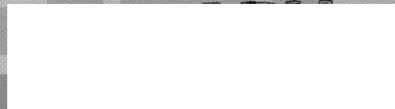


# SOCIAL EUROPE

Action programme  
on  
local labour market development



SUPPLEMENT 3/88



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR EMPLOYMENT,  
SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND EDUCATION

18/4  
CEP

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This publication is also available in the following languages:

DE ISBN 92-825-8382-1  
FR ISBN 92-825-8384-8

The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect either the position or views of the Commission of the European Communities.

The action programme on local labour market development forms part of the research and actions on the development of the labour market of the Commission of the European Communities.

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Community.*

Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1988

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Catalogue number: CE-NC-88-003-EN-C

ISBN 92-825-8383-X

*Printed in Belgium*

**ACTION PROGRAMME**  
**ON**  
**LOCAL LABOUR MARKET DEVELOPMENT**

**A Programme of the Commission of the European Communities**  
**Directorate General for Employment**  
**Social Affairs and Education**

**Working Party Report on the First Year of the Programme**  
**April, 1987**

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ANNEXE: MAIN CONTRIBUTORS TO THE PROGRAMME

The contents of this report are the responsibility of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect any view held by the Commission of the European Communities nor do they commit it to a particular view of the labour market or any other policy matters.

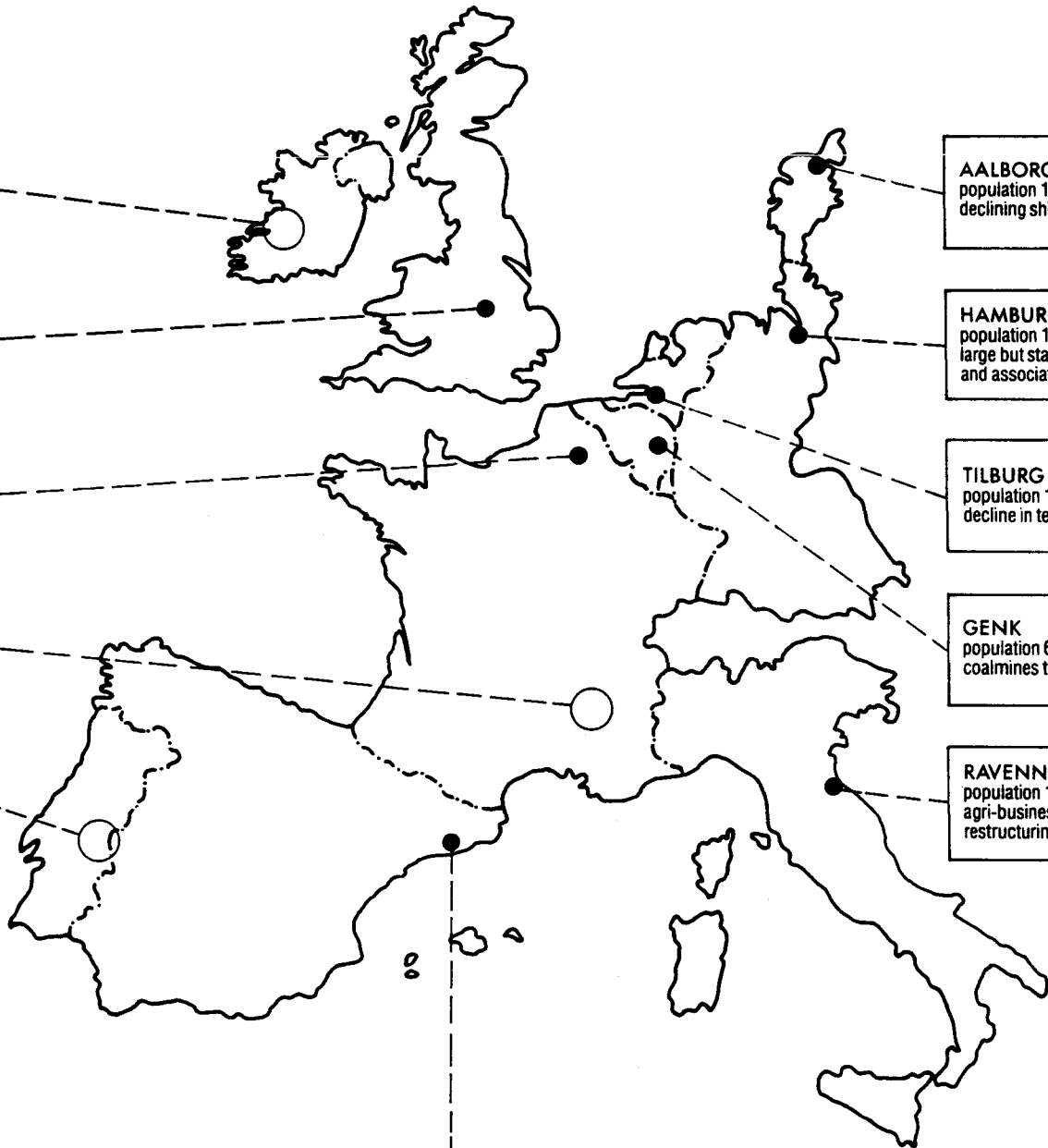
**MID-WEST REGION**  
population 308,000; 7870 sq km  
modern manufacturing industry; farming

**NOTTINGHAM**  
population 493,000  
job losses in large manufacturing enterprises

**LE BRUJAYSIS**  
population 49,000  
coalmines closed down; low skill levels

**LES BARONNIES**  
population 19,000; 1,230 sq km  
farming and associated agri-business

**NORTH ALENTEJO**  
population 52,000; 1,800 sq km  
traditional farming; weak industrial base



**AALBORG**  
population 154,000  
declining shipbuilding and food processing industries

**HAMBURG**  
population 1,592,000  
large but stagnant service sector; declining ship building and associated industries

