



SOMETHING WORTH WORKING FOR:

The Emergence of the 1973
Social Action Programme

Tony Brown

The Institute of International and European Affairs
8 North Great Georges Street,
Dublin 1,
Ireland

Tel: (353) 1-874 6756 : Fax: (353) 1- 878 6880

www.iiea.com

e-mail: reception@iiea.com

Something Worth Working For: The Emergence of the 1973 Social Action Programme. © Aug 2012, The Institute of International and European Affairs.

The Institute of International and European Affairs grants permission for the reproduction of quotations from this text provided such quotations do not exceed 400 words in length, that they provide the reader with a fair context, and that due acknowledgment of the source is made.

As an independent forum, the Institute of International and European Affairs does not express opinions of its own. The views expressed in its publications are solely the responsibility of the authors.

Cover designed by Brian Martin, Creative Director, IIEA

Photo, Wikipedia

**Something Worth Working For:
The Emergence of the 1973 Social Action Programme**

Tony Brown

CONTENTS

1. Introduction: The Enlargement Background	2
2. Social Policy in the European Communities 1958-1972	4
3. The Paris Summit 1972	7
4. A New European Commission; First Draft	10
5. The Formal Draft	16
6. Yom Kippur	20
7. An Autumn of Negotiations	22
8. Social Affairs Council, December 1973	25
9. Conclusions	32
References in Text	37
Appendix 1: Social Action Programme – Pilot Schemes	39
Appendix 2: Social Action Programme Submitted by the Commission to the Council, October 1973	41

1. Introduction: The Enlargement Background

“The Summit shifted from the economic bureaucratic idea to a Europe of people, a Europe built for the benefit of its citizens. Entering into Europe we should be thinking in a more positive way of how we can so structure it as to preserve to the fullest extent liberties and individual rights while improving the standard of living. Again, all these are aims set out in the Treaty of Rome. We can have a very special role to play in making sure that Europe, as it develops, will be something new in the world and **something worth working for**...it is for us to find for our people, and for other people, reasons why individual people should feel a loyalty to Europe as a concept.”

(Patrick Hillery T.D., speaking in Dáil Éireann, October 1972, emphasis added)

Dr. Patrick Hillery made these remarks in a debate on the European Communities Bill, 1972, which made legislative provisions needed to enable Ireland to fulfill the obligations arising from membership of the European Communities and to exercise the rights which membership conferred. The constitutional provision for accession to the European Communities had been made by the Third Amendment of the Constitution which was overwhelmingly approved – 83% voting Yes –in the referendum of 10 May 1972.

He was referring to the [Summit meeting in Paris](#) a week earlier at which the Heads of State or Government of the six founding Member States of the European Economic Community welcomed their counterparts from the United Kingdom, Denmark and Ireland in preparation for the historic enlargement of the Community on 1 January 1973. One of the main messages from that gathering was that the new, enlarged Community should develop policies in line with the viewpoint which the German Chancellor, Willy Brandt, had strongly advocated in the months leading to the Paris meeting, that “it matters very much that our people realise what this Community does and can mean, for the improvement of their living and working conditions. Social justice should not remain an abstract concept and social progress should not be taken to be a mere appendix to economic growth.”

It was agreed by all participants that a focus on social questions of importance to the people of the nine Member States was essential if they were to feel a loyalty to the concept of Europe and a sense that its institutions were democratic and accountable. The incoming European Community institutions were invited to prepare, during 1973, an action programme in the broad area of social policy.

This paper focuses on the efforts made in the early days of the new Community to give reality to that message. Central to those efforts was the Irish Government's appointment to the European Commission of Dr. Patrick Hillery who had led the Irish team negotiating the terms of accession with efficiency and political skill. In recollecting that phase in Ireland's preparation for entry, Dr. Hillery commented that "By the autumn of 1972 it became clear that the incoming Commission would be a highly political body consisting mainly of prominent political figures from Member States. An authoritative Irish voice in the Commission appeared all the more necessary, with regional development and the Community's plan for economic and monetary union on the agenda."

Dr. Hillery was nominated as the Irish member of the thirteen-member Commission and was named as one of the five Vice-Presidents. Francois-Xavier Ortoli of France was appointed President in succession to Sicco Mansholt. Dr. Hillery wrote about his appointment that "we met in January 1973 to discuss the distribution of portfolios. I asked for Social Affairs. The summit meeting on Paris had called on the Commission to develop a social action programme, and it had also been decided at that summit to restructure the social fund. Both of these considerations were in my mind in choosing that portfolio."

He took up his new roles with that clear mandate from Paris and, within weeks, with a new Government at home as the National Coalition of Fine Gael and Labour, led by Liam Cosgrave and Brendan Corish, took over from Jack Lynch's Fianna Fáil. In the new cabinet, the new Tánaiste, Brendan Corish T.D. became Minister for Health and Social Welfare, with Frank Cluskey T.D. as his Parliamentary Secretary – a position renamed Minister of State some years later – and de facto Minister for Social Welfare. Michael O'Leary T.D. was appointed Minister for Labour. It was agreed that responsibility for European Social Policy would be shared by Michael O'Leary and Frank Cluskey.

I became Special Adviser to the Minister for Social Welfare some weeks after the Government entered into office. In practice, I was adviser to Frank Cluskey and was given particular responsibility for advice on European matters, having regard to my experience in business, as an economist working on EEC affairs in the Irish Sugar Company, in politics as a policy adviser to the Labour Party, and in civil society groups such as the Irish Council of the European Movement and the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace. I had coordinated the production of a Labour Party policy document on poverty which influenced the content of the Fine Gael-Labour election manifesto. As I

arrived in Áras Mhic Dhiarmada the issue of an EEC initiative arising from the Paris Summit was high on the agenda.

1973 was the year of the Social Action Programme. From the arrival of Patrick Hillery in the Berlaymont in January to the late-night session of the Social Affairs Council in December, an intense process of drafting, consulting and negotiating resulted in a ground-breaking set of measures which transformed the social policy dimension of the European Community, even if the evolving global economic situation was to introduce doubts and constraints. For 1973 was also the year of the Yom Kippur War in the Middle East and the first Oil Crisis with its immediate and wide-reaching impact on growth and jobs across Europe and on the political fortune of Governments and of the leaders who had drafted the Paris Summit Communiqué.

This paper deals with the events of an extremely busy year which began with the arrival of three new Member States and a new Commission and ended, on 11 December, with agreement at the Council on the comprehensive Social Action Programme. It describes the progress of the programme through the complex institutional structures of the Community and highlights, in particular, the critical role of the European Commission and of the Commissioner himself. And it sets these developments in the context of Ireland's position as a newcomer to the Community, settling into its institutions and culture.

2. Social Policy in the European Community 1958-1972

The history of social policy in the first decades of the European Community has been described as 'one of good intentions, high principles and little action.' The original Treaty of Rome, in 1957, clearly set out the objectives of the Community in terms which were overwhelmingly political and economic. Any social aspects of the Treaty were designed to ensuring the achievement of the economic goals of the European Economic Community. (Kleinman, 2002)

The Treaty of Paris, which set up the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951, and the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC) in 1957 were more interested in social policy than the EEC Treaty. These bodies had to deal with the social impact of structural change in two major industries and with the resettlement of displaced workers. They were also conferred with responsibility for establishing and monitoring basic standards for the health and protection of workers

and the general public, as well as procedures for monitoring and checking their implementation. (Hantrais, 2007)

The Treaty of Rome, in its Preamble, made a brief reference to ensuring the social progress of the Member States but, in practical terms, this was reflected in strictly limited provisions. The most significant social provision of the Treaty, in Article 3, was the creation of the European Social Fund, “in order to improve employment opportunities for workers and to contribute to the raising of their standard of living.” The Treaty further made provision for the freedom of movement of workers throughout the Community and for measures on social security provisions for migrant workers.

Title III of the Treaty dealt with Social Policy and covered a number of important areas of concern, from the promotion of improved working conditions and living standards for workers to action by Member States to ensure equal pay for equal work between men and women. Close co-operation between Member States in areas such as labour law and working conditions; vocational training and social security was to be encouraged and facilitated. The Treaty also referred to issues including action to improve the working environment as regards health and safety and promotion of the right of association, collective bargaining and dialogue between management and labour.

A review of the social dimension of European integration by Professor Mark Kleinman concluded that “overall, then, the EEC Treaty established the principle of a social role for the EEC, but a role that was both clearly limited and clearly secondary to the economic aims of integration. Member States were interested in a social dimension to the EEC, but ‘the compromise that resulted from their failure to agree about objectives, and to set up mechanisms for achieving them, led to what could be described as a modest, cautious and narrowly focused social policy.’” (Kleinman, 2002)

The 1960s saw the European Community divided and constrained by the controversial approach of the French President, Charles de Gaulle, who insisted on extensive veto rights in decision-making and blocked the enlargement process for several years. His departure from office in 1969, and his replacement by Georges Pompidou, reopened the prospect of enlargement and offered the hope of more flexibility in the work of the Council of Ministers. A summit meeting of the leaders of the Six was convened in The Hague in December 1969 which took important decisions on negotiations with the four applicant countries, asserted the objective of working towards Economic and Monetary Union, and reflected on a number of key policy issues. The Summit Communiqué stated that “the Heads of State or Government acknowledge the desirability of reforming the Social Fund, within the framework of a closely concerted social policy.”

The European Commission, through its Belgian Social Affairs Commissioner, Albert Coppe, responded to this Summit statement by drafting a substantial document – ‘Preliminary Guidelines for a Social Policy Programme in the Community’ – published in March 1971 and opening with the statement that “now that the Community has embarked resolutely on the road to economic and monetary union, social policy appears in a new light.”

The report concluded that:

“...merely to state the interdependence of economic and social development and to recognise the need for common final objectives in the social field is not enough to determine priorities or the means required to guide the action of the Community. However, in the Common Market’s commitment to the gradual achievement of economic and monetary union, full and leading account must be taken of the Community’s social and human aspirations in its overall and structural policies and in any action taken...”

“...Spheres of social policy which should be dealt with by the Community direct and those which should be harmonised at Community level will be determined by reference to the aims pursued and the maximum effectiveness of the means to be applied; their limits will naturally change with the passage of time as progress is made towards economic and monetary union.”

