

A Value to Labour. The ILO and the Process of European Economic Integration During the 1950s

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ABSTRACT

The history of the International Labour Organization has been investigated in increasing depth over time. With recourse to selected historiography and press and periodical sources, this article reflects on a specific period, the 1950s, to highlight the ideals and methods of the ILO in carrying out its institutional task, operating during a functionalist phase in the construction of a European Community that has been studied in varying ways by different scholars from a social and labour perspective.

Drawing on its own aspirations and expertise, and dealing with its own internal institutional dynamics, the ILO accompanied the beginning of the process by highlighting potential problems while constantly favouring the logic of market enlargement and economic integration, in the awareness that the model of development being pursued could constitute an invention unprecedented in the history of the European continent and crucial to its future. The Organization's cooperation with the nascent European community was formalized by agreements with the Council of Europe in 1951 and the European Coal and Steel Community in 1953, by which the ILO guaranteed extensive advice and technical assistance over time that would focus particularly on working conditions, labour mobility, social security, labour reintegration, vocational training and workplace health and safety.

1. Labour issues in post-war Europe

The social foundations of European economic integration are still very fragile today. Labour especially, considered as a produc-

tive factor and a resource, is of both historical¹ and institutional interest,² and is unfailingly a focus of debate and tension. This is equally true for the period of globalization, characterized by shocks that have drastically affected the world of labour; one need only consider the transformations produced in recent decades in demographics,³ technology,⁴ corporate organization,⁵ competition with financial capital,⁶ and competition in terms of the increasing labour supply resulting from the unprecedented elasticity guaranteed by major migration flows.⁷

The 20th century, the century of labour, was marked by critical conditions for European workers, not necessarily like those they now face, but equally difficult.⁸ Such conditions were addressed by the International Labour Office (ILO), founded in 1919 and established in Geneva. The ILO dealt regularly with the delicate issues of labour through sustained and innovative action throughout the complicated early post-war period, and beyond.⁹ The history of the ILO has been investigated in increasing depth over time.¹⁰ However,

¹ J. Stiglitz, *Making globalization work*, New York-London, 2006; on Italy, see: S. Zaninelli, M. Taccolini (eds.), *Il lavoro come fattore produttivo e come risorsa nella storia economica italiana*, Milan, 2002.

² G. Alogoskoufis, C. Bean, G. Bertola, D. Cohen, J. Saint-Paul, *Unemployment: choices for Europe*, London, 1995.

³ J. De Vries, "The industrial revolution and the industrious revolution", in *The Journal of Economic History*, no. 2, 1994, pp. 253-272.

⁴ L. Hirschhorn, *Beyond mechanization. Work and technology in a postindustrial age*, Cambridge-London, 1986.

⁵ A.D. Chandler, P. Hagstrom, O. Solvell, *The dynamic firm. The role of strategy, organization and regions*, Oxford, 1998.

⁶ M. Panara, *La malattia dell'Occidente: perché il lavoro non vale più*, Roma-Bari, 2011.

⁷ M. Van Der Linden, *Global labour history*, Amsterdam, 2006; I. Goldin, J. Cameron, M. Balarajan, *Exceptional people: how migration shaped our world and will define our future*, Princeton, 2012.

⁸ A. Accornero, *Era il secolo del lavoro*, Bologna, 1997.

⁹ A summary of the period may be found in: S. Pollard (ed.), *Wealth and poverty. An economic history of the 20th century*, London, 1990; D.H. Aldcroft, *The European economy 1914-1990*, London-New York, 1993.

¹⁰ Of the extensive literature available on ILO history, the following studies are particularly noteworthy: G.A. Johnston, *The International Labour Organization. Its work for social and economic progress*, London, 1970; A.E. Alcock, *History of the International Labour Or-*

few specific contributions regarding Italy, for example, have been produced, although those few are of considerable interest.¹¹ There is thus still a good deal of room for in-depth study to seek terms of comparison (or lessons) by contrasting the current global crisis with world affairs in the past century. At the same time, what Europe needs today, as has been rightly argued, is “defence, re-launching and the reinvention of its economic, civil and political model, based on welfare, on the commitment to the protection of the material and moral dignity of the existence of every individual citizen, on the deepening and extension of the quality of individual and collective life. Europe needs a new social pact.”¹² History can help the creative effort to imagine such a development.

Using appropriate historiographical sources, press and periodicals, the following pages will reflect on a specific period, the 1950s, highlighting the ideals and methods of the ILO in carrying out its institutional tasks,¹³ operating during the period of the functionalist approach to the construction of a European community, which has been studied in varying ways by different scholars from the standpoint of society and of labour.

Indeed, where at first the historiography of the social bases of European economic integration in the second half of the 20th century

ganization, London, 1971; F. Blanchard, *L'Organisation Internationale du Travail: de la guerre froide à un nouvel ordre mondial*, Paris, 2004. More recent works include: G. Rodgers, E. Lee, L. Swepston, J. Van Daele, *The International Labour Organization and the quest for social justice, 1919-2009*, Geneva, 2009; Edward Phelan and the ILO. *Life and views of an international social actor*, Geneva, 2009; J. Van Daele, M. Rodriguez Garcia, G. Van Goethem, M. Van Der Linden (eds.), *ILO histories. Essays on the International Labour Organization and its impact on the world during the twentieth century*, Bern, 2010; S. Hughes, N. Harworth, *The International Labour Organization (ILO). Coming in from the cold*, London-New York, 2011.

¹¹ F. De Felice, *Sapere e politica. L'organizzazione internazionale del lavoro tra le due guerre 1919-1939*, Milan, 1988; new edition, F. De Felice, *Alle origini del welfare contemporaneo: l'Organizzazione internazionale del lavoro tra le due guerre mondiali 1919-1939*, Rome, 2007; M. Taccolini, *Una crisi annunciata? L'inchiesta sulla produzione del Bureau International du Travail (1920-1925)*, Milan, 2001.

