

European Communities

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Working Documents

1983 - 1984

12 March 1984

DOCUMENT 1-1489/83

REPORT

drawn up on behalf on the Committee on Social
Affairs and Employment

on unemployment within the Community and some
of its consequences

Rapporteur: Mr Roland BOYES

PE 88 361/fin.
or. EN

At its sitting of 15 June 1981, the European Parliament referred the motion for a resolution tabled by Mr BOYES on unemployment within the Community (Doc. 1-230/81) pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure to the Committee on Social Affairs and Employment as the committee responsible.

At its meeting of 18 June 1983, the Committee on Social Affairs and Employment appointed Mr Roland BOYES as rapporteur.

The committee considered the draft report at its meetings of 1 February 1984 and 23 February 1984. At the last meeting, it adopted the motion for a resolution as a whole by 8 votes to none with 3 abstentions.

The following took part in the vote: Mr PETERS, first vice-chairman; Mr BOYES, rapporteur; Mr ABENS (deputizing for Mrs DUPORT); Mr CERAVOLO; Ms CLWYD; Mr GHERGO; Mr MARCK (deputizing for Mr CHANTERIE); Mr van MINNEN; Mr OUZOUNIDIS (deputizing for Mr DIDO); Mr PATTERSON and Mrs SALISCH.

The report was tabled on 27 February 1984.

The deadline for the tabling of amendments to this report appears in the draft agenda for the part-session at which it will be debated.

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The Committee on Social Affairs and Employment hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution together with explanatory statement:

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

on unemployment within the Community and some of its consequences

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the motion for a resolution by Mr BOYES, on unemployment within the Community (Doc. 1-230/81),
- having regard to the motion for a resolution by Mr BOYES, on the pathogenic effects of unemployment (Doc. 1-622/82),
- having regard to the conclusions of the Symposium on the Influence of Economic Instability on Health (Munich, December 1981), the Workshop on Health Policy in Relation to Unemployment in the Community (Leeds, December 1982) and the Seminar on Unemployment and Health - New Approaches to Research and Social Action (Stockholm, December 1983), organized by the World Health Organization,
- having regard to the wide-ranging, albeit largely uncoordinated, research carried out, and studies published, in regard to the effects of unemployment on the unemployed themselves, and in particular to the link between unemployment and mental and physical distress¹, and its alarming social implications,
- having regard to the European Parliament's resolutions of 28.4.1983 on the employment situation in the European Community² and on the problem of unemployment among young people³, and of 13.10.1983 closing the procedure for consultation of the European Parliament on the communications from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council concerning a programme to promote employment for young people, together with a draft Council resolution⁴,
- having regard to the report by the Committee on Social Affairs and Employment (Doc. 1-1489/83),

¹ See inter alia: 'World out of Work' by Giles Merritt (Collins, 1982); 'Growing up without work - two case studies' published for the European Centre for work and Society, Maastricht (Van Gorcum, 1983).

² OJ C 135, 24.5.1983.

³ Ibid.

⁴ OJ C 307, 14.11.1983

- A. Whereas unemployment, and in particular long-term unemployment, far from showing signs of abating, is increasingly becoming a feature of life throughout the Community;
- B. Whereas certain social categories, especially young people, the unskilled and the handicapped, have been particularly hard-hit by unemployment and are least able to cope with its consequences;
- C. Whereas, moreover, the number of unemployed women is constantly rising and is disproportionately high in relation to the number of women on the labour market;
- D. Whereas certain areas - and generally those with inadequate health care and social facilities - suffer disproportionately from rising unemployment;
- E. Whereas the Community's regional and social policies have had little impact on problems in these areas;
- F. Whereas the Community's restructuring policies have led to a further decline in employment both in these areas and throughout the Community as a whole;
- G. Whereas a binding and concerted Community initiative to reduce and reorganize working hours is urgently needed and would be particularly welcome;
- H. Whereas Western society continues to attach over-riding importance to employment, not only, or even predominantly, for financial reasons, but because of the status it confers, the scope it offers for social contacts, and, not least, of its 'significance in filling and structuring a person's time and offering opportunities for activity'¹;
- I. Whereas, as a result, jobless people are regarded with suspicion by many people and often dismissed as shirkers and dodgers who exploit the social welfare net at the expense of the Community, thereby distracting attention from the social causes of unemployment and from society's responsibility for the unemployed²;
- J. Whereas for school-leavers finding a job 'represents a crucial aspect in the general development from dependent adolescence to independent adulthood'³;

¹ 'Life on the Dole' by M. Jones (Davis Poynter, 1972).

² Paper on Health and Unemployment', presented by the German Society for Behavioural Therapy in Düsseldorf in April 1983.

