Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 1023 (1986)[1]

Youth unemployment

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Having followed up its earlier work on the subject of employment in Europe, as reflected in its Recommendations 948 (1982) and 981 (1984), by a European Public Parliamentary Hearing on youth unemployment in The Hague on 3 and 4 September 1985 ;

2. Being gravely concerned at the fact that about 40 % of the some 20 million people at present unemployed in member states are under the age of 25 and at the continuing negative outlook for unemployment in the years ahead ;

3. Aware of the dangers of a destabilisation of democracy, an upsurge of violence, xenophobic reactions and anti-social trends, to which mass unemployment exposes European society ;

4. Aware that young people of immigrant origin are even more severely hit than others by the scourge of unemployment, because of specific handicaps such as inadequate schooling and poor grasp of the receiving country's language ;

5. Observing that unemployment, especially if prolonged, engenders and aggravates social problems, such as social isolation and family conflicts, and makes individuals more vulnerable to stress, psychosomatic diseases and even mental disorders, particularly when young people, who are more at risk than others, substitute artificial paradises (drugs, alcohol, sects, etc.) for what society is unable to offer them ;

6. Considering that such new jobs as are created will be mainly in the services sector, covering, among other things, firms, the social services and the culture and information sectors, in which there is a growing need for technological expertise which many people do not possess ;

7. Considering accordingly that a better adapted training must be devised through the co-ordinated efforts of educational circles, young people and firms ;

8. Considering that the problem of unemployment, particularly among young people, cannot be solved by placing absolute trust in the self-regulating mechanisms of the market or by supporting artificial demand for manpower ;

9. Reaffirming the vital need to achieve an economic growth which will create genuine jobs and improve social conditions, and the importance of strengthening European co-operation to this end ;

10. Convinced, however, that macro-economic measures are not enough in themselves to reduce youth unemployment within a reasonable period, and that a whole range of specific innovative measures should be devised and applied in such fields as education, training, reorganisation of work, including cooperative and associated work, decentralisation and financing ;

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1. Assembly debate on 28 January 1986 (22nd and 23rd Sittings) (see Doc. 5508, report of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, and Doc. 5503, report of the Social and Health Affairs Committee). Text adopted by the Assembly on 28 January 1986 (23rd Sitting).

11. Considering that the employment crisis means that employers, too, have responsibilities in their investment policies, and that they should play a more active part in finding solutions, particularly to the problem of youth unemployment ;

12. Believing, in this connection, that the rigidit of the organisation of work are not always calculated to foster the employment of young people ;

13. Welcoming the novel initiatives of the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, particularly its campaign for youth employment at local level ;

14. Being nevertheless aware that youth unemployment is part of a wider problem of unemployment in general and poverty in certain countries, and that, therefore, the adoption of partial remedies must not obscure the fact that only the creation of additional employment through increased and competitive economic activity can lead to a real solution, and that these remedies must form part of an overall programme of measures aimed at the labour market as a whole and seeking to balance all its components, including the age factor,

15. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers invite the governments of member states to have regard to the following proposals in drawing up their policies for combating youth unemployment :

15.1. A policy of growth : even though the link between aggregate growth, combined with selective measures, and the number of jobs created is neither automatic nor very clear, a policy of selective growth aimed at particular groups and objectives, and having effects on supply as well as on demand, remains indispensable ;

15.2. Flexibility : this concept, which is still a neglected area, should be defined with a view to job creation ; it involves, for instance, introduction of part-time work, the reduction or re-adjustment of the working week, the fostering of occupational and geographical mobility, and the amendment of any employment-contract clause which discourages the employment of young people ;

15.3. Making local authorities feel more responsible : it should be possible to reconcile local requirements with the specific needs of unemployed young people in view of their diversity and the opportunities for action and in the light of recent experiments, such as the community-value jobs scheme and the obligation for local authorities to provide work for all young people aged 18 to 19, sometimes working in shifts of four hours a day ;

15.4. Education/vocational training : it seems more than ever necessary to redefine the interaction of the functions of education and vocational training, which implies establishing closer links between schools and the world of work, to ascertain the manpower requirements of the industrial and service sectors, so that training structures can be adjusted to meet them better, and to provide instruction for training staff ;

15.5. Employment-training contracts : a transitional period between school and work should enable young people to meet more satisfactorily the requirements of new technologies as well as the demand of employers for "experience" ; employment-training contracts of a reasonable duration could thus fill a gap ;

15.6. Special efforts to devise forms of training suited to the needs of young migrants ;

15.7. A recognised status for young people undergoing training : the provision of training for young people should not be regarded as a drain on society's resources, but as an investment : the introduction of an official status for young people undergoing training — applicable to all young people who have left the compulsory school system up to the age of 20 and who accept taking on a training contract mdash; and possibly carrying a minimum wage, would be a means of recognising the value and dignity of that section of the population and a direct help to the better motivation of young people, in the spirit of the "Colombo Commission" report ;

15.8. Action by non-governmental organisations : youth organisations, youth clubs and associations, and in particular NGOs dealing with socially disad-vantaged young people should be supported in their action by public authorities at all levels, by direct financial help, a reduction in fiscal and social charges and the creation of back-up services above all for training and equipment ;

15.9. Support for young people's initiatives to create enterprises : the implementation of initiatives to create enterprises by young people should be encouraged by :

a. the possibility of capitalising unemployment and any other appropriate public benefits ;

b. the establishment of management-aid agencies ;

c. promotion of schemes mdash; with or without the help of private financial institutions mdash; designed to facilitate access to venture capital, if possible at favourable terms ;

d. the removal of impediments against the creation of small and medium-sized business by young people ;

15.10. Dialogue with young people : new strategies for enabling young people, and in particular youth organisations to take part in decision-making, particularly in fields of direct concern to them, should be drawn up and implemented in the light of the conclusions of European Youth Week, (Strasbourg, 1-6 July 1985), and the proposals made by the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (Resolution on young people in towns), by the Assembly (Recommendation 1019) and by the first Conference of European Ministers responsible for Youth (Strasbourg, 17-19 December 1985) ;

16. Invites the Committee of Ministers to consider the possibility of setting up in the Council of Europe a study and information centre on national, regional and local youth employment initiatives, with a view to defining policies at European level ;

17. Requests the Committee of Ministers to consider the possibility of the Conference of European Ministers of Labour holding a future session jointly with European Ministers of Education and Youth so that a fuller study may be made of the interaction of schools, institutions of higher education and the integration of young people into the world of work ;

18. Requests the Committee of Ministers to take this recommendation into account when examining the conclusions of the 3rd Conference of European Ministers of Labour (Madrid, 20-22 January 1986).