**TILBURG**  
population 154,000  
decline in textiles industry; expansion in services

**GENK**  
population 61,000  
coalmines threatened with closure; low skill levels

**RAVENNA**  
population 137,000  
agri-business and other manufacturing industries; restructuring of petrochemical industry

**BARCELONA**  
population 1,752,000  
restructuring of manufacturing industries; strong service industries

**PROVINCE OF SITIA**  
population 22,000; 782 sq km  
traditional farming; expanding tourism



## **1. INTRODUCTION**

At the beginning of 1986 the Commission of the European Communities (Directorate-General V) launched an Action Programme on Local Labour Market Development. The Programme examined how 12 areas in the European Community have been tackling unemployment and employment development. A special effort was made to select areas whose experience in this field was likely to be of benefit to a wide range of areas throughout the Community.

The pilot projects adopted an interactive approach vis-a-vis local and regional organisations. Through discussion groups, local consultation conferences, interviews and other research they explored local strategies and other initiatives in:-

- forward looking labour market management;
- local employment initiatives; and,
- various forms of local economic development.

This work was supplemented with a series of review reports on subjects, such as, Evaluation, and Gaining Access to Resources. The experience of some specific development programmes was also reviewed, e.g. the local development programme for Chinon in France, a community enterprise programme in Ireland, and the creation of a network of training workshops in Spain.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 CONVERGENCE OF "SUPRA-LOCAL" AND LOCAL PERSPECTIVES ON EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT**

High and persistent unemployment -- currently standing at 17M in the Community -- has represented a major political and social problem in the last decade. It has stimulated an ever increasing number of policy responses



at "supra-local" (i.e. Community and Member-State) and local levels.

At "supra-local" level a series of constraints have been restricting the scope of macro-economic measures for tackling unemployment. Consequently, more weight has been given to other types of measures, which tend to rely on local actions for their realisation. Adjustments in the labour market feature prominently, e.g. increased training provision, measures to alleviate the effects of unemployment. Measures of a micro-economic nature have similarly become very common, e.g.

- encouraging enterprise development and self-employment
- supporting local initiatives by unemployed people.

The traditional local stance of trying to attract inward investment, or waiting for measures to be taken by national authorities, has gradually been overtaken by a more pro-active attitude. There have been several reasons for this change:

- the immediacy and seriousness of employment problems and the inadequacies of "supra-local" policies compelled local bodies to take the initiative;
- the scarcity of footloose investment and disillusionment with branch-plant-led development switched attention to indigenous enterprises;
- the existence of greatly underutilised resources, including labour, offered a basis for local projects.

Local actions in the field of employment policy are now clearly recognised at Community level. The Standing Employment Committee has emphasised the importance of creating a favourable economic and social climate at the local level by strengthening co-operation between actors in the local market and by ensuring a greater commitment to a decentralised implementation of national employment policies. (CEE/SEC(86) 539).

Other Community policies have further underlined the importance of a local dimension in employment development and other labour market measures:

- the European Social Fund has indentified local initiatives as a priority category;
- the European Regional Development Fund is assisting endogenous development;
- an Action Programme for small and medium enterprises has been adopted; and
- local integrated approaches have been strengthened by the introduction of Integrated Mediterranean Programmes and the prospect of a new generation of Integrated Development Operations.

## 2.2 ISSUES ARISING

This convergence in "supra-local" and local approaches has created in the last few years a substantial "common ground", reflected in a growing body of locally inspired and/or locally delivered actions. It has also raised a series of new issues. A search for:-

- the right policy tools for locally orientated actions;
- new relationships between Member-State/Community-led, and locally-led employment development measures;
- greater cohesion in the actions of different actors responding to employment problems.

Many practical questions spring out of these issues. The Programme has sought to answer them, as far as possible, from the experience of the twelve pilot projects and other information available. The aim was to draw lessons for policy makers and other actors at all levels.

This report, on the first year of the Programme, presents the conclusions of a working party of Commission officials and experts from several Member States, who have worked on all aspects of the Programme. A large number of other experts, researchers and consultants have worked on various aspects of the Programme (see Annexe) and their contributions have been taken into account in preparing this report.

### 3. EMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS AND LOCAL RESPONSES

#### 3.1 LOCAL EMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS

Looking at the employment situation in the pilot project areas, a number of points stand out concerning the nature and seriousness of local employment problems. They show how persistent unemployment or underemployment is, not only in less developed rural areas and rapidly declining traditional industrial districts, but also in relatively prosperous parts of the Community.

Hamburg is regarded as one of the prosperous areas in the Community. It was the region with the least problems in 1977-81, in terms of unemployment and GDP according to the 2nd Periodic Report, "Regions of Europe", 1984. The picture observed through the pilot project is very different:-

- unemployment is, at 13%, much higher than the national average;
- the city has lost, since 1970, 33% of its manufacturing jobs, especially in shipbuilding and the food industry;
- job creation prospects are poor; in recent years only one new job has been created for every 22 lost.

The experience of another major port city, Barcelona, confirms how widespread the employment problems are throughout the Community. A city with one of the highest GDP per capita in Spain, and important services and attractions commensurate with its status as an Olympic city, has an unemployment rate of 19%. In peripheral and surrounding areas this is nearer to 30%.