The report analysed trends in key areas, identified objectives and sought to select priorities to be combined in a programme of community social policy to be put into effect during the first stage of economic and monetary union. And, it pointed out that “a coherent programme...can only be launched with reasonable hopes of success if certain conditions are fulfilled”, above all the existence of the necessary political will “to overcome the difficulties arising from the frequently vague and loose provisions of the Treaties on social subjects.”

In 1971 and 1972 the development of the social situation in the Community was merely the repetition or continuation of the trends of previous years, dominated by the employment problems of Member States and, in particular, of the peripheral regions.

The Preliminary Guidelines paper succeeded in stimulating more intensive study of issues and policy options and highlighted the question of the interdependence of the various factors. The many implications of the enlargement of the Community were taken into account, in areas such as adaptation of social security for migrant workers. Major decisions were taken by the Council on the reform of the European Social Fund and the amended provisions became operational from May 1972, with new emphasis on

schemes to aid retraining and reemployment of people leaving agriculture and of people affected by changes in industrial sectors such as textiles and clothing.

Then, the Paris Summit of October 1972, bringing together the leaders of the founding Member States and the three accession states, took important decisions on the social dimension of the new, enlarged Community and provided a demonstration of the political will recognised by the Commission as critical for realistic progress on social questions.

3. The Paris Summit 1972

The Paris Summit is dealt with in detail in the IIEA paper [*40th Anniversary: The Paris Summit October 1972*](#), available on the Institute website.

On 19-21 October 1972 the Heads of State or Government of the six founding Member States of the European Communities, and of the three states – Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom – which were to enter the Communities on 1 January 1973 in its first enlargement, met in Paris at the invitation of French President, Georges Pompidou. The leaders met in the *Salons Kleber* at the *Centre des Conférences Internationales* which had been the venue of the long-running Vietnam Peace Conference.

Among the Leaders participating were Georges Pompidou, President of France; Willy Brandt, Chancellor of Germany; Anker Jorgensen, Prime Minister of Denmark; Jack Lynch, Taoiseach of Ireland; and Edward Heath, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

The meeting commenced with a series of Opening Speeches which addressed the three agreed themes of the meeting: Economic and Monetary Union and Social Progress; External Relations and the Community's Institutions and Political Cooperation.

The German Chancellor, Willy Brandt, highlighted the social issues which he had promoted from the outset of his term of office:

“I am glad that the first item on our agenda also concerns social progress. To me it matters very much that our people realise what this Community does and can mean, for the improvement of their living and working conditions. Social justice should not remain an abstract concept and social progress should not be taken to be a mere appendix to economic growth. If we can put social policy into a European perspective, then many of our citizens will find it easier to identify themselves with the Community. I suggest that this

Conference instruct the institutions of the Community to prepare without delay a programme of action.”

For Ireland, the Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, took a positive approach:

“...My Government also see the need for a greater emphasis on social issues and for consequent effective action to give the Community a greater social content. We are resolved under the Treaties to ensure the social progress as well as the economic progress of our countries by common action. Among the present Member States themselves there appears to be a growing desire to make more effective and speedy progress in social matters. Certainly in Ireland and I have no doubt in, the other acceding countries the expectations of our peoples are high in this regard. I would hope, therefore that we shall agree to match the achievements to date of the Community in the economic field by parallel progress in the social field.”

The Summit moved on to debating the agenda which had been agreed in a lengthy preparatory phase. The key points agreed by the leaders were:

- Establishment by 1980 of an Economic and Monetary Union to guarantee stability and growth, ensure solidarity and provide for social progress and an end to regional disparities;
- Affirmation of the intention to transform before the end of the present decade the whole complex of relations between Member States into a European Union;
- Attention to intangible values and to protecting the environment; increased efforts in development aid and technical assistance to the least favoured countries and regions;
- Encouragement of the development of international trade: promotion of good neighbourly relations among all European countries whatever their regime through a policy of détente and the establishment of wider economic and human cooperation.

The extensive [Summit Communiqué](#) contained detailed and specific aspirations and commitments in a number of key policy areas. The specific reference to Social Policy was brief but clear.

“Economic expansion is not an end in itself. Its firm aim should be to enable disparities in living conditions to be reduced. It must take place with the participation of all the social partners. It should result in an improvement in

the quality of life as well as in standards of living. As befits the genius of Europe, particular attention will be given to intangible values and to protecting the environment, so that progress may really be put at the service of mankind...

“...the Heads of State or Heads of Government emphasised that they attached as much importance to vigorous action in the social field as to the achievement of the economic and monetary union. They thought it essential to ensure the increasing involvement of labour and management in the economic and social decisions of the Community.

“They invited the institutions, after consulting labour and management, to draw up, between now and 1 January 1974, a programme of action providing for concrete measures and the corresponding resources, particularly in the framework of the Social Fund, based on suggestions put forward by the Heads of State and Heads of Government and by the Commission during the conference. The programme should aim, in particular, at implementing a coordinated policy for employment and vocational training, at improving working conditions and conditions of life, at closely involving workers in the progress of undertakings, at facilitating on the basis of the situation in different countries the conclusion of collective agreements at European level in appropriate fields and at strengthening and coordinating measures of consumer protection.”

Speaking in Dáil Éireann on 25 October, the Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, gave his reactions and analysis:

“The Community concern to deal effectively with the human problems posed by development was demonstrated not only in the sphere of regional policy, but in other subject areas also. In the realm of social policy, for example, they invited Community institutions to draw up by 1 January 1974, an action programme covering working conditions, training, measures for consumer protection, and other areas of importance in work and leisure activities.”

Liam Cosgrave T.D., Leader of Fine Gael and soon to become Taoiseach, remarked on the social dimension of the Summit Communiqué: “A number of matters that have been referred to here already were dealt with at the summit meeting which was held in Paris last week. Perhaps the most significant decisions to emanate from that meeting in so far as the immediate future of this country is concerned were those relating to regional and social policies.”

Just over ten weeks after the Paris Summit the first enlargement of the European Communities became a reality as Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom became full Member States on 1 January 1973. As described above, Dr. Patrick Hillery was nominated as the Irish member of the thirteen-member Commission and was named as one of the five Vice-Presidents, with responsibility for Social Affairs. Francois-Xavier Ortoli of France was appointed President in succession to Sicco Mansholt.

The moral imperative to act decisively in the social field had come from the German Chancellor, Willy Brandt, who wrote about his initiatives in two volumes of political memoirs:

“In my view, the Community should be more than a framework of economic interests. Europe’s place in the world will not be properly filled until it articulates a coherent political resolve and acts on it. This entails a governmental structure – suitably controlled – for areas of joint responsibility...the projected European Union will be nothing but a cloud-castle unless it acquires economic and monetary foundations commensurate with its democratic and social substance. The Europe for which we are working must be an example to the world of the rule of reason over productive factors, the rule of justice over the egoisms of power, and the rule of humanity over the disease of intolerance.”

“At the time I tabled a memorandum on European social union: it must be made clear to people, I said, what the Community meant and could mean in their work and their daily life. Social progress was not to be seen as a mere appendage of economic growth. “If we develop a European perspective on social policy, many of the citizens will find it easier to identify with the Community.”

4. A New European Commission and a First Draft

In January 1973, the European Community enlarged from six to nine Member States and the new Commission entered into office in Brussels.

Patrick Hillery arrived in the Berlaymont with the advantage of having a clear set of political objectives in the shape of the Paris Summit mandate and with the immediate task of drafting and seeking ratification of what became the first EEC Social Action Programme.

The Social Affairs Directorate which Hillery took over was headed by another newcomer to Brussels. The Director General for Social Affairs was Michael Shanks, the prominent British academic, journalist and business leader, whose 1961 book *'The Stagnant Society: A Warning'* was recognised as a seminal critique of British society and of an economy which had been falling behind its competitors abroad.

John Walsh's official biography of Patrick Hillery describes in quite graphic detail the early days of the new Commission and of its Irish Vice President, categorising his first three months in Brussels as "among the most traumatic of his career." Adapting to the Brussels system posed early challenges. Hillery quickly dealt with the language issue by bringing his command of French to an effective level without delay. The most immediate problems arose in relation to setting up and operating the continental version of a ministerial private office or *Cabinet*. He appointed four Irish experts with experience in key areas together with three officials from other Member States, including a Belgian economist who had worked in the *Cabinet* of the previous Social Affairs Commissioner, Albert Coppe. In addition, a leading Irish journalist was recruited as official spokesman for the Social Affairs Directorate.

The early weeks of the Cabinet's work were overshadowed by an insoluble clash with the senior Foreign Affairs official who had been given the key role of Chef de Cabinet. It became clear that a change was inevitable and this took place with the resignation of the first Chef and a careful reorganisation of the office. This proved successful.

The reformed Hillery team became an effective and focused group. It gave Hillery the level of support he needed in dealing with his heavy agenda and with his Directorate, which had a poor record in terms of efficiency and policy development. The Social Affairs Directorate had been limited, in effect, to managing the European Social Fund, which dealt with retraining of workers who had lost their jobs due to industrial restructuring. In 1971 its remit had been extended to providing help to workers directly affected by the impact of Community policies.

Hillery's biographer quotes his diary: "DG-V is not functioning properly. It is like the Department of Education when I first went there." This comment referred to the conservative attitudes of senior officials but there was a deeper and more challenging problem in the Directorate. Hillery's biographer described this:

"...many Commission officials did not feel any such commitment to the views of an individual Commissioner. The Commissioner had no say in their appointment and there were rarely ties of nationality or culture between Commissioners and their officials..."

“...The impact of enlargement also cut both ways: officials from continental countries had to get accustomed to working with commissioners from the new Member States, while some Irish and British officials struggled to adapt to the working environment in the Berlaymont. The end result was that the impetus for change in Social Affairs was largely external and had little to do with the internal dynamics of DG-V. Yet on this occasion the momentum for change was much more powerful, as it came from the national leaders.”

(Walsh, 2008)

Based on the Paris Summit mandate, Hillery set out a demanding work schedule, involving both his Cabinet and senior officials from within the Directorate, with the objective of producing a Social Action Programme for the enlarged EEC. He made it clear that the programme must include plans to promote employment opportunities for those with disabilities, measures to protect migrant workers and provisions to deal with discrimination against women in pay and working conditions.