¹² E. Morin, M. Ceruti, *La nostra Europa*, Milan, 2013, p. 65.

¹³ V.Y. Ghebali, *The International Labor Organization: a case study in the evolution of U.N. specialized agencies*, London, 1989.

tended to view it from the predominantly political angle of the Cold War,¹⁴ later research developed a series of essential economic interpretations. A first set of studies addressed some basic themes, such as the Marshall Plan, with an innovative approach as regards both overall historical reconstruction and sources.¹⁵ A second strand of work emphasized the elements of continuity between the cooperative choices that emerged in Western Europe after 1945 and the previous period of early globalization, taking its cue from the new elements presented by the second industrial revolution.¹⁶ A third group of studies took a more generalised approach, focusing on the short term¹⁷ or taking a longer-term perspective. The longer view produced a critique of the history of European integration as the progressive and straightforward affirmation of the market economy.¹⁸ A fourth perspective has included this topic in the debate on social instability linked to the conflict between capital and labour in contemporary European history.¹⁹ Lastly, a fifth branch of analysis focuses on labour questions, addressed according to the way in which the various agencies formed within the international institutions after World War II chose to deal with them. A good example of this approach is the work of Mario Taccolini.²⁰ What emerges from this

¹⁴ A. Varsori, W. Kaiser (eds.), *European Union history: themes and debates*, Basingstoke, 2010.

¹⁵ See for example F. Fauri, P. Tedeschi (eds.), *Novel Outlooks on the Marshall Plan. American Aid and European Re-Industrialization*, Brussels, 2011.

¹⁶ E. Bussière, M. Dumulin, S. Schirmann (dir.), *Europe organisée, Europe du libre-échange? Fin XIX^e siècle – Années 1960*, Brussels, 2006.

¹⁷ P. Thody, *An historical introduction to the European Union*, Routledge, London, 1997; F. Fauri, *L'integrazione economica europea 1947-2006*, Bologna, 2006; D. Dinan, *Europe Recast. A History of European Union*, London, 2014.

¹⁸ B. Farolfi, *L'integrazione economica europea in una prospettiva storica*, Turin, 2006.

¹⁹ Such is the case of L. Mechi, *L'Organizzazione internazionale del lavoro e la ricostruzione europea. Le basi sociali dell'integrazione economica (1931-1957)*, Rome, 2012: before this monograph, the author had already intervened in other circumstances on these general themes, from a predominantly international-relations historical perspective.

²⁰ M. Taccolini, *La costruzione di un'Europa del lavoro. La Commissione per gli affari sociali dalle origini all'applicazione del Trattato di Roma (1953-1960)*, Milan, 2006; M. Taccolini, "Europa, lavoro, politiche sociali", in A. Varsori, L. Mechi (eds.), *Lionello Levi Sandri e la politica sociale europea*, Milan, 2008, pp.133-149; M. Taccolini, *L'Europa mancata: lavoro*

last case is the substantial rejection of “market solutions to social problems,”²¹ both by institutions such as the ILO and by the early forms of management of European Community institutions.

Moving on now to the central theme of this essay, it is clear that the ILO’s first task was to photograph the economic reality of the world in the early 1950s, using instruments that had been refined and consolidated over three decades. These included such resources as the annual reports of the Director-General, the Resolutions and the Records of proceedings of the various International Labour Conferences, the articles published in the *International Labour Review* or the *Official Bulletin* and the monographic studies sponsored or conducted by the ILO itself on topics concerning the world of labour. Not infrequently such studies were made in conjunction with national and international bodies and institutions around the world. Suffice it to mention that the “Report of the Director-General” always began with a hefty chapter entitled “The economic background”, preceding the analysis of topics more closely related to the social issues that would be addressed thereafter. Equally interesting are the “Minutes of the sessions of the Governing Body”, expert debates not only dealing with the ILO’s internal questions but also focusing on the major social issues of the day.²²

Precisely from this perspective, from 1951 onwards Director David A. Morse postulated that economic development was a necessary, fundamental premise for Western Europe in sketching out the future of the area, and of the entire Continent, including the future of labour. This issue, however, first required a reflection on the situations of greatest economic and social difficulty, which obviously had to be identified if they were to be resolved. In this regard, he observed:

e società nelle dinamiche economiche del secolo breve, forthcoming; on these questions, see also A. Ciampani (ed.), *L'altra via per l'Europa. Forze sociali e organizzazione degli interessi nell'integrazione europea (1947-1957)*, Milan, 1995.

²¹ C.S. Maier, “I fondamenti politici del dopoguerra”, in *Storia d'Europa*, vol. I, *L'Europa oggi*, Turin, 1993, pp. 365-366.

²² For the availability of some of these materials, see the ILO’s institutional website <http://www.ilo.org/century/keydocuments/lang—en/index.htm>.