The experience of the Belgian town of Genk in the Province of Limburg, shows how deep employment problems can be. Genk is a highly industrialised area with a population of 61,500 of which 31.4% are immigrants. The area is now threatened with the closure of its coal mines which employ 6,400 people. This is on top of existing serious problems in the local labour market:-

- high unemployment (22.5%) containing an exceptionally high proportion (60%) of long-term unemployed;
- low skills: 72.8% of the Belgian-born unemployed and 93.4% of those of immigrant origin have received, at most, lower secondary education.

In less industrial areas, employment problems can be even more deep-rooted and of a long-term nature, as in the case of the Province of Sitia, in Crete (population 22,000). In this remote part of Greece 70% of the economically active people are engaged in agriculture. There is serious underemployment, the main crops and farming methods are traditional, and the productivity of farm units is very low (most land is mountainous, only 31% of farmland is irrigated and the size of 61% of the units is less than 3 hectares). People have been abandoning farming for many years but the large scale emigration of the 1960's and 1970's has stopped. They are now putting increasing pressure on the smaller secondary and tertiary sectors, where unemployment is already high (estimated over 12%) and most of the unemployed are young.

North Alentejo, a mainly rural area with 52,000 population centred on the town of Portalegre, is facing similar problems: lack of infrastructure, lack of skilled professionals, ageing and illiterate farmers, youth unemployment. New jobs are urgently needed and hopes are placed on some industrialisation. However, several of the existing factories have closed down recently resulting in employment losses.

### 3.2 LOCAL RESPONSES TO EMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS

The pilot projects had the opportunity to look into a wide range of local actions. A number of different approaches have been observed and these are illustrated in the experience of areas like Aalborg, Le Bruaysis, Genk, Nottingham, and other cases mentioned below.

The port city of Aalborg in North Jutland -- 154,000 population -- has been suffering from the effects of restructuring in its shipbuilding and food processing industries. Its shipyard recently made 1,300 people redundant and unemployment is consistently higher than the national level. Local actions have been trying to stimulate new industrial growth but the main thrust has been in local labour market management.

The Local Manpower Board, the Local Employment Service and the Municipality co-operate closely on a number of temporary employment and training programmes. The emphasis is on creating "extra" places, involving activities not already performed, particularly for the young and the long-term unemployed. In an area with 8,700 unemployed, the scale of these measures is substantial, e.g.:

- 2,397 long-term unemployed were placed in work in 1985 under a special scheme;
- 2,145 apprenticeships were subsidised in 1985;
- there were 463 places in 1986 in training, work experience and employment projects of the Municipality, including construction, metal working, and gardening services for old age pensioners.

Le Bruaysis -- a district with 49,000 inhabitants in Nord Pas de Calais -- suffered a major shock from the closure of its mines in 1980. Coal mining had dominated every aspect of local life and their closure, not only created a shortage of jobs but also left the area demoralised. The population is ageing whilst young people see no future in the area. Some 50% of the 15-20 year olds never had a job. Skill levels are very low; 68% of the labour force is unskilled and local firms are facing skill shortages.

The main thrust of local actions is on labour market adjustment and the "rebuilding" of the human resources. Training is at the centre of this effort, which is led by the Syndicat Intercommunal pour la Formation, seeking to create new skills, change mentalities, and generally upgrade the labour force. Local projects forming part of this include: a local research and studies centre (observatoire local) on skills and employment, a centre

for the assessment of individual training needs (atelier pédagogique personnalisé), and a unit on training needs in the construction industry.

Whilst training is a major area of concern in Genk too, Genk's responses to employment show a strong orientation towards strengthening job creation through the development of small and medium enterprises. This is to break the town's dependency on traditional sources of employment and to overcome the lack of an entrepreneurial tradition. The package of local actions in this field includes:-

- a business centre and other facilities offered through the Municipality of Genk;
- a project sponsored by major local employers and other organisations which provides assistance to small and medium enterprises to improve the quality of their products and management in order to become suppliers of large local firms;
- a business advice and training programme offered jointly by the Generale Bank and the Limburg Graduate School of Business.

Greater Nottingham - with 493,000 population - has been suffering from a steady decline in its traditional industries for many years, rather than a single employment crisis. There is now a substantial body of local employment programmes pursued by different agencies. One of the programmes has been attempting a forward looking response to one of the vulnerable sectors of Nottingham's economy: textiles. This is a multifaceted initiative led by the local authority (City of Nottingham) with active participation of private firms, trade union representatives and Nottingham's Trent Polytechnic. The initiative comprises projects such as:-

- the Nottingham Fashion Centre;
- consultancy to dyeing and finishing firms;
- Fashion Enterprise Workshops (starter units);
- clothing industry operatives training.

The Mid-West Region of Ireland -- 308,000 population -- has a long-standing, though informal, industrial development strategy. This has several strands, encompassing the attraction of inward investment, development of small and medium enterprises, introduction of new technologies and high-level skill training. Emphasis is given to the attraction and development of high technology industry, and a new policy dimension is the promotion of advanced business and financial services. The impact of this approach on this largely rural area has been considerable and is discussed further in 4.2, below.

Like the Mid-West Region, technology transfer and innovation represent a major thrust of development efforts in Hamburg. The Technical University Hamburg-Harburg provides the focus for many activities. Its Office for Technology Distribution (Technologie-Vermittlung Der TU-HH) provides information and support programmes to private enterprises and other bodies. Other local projects include:-

- the Hamburg Institute for Technology Development, established in 1980 by private initiative, in association with the Technical University;
- the University Consulting Centre, a public foundation undertaking pilot projects;
- the Working Circle (Arbeitskreis) for Technology Development, which brings together some twenty organisations involved in consulting (chambers, universities, private companies, city officials).