This effort was given high priority and Ed FitzGibbon, as Chef de Cabinet, was given overall charge of the exercise. He was warned of the potential pitfalls, both in Brussels where wide-ranging proposals could provoke ‘turf wars’ with other Commissioners and Directorates and in national capitals conscious of their sovereignty. In the initial drafting exercise, FitzGibbon was assisted by Jean Degimbe, a senior member of the Cabinet of Commission President Ortolí who was to succeed Michael Shanks as Director General for Social Affairs.

By the beginning of April 1973, a paper containing ‘Guidelines for a Social Action Programme’ was ready for submission to the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and a Tripartite Conference involving the social partners. In the event, the social partners were unable to agree on the structure of the proposed Tripartite Conference and the Commission proceeded by means of direct consultation with the trade union and employer organisations.

The Guidelines for a Social Action Programme contained outline proposals under four headings: General Considerations; Full and Better Employment; Improvement of Living and Working Conditions; Participation of the Social Partners in Economic and Social Decisions. Taking on board the conclusion of the Paris Summit that social progress must be given equal standing with Economic and Monetary Union, the Guidelines begin by arguing that “the issue now is to give to Economic and Monetary Union its proper social dimension by recognising that economic expansion is not an end in itself; that its first aim should be to reduce disparities in living conditions and improve the quality of life and the standards of living of the population of the Community.”

The paper continued to argue that “although a social policy is required for its own sake, it is part of the complex of Community policies necessary to bring about Economic and Monetary Union and must be closely linked to those policies – industrial, agricultural, competition, environmental, consumer protection and, above all, regional policy. If this is not done, the underprivileged regions and the socially underprivileged would not merely fail to progress but would deteriorate.” It went on to emphasise that the Commission was not proposing to centralise the solutions of all the social problems of the Member States nor was it seeking to introduce a single social policy tackling all problems in a uniform manner.

Under the indicated policy headings, the paper proposed a range of initiatives.

- On Full and Better Employment, proposals were made on issues such as training, migrant workers, women, school-leavers, elderly workers, the handicapped, cooperation between employment services and exchanges for young workers.
- On Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, the issues raised included the distribution of income and wealth, social security, social indicators, housing, assembly-line work and safety and working environment.
- A number of actions were proposed in respect of Participation of the Social Partners.

The Guidelines were discussed by the Council of Social Affairs Ministers on 21 May 1973 at which Ireland was represented by the Minister for Labour, Michael O’Leary T.D., and Parliamentary Secretary, Frank Cluskey T.D. They set out a number of concerns about the content of the Commission paper, giving particular attention to issues arising from regional disequilibria in the Community and to the need for policies, and appropriate funding arrangements, to deal with them. They pointed to the need to broaden the proposed policies to include Community-wide actions supporting the weaker sections of society and to ensure that research and study into social problems would be pursued. The Council made no decision at this initial meeting and Hillery proceeded to develop the various proposals and to conduct face-to-face consultations with the relevant national Ministers and with the social partners at both EC and national level.

In the weeks following the May Council, work commenced on developing the Irish position across the range of issues raised in the Guidelines. Consultation with academic and non-governmental circles about the details of the proposed programme was undertaken by the Special Advisors working with Ministers O’Leary and Cluskey. These

conversations included consideration of the opportunities for action in Ireland – initially through a programme of pilot schemes and studies – to expand the range of ways in which to meet the commitments in the Coalition Statement of Intent on eradicating poverty.

When it was indicated that Vice President Hillery was coming to Dublin for consultations on the Guidelines, a memorandum was prepared for Brendan Corish and Frank Cluskey as a basis for discussion. This stressed the importance of indicating those features of the Commission proposals which Ireland required to be made concrete “together with such additions or expansions to the proposals as may appear necessary in Irish circumstances.” The memorandum raised the question of allocating EEC funding to special projects, pilot schemes and research in areas of social imbalance in Member States and pointed out that, as described above, a number of such projects, in the poverty area, were under consideration in Ireland. It further underlined the need for comprehensive and continuing projects of research to provide the basis for policy and action.” It concluded with the insistence that “the whole Irish policy position must be presented as a long term contribution to the evolution of overall Community programmes. This will depend upon an understanding of the total Community requirements and priorities in the social area and of the relationship between this area and that of economic policy.” (Department of Social Welfare, 1973)

On 3 September 1973, Dr. Hillery, accompanied by his new Chef de Cabinet, Ed Fitzgibbon, arrived for his meeting with Corish and Cluskey. The meeting was attended by Special Advisors Tony Brown and Flor O'Mahony. The meeting was extremely businesslike and Dr. Hillery quickly established his complete mastery of a complex brief and his personal commitment to giving political reality to the Paris Summit principles. He responded to the suggestion about pilot schemes in the area of poverty with a direct challenge. If the Irish authorities could furnish a clear, succinct, written proposal with a week or so he would give it serious consideration in proceeding to a final draft Social Action Programme. He stressed the importance of a pragmatic approach, especially in respect of funding, and indicated that it would be necessary to find a workable legal basis in the Treaty for such an initiative. He left the firm impression that, if the paper was delivered, the final draft Programme would include a proposal on poverty.

By agreement with the Secretary of the Department of Social Welfare, a small working group was established including the Special Advisors and key Social Welfare civil servants, notably Edward McCumiskey, who was to play a key role as Social Welfare attaché in the Permanent Representation in Brussels and who would go on to become a distinguished Secretary General of the Department. The group worked over the

following days, during which Ed Fitzgibbon called at the Department to check on progress, and produced a draft paper which was approved by Frank Cluskey.

The paper was a two page document – ‘Social Action Programme – Pilot Schemes’ – in which it was proposed: “to initiate a series of pilot schemes of social action in selected, representative communities in order to provide a basis for the evolution and implementation of policies for the alleviation and elimination of poverty.” The stated objectives included identification of the problems arising from poverty, action to end the cycle of poverty, promotion of community action in relevant areas and assessment of the information arising from these actions. Project Teams would be organised drawing on a range of skills with a small monitoring and review group. The schemes would direct attention to provision of information on available services, deployment of specialist services and stimulation of community action aimed at generating self-sustaining efforts at breaking the poverty cycle. The document stated that the pilot schemes should be representative and situated in centre-city depressed areas, working-class housing schemes, suburban residential areas, small rural towns, working-class areas in larger rural settings and rural areas. The full text of the paper is reproduced in the Appendices section.

On 10 September, the two-page document was presented to Ed Fitzgibbon and his colleagues, John Feeney and John McColgan. During the next two weeks, Frank Cluskey visited Copenhagen, Bonn and Brussels for discussions with his opposite numbers in the Danish, German and Belgian administrations on the development of the Social Action Programme and on the specific views of the Irish Government, including the poverty proposal.

October began with a visit by Ed Fitzgibbon who brought the Department up to date with the work underway in the Commission on finalising the draft Social Action Programme for submission to the Council in advance of the scheduled December Social Council meeting. He explained that the draft would be published before the end of October and that the Irish Ministers would not be disappointed in relation to the poverty issue. In a communication to the Dublin authorities, Fitzgibbon set out details of the approach to be followed by the Commission in bringing its proposals to Council. The Council would be urged to adopt a limited number of actions to be implemented in the period 1974-1976 and to take the necessary steps to take the programme to a second stage.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions made a major submission to the Commission and to the Government on the Social Action Programme. The submission welcomed many aspects of the Commission Guidelines, in particular in respect of regional policy and policies directed to the achievement of full employment. It called for urgent action on

issues of importance to women, including equal pay for work of equal value. A strong statement was included on the subject of poverty, criticising the absence of any mention of the issue in the April Guidelines. “Low living standards, social deprivation, inequality of opportunity, still mark society in all the Member States of the Community notwithstanding the widespread affluence and economic prosperity.” (ICTU, 1973)

On 13 October 1973, Brendan Corish addressed the Annual Conference of the Labour Party in the Cork City Hall. In a comprehensive review of aspirations and policy in the first year of Labour’s return to Government he gave particular attention to the poverty question and to its EEC dimension:

“A central theme in all I have said since becoming a member of this Government is that poverty must be eliminated...the elimination of poverty is a long term goal. It cannot be done overnight. It requires firm economic and social planning to produce deep structural changes...

“The government has recognised the importance of the publication of the Social Action Guidelines prepared by the EEC Commission...the priorities in the EEC social policy must be the evolution of a set of long-term goals which will be worthy of the high aspirations of the Paris summit...

“The specific issue of poverty, especially as a long term phenomenon has been raised by the Government, not alone with the Commission but with member governments. The visits to European capitals by Frank Cluskey...were made to arouse the political leaders of the Community to the need for a progressive set of priorities in the social action programme planned for the next five years. We are very hopeful that policy initiatives will result. Above all, we are prepared to fight for the necessary funds to do the job.”

(Corish, 1973)

5. The Formal Draft

On 25 October 1973, the Commission produced the draft Social Action Programme, including a proposed Council Resolution for decision at the December meeting. A short introductory paper was accompanied by a seventy-page document setting out the details of some thirty-five programmes and actions. The full details of the programme are set out in the Appendices section.

The programme reflected the outcome of a great deal of consultation and negotiation on the part of Vice President Hillery over the previous six months. Having listened to the initial responses of ministers at the May Council meeting Hillery embarked on a round of meetings and visits across the Community including the visit to Dublin described above. His biographer writes of “a series of visits to European capitals ...lobbying governments to support the Social Action Programme and briefing key interest groups on his proposals. He was particularly concerned to involve the trade unions in the planning of the social reforms: he identified the unions as his department’s key constituency and set out to mobilise broad trade union support for his plans. His period as Minister for Labour gave him particular insights and practical experience across much of the broad sweep of social policy addressed in the draft programme. (Walsh, 2008)

The introductory paragraphs of the Programme give a clear flavour of its origins and inspiration and indicate the degree to which the Hillery had taken on board the Paris Summit message, reflecting the commitments of leaders such as Willy Brandt.