An urgent need for economic development also exists in several countries in Western Europe. Italy has been grappling with the pressing problem of relieving poverty and underemployment in the southern parts of the country. Early in 1950 the Italian Council of Ministers approved a ten-year investment plan for public development works in the depressed areas in the south and in Sicily and Sardinia. The plan calls for a total capital expenditure of 1,200 thousand million lire. For the fiscal year 1950-51 the planned investments for the depressed areas total 120,000 million lire, to be financed partly by the counterpart funds from the European Recovery Programme and partly by new taxes. The Council of Ministers also approved a bill authorising the Government to expropriate immediately land in some areas of southern Italy and to distribute it to landless peasants. This bill forms part of a nation-wide land reform which the Government intends to carry out in the next few years. In Greece, another country of relatively low standards of living, the progress made thus far has been somewhat slow because of disturbed internal conditions. Only a part of the investment programme for the post-war period has been actually fulfilled. The Greek Government recently formulated a new long-term recovery plan which envisages substantial increases in national output and investment in the next few years subject to sufficient financial assistance being secured from abroad. In Spain, where economic progress has long been retarded, the Government has recently drawn up a five-year plan of industrialisation which will be financed jointly by the Government and private enterprise. The plan provides, amongst other things, for an expansion in the production of coal, electric power, textiles and fertilisers.²³

Even these very short notes signal the importance of the issue of the social asymmetries present in Europe during post-war reconstruction. Thus Italy, Greece and Spain, the most fragile economies in these post-war years, had urgent structural economic needs that

²³ International Labour Conference, Thirty-fourth session - Geneva 1951, *Report of the director-general*, ILO, Geneva, 1951, p. 39.

had to be served by national strategies, with external aid. But there was also a need for an evolutionary perspective taking into account the benefits of continental economic integration, which had already been contemplated before the War, not only by the Federalists²⁴ but also by the ILO itself.²⁵ However, it was necessary to consider the compatibility between the commencement of trade integration/liberalization and the foreseeable persistence of social asymmetries – or inequalities – in the different nations.

2. Labour in the Schuman Plan

The ILO definitely favoured a process of integration between the European economies that were in a position to participate. In fact, in the first chapter of the “Report of the director-general” to the 34th session of the Geneva International Labour Conference in 1951, David Morse observed that “An important recent development in the economic integration of Western Europe has arisen out of negotiations concerning the Schuman Plan. The Plan proposed to place the total production of coal and steel in France and the German Federal Republic under a common High Authority, in an organization open to the participation of other European countries. Four countries — Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg — have participated with France and the German Federal Republic in drawing up a draft agreement which has recently been initialled.”²⁶ The ILO’s engagement in this initiative, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), was significantly influenced by its reflections on the effects not only on production and strategy but also on “international trade.” Even at this very early stage the project was subjected to careful investigation.

²⁴ For the important British case, see M. Burgess, *The British tradition of Federalism*, London, 1995.

²⁵ D.A. Morse, *The origin and the evolution of the ILO and its role in the world community*, New York, 1969.

²⁶ International Labour Conference, Thirty-fourth session - Geneva 1951, *Report of the director-general*, p. 17.

In this perspective, in March 1952 the *International Labour Review* published an article by ILO researcher René Roux, "The Position of Labour under the Schuman Plan," which delved more deeply into the issue of the inevitable involvement of labour in launching such an important experiment in regional economic cooperation. This article embodied the watchfulness of the ILO, which from the very start focused on the development of the European community. In fact, although the ILO was closely involved, at the same time it stood as an outside observer, making its observations all the more useful.

After a general introduction, Roux's essay analysed the involvement of European trade unions in the drafting of the ECSC Treaty, the scope they were granted within the framework of the Community institutions established, the potential impact of the ECSC on the living conditions of the countries involved (given the move to organize a competitive but Community-regulated market, called a "new economy"), the tools available to the central authority created to manage coal and steel production (in terms of both volume and productivity), and finally the effects on "working conditions" (with particular reference to wages and employment prospects).²⁷ The conclusions of this timely study were of impressive significance for the present and the future of Europe:

According to its Constitution the essential purpose of the European Coal and Steel Community is to amalgamate and expand production. To this end or as a secondary aim, it concerns itself with the workers in the industries concerned. While it may improve their situation, particularly as consumers, it also involves admitted risks that they will have to make at least temporary sacrifices as regards working conditions and therefore as regards living conditions. Obviously, this price of economic progress is only acceptable if its burdens are fairly distributed and if at the end it leads to further social progress. The Coal and Steel Community will be judged by this progress. Can the High Authority bring

²⁷ R. Roux, "The Position of Labour under the Schuman Plan," in *International Labour Review*, vol.LXV, no. 3, March 1952, pp. 282-320.

about such progress by going beyond its limited field of economic policy and assuming the social responsibility of improving labour conditions in a really human Community? Apart from economic conditions, which at present are favourable, everything depends on the spirit of its members. But these men, whatever their competence and devotion, can give the Community only a short and artificial life while its scope is limited to coal and steel. The Community, although only just born, must expand if it is to continue to exist. Only the unification of Europe will enable its difficulties, insufficiencies and risks to be gradually reduced and eliminated. The creators of the Community have always considered it as an intermediary stage preparing and making possible the necessary transformation into a complete Community. 'We and the other participants in this Treaty recognise that the creation of a European Coal and Steel Community is the first step towards European union... We visualise, as a goal which is no longer out of reach, the union of all the peoples of Europe who love freedom and law in a common homeland bearing the venerable name of Europe'. Mr. Schuman expressed himself even more explicitly: 'The essential problem is whether a supranational authority can be set up in the near future'. Thus, the success of the European Coal and Steel Community and its value to the workers depend in the last resort on its being completed by the unification of Europe – a political event that would be the most important of this century and the most difficult to bring about.²⁸

"The unification of Europe" towards a "complete community" became the real medium-term goal, not only to support the strategy of integrating continental coal and steel production (which required recognition of the potential dangers and of the need for equal distribution), but also to give economic and hence social consistency to a new model of international geopolitical balance, in which a leading protagonist would be a solidly, permanently united Europe, after a thousand years of devastating conflicts for continental hegemony.²⁹

²⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 319-320.

²⁹ D. Dinan, "The Historiography of European Union", in D. Dinan (ed.), *Origins and Evolution of the European Union*, Oxford, 2014, pp. 345-375.