Les Baronnies is a rural area in Drôme, France with 19,000 population and no major urban centres. It has a long experience in tackling the problems of underdevelopment and especially the demographic and employment-related problems facing the mountainous zone of this area. Since the formation of the Syndicat d' Aménagement des Baronnies in 1974 a key local policy has been the programme of assistance to young people to set up in farming (Programme local d'installation des jeunes agriculteurs). This has the dual objective of maintaining and modernising agricultural activities as well as solving the crucial problem of youth employment and retention.

This programme assisted some 200 young farmers between 1978 and 1985 and continues, involving a package of 14 activities, operated through a team of amateurs and agricultural advisers, such as:-

- financial assistance;
- technical assistance, e.g. soil surveys
- support services;
- training and information

#### Established and new elements in local responses

The different orientation of local actions in these area reflects the particular needs and priorities of each locality. At the same time there are considerable similarities, with local actions concentrating on some key areas, which constitute a common core of initiatives:

- youth training and work experience programmes;
- measures for the long-term unemployed;
- support for the development of small and medium enterprises;
- encouraging innovation and technology transfer.

Although this shows that local responses are "settling down", after a period of experimentation, there are signs that an intensive search for a new approach to employment and economic development is still going on in some areas. Amongst the pilot projects Ravenna and Sitia provide insights into particularly interesting attempts to formulate broad and innovative local development strategies.

Ravenna, a 137,000 population port city in Emilia-Romagna, lacks the dynamism of the neighbouring industrial districts of central Italy. Its economy comprises some very large industrial enterprises, e.g. Ferruzzi, ENI/ANIC, AGIP/SAROM, CMC (an international building co-operative), a weak small-and-medium-enterprise sector, and a substantial agricultural hinterland. The employment situation has worsened in the 1980s and the city's unemployment is now substantially higher than the regional average, showing that economic difficulties are found even in the new industrialising areas, such as those of the Adriatic belt.



In 1984/85 the reconversion of the local ENI/ANIC petrochemical operations and the AGIP/SAROM's oil refining triggered off a highly collaborative effort between local actors. This has led to the formulation of an approach which seeks to remedy a series of weaknesses which underlie the lack of dynamism in the local economy. A "net" of closely intermeshing ideas is being developed for the creation of a university-type development "pole", business management training, technological innovation and transfer, and development of small and medium enterprises.

A number of initiatives have progressed within this framework:-

- a newly created, mixed public/private sector, economic development agency, ASE;
- the transformation of the locally based Co-operative Federation (FEDERCOOP) to a merchant bank with the aim of relaunching enterprises facing problems and supporting new ones;
- the creation of "Paradigma", a business consultancy sponsored by employers associations and large private and co-operative enterprises, and local government authorities;
- the promotion of youth co-operatives;
- extensive training programmes, including one for local development agents;

Ravenna's approach is discussed further in 4.2, below.

Sitia's development efforts began in the late 1970's. Since then a development approach has emerged and has been widely debated at local conferences, workshops and popular assemblies. This approach centres on the need to pursue a balanced and multi-dimensional development strategy for the Province, avoiding the experience of neighbouring areas, which have become over-dependent on tourism, and the widespread abandonment of farming and mountain villages which is common in remote parts of Greece. The goal of an integrated development programme for the Province is now nearer to fruition with the creation of a local development agency. In the meantime the local government authorities, led and co-ordinated by the Mayor of Sitia, have initiated many actions, often attracting the support of government agencies and the European Community:

- substantial infrastructure improvements are in progress (hospital, harbour, airport, utility networks);
- efforts are being made to harness the tourist potential, including a rural tourism development programme;
- training programmes for young unemployed in tourism, greenhouse construction and management, etc.

### 3.3 LOCAL ACTORS

These examples show how localities are following different approaches to suit their particular needs. Individual projects and broader action programmes have been launched or implemented by various locally-based bodies. Many of these actors have been playing new roles responding to the new challenges in the local labour market.

#### Existing local actors

Local government authorities have undergone major changes in the last five years. They now tend to play an important role in the local labour market, instigating new actions, supporting other bodies and seeking to co-ordinate local economic and employment development, despite often tight financial and legal constraints. The experience of the Municipality of Barcelona is typical of these changes. It has:-

- created a new Economic and Social Development service promoting youth employment, community enterprise and other programmes, and operating a network of local development agents at neighbourhood level;
- established Iniciatives SA, a company charged with setting up mixed public/private sector enterprises, e.g. cable television, hotel, newspaper, street furniture manufacturing companies;
- set up another organisation, Barcelona Activa, to create a large business centre complex for new enterprises and to offer complementary enterprise training programmes.

Many local organisations in the private and "associational" sectors are also involved in local actions. There are signs that trade union participation in local employment development is increasing. For example, in Hamburg the Metal Workers' Union set up an Innovation Consultancy Group. In the Dutch city of Tilburg (population 154,000), trade unions participate in the Foundation "Education and Jobs". Similarly, in Aalborg they are one of the sponsors of the City's Industrial Development Office. Overall, however, trade unions rarely seem to be the instigators of local development actions.

The same, growing but still rather limited role in local initiatives, has been observed in the case of employers (who, of course, play a massive role through their normal recruitment, training and other practices). In some areas large enterprises are playing a leading role, e.g. the Ford Motor Company in Genk's "Approved Suppliers and Managers" project, and Plessey in the setting up and running of the Nottingham Advanced Business Centre in partnership with the City Council. This is not however an experience shared by many of the other areas. The closure of two oil refineries by BP and ESSO in Hamburg was not accompanied by any employment initiatives by those companies. A similar lack of perception of a broader role in the local economy has been observed in newly industrialised Mid-West Region. In Tilburg the expressed willingness of major companies "to help" has not yet resulted in concrete actions.