“Since its inception, the European Community has achieved a substantial increase in the rate of economic growth, which has literally transformed the life and the face of Europe and brought to the great majority of its people higher living standards and wide horizons.

“But greater prosperity has not resolved the social problems of the Community, and indeed in some cases it has exacerbated them. There are the problems of those regions and groups which have not fully participated in the general advance, and which, in some cases, find themselves falling further and further behind. There are continuing, and in some cases worsening, problems over the distribution of income and wealth within the Community and over worker participation within industry.

“There are problem caused by the failure of the infrastructure in some sectors to keep pace with the demands on it. And then there are the problems caused by growth itself – problems of industrial pollution, of a deteriorating environment, of a conflict of values in some cases between industry and society, disruption to the pattern of life, and a growing dependence on migrant workers whom society is not always ready to accept as citizens while it continues to require their services to maintain its standard of living.”

(Commission, 1973)

The message of the introduction was summed up in its closing sentences: “...it is the case – as the Summit Conference communiqué indicates – that there is now a greater

sense of priority and urgency about social policy in the Community. The reasons are those set out in the paragraphs above: the fact that the Community has now reached a stage in its economic and social development when it can, and indeed must, afford to question more critically the pattern and the costs of economic growth and the distribution of its resources. One must also bear in mind that our Community is today not only richer, but also better educated and informed. With better education and information come increased, and entirely legitimate, demands for a more just society and a better quality of life.” (Commission, 1973)

The proposed Social Action Programme consisted of some thirty-five different actions - together with six which had already been submitted to the Council – aimed at achieving three fundamental objectives:

- Full and better employment;
- Improving living and working conditions;
- A more active role for trade unions and employers in decision-making processes.

It was proposed that immediate action should be undertaken on a number of specific measures related to the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women; the position of migrant workers and of handicapped workers; enhanced provisions for health and safety at work; the application of the principle of the forty-hour week with four weeks paid holidays; the approximation of legislation on mass dismissals; and the setting up of a European Foundation for the Improvement of the Environment and Living and Working Conditions.

This, in itself, was a challenging agenda with major long-term implications for all Member States. From an Irish viewpoint, the actions on the handicapped were of great significance, contributing eventually to the development of the National Rehabilitation Board, while the European Foundation for the Improvement of the Environment and Living and Working Conditions was set up in Loughlinstown, south of Dublin City centre. The equal pay issue was eventually to become the subject of conflict between Ireland and the Commission.

A further set of actions was proposed for decision over the period 1974-1976. These included the establishment of the European Vocational Training Centre; the provision of income support for workers during retraining; the gradual achievement of equality between men and women on the labour market; action to promote social integration of handicapped persons; extension of certain forms of social protection; protection of workers' rights in the case of mergers etc.; the establishment of a European Trade Union Institute to support training services; and action “to implement in co-operation

with the Member States, specific measures to combat poverty by the preparation of pilot schemes.”

The poverty proposal had, thus, been taken up by the Commission and a page in the longer document was devoted to Action II/6:

Community Programme Against Poverty

Objective: To ensure that the chronically poor are aided and equipped to increase their share in the economic and social wellbeing of the Community.

Present Situation: there is a minority of chronically poor in each Member State, for example certain of the elderly unemployable persons and their families, the socially maladjusted, large families with low incomes etc. This group is difficult to identify and measure. Nevertheless the Commission has started research into the methodology for the evaluation and identification of such groups. Preliminary results should be forthcoming in 1974.

Moreover, the Commission is about to complete a study of the social problems of the elderly, in which certain aspects of chronic poverty will be examined.

Means: The Commission will examine the results of the research into methodology and will discuss with experts from the Member States, including charity organisations which play a large role in dealing with the problems of the chronically poor, in order to determine the areas in which a concerted Community action could be undertaken. By the end of 1974, the Commission will propose a programme of pilot projects, to be undertaken in 1975-76, in which will be involved social workers, psychiatrists, guidance experts etc. with a view to finding solutions to the problems identified and permitting a specific programme against poverty to be presented to the Council by 1 January 1977.

The Commission's proposals for a Community Programme Against Poverty will be a complement to the various actions proposed on behalf of the elderly, handicapped and underprivileged groups generally.

Thus, the proposal contained in the 'two page' document had found its way, with clear evidence of internal Commission discussion of the concept, into the formal text of the Social Action Programme and with much of the eventual detail to be filled in during 1974. This met Frank Cluskey's goal, expressed to Hillery at the September meeting that, while it was not feasible "to establish some huge programme...what he wanted to

do was to get the issue onto the agenda and to set up a programme and begin to get things done.” (Walsh, 2008)

Attention now turned to the Council and the question of ratification of the Social Action Programme.

6. Yom Kippur

On 6 October 1973 – Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar – Egyptian and Syrian forces launched a concerted attack against Israel. Their objective was to win back some or all of the substantial territories lost to Israel during the 1967 Arab-Israel war. Using the advantage of surprise, and with many Israeli soldiers engaged in Yom Kippur observances, the Arab forces made major advances. Israel looked to the United States for support – and, in particular, for emergency military supplies – but it was only after a week’s delay that President Nixon decided to back the Israeli military effort. With US backing assured, the Israeli forces advanced on all fronts and, despite huge losses, beat the Egyptians and Syrians back in Sinai and even seized further territory on the Golan Heights. Frantic efforts at the United Nations in New York led to an Egyptian-Israeli ceasefire agreement which was followed by an end to all hostilities. The ceasefire was followed by a process of negotiation between Israel and Egypt which led eventually to the signing of a Peace Agreement involving the return of the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt.

The military and diplomatic aspects of the Yom Kippur War were of great international significance but these were soon in the shadow of the dramatic economic fallout. On 16 October 1973, the members of the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) – consisting of the Arab members of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) plus Egypt, Syria and Tunisia – proclaimed an oil embargo designed to punish the United States for its support of Israel. The embargo was variously extended to Western Europe and Japan. On the same day OPEC announced a decision to raise the posted price of oil by 70%, to \$5.11 a barrel. Oil ministers also agreed to a cut in production by five percent from September's output, and to continue to cut production over time in five percent increments until their economic and political objectives were met.

The idea of significant price rises was very much in the minds of leaders in the Middle East producer countries. In 1973, the Shah of Iran, the world's second-largest exporter of oil, gave an interview to the New York Times in which he said: “Of course, the world price of oil is going to rise. Certainly! You Western nations increased the price of wheat

you sell us by 300%, and the same for sugar and cement. You buy our crude oil and sell it back to us, refined as petrochemicals, at a hundred times the price the price you've paid to us. It's only fair that, from now on, you should pay more for oil. Let's say ten times more."

The OAPEC decision to punish the US lasted until March 1974. With its implications for oil supplies and prices and with the threat of recession, a strong rift was created within the membership of NATO, some of which had not supported the US in relation to Israel. Some European nations and Japan took steps to disassociate themselves from US policy in the Middle East. The Nixon Administration, through Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, played a key role in the negotiations for an Israeli withdrawal from Sinai and this led to the lifting of the embargo.

The decision on price increases had global consequences, with the fourfold increase in the cost of crude oil bringing an end to the west's long postwar boom. The price rises had a much greater impact in Europe than the embargo and contributed to a deep recession. The European Commission, in its Report on the Development of the Social Situation in the Community in 1974, stated that:

"The general economic and social situation of 1974 was characterised by increasing inflationary tendencies, rising unemployment in nearly all Member States and balance of payments difficulties in most of them. By the end of 1974, total unemployment in the countries of the European Communities had reached a peak of almost four million persons out of work, and consumer prices increased during the course of 1974 in some countries by nearly 20% or even more...

"...the accelerated price increase, on the other hand, had a growing impact on the economically weaker groups of the population, and more especially the non-active people irrespective of their entitlement to social benefits, such as the unemployed, handicapped, sick, those suffering from employment injuries and occupational diseases, the retired and others, as well as workers with lower wages and salaries."

(Commission, 1974)

The energy crisis had major social and political impact across Europe. In the United Kingdom the situation was combined with strikes by coal miners and railroad workers, leading to a national crisis of confidence which saw a change of government in 1974. The Conservative Prime Minister, Edward Heath, who had asked British families to heat only one room in their houses over the winter, called an election which was won by the

Labour Party under Harold Wilson. This was not the only government to suffer defeat in this crisis, with the Danish administration falling in December 1973. The UK, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, and Norway banned flying, driving and boating on Sundays. Sweden rationed gasoline and heating oil. The Netherlands imposed prison sentences for those who used more than their given ration of electricity.

For Ireland, the Oil Crisis posed a dramatic challenge to the country's possibilities for growth and social progress. Addressing the Labour Party's 1974 Annual Conference, the Tánaiste and Minister for Health and Social Welfare, told his party colleagues that:

"The decision by the oil producers to increase their price has meant that we are being forced to pay an extra two hundred million pounds per annum on our import bill for the same quantity of oil and other products as we imported last year. That is the enormity of their decision upon our economy and upon our standard of living...

"...Since we have no option but to pay this enormous extra bill it means we will have two hundred million pounds less to spend on other products and service and our standard of living will be affected. At the same time, other countries are also being hit by equally huge oil bills and price increases and they too have less money to spend, particularly on imports from this country....this year growth in world trade will only be half of what it was last year and this is serious news for us. Growth in all the major economies has either slowed down to a crawl or is at a standstill."

(Corish, 1974)

In his Guide to the European Union, Dick Leonard points to an important political consequence of the crisis, commenting that "efforts to co-ordinate energy policies of the Member States proved elusive, as did attempts to find a common economic strategy to enable the Community to hoist itself out of the recession. The member governments all felt constrained, to varying degrees, to implement austerity policies in their own countries, and it became increasingly difficult to persuade them to release resources for the introduction of new common policies under the aegis of the Community." This was to be seen in concrete terms in the debates on the Social Action Programme. (Leonard, 2010)

7. An Autumn of Negotiations

Commission Vice President Hillery arrived in Dublin on 29 October 1973, for consultations with various Ministers. The Head of the EEC Representation, Denis Corboy, hosted a lunch at which the overall strategy for ratification was discussed. Two days later meeting of Labour Party advisors took place at the Department of Labour to prepare for a group visit to Brussels from 5 to 7 November. A report on the visit records a dozen meetings at the Irish Permanent Representation, with the Hillery Cabinet and with officials in the Social Affairs Directorate, including the Director General, Michael Shanks. The group met for the first time Leo Crijns, a senior Commission figure from the Netherlands, who was to be appointed to oversee the implementation of the poverty programme.