That is, the ILO did not see European economic integration as a mere market instrument to support and extend welfare policies whose purpose was the social stabilization of a Europe framed by Cold War logic. Rather, it envisaged and accepted the less functional, more federalist risk of a process that would be complex and difficult in its responsibilities towards labour – a process of strengthened European integration as a nascent democracy, or rather of social democracy, an experiment that would afford protection from the actual and potential upheavals of the market economy.³⁰

In the years following the establishment of the ECSC other opportunities arose for cooperation between the ILO and Community institutions, the Council of Europe and the Organization for European Economic Cooperation, within the sphere of the six ECSC founding countries and always within the framework of Western Europe. The 1953 *World Labour Report* dedicated considerable space to the topic:

There is one development of considerable importance to which I would like to refer before giving an account of the detailed activities of the I.L.O. During the past year great strides have been made towards European economic and social integration involving a number of States Members of the I.L.O. The Schuman Plan for a European Coal and Steel Community has become a reality. At the time of writing discussions are proceeding in certain European capitals concerning ratification of the proposed European Defence Community Treaty; and there are negotiations for the creation of a European Political Authority. There is also at present a proposal, towards which Governments have not yet defined their attitudes, for the establishment of a European Economic and Social Council. The Council of Europe is closely related to these developments; it will be recalled that the I.L.O. has a formal agreement with the Council of Europe, which has had under consideration such questions as full employment, migration, social security and

³⁰ T. Judt, *Guasto è il mondo*, Rome-Bari, 2011, pp. 40-41, 58; T. Judt, *Postwar. A history of Europe since 1945*, New York, 2005.

housing, which are of concern to the I.L.O. It is, of course, impossible at the present stage to foresee the exact shape which European regional organisation will assume several years, or perhaps even several months, hence; nevertheless, it is obvious that the present developments affect the I.L.O. very closely, and that if the I.L.O. is to continue to be an effective instrument of social advancement in Europe it must be brought into any future arrangements which will cover matters of social policy. The I.L.O. has many times indicated its willingness, while remaining outside political controversies, to assist such regional groupings as Governments may think desirable in dealing with social policy within its sphere. This willingness has taken concrete form in our collaboration with the Council of Europe on such questions as social security, and with the Council of Europe and O.E.E.C. on migration. More recently we have been in contact with the European Coal and Steel Community, and have assisted it in making a general survey of conditions of work, including wages and hours of work, and of social security of miners in the countries belonging to the Community, and arrangements are being made to extend the assistance of the I.L.O. to other fields of common concern. Such technical collaboration must, however, in the long run be followed by co-operative arrangements of a more organic character if the I.L.O. is to continue to fulfil its mission in Europe.³¹

As the first phase of European construction recorded both encouraging prospects and failures,³² the ILO continued its joint work with the Council of Europe and the ECSC, soon producing specific in-depth studies, so it could be said that "Co-operation with the Council of Europe on social security questions, to which I referred in previous Reports, has been continued during the year and, as pointed out above, the European Coal and Steel Community has also been assisted in this field. The five Governments which were a party

³¹ International Labour Conference, Thirty-sixth session - Geneva 1953, *World Labour Report 1953*, ILO, Geneva, 1953, pp. 94-95.

³² D. Dinan, *Europe Recast*, cit., pp. 64-70; B. Olivi, R. Santaniello, *Storia dell'integrazione europea. Dalla guerra fredda ai giorni nostri*, Bologna, 2015, pp. 25-29.

to the agreement concerning social security of Rhine boatmen, adopted in 1950, have now ratified the agreement; in anticipation of its coming into force on 1 June 1953, the I.L.O. has been requested to prepare draft administrative arrangements for its application.”³³

This cooperation was formalized in agreements with the Council of Europe in 1951 and the ECSC in 1953, in which the ILO guaranteed extensive consultancy and technical assistance over time that would focus particularly on the issues of working conditions, labour mobility, social security, labour reintegration, vocational training and the health and safety of workers.³⁴

Bear in mind that the relationship between the ILO and the European Community institutions was being defined in this specific stage in ways that could not disregard geopolitical balances at both regional and global level, as these changed dynamically. In this sense, not only the strategic choices but also the analysis of the social condition of the Inner Six were to be developed using instruments within the bodies of the new Community. Hence, to enhance the ECSC’s familiarity with labour issues, a Social Affairs Committee (SAC) was formed, working from 12 January 1953 “at the service of the Joint Assembly of the ECSC, and from 1958, at the service of the European Parliamentary Assembly. The choice of the entity’s title seemed to reveal the Committee’s interest and competence, revealing at the same time the awareness that the economic problems associated with the integration process on the European continent were bound to produce significant social effects: the responsibilities of the Committee therefore often involved meetings, and the resulting dialogue, with the social partners and institutional bodies, and these took place in the various regions of Europe.”³⁵ As we know,

³³ International Labour Conference, Thirty-sixth session - Geneva 1953, *World Labour Report 1953*, cit., p. 116.

³⁴ G. Rodgers, E. Lee, L. Swepston, J. Van Daele, *The International Labour Organization and the quest for social justice, 1919-2009*, cit., pp. 43-53.