Employers' involvement through collective bodies like chambers of commerce or industry is more established. An interesting example comes from Nottingham. There, the Chamber of Commerce is co-operating closely with trade unions, and central and local government:

- it is one of the largest youth training agencies in the city with some 730 training places;
- it runs seminar programmes for personal business skills;
- it operates jointly with Trent Polytechnic a graduate extension programme in business management.

A clear pattern is also emerging in the case of universities and research centres. These institutions have started to play an active role in economic and employment development in all seven areas of the Programme which are endowed with such facilities. Technological transfer and the development of small and medium enterprises are activities in which they are increasingly involved, as in the examples from Nottingham, Genk and Hamburg mentioned above. In the Mid-West Region the National Institute of Higher Education has been playing a major role in this field. This experience is supported by Aalborg's case where the University Centre has taken the initiative in the creation of an Innovation and Industry Park.

A less uniform pattern is apparent in the social sector. Hamburg has several non-conventional employment initiatives in the "alternative" sector, e.g.

- Network Self-help, an entirely voluntary organisation supporting self-managed enterprises;
- Autonomous Youth Training Workshops, an association providing professional training for disadvantaged young people.

Various associations and foundations -- originally with social objectives -- have become involved in training and employment projects often in partnership with other local bodies in Nottingham, Tilburg and other urban areas. Even in a rural area like the Municipality of Nisa in North Alentejo there are interesting initiatives, including handicraft training and the creation of artisan jobs by a project of the "Misericordia" (social solidarity voluntary association) which is receiving support from the European Social Fund, the municipal authorities, and the Portuguese Institute of Employment and Professional Training. By contrast, there is little employment or other labour market related activity outside the formal institutions in Aalborg.

#### Member-State and Community controlled actions

In several pilot project areas, there are also signs of major changes in the local operation of national agencies. In Barcelona and throughout Catalonia, INEM,

Spain's manpower agency, has been setting up extensive network of modern local offices. In Nottingham, like the rest of Britain, the Manpower Services Commission has been decentralising the delivery of many of its services through contracts to local managing agents (public and private bodies) for its training and temporary employment schemes.

Notwithstanding these changes local criticisms of the operation of national and Community schemes are in abundance. Rigid and incomprehensible rules have been quoted in practically all pilot areas as frustrating the achievement of the stated Community and Member-State objectives. Lack of adequate information, outside the principal public authorities, for instance on the contents of the Integrated Mediterranean Programmes for Crete and Drôme, and the proposed Integrated Development Operation for North Alentejo was a major source of frustration amongst local actors. Overlaps and competition between national, regional and local actors was also generally observed and criticised.

An example from North Alentejo shows the difficulties that a "top-down" approach can cause. A major project undertaken jointly by nine co-operatives in the Municipality of Crato is a new olive oil processing and bottling plant, funded mainly by a loan from IFADAP (state credit farming institute) through the Caixa de Credito Agricola Mutuo de Portalegre. This was largely completed two years ago but is still not operational pending the acquisition and installation of some of the equipment. Local leaders complain that changes in the loans policy to Caixas de Credito by the Central Bank have stopped the project from obtaining the last stage of approved funding. The project is paralysed. The building and equipment are deteriorating, and substantial interest and capital repayment debts have already accumulated.

### New Actors

One of the more remarkable features in practically all pilot project areas is the emergence of a large number of new bodies -- both small and large -- which spearhead much of the local actions on employment development:-

- special units within local government authorities, e.g. Aalborg's Employment Office, and Nottingham City Council's Economic Development Unit;
- inter-municipal bodies like the "syndicats intercommunaux" in Les Baronnie and Le Bruaysis, and the informal Provincial Council in Sitia, and the Training Centre for Footwear (ACCF) in the Province of Ravenna.
- semi-autonomous bodies created by public authorities, like Hamburg's Lawätz Foundation, Tilburg's B.K.W. (agency for small enterprises), and "Ravenna Lavoro";
- private sector initiatives, such as the Nottinghamshire Business Venture, a local enterprise development agency, Tilburg's Venture Capital Association promoted by the Chamber of Commerce and local enterprises, and Ravenna's INFIN SpA, a financial agency set up by the Industrial Employers Association;
- various partnerships between the public, private and social sectors e.g. "Youth Enterprise Tilburg" (J.O.T.) (employers' organisation BZW, trade unions, agency for small enterprises BKW, businesses), and Hamburg's Economic Development Corporation (banks, chambers, and city administration).

Such local development agencies vary widely in terms of their links -- legal and financial -- to major public and private organisations and the breadth of their functions. What they tend to have in common is much greater flexibility in their operation than their parent bodies or sponsors. Furthermore their personnel is highly motivated and shows a close identification with, and commitment to the particular client groups or subjects in which they specialise, and this ensures direct access to the ultimate beneficiaries. Other fairly common but less positive features in such new and growing organisations, include the lack of experience and insufficiently equipped teams, in technical and financial terms.