The group provided a detailed debriefing for Frank Cluskey on the Brussels meetings before spending the next two days – 8 and 9 November – at intensive inter-departmental sessions on the Irish response to the Commission draft. Representatives of the Departments of Labour, Social Welfare, Finance, Local Government, Agriculture, Industry and Commerce and Foreign Affairs met at the Department of Labour and produced a paper of up to forty pages dealing with all aspects of the programme.

The Irish response stated that “The Irish Government is concerned to ensure that social policy in the Communities does not centre on those issues which have come to be referred to as social problems arising from employment...policy must be directed towards the raising of standards of living in the broadest sense.” It went on to place particular emphasis on the proposed actions on poverty and recalled the Irish proposals for the establishment, as a priority, of pilot projects in order to identify key issues and point the way to practical solutions. (Government, 1973b)

The next week saw a series of meetings in the Departments of Social Welfare and Labour devoted to various elements of the Social Action Programme. One session of particular significance was arranged by Frank Cluskey who indicated that, having put the pilot schemes concept on the Brussels agenda, we should give serious thought to devising an appropriate national programme. He indicated that it was important to consult widely on the various issues arising. A range of contacts and meetings followed with organisations and individuals, including the Economic and Social Research Institute, the Institute of Public Administration, Muintir na Tire, the National Social Service Council, the Council for Social Welfare and a number of trade union officials.

19 November saw a delegation from Social Welfare in Brussels for consultations with the Permanent Representation and the Hillery Cabinet. The next two days were devoted to an intensive meeting of the Social Questions Group of the Council, under the Danish Presidency, dealing with the national responses to the Social Action Programme. Line-

by-line, the extensive proposals were discussed and the positions of the various delegations set out and noted. Progress was made on most elements of the document but the shadow of the Yom Kippur crisis and the oil market dislocations lay heavily across the work. It was evident that the financial implications of the crisis were bringing the national Finance Ministers into play, questioning expenditure plans and calling for cuts and adaptations in every aspect of the programme.

The Social Questions Group sent its conclusions and reservations to the senior national representatives on COREPER – the Committee of Permanent Representatives – whose responsibility was to prepare the agenda and documentation for the Social Affairs Council which was to meet on 11-12 December.

The next week saw preparations for the Council moving ahead, with meetings in the Department of Foreign Affairs to discuss Council procedures and prospects, involving the senior diplomat, Brendan Dillon, who was moving to Brussels to become Ireland's Permanent Representative to the Community institutions. At the same time, the strictly political dimension of the forthcoming Council session was developing. On 30 November, Minister for Labour, Michael O'Leary, Frank Cluskey and their Special Advisors flew to Milan to attend a Conference organised by the two Italian socialist parties – the Socialist Party and the Social Democratic Party – which was attended by representatives from sister parties across the EEC.

On the fringes of this meeting consultations took place with colleagues such as the influential Belgian Social Affairs Minister, Ernest Glinne, and the Italian Ministers, Bertoldi and Colonna, on the contents of the Social Action Programme. The Italian Government had taken a strong line on the need for determined EEC action in the face of the crisis arising from the Yom Kippur War and the subsequent oil price increases and saw the debate on the Social Action Programme as a critical element in achieving an effective EEC response. The Belgian Minister expressed particular interest in the initiative on poverty.

Frank Cluskey held a press briefing in Aras Mhic Dhiarmada on Friday 7 December at which he argued that “expressions of solidarity, while constituting important bases for action, will not bring a ‘human face’ to Europe or change the largely economic and market ethos of the Community in themselves. They must be translated into concrete propositions for action and change.” He stressed three key principles: that social policy must permeate all areas of Community activity; that social policy must be relevant to all the people of the Community, not just the employed or potentially employable; that the necessary mechanisms and institutions must be provided for the achievement of the

actions arising from the application of the first two principles, including adequate resources for the European Social Fund. (Cluskey, 1973)

8. Social Affairs Council, December 1973

On 9 December, the Irish delegation to the Social Affairs Council arrived in Brussels and formal pre-Council briefings at the Irish Permanent Representation began the following morning, with the Deputy Permanent Representative Edward J. Brennan – later to be Ireland’s first Ambassador to the Soviet Union – heading the team of officials. Before the meeting were the detailed reports from COREPER dealing with the issues raised by the various national delegations on the Commission proposals. The Commission services had translated the detailed proposals in the Social Action Programme into a formal Council Resolution and the discussions in COREPER had identified the positions of the nine national delegations on each line of the text.

The Irish position on the various proposals had been communicated to COREPER and the briefing sessions concentrated on the statements to be made by the two Ministers and on those issues which were likely to be the subject of negotiation and decision in the course of the Council meeting. Ireland had taken a strong line on the issue of the financial resources devoted to social policy and on the importance of underlining the Council’s “political will” to implement fully the decisions taken. Ireland also put emphasis on the specific vocational training needs of less favoured regions and backed proposals for a major programme for the social integration of handicapped persons.

Two issues of particular significance for the Irish delegation concerned the poverty initiative and the setting of priorities within the overall programme.

On poverty, the Commission text read: “to implement, in co-operation with the Member States, specific measures to combat poverty by the preparation of pilot schemes”. This formulation was supported by the Belgian, Danish, Irish, Italian, Luxembourg and Dutch delegations. The United Kingdom and Germany proposed alternative wording: “to promote the exchange of information between Member States about the steps necessary to combat poverty”. France reserved its position on both proposed wordings.

On the issue of priorities, the Commission had already submitted formal proposals on seven matters:

- assistance from the European Social Fund for migrant workers and handicapped workers;

- action programme for handicapped workers in an open market economy;
- provisions on industrial safety;
- application of the principle of equal pay for men and women;
- application of the principle of the forty-hour week and four weeks annual paid holidays;
- establishment of a European Foundation for the Improvement of the Environment and Living and Working Conditions;
- approximation of legislation on mass dismissals.

On four further matters the Commission indicated an intention to submit formal proposals in early 1974: an action programme for migrant workers; establishment of a European Vocational Training Centre; a directive on workers recruited through contract labour agencies; a directive on protection of workers' interests in the case of mergers. The remaining items in the Social Action Programme, including poverty, would be dealt with by the Commission over the period 1974-1976.

The COREPER discussions had led to the conclusion that the Council itself should consider setting priorities among the various proposals and, if so, should set out a schedule for attaining such priority measures. Different opinions were expressed on the items to be included in a priority list. The Irish position was one of general support for the eleven proposals in question but with the proviso that other items should be included in the priority list, above all the poverty initiative.

The Social Affairs Council convened in the Charlemagne Conference Centre on 11 December 1973. The Danish Minister for Labour, Erling Dinesen, was in the chair. Among the Ministers in attendance was the UK Minister of State for Employment, Robin Chichester-Clark, the Ulster Unionist MP for Londonderry and brother of James Chichester-Clark, the last Unionist Prime Minister of Northern Ireland. Germany was represented by the Federal Minister for Labour and Social Order, the former miners' union leader, Walter Arendt, who would play a central role in the continuing story of the poverty initiative.

As Ireland had made a detailed submission on the proposal for a Social Action Programme, the Minister for Labour, Michael O'Leary, was invited to make an opening statement. In this he criticised the Commission for what he saw as a failure to respond adequately to the mandate of the 1972 Paris Summit. He made particular reference to

the lack of “any central core of concern about the direction in which our Community should proceed so that progress may really be put at the service of mankind”

Frank Cluskey, in his remarks, underlined the key Irish concern that the Social Action Programme should address both “the problems of those at work and those of the deprived sections of the population.” He welcomed many of the individual proposals but insisted that a balance must be maintained between the two elements highlighted in the Irish submission. He concluded by expressing appreciation of the work of the Commission in preparing the draft programme and stated that “it is our responsibility to provide them with the resources to implement the programme in its entirety and with the clear mandate to move forward steadily towards the goal of building a true social community...” (Cluskey, 1973)

As the meeting turned to the Resolution concerning the Social Action Programme another reminder of the Yom Kippur crisis was provided with the breaking news that a “no confidence” motion had been tabled in the Danish Parliament, the Folketing, and that it was likely that the Social Democrat Government of Prime Minister Anker Jorgensen would lose power. In the event Jorgensen was defeated and succeeded as Prime Minister by the Liberal leader, Poul Hartling, on 19 December.

The Social Action Programme debate got going at 11a.m. and lasted until 3.30a.m. the following morning, with breaks for a working lunch for the Ministers and a sandwich and beer dinner. For the benefit of the delegations from the new Member States it was described by more experienced participants as a European “marathon” – a remarkable mix of adrenaline and exhaustion, of rhetoric and compromise.

The Irish delegation had the benefit of a clear yet detailed Brief on Procedure, prepared by the Permanent Representation, which set out the likely order of business and highlighted the agreed Irish position on each item of business. It indicated that the first matter to be discussed was the question of setting priorities within the Social Action Programme. The Brief made reference to the Commission proposals, arguing that they were unsatisfactory from the Irish point of view. The difficulty of getting agreement on priorities was pointed out but it was made clear that discussion in the Council was likely to centre on the Commission proposals which, in the Irish view, failed to include key issues such as support for the handicapped, restructuring of the European Social Fund and the poverty initiative.

In the event, the debate on priorities took an unexpected turn. It became clear that several delegations wished to see the establishment of a genuine set of priorities and that the Commission proposal was not considered adequate. The French and Belgian Ministers argued that, in the existing crisis situation, the Council must be seen to set a

number of immediate goals for decision and action. In his opening intervention the French Minister, Georges Gorse, insisted that the Council meeting must result in a concrete programme which would be understood by the public. Social Affairs Ministers should meet more frequently to drive the programme politically.

The Belgian Minister, Ernest Glinne, insisted that 'priority' meant 'commitment to act' and must cover relevant institutional and financial aspects. This line of argument was supported by the UK Minister, who saw firm action during 1974 as essential, a point taken up by Germany, the Netherlands and Italy. Frank Cluskey underlined the importance, for Ireland, of actions outside the immediate concerns of the workforce and in particular of actions on poverty and handicap.