³⁵ M. Taccolini, *La costruzione di un’Europa del lavoro. La Commissione per gli affari sociali dalle origini all’applicazione del Trattato di Roma, 1953-1960*, cit., p. 17.

the new body, whose achievements have been studied by Mario Taccolini, dealt with the social issues of the day by referring to selected fields of research, carried out within the Community with the support of the experience furnished by the ILO. These research areas concerned: the living conditions of workers in relation to safety issues; reduction in working hours; wage policies; the free movement of labour; the issue of housing for workers; and the problem of “re-adaptation” of the workforce.³⁶

On the other hand – broadening the outlook to the global context – the ILO responded in its own way to a logic determined by great power relations. Thus, when the Soviet Union became a full member of the ILO in April 1954, this meant “the logic of blocs entered the ILO. (...) All this led to a substantial part of the organization’s energies being wasted in specious or ideological debate, often at the expense of concrete issues.”³⁷

3. Collaboration between the ILO and the European institutions

Nevertheless, the collaboration with the European Community institutions continued, and as part of that cooperation, through the course of 1954 the ILO observed the behaviour of the national economies involved in the ECSC, noting certain critical elements, such as the modest impact of the new organization on unemployment,³⁸ and its limited contribution to the growth of steel output.³⁹ As regards the first problem, with reference to the worrying situation in Italy, it was noted:

³⁶ M. Taccolini, “Europa, lavoro, politiche sociali”, cit., passim.

³⁷ L. Mechi, *L’Organizzazione internazionale del lavoro e la ricostruzione europea*, cit., pp. 164-165.

³⁸ A. Oblath, “The Problem of Surplus Manpower in Europe”, in *International Labour Review*, vol. LXX, n. 3-4, September-October 1954, pp. 301-322.

³⁹ J.A. Morris, “Maintaining Employment in the Iron and Steel Industry”, in *International Labour Review*, vol. LXX, no. 5, November 1954, pp. 385-400.

A comprehensive analysis undertaken by a Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry showed how serious the unemployment problem is in Italy. Although the number of fully unemployed workers appeared to be lower than is often supposed (the Committee put it at 1.3 million), there is in addition a large number of underemployed workers. Nearly 260 thousand persons were found to work less than 15 hours a week, while about 2.8 million workers worked less than 40 though more than 15 hours a week. In the course of 1953 numbers of workers, particularly in the iron and steel industry, were laid off as a result of rationalization of production. At the request of the Italian Government the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community sent a commission of inquiry to Northern Italy to study labour problems in the Italian coal mining and steel industries.⁴⁰

On the second problem, the director-general commented as follows:

Another circumstance which is tending to lead to a fall in effective demand is the fact that the post-war drive for industrial re-equipment seems in many countries to have reached a point of virtual saturation. For example, the demand for steel and equipment in France showed some signs of slackening in the course of 1953, and there was a fall in the production of equipment. This was the case in Sweden also. In the Federal Republic of Germany and the United Kingdom, where total production, supported by high activity in the building and consumers' goods industries, was higher than in 1952, the demand for engineering products was weaker. Whereas the output of crude steel for Europe as a whole increased slightly compared with 1952, in the countries adhering to the European Coal and Steel Community total production of steel declined gradually until during the third quarter of 1953 it was 14 per cent below the level of the first three months of the

⁴⁰ International Labour Conference, Thirty-seventh session - Geneva 1954, *Report of the director-general*, ILO, Geneva, 1954, p. 11; on this point, see also R. Tremelloni, "The Parliamentary Inquiry into Unemployment in Italy", in *International Labour Review*, vol. LXVIII, no. 3, September 1953, pp. 256-269.

year; for the year as a whole production was about 5 per cent below the level of 1952.⁴¹

Coordinated action of ILO and European Community institutions to counter this trend continued, as was documented annually:

In previous Reports I have indicated the I.L.O.'s concern for contemporary European social and labour problems. In 1954 the Organisation will convene its first tripartite European Regional Conference. Specific questions which are to be laid before this Conference are the role of employers and workers in programmes to raise productivity, methods of financing social security benefits and the age of retirement. In addition, my Report to the Conference will afford an opportunity to consider the social implications of efforts towards European economic integration and similar general questions of major significance which have a bearing upon the development of I.L.O. activities of concern to Europe. Collaboration with the various European regional organisations – in particular, the Council of Europe, the O.E.E.C., the European Coal and Steel Community and the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration – has continued. A formal agreement has been concluded between the I.L.O. and the European Coal and Steel Community which entered into force on 16 July 1953. Under the terms of this agreement the I.L.O. has continued to give technical assistance to the Coal and Steel Community on matters affecting particularly the movement of workers in the industries concerned among the different countries of the Community. Such assistance covers occupational classification, the definition of qualifications for workers in the industries and preparation of a certificate attesting to such qualifications, vocational training and retraining and social security problems of workers migrating between the countries concerned. The Governing Body has also, at the request of the Council of Europe, examined proposals put forward in that Council, concerning the establishment of a European Economic and Social Council to include employer and worker representa-

⁴¹ International Labour Conference, Thirty-seventh session - Geneva 1954, *Report of the director-general*, cit., p. 14.

tives as well as government representatives and concerning the role of the Council of Europe in the social field. In this connection the Governing Body has called attention to the need for co-ordination of the activities of the I.L.O. and the Council of Europe, in accordance with the formal agreement between them, in order that their complementary roles may be fulfilled most effectively, and to the advantages to be derived for the Council of Europe from drawing upon the technical competence and benefiting from the tripartite structure of the I.L.O. in connection with the examination of international social problems. This year the Organisation has continued to give technical assistance to the Council of Europe, in particular as regards the proposal to draw up a European Social Security Code.⁴²

Moreover, again between 1953 and 1954

the I.L.O. assisted in the preparations for, and participated in, a technical meeting of vocational training experts in the coalmining industry from the member countries of the European Coal and Steel Community, held at Luxembourg in October 1953, and contributed for this purpose monographs on vocational training activities in the coalmining industries of the United States and the United Kingdom. Following suggestions made at the meeting, the Office established the plan of a detailed monograph indicating the methods employed in the training of miners and also prepared an annotated bibliography and an international list of technical films relating to such training. A set of similar documents was prepared for the iron and steel industry of the Community, to be used as a basis for discussions at the technical meeting of experts in April of this year. Arrangements are also being made for a regular exchange of information between the High Authority of the Community and the I.L.O. in the field of vocational training, and the I.L.O. is helping the High Authority to establish a documentation centre and an exchange service for teaching aids.⁴³

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 106.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 111.