## Strategic direction of local actions and interaction between local actors

The very wide range of local initiatives and the many new and existing actors form a dynamic local environment. In this environment it is frequently difficult to discern an overall strategic direction in local actions, and the degree of cohesion between local actors might be slighter than realised at first sight. This also means that the existence of a formal strategy document -- describing a multi-programme action -- does not necessarily mean that there is a coherent strategic process, say, in setting objectives, deciding on policy instruments, monitoring results, etc. Indeed, the reverse might apply, with local actors working together without a formal and explicitly-stated strategy, as in the case of:

- industrial development in the Mid-West Region of Ireland; and
- the inter-linked policy areas of technology transfer, training and promotion of small and medium enterprises, which represent the main thrust of Hamburg's informal development strategy.

In general terms, in most of the pilot project areas there are clear aspirations to develop an integrated local development strategy. These aspirations are particularly pronounced in some areas e.g. North Alentejo, Mid-West Region, and Tilburg. Sitia's and Ravenna's efforts have been noted above. However, at present, many localities, especially larger urban areas, lack the necessary cohesion to move in that direction.

In Barcelona multiple fragmentation is clearly apparent, with the Generalitat de Catalunya (autonomous regional government), the Municipality, INEM and other local actors, maintaining the separate identity of often similar programmes. Similarly in Nottingham local efforts do not seem to intermesh, with Nottinghamshire County Council, the City Council, large local employers and other local actors in the public, private and social sectors involved in substantial programmes but not sharing a common vision of the future. Like Barcelona, many local actions are unconnected to each other, even within the same organisation.

Although local actions do not always intermesh, most of the localities are addressing the heart of the problem. In declining industrial areas more jobs are being lost than created. Many rural areas continue to stagnate at a low level of economic activity. In the broadest sense, both industrialised and less developed local economies suffer from the inability to generate new employment. In all cases some important ingredients are missing: local resources (or access to outside resources); dynamic elements such as skills and technologies; local capacity to overcome such deficiencies and to activate the existing strengths.

Many areas have begun from a position of serious deficiencies, widespread demoralisation, and a lack of suitable development instruments. Their responses have been tackling all these issues. For example, local resources are being mobilised, new skills and technologies are being introduced, much needed stimulation is coming from a variety of new actors and, generally, positive dynamics are being created. The characteristics of this approach are discussed in the next Section.

#### **4. A LOCAL APPROACH TO EMPLOYMENT CREATION**

##### **4.1 TOWARDS A COHERENT APPROACH**

Despite the diversity of local actors, there are some striking common features in much of this activity. Although there is no "ideal" model to draw upon, the experience of areas as diverse as Les Baronnie and Genk helps make this point.

The first feature is the endogenous nature of much of this developmental effort which focuses on exploiting local resources through locally instigated actions, such as the "commercialisation" of traditional aromatic plants in Les Baronnie, and Genk's small and medium enterprise support programmes.



The second feature is the entrepreneurial approach of the principal local actors, which means an "initiative-taking" attitude and a rejection of a dependency mentality. Many solutions to employment problems are formulated and promoted from within the localities, although both Genk and Les Baronnies still lack entrepreneurial strengths in the limited business sense.

The emphasis on operating flexibly, through networks of local agencies, represents the third feature: the high degree of local responsiveness and institutional adaptability. Extensive partnerships between the local social partners and a number of government levels in Genk confirm this point.

A clear orientation towards an employment development goal but frequent reliance on intermediate objectives (e.g. the provision of training or the introduction of business "incubator" centres) creates a fourth feature, a strong action bias. Many years of expressing the priorities and objectives of Les Baronnies in the form of concrete projects underlines this point.

These common features transcend a multitude of ideological viewpoints and political priorities associated with individual programmes and initiatives on employment development. They suggest a coherent approach to employment development with a clearly local orientation, especially in terms of processes and institutional structures. This approach seems to combine many characteristics associated with a modern entrepreneurial management approach, such as adaptability to a changing environment, and flexible and efficient use of available resources.

Although it is possible to establish the identity of such a local approach, the evidence of the pilot projects and all other information available to the Programme suggests that several parts of the overall picture are still incomplete or unclear, and require further investigation as discussed in Section 5.

## 4.2 A DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

The key characteristics of this approach can be of particular relevance to the future of a local economy and labour market. They can bring together and activate crucial dynamic elements in a locality, generating new enterprises and other projects. They can, in this way, trigger off a sustainable development process. Such dynamic elements include:-

- capacity for innovation, in technology and other fields;
- availability of vocational and business skills;
- potential for local investment;
- accessibility to markets.

In most problem areas some of these elements are deficient or exist in latent form, and the local resources are insufficient. Moreover, strong external forces can be at work. Employment development in such cases is unlikely to be totally self-stimulated and self-resourced. External inputs will be needed but these are not necessarily incompatible with a local approach. This approach has much to offer here by:-

- creating some of the positive attributes needed for development, e.g. through training or enterprise development;
- tapping internal and external resources;
- mobilising the wider community on a long-term basis.

Experience shows that areas following such an approach can turn the tide of decline or break the inertia of underdevelopment by:

- getting employment creation going, as far as local strengths allow it to go; and,
- creating the capacity and conditions for benefitting from outside inputs.

Several areas have relevant experiences which show how this approach can work. The cases of the Mid-West Region, Ravenna and Tilburg are briefly mentioned below.

The predominantly rural area of the Mid-West Region of Ireland has witnessed a major transformation over the last 20 years, led by a state funded local development agency, Shannon Free Airport Development Company. SFADCO

and other local actors have been working closely together and have achieved a number of widespread changes:-

- a substantial modern industrial sector (electronics, light and precision engineering) based on foreign investment;
- a growing indigenous small and medium enterprise sector;
- the generation of a highly skilled labour force (e.g. electronic engineers computer experts, and business graduates) through the creation of NIHE (National Institute of Higher Education);
- the generation of technological innovation (e.g. Innovation Centre and new companies started by NIHE graduates in the Plassey Technological Park, near Limerick).