³ 'Unemployment among school-leavers: a study of youth unemployment in Birmingham 1979-1980' by H. Stokes (unpublished conference paper, 1981)

- K. Whereas, moreover, the unemployed tend either to blame themselves for their plight or to turn against a society which has failed to plan ahead sufficiently to provide all its members with opportunities to fulfil their potential;
1. Expresses its concern at the fact that the full psychological, pathological and social implications of this deplorable and alarming situation, which does not affect the unemployed alone, but also their families, have not yet been recognized by the Community or its Member States;
 2. Stresses the urgent need to coordinate and consolidate the extensive research carried out by various medical, para-medical and social bodies showing that the unemployed, and also their families, are especially prone to physical and mental distress and that, while they do not form a homogeneous group, for the vast majority of them being unemployed will be the bitterest and most self-destroying experience they are ever likely to face;
 3. Notes that:
 - a. the young unemployed are increasingly subject to a variety of pathological conditions hitherto affecting mainly people from middle age onwards, such as bronchitis, tachycardia, duodenal ulcers, diverticulitis, rheumatic pains, and nervous complaints;
 - b. hyperventilation, from being a syndrome met with only occasionally, has become what might be termed 'a symptom of our times', accompanied by such an upsurge of cases of 'tetanic syndrome' that medical opinion in the Member States is increasingly voicing its concern both in print and at conferences and symposia;
 - c. the diagnosis and treatment of psychosomatic ailments, already complicated enough in our age of highly compartmentalized medicine, is rendered all the more difficult by the fact that, with medical resources stretched to the limit - and beyond - at a time of recession and increasing budgetary stringency, adequate provision, in terms both of staff and of time, is simply not available for the care of the 'undiagnosed';
 - d. drug-taking together with abuse of alcohol and tranquilizers has become a problem of such magnitude that, apart from other social causes, it can be assumed that unemployment is a significant contributory factor;

4. Stresses that the very social fabric of modern society is being eroded and in many cases, destroyed by problems related to unemployment:
- a. redundancy may push the recently jobless down the path of despair, resignation, loss of self-confidence and self-respect, leading ultimately to the abandonment of all responsibilities;
 - b. moreover, those in employment under threat of redundancy show increased reluctance to seek treatment for illness, for fear that absence on sick leave may put their jobs in jeopardy and, furthermore, many people - mainly the young - often accept jobs which are beyond their qualifications and/or abilities, thus putting themselves under intolerable stress trying to cope with demands they cannot fulfil; moreover, increasing unemployment drives people to accept particularly dangerous forms of undeclared and uninsured employment, with considerable health and safety risks for the workers involved;
 - c. unemployment coupled with poverty, poor housing, an increase in local vandalism and/or violence may plunge individuals into a state of depression requiring (but rarely obtaining) psychiatric help;
 - e. young unemployed people who might otherwise have been leading their own independent lives, and those forced to return to their families, put an unbearable strain on the household, disrupting the routine of younger brothers and sisters and, generally, causing tension and distress in the family;
 - f. frustration resulting from this situation may lead to violent behaviour in an effort to compensate for emotional and psychological stress;
 - g. unemployment benefit and other welfare allowances, almost adequate as they may be in some cases, cannot compensate for the loss of the feelings of self-confidence and self-respect induced by the earned wage and often gives rise to indiscriminate spending on non-essentials to the detriment, moreover, of the recipient's physical and mental wellbeing;
 - h. the unacceptability of this situation of dependency is aggravated by the fact that those belonging to the 'blighted generation'¹ were born in a period of unprecedented prosperity whose generous material and social benefits were shared, and taken for granted, by virtually all classes of society;

¹ 'World out of Work', op. cit. p. 9

5. Draws attention to the fact that the educational systems in the different Member States still place academic accomplishment far above manual skills for which, moreover, specific training provision is all-too-often inadequate if not non-existent; failure by educational authorities to effect a major shift and 'focus resources on those who are unlikely to gain formal qualifications or who found nothing to stimulate them in the present curriculum'¹ has an important bearing on youth unemployment and its consequences:

- a. lack of provision, at both primary and secondary level, for training in more 'practical' subjects robs all-too-many youngsters of the opportunity to discover where their real aptitudes, talents and skills lie, leaving with a sense of frustration and grievance those who, written off as 'academically ungifted', might well have demonstrated that they were both highly intelligent and 'creative';
- b. upgrading both training and skills and linking them to real employment prospects, not least in the cultural, environmental and tourist sectors, and in the field of the new technologies, would go a long way towards answering the all-too-often justified complaint of the young that existing training schemes are no more than stop-gaps, sops or acts of 'charity' which do not do justice to their potential of their expectations;

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* * *

6. Urges the Council and the Member States to recognize the full dimensions and implications of this intolerable - and potentially explosive - situation not only in terms of the waste of human potential, the personal tragedies and the self-destruction it entails but also in terms of its social repercussions, through frustration, bitterness and, ultimately, revolt, in the form of increasing violence and political unrest, and insists that they accept their responsibility for preventing the unemployed, and particularly the young unemployed, from being sacrificed on the pyre of their blindness and failure to act;

¹ 'Growing up without Work', op. cit. p. 52.