On a proposal from the French Minister, it was agreed to set up a Working Group which would meet at once and report back to the Council in the afternoon. Michael O'Leary's Special Advisor, Niall Greene, was nominated by the Irish delegation to participate in the Group.

The Council moved on to the important questions of commitment and engagement. The Commission text, in its opening section, contained the statement that the Council "CONSIDERS that...the initial measures necessary to achieve the following objectives should be adopted during a first stage covering the period from 1974 to 1976..." During the deliberations of COREPER the Italian delegation argued that there was a need to indicate unambiguously the Council's commitment to act and put forward a proposal for stronger wording stating that the Council "UNDERTAKES to adopt the following initial measures..." Other delegations, including Ireland, then suggested that the text should state that the Council "EXPRESSES the political will to adopt..."

The Council Legal Services indicated that none of these texts added up to a legal undertaking since the instrument under discussion was a Resolution which was not legally binding. The proposals from the various delegations were for "moral and political undertakings." Vice President Hillery emphasised the importance of moving swiftly to act on the decisions of the Council and called on the Ministers to find a wording which engaged the Commission and Council to proceed without delay to implement the actions proposed according to the appropriate institutional and budgetary means. The Council, on the proposal of Minister Michael O'Leary, decided to adopt the formulation "EXPRESSES the political will to adopt, in an initial period from 1974 to 1976, the measures necessary to realise the following objectives..."

The Council moved on to the detailed elements of the programme, with particular emphasis on a number of items on which there had been differences of opinion in the COREPER discussions: establishment of the European Centre for Vocational Training;

actions to assist migrant workers; development of the Standing Committee on Employment. A final list of twenty-five items was agreed, with some of the original proposals either remitted for further consideration or combined for reasons of efficiency. An important issue for the Irish delegation had been addressed insofar as the wording on actions in support of handicapped persons had been amended to shift emphasis from policies designed to assist those who could eventually get into commercial employment to cover individuals whose disabilities might require placements in sheltered workshops.

The adoption of the poverty item was delayed through the day as the UK and German delegations argued for their alternative, weaker wording. The German position was firmly predicated on the fear that Ireland was seeking to open a second Social Fund which would be financed by the German tax-payer. Eventually the UK Minister – possibly influenced by the major developments in Anglo-Irish relations surrounding the Sunningdale Conference and Agreement – changed sides and the Germans were isolated. Minister Arendt finally conceded that the proposal should be included – using the Commission wording – but threatened to continue their fight when the detailed legislative proposal emerged. Much more was to be heard from Walter Arendt, and from his colleagues in the German Federal Finance Ministry, in the months ahead.

A lengthy debate took place on the crucial issue of finance, in particular through the activities of the European Social Fund. The outcome was a very general statement that the Council “Considers that, to achieve the proposed actions successfully, and particularly in view of the structural changes and imbalances in the Community, the necessary resources should be provided, in particular by strengthening the role of the European Social Fund.” This was accompanied by a number of Declarations, by the Council as a whole and by individual delegations. The Irish delegation appended a Declaration indicating that it “understands that the reference to the European Social Fund involves an examination of the possibility of introducing differential rates on a regional basis together with criteria for determining which regions should enjoy priority in respect of such rates.”

Vice President Hillery made a personal declaration undertaking to examine the working of the European Social Fund and to report to the Council by the end of the German Presidency in the first half of 1974. The French delegation declared that “the term ‘strengthening the role’ does not ipso facto signify ‘increasing financial means.’”

An attempt by the German Minister to expand discussion of the European Social Fund to include the entire range of EEC financial resources, from the Regional Fund to the Agricultural Funds and the European Investment Bank proved controversial and

potentially divisive. Ministers raised a number of points related to the general economic situation and debated the role of the social partners in promoting effective policies for restoring growth and job opportunities. Policies for full employment were seen as essential by many speakers. The German Minister told his colleagues that his country would hold the Council Presidency in the first half of 1974 and would immediately set out to consult both sides of industry on the way forward. He added that the Social Action Programme must be viewed in the context of the economic crisis.

Vice President Hillery intervened strongly, stressing the fact that the Commission was preparing its assessments of the effects of the energy crisis and inflation. They would be submitted to the Standing Committee on Employment early in the New Year and would be brought to the Council for debate and action. He informed the meeting that the European Trade Union Confederation had written to the Commission President, Francois Xavier Ortoli, calling for a wide-ranging conference on the economic situation at the earliest possible moment. It was of the utmost importance that this Council meeting should decide on the Social Action Programme as failure or delay would greatly weaken the position of the Community in the eyes of workers who were suffering the realities of inflation and unemployment. The good faith of the Council and of the Community itself was in question.

The Council agreed to press ahead and turned its attention to the question of priorities. The Working Group reported that it had identified as many as twelve items which could be considered priorities, including the action on poverty, reflecting the efforts of Niall Greene. There followed an initially unfocused debate in which Ministers highlighted their various national concerns. This provoked an intervention by the Belgian Minister, Ernest Glinne, insisting that decisions must be taken on the priorities and on the programme as a whole. It was agreed to go through the Working Group paper point-by-point and this exercise proved so effective that the Council was able to produce a list of nine priorities:

- consultation between Member States on employment policies;
- Community action programme for migrant workers;
- a common vocational training policy and a European Vocational Training Centre;
- action on equality between men and women, including on pay;
- consultative arrangements between Member States on social protection policies;
- a Community action programme on health and safety at work;
- implementation of specific measures to combat poverty;

- progressive involvement of workers in the life of undertakings;
- promotion of the involvement of management and labour in the life of undertakings.

In relation to the poverty issue the Council agreed on a wording proposed by Belgium which avoided the details contained in the formal Commission text, referring to “the implementation, in cooperation with the Member States, of specific measures to combat poverty by drawing up pilot schemes.”

Eventually, well after 3a.m. on 12 December 1973, the Social Affairs Council reached the end of its long agenda and concluded its work with Vice President Hillery indicating that the Commission would immediately set about finalising the text of the Resolution as it emerged from the Council’s deliberations. A definitive text would be prepared and submitted for adoption at a convenient Council meeting, probably in January 1974. Work would then commence on bringing forward formal, substantive proposals on each item of the Social Action Programme, beginning with the priority items as agreed. The Commission would also seek to make progress with items already on the Council agenda such as the historically important proposal for a Directive providing for the approximation of Member States’ legislation concerning the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women.

Before departing from the conference centre there were press briefings to be conducted. The Irish delegation was in a position to point to quite significant achievements in areas highlighted prior to the meeting. The priority list included not alone the poverty initiative – a clear Irish achievement, with some timely assistance from Belgium – but also an important input by Minister Michael O’Leary on the Social Fund and welcome progress on employment policies; policy for the handicapped; vocational training; social protection and worker participation. The important question of action on equality between men and women, including the proposals on pay, was welcomed but was to become a matter of great controversy and dispute in future relations between the Irish Government and Commission Vice President Hillery.

The Irish delegation had played a strong and constructive role in the evolution of the Social Action Programme. In this first year of Irish EEC membership the Social Affairs area could be seen as a success in terms of progress on a key policy and of efficient organisation at political and official levels. Progress was made in advancing Irish interests, in the immediate areas of concern of Labour and Social Welfare but also in other important areas such as provision for handicapped persons, where the Commission had already set out proposals for action.

This Social Affairs Council was a significant success for Patrick Hillery in his first year in office. He had produced the draft Social Action Programme in the months prior to the Yom Kippur War and might well have seen it blown away in the turmoil of the energy crisis. He took the view that the crisis made the Programme more important than ever and fought skillfully for its acceptance and implementation, telling the European Parliament on the eve of the December Council that while the oil crisis threatened jobs and living standards it was the poor who would suffer most from its effects and that it was therefore essential to proceed with the Social Action Programme.

Hillery's biographer quoted a participant in the Council meeting who had no doubt that the Commissioner played a pivotal part in ensuring a positive outcome: "Hillery's role in the Council meeting was extraordinary in terms of holding the thing together, particularly when the Danish crisis happened." He correctly concluded that "He secured the adoption of the Social Action Programme at a time when delay would almost certainly have been disastrous; a Community social policy, universally regarded as a vital necessity in 1972, would have appeared an impractical luxury in the harsher economic climate of the mid-1970s." (Walsh, 2008)

9. Conclusions

The Social Action Programme was formally approved by a [Council Decision](#) on 21 January 1974, giving 'the stamp of legitimacy' to Hillery's plans. But, as has been described, the approval of the Social Action Programme took place at a time of growing economic and financial difficulty in the context of the Oil Crisis. The fifth report in the series 'Developments in the European Communities' dealt with the situation in the year following the Council decision on the Programme, indicating that:

"The need for implementation of the Social Action Programme has been highlighted by the deterioration in the general economic situation in the Community...the Heads of Government expressed their conviction that in this period of economic difficulties special emphasis should be placed on social measures and reaffirmed the importance which they attach to the implementation of the Social Action Programme."

(Government, 1975)

The Commission, under Vice President Hillery, made clear its determination to ensure that, in respect of all of the measures included in the Programme, it would formulate concrete proposals for decision by the Council by the end of 1976. This considerable

work programme was carried out, providing the Community with a comprehensive set of social initiatives in line with the political mandate given at Paris.