Ravenna offers an impressive example of large scale mobilisation. This began with the discussions on the future of the state controlled operations of ENI/ANIC and AGIP/SAROM, and culminated in formal agreements between these companies, trade unions and the Emilia-Romagna Region, and the Municipality of Ravenna for the planned reconversion of ANIC and SAROM's local activities and for the "re-industrialisation" of the district. Since then the process of collaboration amongst local actors has gone beyond crisis talks and has broadened considerably encompassing employers' organisations, and key private and co-operative enterprises. The agreements have been in part implemented and a number of other initiatives are already at an advanced stage as mentioned above, including a number of development agencies jointly sponsored by the private and public sectors. Through joint working parties, involving more than 50 high-level representatives from all sectors, a number of development opportunities were explored in the context of the pilot project. New proposals for strengthening the collaborative structures were also put forward in order to make the collaboration between local actors more effective and to speed up the implementation of projects.

A most imaginative example of utilisation of local resources for a developmental purpose comes from Tilburg. The Project Innovation Tilburg has been set up by a new voluntary organisation sponsored by BKW (agency for small enterprises), technical schools and individual enterprises, and supported by the European Social Fund.

It trains unemployed university graduates to become innovation counsellors. They will then work with local businesses on innovation in products, processes and markets.

#### 4.3 AN IMPORTANT APPROACH?

The qualitative features of the local approach thus make it particularly relevant to employment development. It also seems to offer considerable quantitative strengths. This is however a point which is difficult to substantiate because of the almost total lack of systematic evaluation of local multi-programme actions on employment and economic development.

The evidence from this Programme and other sources show that local actions are:-

- substantial in scale, e.g. in Aalborg, as noted above, and in Hamburg where the part-locally funded employment and training schemes cover some 15,000 people annually, out of a total of approximately 90,000 unemployed;
- very close to Community and Member-State policy objectives with training, projects for the long-term unemployed, support to small and medium enterprises and promotion of new technologies representing the core of local actions,
- and can reach effectively the ultimate beneficiaries through the "multiple access points" to the community created by the many direct links with individuals and enterprises of local partnerships and networks.

These, together with the low cost of local employment initiatives (as defined by the Community, COM (83) 662 Final), the extra resources mobilised, and the general facilitating effect on "supra-local" schemes make the local approach to employment development particularly valuable.

## 5. HOW CAN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY BENEFIT FROM A LOCAL APPROACH

### 5.1 POSSIBLE BENEFITS

Both qualitative and quantitative aspects of the local approach underline its complementarity to other employment policies in the Community. There are a number of benefits that the European Community (EC) and Member-States (MS) can obtain from this approach, if adequately harnessed and enhanced. Local actions can boost EC/MS programmes, because of their affinity to EC/MS policy objectives and their substantial scale. They can also provide a much needed delivery mechanism close to the community -- the unemployed and local enterprises -- because of the management orientation of the approach and its pragmatic "bottom-up" emphasis. This would secure greater effectiveness for EC/MS policies and a more sustainable employment development process.

Other benefits could be obtained:-

- greater integration of "vertical" programmes at local level;
- increased awareness about Community and Member-State programmes;
- raised local capacity, enabling areas to benefit from other Community and Member-State help available, and reducing inter-regional imbalances;
- greater resources through local solidarity and mobilisation.

### 5.2 COMMUNITY AND MEMBER STATE ACTION

A number of positive lessons are emerging from the experience of this Programme, and Community actions can draw on them. The most obvious point is that the Community should target the resources of its structural funds to fill crucial gaps in the assisted areas' strengths.

However, cash injections on their own or generally isolated interventions which do not generate or activate potentially dynamic elements in a locality may not prove an answer to deep rooted employment problems.

The Community should therefore explore ways of enhancing the local approach and building up stronger links between supra-local and local schemes, possibly through an employment promotion and demonstration programme covering a wide range of areas. The following actions would help a move in this direction:

- greater responsiveness to local needs in the operation of the structural funds, through increased devolution of their detailed operations in a way that would help localities develop the capacity to help themselves;
- extensive but flexible technical assistance, both of a general nature (e.g. evaluation methods, exchange of information) and specific to particular initiatives (e.g. on project development, strengthening local support structures, and training of local actors);
- support (technical and financial) for:-
  - reviews of local actions to assess performance and identify major gaps and opportunities;
  - projects of catalytic or strategic importance
  - coherent packages of actions with clear employment objectives.

Member-States' actions should be on similar lines, seeking to help Community/Member-State and local schemes intermesh. Decentralised and targetted delivery of national programmes would be particularly important in this field, as well as the definition of a positive legal and financial framework concerning the involvement of regional and local government authorities in employment development.

Evidence on other points is however less conclusive and it will be beneficial to continue with the action-research work of the present Programme. Some key issues which should be covered by this work are mentioned briefly below.

The differences between various types of areas appear to be considerable. Rural areas in particular stand out because of the weakness of both economic and social

indigenous structures, but there are also marked similarities in problems and approaches. More work is needed to establish the main "catalysts" -- people, structures or processes -- which can stimulate and sustain development in different areas.

Tripartite arrangements involving the local social partners seem to help local mobilisation but in several cases informal and project-specific collaboration is more effective. Ways of creating the conditions for different forms of local collaboration and mobilisation need to be further explored.

Better co-ordination is generally regarded as desirable but there is a clear need to refine local management approaches since rigid integrated programmes could stifle local dynamism, if they do not reflect a genuine high degree of local cohesion.