7. Is firmly convinced that a thorough investigation into the link between unemployment, mental and physical distress and its social consequences is not only justified on both practical and scientific grounds, but is also an indispensable prerequisite for effective remedial action, all the more so as it has reason to believe that the findings of government-sponsored research undertaken to date into various aspects of the problem have, in some cases, been suppressed;
8. Endorses the recommendation of the Workshop on Health Policy in Relation to Unemployment in the Community that 'governments should promote or sponsor research on the causal links between economic instability and health, and obtain information on the health of their socially most vulnerable groups';
9. Calls, therefore, on the Commission to carry out, in close cooperation with the appropriate specialists and public and private bodies both in the different Member States and at the international level, a comprehensive in-depth study of the consequences of unemployment for the individual and for society, and to submit its findings in the form of a communication to the Council;
10. Stresses that the measures ultimately envisaged must be seen within the overall framework of a range of coordinated research and actions having a bearing on the problems of unemployment, and its pathological, psychological and social consequences;
11. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission and the Council.

B : EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

As this resolution is largely self-explanatory, there is not a great deal to add: the purpose of the resolution is to draw attention to a problem whose gravity is still not sufficiently recognised by society in general and by governments and other policy-making bodies in particular. This is in no small measure due to the fact that the considerable amount of research, of direct or indirect relevance to the problem, undertaken so far has been carried out in a piecemeal and largely uncoordinated manner - although the situation is now improving, not least thanks to the efforts of the World Health Organisation which, as specified in the resolution, has, since 1980, organised three seminars on the problems relating to unemployment and health. Moreover, the same body has itself stressed the need for governments to "promote and sponsor research" in this crucial area, thereby justifying the essential plea made in the resolution.

The rapporteur, however, would like to mention briefly some of the sources to which he turned for evidence to substantiate the views put forward in the resolution.

First of all, it should be pointed out that during the economic crisis of the 1930s, it did become apparent to a certain number of specialists working in the medical, social and related fields that there was a link between unemployment and physical and psychological distress; however, the research that was carried out in this connection was sporadic, unpublicised and largely inconclusive. Particular mention should however be made of the pioneering work carried out by M JAHODA on the Marienthal Community in Austria, published in 1933.

During the boom years following the second world war, the problem of unemployment was no longer a major concern and consequently preoccupation with its effects on the individual and society virtually faded into the background.

With the unforeseen and alarming resurgence of growing mass unemployment at the end of the post-war economic boom, the relevance of the pioneering work of JAHODA and others became increasingly apparent for doctors, psychologists, social workers and other specialists.

Although the subject of some controversy, no survey of the considerable amount of research carried out in this field would be complete without a mention of the important medical research of Harvey BRENNER, Professor of Operations Research and Behavioural Sciences at John Hopkins University Baltimore, USA. His major contributions included "Mental Illness and the Economy" (1973) and "Estimating the Social Cost of National Economic Policy" (1976). As far as the relevance of his work to the European situation is concerned, it should be noted that Professor Brenner took up a visiting professorship at the Welsh National School of Medicine (University of Wales, Cardiff) in 1981, where he undertook further work, in cooperation with a team of general practitioners, psychologists, sociologists and other specialists. Their findings confirmed that there was more than ample justification for continuing and indeed extending, both scientifically and geographically, research into the effects of unemployment on the individual and society, suggesting specifically that this work be continued on a Europe-wide scale.

In drawing up this report, the rapporteur also took particular account of the following publications: 'Life on the Dole' by M Jones (Davis Poynter, 1972); 'Unemployment - the threat to public health' by J Popay (CPAG, 1981); 'The Workless State - studies in unemployment' [B Showler and A Sinfield (editors, 1981)]; 'World out of Work' by Giles Merritt (Collins, 1982); and 'Growing up without Work - two case studies', comprising (a) 'Growing up without work: a study of young unemployed people in the West Midlands' by Marilyn Taylor, and (b) 'Life patterns of poorly educated young unemployed people in the Charleroi region' by Mateo Alaluf, Pierre Desmarez and Isaac Domb, published for the European Centre for Work and Society, Maastricht (Van Gorcum, 1983).

As the foregoing paragraphs cover only a few of the relevant sources the rapporteur would conclude by drawing attention to the select bibliography listed in the annex to this report.

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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION (DOCUMENT 1-230/81)
tabled by Mr BOYES
pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure
concerning unemployment within the Community

The European Parliament,

- aware that unemployment within the Community has reached the tragic figure of almost 10 million,
- recognizing that unemployment continues to rise unabated, having already risen by 32% in the Community over the last year and by over 65% in the UK in the same period,
- concerned at growing evidence which demonstrates the possibility of an increasing incidence of social problems as unemployment mounts in areas of already high unemployment,
- aware that the Commission has undertaken studies into the pathogenic effects of unemployment (reference answer to Written Question 1570/80),
- alarmed that the rate of suicide and attempted suicide is on the increase,

Asks the Commission to investigate the association between suicide and growing unemployment and to report to both the Parliament and the Council.