In the words of Professor Linda Hantrais, “the Social Action Programme thus set the scene for the development of the Community’s social policy over the next decade. The 1970s saw a spate of action in the areas of education and training, health and safety at work, workers’ and women’s rights and poverty, leading to the establishment of a number of European networks and observatories to stimulate action and monitor progress in the social field.” (Hantrais, 2007)

It is for another study to trace the history of European Social Policy from the 1970s. A brief chronology of the stages of development includes:

1986	Single European Act; extension of QMV in social matters
1898	The Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers
1989	European Anti-Poverty Network established
1992	Treaty of Maastricht; Agreement on Social Policy
1993	Commission Green Paper on European Social Policy
1994	Commission White Paper on European Social Policy
1997	Treaty of Amsterdam; Article on Social Exclusion
1997-1999	Commission Communications on Modernizing Social Protection
1998	Social Action Programme 1998-2000
2000	Lisbon European Council; The Lisbon Agenda
2000	Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union
2000	Social Policy Agenda
2005	Social Agenda 2005-2010
2008	Treaty of Lisbon, incorporating Charter of Fundamental Rights
2010	Europe 2020 Strategy

The specific action on poverty in the Social Action Programme, laid the foundation for a series of policies and consultative networks which has continued to the present time. Three European Poverty Programmes covered the period 1975-1994. The 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam provided for the Open Method of Coordination as a basis for sharing experiences and research findings on poverty-related matters between governments and civil society organisations. Following the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development in 1995 the concept of National Anti Poverty Strategies was developed, with Ireland as an early innovator. In Ireland, the Combat Poverty Agency was established in 1986 and played a key role in policy development and practical work until its abrupt abolition in 2009.

The current global economic and financial crisis, and the specific problems of the Eurozone has posed challenges to the future of the European Social Model. This was addressed by the EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Laszlo Andor, in a May Day speech in 2012:

“The social consequences of the global financial crisis are dire -- especially in Europe's peripheral regions -- and painful austerity measures to reduce deficits and debt are aggravating this harsh reality. Some have concluded, both inside and outside Europe, that our social model is dead. To quote Mark Twain, I consider that reports of our social model's death are “greatly exaggerated”.

“First, Europe’s institutions that underpin social cohesion have always been linked to economic prosperity and a high level of industrial and technological development. The welfare we share must be built on the wealth we produce in Europe. Our economic performance is the guarantee for our social security and social mobility.

“Second, there was no golden age before the crisis. Where there was prosperity and a high rate of growth, it was not necessarily sustainable or inclusive. There were periods of dynamic job-creation, but we had drifted far away from full employment, and the number of those working and living in precarious conditions grew fast. We can look back to find what was working well, but there is a clear need for a new construction

“Third, the concept of the European social model has always been partly reality, and partly an ideal. We are proud of what has been achieved, and share a common European vision. We can use the best practices of the more

advanced European countries for inspiration and to help to develop EU standards.

“Fourth, we have been speaking about a European social model despite diversity in Europe, and this diversity has increased with the successive waves of enlargement. National and regional traditions matter. However, as economic integration develops, the social dimension of the EU also has to catch up...

“In tough economic times, we have to be sure that the most vulnerable social groups are better protected at a time of national budget cuts, and civil society organisations can play a valuable role in this effort. While there is a risk at a time of financial emergency and fiscal consolidation, we need to prevent the erosion of social, environmental and occupational health and safety standards...

“The essence of the European social model is that we do not allow economic policies and activities to disconnect from social values and rights. We also believe that a civilised society always responds to a crisis with more solidarity. What is therefore the most important requirement in order to secure the future of the European social model is to redefine solidarity on the EU level, and to reinforce our alliance with social partners and civil society organisations.”

(Andor, 2012)

The Commission President, José Manuel Barroso, in his 2012 State of the Union address to the European Parliament, spoke strongly on the importance of the social dimension of any European recovery programme:

“Our agenda of structural reform requires a major adjustment effort. It will only work if it is fair and equitable. Because inequality is not sustainable.

“In some parts of Europe we are seeing a real social emergency. Rising poverty and massive levels of unemployment, especially among our young people. That is why we must strengthen social cohesion. It is a feature that distinguishes European society from alternative models.

“Some say that, because of the crisis, the European Social model is dead. I do not agree. Yes, we need to reform our economies and modernise our social protection systems. But an effective social protection system that helps those in need is not an obstacle to prosperity. It is indeed an indispensable

element of it. Indeed, it is precisely those European countries with the most effective social protection systems and with the most developed social partnerships, that are among the most successful and competitive economies in the world.”

(Barroso, 2012)

These recent comments demonstrate that now, forty years after the momentous decision on the Social Action Programme, the social dimension of the EU, the social implications of crises and the need for solidarity remain critical. The events of 1973 demonstrate the scale of political will required to address these fundamental issues and provide invaluable insights for today’s politicians and policy-makers.

Patrick Hillery

Patrick Hillery died on 12 April 2008, just before his 85th birthday. In Dáil Éireann a few days later, Party Leaders paid tribute to a man who had served as Deputy, Minister, Commissioner and President. Many of these statements highlighted his achievements as EC Commissioner:

“By introducing the equal pay directive and the equal treatment directive, Patrick Hillery not only put the rights of women at the heart of European policy, he put Ireland at the heart of European social progress.

(Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern T.D.)

“The groundbreaking role he played as Social Affairs Commissioner demonstrated impractical terms the benefits that EU membership could bring to the living and working conditions of the Irish people. Despite the difficulties created by the first oil crisis, he was a genuinely reforming Commissioner introducing many additional protections and benefits for workers across Europe. His term of office also saw the establishment of the first combat poverty programme. He demonstrated his independence when he was prepared to take on the Government and insist that the principle of equal pay for men and women was proceeded with.”

(Eamon Gilmore T.D., Leader of the Labour Party)

“Clearly, one of his greatest, lasting achievements was to shepherd Ireland into membership of the European Economic Community, a turning point in our economic and social history. He was clear that, by joining, Ireland would be participating in the political shaping of Europe in the long term, as he said, shaping “a unified Europe that would be a potent force for peace not only on our Continent but in the world.

“It was not enough, in his eyes, merely to get in the door as a member on a political level. As our first European Commissioner, he showed how important it was to follow through and deliver the practical benefits of EEC membership to our people. His courageous insistence as EU Social Commissioner that the European equality directive had to apply in Ireland delivered one of the most practical equalities for women — equal pay. The women of Ireland can be truly grateful for his quiet determination.”

(Mary Harney T.D., Leader of the Progressive Democrats)

Patrick Hillery’s biography concluded that “it was as a member of the European Commission that Hillery enjoyed the greatest scope to express his egalitarian social ideals. Hillery guided the social action programme past the multiple hurdles of the European institutions and secured its adoption within a year of his arrival in Brussels. He drove forward its implementation with remarkable success despite the economic crisis and a declining political will to support social reform among national leaders. The social action programme created a genuine European social policy for the first time, even if it was neither as radical nor as well financed as Hillery had hoped. His achievements here stand the test of time....If Hillery’s reputation depended solely on his term in the Commission, his status as an outstanding social reformer would be secure.”

References in text

Andor, Laszlo (2012) *Looking at Europe’s Social Model – today and tomorrow*. Statement on May Day 2012.

Barroso, Jose Manuel (2012) *Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion: The European Commission’s Approach*. Speech to the Convention of the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion. Brussels, 5 December 2012.

Brandt, Willy (1969) *Letter to President Georges Pompidou*, November 1969.

Brandt, Willy (1976) *People and Politics*. London, Collins.

Brown, Tony (2009) ‘Combat Poverty – Origins and Inspiration’ in O’Flynn, Joan (ed.) *Poverty, Policy and Practice*. Combat Poverty Agency / IPA.

Brown, Tony (2012) *40th Anniversary: The Paris Summit, October 1972*. Institute of International and European Affairs.

Callanan, Mark (ed.) (2007) *Foundations of an Ever Closer Union*. Institute of Public Administration.

Cluskey, Frank (1973) *Remarks at Social Affairs Council*, December 1973.

Cluskey, Frank (1973) *Remarks at Press Briefing on EEC Social Action Programme*, December 1973.

Cluskey, Frank (1974) *Speech on Estimate for Social Welfare*. Dáil Éireann

Commission of the EEC (1962) *Action Programme of the Community for the Second Stage*.

Commission of the European Communities (1971) *Preliminary Guidelines for a Social Policy Programme in the Community*, March 1971.

Commission of the European Communities (1972-1976) *Reports on the Development of the Social Situation in the Community*.

Commission of the European Communities (1973) 'Guidelines for a Social Action Programme' in *Bulletin of the European Communities*, Supplement 4/73.

Commission of the European Communities (1973) *Social Action Programme*.

Council of the European Communities (1974) *Council Resolution of 21 January 1974 concerning a Social Action Programme*.

Council for Social Welfare (1972) 'Papers of the CSW Conference on Poverty, Kilkenny, November 1971' in *Social Studies*, Vol.1, August 1972.

Corish, Brendan (1973) *Address to Labour Party Annual Conference*.

Corish, Brendan (1974) *Statement on EC Social Action Programme*.

Department of Social Welfare (1973) *Memorandum for Ministers on Social Action Guidelines*.

Dáil Éireann (2008) *Statements on the Death of Patrick Hillery*, 15 April, 2008.

European Communities (1969) *Communiqué of the Conference of the Heads of State or Government of the European Communities*, The Hague, December 1969.

European Communities (1972) *Communiqué issued by the Heads of State or of Government of the Nine*, Paris, October 1972.

Fine Gael and the Labour Party (1973) *Statement of Intent*, General Election 1973.

FitzGerald, Garret (1993) *Ireland's Role in Europe – a Personal Experience*. Address to Institute of European Affairs, 27 May 1993.

Government of Ireland. (1973-1975) *Developments in the European Communities*.

Government of Ireland (1973) *Elements of the Position of the Irish Government on Community Social Policy*.

Hantrais, Linda (2007) *Social Policy in the European Union*. London, Palgrave.

Hillery, Patrick (1972) *Speaking on European Communities Bill*, 1972. Dáil Éireann, October 1972.

Hillery, Patrick (1973) *Drawing up an EC Social Policy*. Address to European Parliament, February 1973.

Hillery, Patrick (1975) *Address to the European Parliament*, 18 February 1975.

Hillery, Patrick (1993) *Address to Institute of European Affairs*.

Irish Congress of Trade Unions (1973) *Submissions on the draft Social Action Programme*.

Kleinman, Mark (2002) *A European Welfare State?* London, Palgrave.

Labour Party (1974) *Policy Statement on the Fight Against Poverty in Ireland*.

Leonard, Dick (2010) *Guide to the European Union*. Tenth Edition, The Economist.

Lynch, Jack (1993) *Address to Institute of European Union*.

O Cinneide, Seamus (ed.) (1993) *Social Europe*. Institute of European Affairs.