On the theme of employment and migration, it was reported that

work initiated in May 1953 for the European Coal and Steel Community involved a new application of occupational analysis and classification methods and of I.L.O. materials in this field. The Treaty establishing the Community provided that, subject to limitations of health and public order, members shall renounce restrictions based on nationality that prevent the employment in the coal and steel industries of workers of proven qualifications for the industries. In order to determine occupationally the workers to whom this provision should apply, it was necessary to identify and define occupations found in the two industries in the six member States, and to ascertain national variations. On the basis of this information, Members of the Community will be able to determine by common agreement which occupations involve such a degree of qualification that workers in these occupations should be considered as coming under the terms of the Treaty. An I.L.O. expert has been working with government representatives, employers and workers of the two industries to develop definitions of coal and steel occupations and to establish tables showing the titles of comparable national occupations. The I.L.O. International Classification of Occupations for Migration and Employment Placement, issued in 1952 in English and French, facilitated work in this connection by providing a convenient common starting point for identification of the content of national occupations and for the formulation of definitions showing what these jobs have in common and in what respects they differ. The International Classification was made available in the Spanish language in 1953. The usefulness of a classification of this kind is obviously substantially increased by translation into a number of languages.⁴⁴

Finally, with regard to social security, the 1954 report noted:

at the request of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community, the I.L.O. undertook the preparation of a draft

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 115.

agreement, and documentation pertaining thereto, which will deal with the social security rights of all workers migrating from the territory of one Member of the Community to that of another member State, whether or not such workers are connected with the coal or steel industries. Among the aims of such agreement are the removal of any obstacles raised by national social security measures to the mobility of labour, ensuring equality of treatment of workers in different countries regardless of nationality, conservation of benefit rights acquired or in course of acquisition, and protection of the social security position of dependants who reside in a country other than that in which their breadwinner is employed. As early as 1950 the Council of Europe, through its Consultative Assembly, declared itself in favour of the establishment of a European social security code which would have the effect of raising social security in every country to an equally high level. In accordance with the wish expressed by the Assembly the I.L.O. has collaborated closely with organs of the Council of Europe in the formulation of such a code. Following the adoption by the International Labour Conference of the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952, the Council of Europe expressed the view that this Convention might be taken as the basis for drafting the proposed code, and raised the question whether the code should stipulate more liberal benefits, a wider coverage, and a larger number of social security branches than is required for ratification of the I.L.O. Convention. The I.L.O. has accordingly carried on intensive research into this problem during 1953. The views of governments concerned have been ascertained, and a technical study has been completed which can provide a basis for further deliberations regarding the code by organs of the Council. Two interim agreements between member countries of the Council of Europe on equality of treatment in social security, of which the initial drafts were prepared by the I.L.O., were signed by the Committee of Ministers in December 1953.⁴⁵

In 1956, in the aftermath of the Marcinelle coal mine disaster in Belgium in August, the High Authority of the ECSC had to engage

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 122.

even more directly on social issues, especially the safety of the mining industry. In fact, 1956 saw the International Conference on the Safety of Mines in September and the establishment of the Permanent Body for Safety in Coal Mines.⁴⁶ While the scope of Europe's institutional presence and the predominance of the ILO in it were reduced, the ILO still had the chance to describe and interpret the major phenomena determined by the full operation of the ECSC, in the context of the dynamics of "labour mobility and employment security" in Western Europe. The Director-general's report in 1956 read, in part:

In Western Europe implementation of current plans for economic and social development involves the transfer of many hundreds of workers from one occupation and often from one place to another and sometimes from one country to another. In France a Manpower Redistribution Fund was set up in 1954 specifically to promote the movement of workers from occupations and areas with declining activity to occupations and areas with better prospects. In Italy the Vanoni plan calls for the transfer of some 600,000 workers from the south to the north of the country. The Netherlands is seeking to encourage unemployed persons to move to other parts of the country by special grants to those willing to take up jobs elsewhere. The Federal Republic of Germany is making particular efforts to improve housing facilities in areas with expanding employment opportunities. Within the Coal and Steel Community measures have been taken to promote the movement of workers from areas where marginal undertakings are being closed down to occupations and areas where additional workers are needed. Within the O.E.E.C. countries, and in relation to their efforts to develop a more integrated economy in Western Europe, a good deal has been done both to encourage effective national organisation of employment and to meet specific problems of manpower demand by facilitating a freer flow of manpower from one country to another.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ M. Taccolini, *La costruzione di un'Europa del lavoro. La Commissione per gli affari sociali dalle origini all'applicazione del Trattato di Roma (1953-1960)*, cit., pp. 51-65.

⁴⁷ International Labour Conference, Thirty-ninth session - Geneva 1956, *Report of the director-general*, ILO, Geneva, 1956, pp. 25-26.