Many of the established evaluation and other methodological tools are largely unsuitable or ill-adapted to the needs of local policies and therefore further detailed work is required in this field. Particular attention should be given to the development of inter-active monitoring and evaluation systems which would help local actors learn from the results of employment initiatives and improve their effectiveness.

## 6. SUMMARY

### Main Lessons

Community, Member-State and local perspectives on tackling unemployment and employment development have been converging. Measures of a micro-economic nature are now very common, and there is a growing body of locally inspired and/or delivered actions. This new dimension in employment development policies raises a number of issues, which were explored by the Action Programme. The Programme examined local strategies and other initiatives in 12 areas in the Community, including:-

-- forward looking labour market management;

- local employment initiatives; and
- various forms of local economic development.

The experience of the Programme, including information from review reports and other material has pointed out how widespread and severe employment problems are at the local level. Their impact is felt even in relatively prosperous areas and countries, like Hamburg in Germany, whilst they continue to be very difficult to solve in less developed rural areas, such as North Alentejo in Portugal and the Province of Sitia in Greece.

All areas considered have been taking initiatives to tackle unemployment and promote employment development. There are now local programmes which are both well established and substantial in scale, especially in:-

- youth training and work experience;
- measures for the long-term unemployed;
- promotion of small and medium enterprises; and,
- technology transfer.

Serious unemployment still prevails but things would have been much worse without the employment benefits created by these actions, as shown in the experience of the Mid-West Region of Ireland.

Although a strategic direction is not very often clear, a particular local orientation is discernible in the actions of most areas. For example, in Le Bruaysis training and generally upgrading the labour force is given priority. In the Mid-West Region an industrial and technology development strategy predominates, whilst in Genk more specific emphasis is given to job creation through indigenous small and medium enterprises. An interesting approach, though not the main thrust of local actions, is Nottingham's textiles initiative, which seeks a forward looking approach to the modernisation of a vulnerable economic sector. In Les Baronnies the modernisation of farming and youth employment have provided a central axis of development policy (Programme local d'installation des jeunes agriculteurs).



The Programme also indicates that there is increasing involvement and co-operation amongst local actors on employment development issues, although some of them -- trade unions and large employers -- are not particularly proactive. Many such employment initiatives come from local government authorities, universities and social sector organisations, often acting in partnership with other local bodies and "supra-local" organisations. Local government authorities tend to take the lead in attempts to co-ordinate local actions, although they frequently lack financial or legal powers in this field.

A number of points clearly emerge from the experience of the Programme to date. They emphasise a number of strong common features in local actions, which provide the hallmark of the local approach;

- endogenous;
- entrepreneurial;
- with a high degree of local responsiveness and institutional adaptability; and,
- with an action bias.

Although the picture of this approach on employment development is still incomplete, there are some key positive points that stand out:-

- its developmental nature, as a method of helping the mobilisation of dynamic elements (e.g. innovation, business and vocational skills) in an area;
- its substantial scale of operation already achieved;
- its management orientation and consequently its complementarity, as an efficient delivery mechanism, to other employment policies.

However, this approach is not yet fully understood, is insufficiently developed from a technical viewpoint, and seems to be facing constraints emanating from a Community and Member-State level. Notwithstanding these limitations local actions have already achieved a substantial depth and breadth and have a considerable potential which the Community and Member-States can exploit.

## Main Lines of Action Proposed by the Working Party

The following steps by the European Community would contribute to the enhancement and greater utilisation of the strengths of the local approach as a complement to other employment policies;

- continue pilot actions and development work, giving priority to outstanding issues such as those mentioned in 5.2,
  - dissemination of the lessons of the first year of this Programme and further technical development of guidelines for action;
  - follow-up action in the 12 pilot project areas, including workshops, exchange visits, and other "learning" activities;
  - a second series of pilot projects in various types of local labour markets in the European Community, drawing on the experience gained to date;
  - a number of specific developmental actions (experimental collaborative employment projects) in the pilot project areas, aimed at mobilising the social partners and other local actors, and improving co-ordination.
- launch a programme to promote local employment development with its main components being technical assistance and support for the development and implementation of key local projects;
- offer greater devolution and take greater account of local user needs in the reform of the structural funds.

Similarly, Member States can be encouraged to contribute to this end by:

- supporting and participating in the Community's pilot actions and the proposed employment promotion programme;
- guaranteeing minimum level of devolution to local agencies, for the design and implementation of actions supported through national schemes;
- establishing a clear legal/financial framework concerning regional and local government actions on employment development, reflecting the greater level of local autonomy in the operation of national agencies suggested above.



## **ANNEXE**

### **MAIN CONTRIBUTORS TO THE PROGRAMME**

A large number of researchers, consultants and other experts have contributed to the work of the first year of the Action Programme, through the pilot projects, review reports, and other activities. In addition, many members and officials of local authorities, and other public and private organisations gave invaluable help to the various projects of the Programme. Their large number makes it impossible to acknowledge all these contributions individually. The following list is therefore restricted to the main contributors.

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European Communities — Commission

**Social Europe — Supplement**  
**Action programme on local labour market development**

Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities

1988 — VI, 31 pp. — 21.0 × 29.7 cm

DE, EN, FR

ISBN 92-825-8383-X

Catalogue number: CE-NC-88-003-EN-C

Price (excluding VAT) in Luxembourg: ECU 5.10



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Price (excluding VAT) in Luxembourg

	ECU
Supplement	5.10
<i>Annual subscription</i>	
Social Europe (General review)	28
Social Europe (with supplements)	69.50

ISBN 92-825-8383-X



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