O'Leary, Michael (1973) *Remarks at Social Affairs Council*, December 1973.

Shanks, Michael (1977) *European Social Policy: Today and Tomorrow*. Pergamon Press.

Teague, Paul (1989) *The European Community: The Social Dimension*. London, Kogan Page.

Walsh, John (2008) *Patrick Hillery*. Dublin, New Ireland.

Appendix 1

Social Action Programme – Pilot Schemes

(Paper submitted by the Department of Social Welfare to the Commission, September 1973)

Social Action Programme – Pilot Schemes

Proposal: to initiate a series of pilot schemes of social action on selected, representative communities in order to provide a basis for the evolution and implementation of policies for the alleviation and elimination of poverty.

Objectives: the pilot schemes would have the following immediate and long term objectives:

- identification of the social problems arising from poverty of individuals and families in the selected areas;
- to bring, in addition to immediate financial aid, a wide range of relevant services to bear on such problems with the purpose of ending the cycle of poverty through personal or community rehabilitation;
- promotion and support of community activity at all levels which will underpin individual development and ensure that the poorest sections of the community will benefit from social and economic policies;
- assessment of the information, trends, attitudes etc., discernable from these schemes which will contribute to the drawing up of appropriate long term general policies against poverty.

Organisation: the organisation and carrying through of the schemes would involve the following elements:

- in each area, a Project Team under a qualified professional Director and containing a range of skills (e.g. community development officer, social workers, home assistance officers, information officers, necessary medical advisors, nurses and administrative staff) appropriate to the task;

- centrally, a small monitoring and review group which would include a sociologist, a psychologist, a community development advisor and administrators;
- premises in each area suitable for use as an information office, consultation rooms, meeting facilities, offices etc.

These premises would be carefully chosen to provide a blend of efficiency and compatibility with other social services in the area in question.

Policy Review: the project would be subject to overall review and policy interpretation by a single Government Department which would consult with and enlist the assistance, if necessary, of all appropriate central government departments, local government authorities and other relevant statutory authorities.

Method of Operation: the Project Team would in the main work through being brought into contact with individuals and families in receipt of any form of social assistance through the existing agencies, including voluntary organisations. In addition they would rely on the widespread dissemination of information on existing statutory income maintenance and welfare services making other necessitous and deprived individuals and families aware of the help the teams could provide to meet their needs. Assessment of the range of needs of those contacted would be followed up with the deployment of specialist services, involvement of voluntary groups and application of existing welfare schemes. The community development and organisation aspects, and equally the educational, housing and environmental implications of the problems encountered would be dealt with. Particular emphasis would be placed upon stimulation of effort within the community and upon the generation of personal, self-sustaining efforts at breaking the poverty cycle. In no sense should these schemes be permitted to be, or to be seen to be, paternalistic exercises.

Choice of Pilot Areas: initially the pilot schemes should be fairly representative and it is suggested that six areas might be chosen: a centre-city depressed area; a working-class housing scheme; a suburban residential area; a small rural town; a working-class area in a larger rural town or city; a rural area.

Appendix 2

Social Action Programme Submitted by the Commission to the Council, October 1973.

(Text from Commission Information brief)

The Social Action Programme proposed by the Commission consists of some 40 different actions aimed at achieving three fundamental objectives:

- Full and better employment;
- Improving living and working conditions;
- A more active role for trade unions and employers in the decision-making processes of the Community.

Some of these 40 proposals are already before the Council of Ministers. Seven others, of particular political significance, will be submitted to the Council for action before the end of the year. The others are planned for the period 1974-76.

The Commission's proposals are all based on the belief that the purpose of economic growth should be to widen the choice of social options available to the peoples of the Community by bringing about a continuing rise in living standards and the quality of life. Economic growth and an active programme of social reform need not be antithetic.

...it is not the Commission's aim to centralise the solutions to all the social problems of the Community. The Commission has no wish to see introduced a single social policy tackling all social problems in the Community in a uniform manner. Nor does the Commission propose the transfer to Community level of responsibilities and functions carried out more appropriately at other levels.

Neither are the proposals in this Action Programme intended as a substitute for national policies. Rather, each action is envisaged, and will need to be examined, in the context of what individual Member States are doing and can be expected to do within the limits of their resources. Nor does this Action Programme seek to mitigate the responsibilities of Member States within the social field.

A Community social action programme is needed for the simple reason that there are problems in the social field which are common to all the nine Member States and which could best be dealt with on a Community basis rather than in isolation. The number of these problems will grow with the increasing integration of the economies of the Member States, particularly as progress is made towards economic and monetary union.

Monetary integration imposes constraints on national economic policies which are particularly likely to affect employment and, in some cases, inflation rates. All the Member States accept that this process demands a more active Community social policy if the well being of all the peoples of the Community is to be maintained.

Furthermore, without Community solidarity, the less-favoured Member States and regions will find it increasingly difficult to solve their problems. And serious disparities in the rate of social progress and social standards between Member States could distort competition and thus retard the development of full economic union. It is, therefore, clear that close and continuous collaboration between national administrations and Community institutions is going to be increasingly necessary in the months and years ahead.

This Social Action Programme does not represent the first writing on a 'tabula rasa'. Many of the actions now in progress or elaborated in this document owe their origin in the Commission's paper 'Preliminary Guidelines for a Social Policy Progress in the Community' published in February 1971.

The same is true of the financial instruments of social policy, in particular the Social Fund. The Budget of the Social Fund has been quadrupled in the last 10 years (the proposed budget for 1974 is 327 million Units of Account), and its terms of reference were deliberately widened in 1972 to enable it to act as a more positive instrument for social reform. It will continue to be the main operational instrument in social policy and its resources must, therefore, be increased to be commensurate with the Summit's aims. The Commission is only too aware that a single Social action Programme covering a limited time-span cannot hope to resolve all the social problems of modern society.

This Programme must be seen therefore as part of comprehensive and continuing attack on social problems and abuses, to enable the Community to develop as a model of social progress. It is important to note that responsibilities for action in this field rest not only with the Community Institutions but also with the Member States and with employers and trade unions.

Achievement of the objectives outlined will require co-ordination with all the other areas of Community policy (regional policy, transport policy, agricultural policy, industrial policy etc.). The Commission will ensure that policy measures taken in these fields reflect social objectives and contribute to their achievement.

As the Paris Summit communiqué indicates, there is a greater sense of priority and urgency about social policy in the Community. The Community has now reached a stage in its economic and social development when it can afford to, and indeed must, question more critically the pattern and the costs of economic growth and the distribution of its resources. One must also bear in mind that the Community is today not only richer, but also better educated and informed than ever before, and with better education and information come increased, and entirely legitimate, demands for a more

just society and a better quality of life. It is on this basis of achievement and enhanced expectations that we must build.

The actions proposed in the Social Action Programme fall into the following four categories:

I - Immediate Actions which will be the subject of proposals by the Commission to the Council of Ministers for action before the end of 1973:

1. assistance from the European Social Fund (Article 4) for migrant workers and handicapped workers;
2. an action programme for handicapped workers in an open market economy;
3. the setting up of a European general safety committee and the extension of the competence of the Mines Safety and Health Committee;
4. a directive providing for the approximation of legislation of Member States concerning the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women;
5. the designation as an immediate objective of the overall application of the principles of the 40-hour week between now and 1975, and the principle of 4 weeks annual paid holidays between now and 1976;
6. the setting up of a European Foundation for Improvement of the Environment and Living and Working Conditions;
7. a directive on the approximation of the Member States' legislation on mass dismissals.

II - Other Priority Actions, on which the Commission considers that the Council should decide in the period 1974-76

A – In the field of Full and Better Employment

8. a directive to provide for the protection of workers' interests in particular with regard to the retention of acquired rights in the case of mergers;
9. to promote their cooperation a smoother operation of national employment services;
10. to implement a common policy of vocational training, particularly by setting up a European Vocational Training Centre;

11. to promote the introduction in all Member States of national systems ensuring income support for workers during vocational retraining, possibly supported by a Community aid geared to the development of Community employment objectives;
12. to undertake action for the purpose of gradually achieving equality between men and women on the Community labour market and to reconcile women's family responsibilities with their job aspirations;
13. to achieve equality in living and working conditions, in wages and salaries and in economic and social rights, and to ensure the participation in Community life for all migrant workers and their families, combined with a Community action programme and a coordination of the immigration policy of the Member States with regard to third countries;
14. to initiate a programme for the social integration of handicapped persons;
15. to protect workers hired through private employment services and to regulate the activities of such firms with a view to eliminating abuses thereof.

B - In the field of Living and Working Conditions

16. to implement an action programme on safety at work;
17. to gradually extend social protection to those persons not covered or inadequately provided for under existing schemes;
18. to gradually introduce machinery with a view to adapting social security benefits to income growth;
19. to protect workers' interests, with regard to the retention of acquired rights in the case of mergers, concentrations or rationalisation operations;
20. to implement in cooperation with the Member States specific measures to combat poverty by the preparation of pilot schemes.

C – In the field of Participation and Industrial Democracy

21. to use more extensively the Standing Committee on Employment as the principal organ for the discussion of all questions with a fundamental impact of employment. To assist in the setting up of a European Trade Union Institute to help European Trade Union organisations establish training services on European affairs.

III - Supporting Actions

A - In the field of Full and Better Employment

- 22. extension of young worker exchanges;
- 23. action for elderly workers, unemployed school leavers and women re-entering employment;
- 24. forecasts and research on the labour market.

B - In the field of Improving Living and Working Conditions

- 25. unemployment benefits;
- 26. the European Social Budget;
- 27. extension of social indicators;
- 28. minimum wages;
- 29. statistics on incomes and assets;
- 30. asset formation;
- 31. job enrichment;
- 32. statistical enquiries on accidents at work and on occupational safety;
- 33. health protection from pollution and from environmental hazards;
- 34. extension of the radiation protection programme;
- 35. social housing.

C - In the field of Participation and Industrial Democracy

- 36. worker participation;
- 37. extension of Joint Committees.

IV - Actions on which Proposals have already been submitted to the Council

- 38. divergent labour market;
- 39. comparable statistics on migrant workers;
- 40. the Statute of the European Company;

41. the Third Directive on Company Law.