Criticisms were thus raised, albeit in prospect, in relation to the need for ever greater harmonization of national social policies, inevitably impelled by the changes produced by the new Community context. In this regard, Director Morse argued:

While in previous years attention was mainly focused on other areas, European problems played a prominent part in I.L.O. activities in 1955, and the first European Regional Conference heralded a number of significant developments. In addition to considering productivity, the financing of social security and the age of retirement, it inspired a general plan of action. In attempting to draw together the main trends of the debate, I remarked that the ultimate goal of economic cooperation in Europe was to raise levels of living through a general increase in production, and that it was for the I.L.O. to assist countries in planning the social policies without which economic changes would not attain their real purpose. The Conference felt the need for further study of the problems of transition to new and more efficient patterns of production and employment, following from the establishment of common markets. The influence of increased competition on the possibility of further improvement of social standards and the freer international movement of labour also calls for objective investigation because of uncertainty about real and apparent differences in labour costs, including social charges. As a result a group of statistical experts was convened to advise on sources of information in the field of wages and related elements of labour costs in European countries. A group of economists discussed the extent and manner in which closer European economic co-operation and, in particular, freer trade may require adjustment in national social policies, the measures which might be taken in order to mitigate any disturbances in output, employment and social conditions in general which may result from the freeing of trade, and the ways in which European economic co-operation may contribute to the continued pursuit of a progressive social policy in all parts of the area concerned. Practical steps towards such objectives have also been taken through co-operation with the O.E.E.C. and the Coal and

Steel Community in connection with liberalisation of European manpower movements and labour and social standards.⁴⁸

For these reasons too, technical cooperation between the ILO and the Community institutions continued, especially in the field of migration:

There has been regular co-operation with the O.E.E.C. in connection with the work of that organisation relating to the liberalisation of European manpower movements. Co-operation with the High Authority for the European Coal and Steel Community on migration questions has been strengthened. At the request of the High Authority the I.L.O. contributed material for the preparation of international bibliographies concerning migration and obstacles to the mobility and readjustment of workers.⁴⁹

4. Towards the Common Market

The relationship between the ILO and the Community institutions became particularly intricate in the delicate phase of the planning of the European Common Market,⁵⁰ which had been underway since the Messina Conference of 1955 and received added impetus with the publication of an important study promoted by the ILO on the social aspects of European economic cooperation. This work is well known to the historiography on the subject,⁵¹ though in certain cases the interpretation has been partial, owing to the nature of the personalities involved in drafting the study and its functional content for the design of the nascent European Economic Community.⁵²

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 96-97.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 109.

⁵⁰ W. Asbeek Brusse, *Traiffs, Trade and European Integration 1947-1957: from Study Group to Common Market*, New York, 1997.

⁵¹ The most recent reference is in M. Alberti, "Italian welfare as seen from the standpoint of the International Labour Organization (1944-68)", in *Journal of Modern Studies*, 22, 2017, no. 2, pp. 194-211.

⁵² International Labour Office, *Social Aspects of European Co-operation. Report by a Group of Experts*, ILO, Geneva, 1956.

Apart from the questions raised by the allegedly political rather than technical criteria for selecting the members of the Research Group, which inevitably reflected the institutional and political complexity of that particular historical juncture,⁵³ the key problem was excessive confidence in the positive effects of market forces that one of the members of the team, Maurice Byé of France, identified as a weakness in the analysis of the “social aspects of European economic cooperation.” In questioning the effectiveness of processes that opened up the economy but failed to accompany this with appropriate social harmonization mechanisms, he warned of the risk of spreading the illusion that the Member States of the future EEC would enjoy the benefits of integration while remaining autonomous in terms of policy decisions.⁵⁴

It is worth noting not only that Byé’s doubts instrumentally mirrored the position that France intended to take at the negotiating table for the drafting of the EEC Treaties⁵⁵ but above all that it was impossible to establish a credible, more effective alternative to the contents of the work done jointly within the ILO Study Group. On the other hand, Byé agreed in general terms with the structure and

⁵³ The following qualified and authoritative members were selected: Maurice Byé, Professor of International Economic Relations at Paris University, Faculty of Law and Member of the French Economic Council; Thomas U. Matthew, formerly Lucas Professor in the Principles of Engineering Production, Birmingham University; Helmut Meinhold, Professor of Economic and Social Science, Heidelberg University, Member of Scientific Council, Federal Ministry of Economics, Member of Market Research Committee of the High Authority, European Coal and Steel Community; Bertil Ohlin, Professor at Stockholm Commercial College, Member of Riksdag, Minister of Commerce 1944-45, Leader of the Liberal Party, author along with his mentor Eli Heckscher of one of the best-known theorems of economic science dedicated to the theme of the benefits of international trade (Nobel prizewinner in 1977); Pasquale Saraceno, Professor at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan, Central Director of I.R.I. (Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale), Secretary-General of Associazione per lo Sviluppo del Mezzogiorno (SVIMEZ); Petrus J. Verdoorn, Professor of Market Analysis, Trade Statistics and Commercial Economics, Rotterdam School of Economics, Deputy Director, Netherlands Central Planning Bureau, Economic Adviser to Surinam Planning Board, 1951 and 1954; Prof. Ohlin was elected chairman of the group (*Ibidem*, Preface).

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 139.

⁵⁵ D. Dinan, *Europe Recast*, cit., p. 74.

many of the “practical conclusions” of the so-called “Ohlin Report,” which was unquestionably one of the main theoretical points of reference in the consultations towards the drafting of the Treaties of Rome;⁵⁶ it was also, and perhaps most importantly, a solid contribution to the analysis of the social aspects relating to the process of European economic integration.

In fact, the report was no mere uncritical exposition of the benefits of market expansion in terms of growth and welfare. Rather it explicitly considered the social problems that would affect the nations projected towards the establishment of an integrated continental market. It was expected that such problems would be resolved, for the first time taking for granted the prospect of the effective creation of a single European market.⁵⁷ This emerges clearly from an analysis of the six chapters that made up the extensive study – Chapter I, “Approaches to closer economic co-operation”; Chapter II, “The advantages of closer economic co-operation”; Chapter III, “International differences in labour costs and their impact on international trade”; Chapter IV, “Problems of transition to a régime of freer trade”; Chapter V, “Social policy in a régime of free trade”; and Chapter VI, “International movements of labour and capital”). And it is even more evident from a look at the conclusions, divided into four themes: “The question whether international differences in labour costs and especially in social charges do or do not constitute an obstacle to the establishment of freer international markets”; “The need for policies designed to reduce to a minimum the hardships which closer economic co-operation may involve for persons engaged in particular industries”; “The question whether, if a freer international market were established, it might be necessary for the

⁵⁶ L. Mechi, *L'Organizzazione internazionale del lavoro e la ricostruzione europea*, cit., p. 190.

