.E.C. and the Manpower Committee in particular. A Decision adopted by the Council on 30th October 1953 provides a number of measures to facilitate the employment of nationals of member countries in other countries. At the same time, O.E.E.C. has endeavoured to simplify the administrative practices which have hitherto impeded movements of manpower. Certain provisions of the Rome Treaty go still further in this direction but will only apply to the " Six". These problems are also being studied in connection with the Free Trade Area.

8. A Joint Agriculture/Manpower Working Party, on the basis of the Report of a Technical Assistance Mission, has studied, more specifically, certain problems of agricultural manpower and has recommended action both at national and international level to the Committee of Deputies.

2.3. Technical assistance

9. The Organisation has allotted a preponderant place in the productivity programme for agriculture and food to the execution of projects for improving the marketing of agricultural produce and to the establishment of well-organised advisory services employing modern and highly efficient methods. These two branches of activity are particularly stressed in Recommendation 121.

10. Apart from this general work on agricultural marketing and advisory services, E.P.A. is carrying out a complex project which is specially designed to meet the needs of the areas in question. EPA projects were drawn up after thorough on-the-spot investigations, in full agreement with the Governments concerned, and were put in final shape in close co-operation with regional and local authorities; these projects provide assistance for the completion of regional development plans, the creation of training facilities for agricultural advisory officers and the diffusion of technical knowledge, particularly with regard to irrigation, and the processing of agricultural products. For this purpose, it has established trial and demonstration areas (pilot areas) in Sardinia, Italy and in Greece and Turkey. This work is not confined to agriculture but, in view of the economic structure of these areas, the main aim is to improve and develop agriculture and to make better use of the available labour force.

3.

Conclusions and future work

11. To sum up, it may be said that the problems stressed in Recommendation 121 of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe are well known to the Organisation and have been studied, for several years, by its appropriate bodies with a view to improving economic and social conditions in these areas. The economic problems of more general scope which arise in these areas and the ways and means of providing financial aid have been given special attention by the appropriate bodies and are now being reexamined in connection with the negotiations for a Free Trade Area. In particular, the Working Party responsible for studying the position of countries in the course of development, is at present examining a report by financial experts especially appointed for this purpose. This report suggests action which might be taken in O.E.E.C. to contribute to the economic development of those countries and to give them the necessary financial help. A special meeting was held on 12th February 1958, at the headquarters of O.E.E.C. to acquaint national representatives of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe with the progress so far achieved. Practical measures have been taken, particularly as regards technical assistance and greater mobility of manpower.

12. As regards the other main problems, like the measures envisaged for achieving greater mobility of labour and technical assistance, the Organisation's activities largely answer the considerations expressed in Recommendation 121 and provide aid of an essential nature to the countries interested in these problems. The Committee of Deputies of the Ministerial Committee for Agriculture and Food has, however, considered the possibilities of wider action in the following fields:

an increase in technical assistance,

the procurement of more information on regional and local demographic problems.

13. It has therefore

a. decided to consider the possibility of increasing the technical assistance already given in the agricultural sector in connection with the productivity programme for agriculture and food, and to submit concrete proposals for further action;

b. instructed a restricted Group of Experts, which representatives of the Resettlement Fund of the Council of Europe and the F.A.O. will be invited to attend, to report on the possibility of collecting more detailed information on the over-population and surplus agricultural manpower in Southern Italy, Greece and Turkey. Such information would indicate more clearly the areas in which there is a particularly large surplus of manpower and in which special action could give particularly interesting results. If such a study proves useful, the Experts would be asked to suggest practical ways of carrying it out.