⁵⁷ With this orientation, the ILO engaged in further and deeper research, arousing a lively and constructive debate: M.A. Heilperin, “Freer Trade and Social Welfare: Some Marginal Comments on the ‘Ohlin Report’”, in *International Labour Review*, vol. LXXV, no. 3, March 1957, pp. 173-192; A. Philip, “Social Aspects of European Economic Co-operation”, in *International Labour Review*, vol. LXXVI, July-December 1957, pp. 244-256.

countries of Europe to shape and carry out their social policies with a greater degree of international consultation and co-ordination than at present"; and "The social problems connected with freer international movement of labour."

Meanwhile, the inquiries of the SAC during these years studied the main social problems arising from the process of European economic integration, with a view to tackling them.⁵⁸ And the ILO itself, in line with the approach set out in René Roux's 1952 article, cited above, was favourable to a path of progressive economic integration in the heart of Europe,⁵⁹ a path that would necessarily require the sacrifice of the "independent decisions" of each country. Such sacrifice could only come gradually, over time, and as the hoped-for economic and social successes were realized.

As the signing of the Treaties of Rome approached, at the annual International Labour Conference in Geneva in 1957, the ILO's leadership recognized the innovative technological skills achieved by the ECSC, while continuing to analyse events in Europe in the context of worldwide transformations, especially automation and atomic energy:

The European Coal and Steel Community is taking an active interest in the technological progress of the industries with which the High Authority is concerned. In all the more industrialised countries, however, progress is uneven. It varies by industries and still more by undertakings. But the main trends converging towards fuller automation are making their appearance in some areas of the economy in all the industrial countries and are even emerging in particular instances in some of the economically less developed countries. At present, in the most highly industrialised countries, and typically in the U.S.S.R. and the United States, almost every major area of the economy has been touched by some form of automation or closely related technological developments.

⁵⁸ M. Taccolini, "Europa, lavoro, politiche sociali", cit., pp. 133-149.

⁵⁹ S. Hughes, N. Haworth, *The International Labour Organization (ILO). Coming in from the cold*, cit., pp. 14-18.

The development of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy has been even more spectacular in many ways. Only five years ago there were many serious technical problems still to be overcome, and it was said that years would elapse before nuclear energy could compete with energy produced from coal and other conventional sources and that its practical use in industry could not be expected to materialise for two or three decades. Yet by 1954 a nuclear energy plant was supplying power to industry and agriculture in one region of the U.S.S.R.; in 1955 a town in the United States was for a short period fully supplied with electricity from a similar source; and in 1956 two nuclear energy plants went into operation in France and the United Kingdom. All these countries are already planning or constructing a number of new and larger commercial power plants, but the movement is by no means confined to them. More than a score of countries, in all continents, have atomic energy commissions to study their needs and plan their programmes. By the autumn of 1956 there were at least 77 reactors in operation: 53 in the United States, ten in the United Kingdom, four in the U.S.S.R., two in Canada, seven in various countries of Western Europe and one in India – the first in Asia. Some hundreds of others are being built or are in an advanced stage of planning. The great majority of these are for research and experiment and to train the specialists who will be needed in every country that wishes to develop an atomic energy programme. The use of nuclear power for various forms of transport is developing more slowly than its use for industrial power, because of the serious technical problems involved. Nevertheless, the United States already has two nuclear-powered submarines and plans for nuclear-powered tankers or large bulk cargo vessels are being developed there and in France, Japan, Norway, the United Kingdom, the U.S.S.R. and other countries. In the case of aircraft, the problem of weight involved in the proper protection of the persons on board is particularly serious, but it is expected that a number of nuclear-powered aircraft will be constructed within a few years. Another use of atomic energy may well have as far-reaching consequences as its use as a source of power. This is the rapidly developing utilisation of radio-isotopes, a by-product of the production of nuclear energy. Radio-

isotopes are already being used extensively in research, medicine and agriculture, and are being ever more widely used in industry for a great variety of purposes. Here there is a close link between atomic energy and automation.⁶⁰

Cooperation between the ILO and the European institutions continued on issues of workforce mobility, with consultancy⁶¹ and planning for implementation of agreements and conventions,⁶² and also on social security issues, as described by the Director General:

At the request of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community, the International Labour Office prepared a draft agreement providing for more detailed and comprehensive protection for foreign or migrant workers moving from one State Member of the Community to another. A meeting of experts convened by the I.L.O. and the High Authority considered the draft at three sessions, held in Geneva in July 1954 and April and October 1955. The experts agreed on most questions, but asked the gov-

⁶⁰ International Labour Conference, Fortieth session - Geneva 1957, *Report of the director-general. Part I: automation and other technological developments*, ILO, Geneva, 1957, pp. 12-13.

⁶¹ On this subject, see "Obstacles to Labour Mobility and Social Problems of Resettlement. A Survey by the European Coal and Steel Community", in *International Labour Review*, vol. LXXVI, July-December 1957, pp. 72-83, and "The Coal-Mining Safety Conference of the European Coal and Steel Community", in *International Labour Review*, vol. LXXVI, July-December 1957, pp. 188-193.

⁶² "During the whole period covered by the present report the I.L.O. co-operated in the work of the O.E.E.C. to secure greater manpower mobility in Europe. Together with the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community it continued preparation of the draft for a multilateral European Convention on social security for migrant workers. As regards the Council of Europe, a representative of the I.L.O. attended meetings of the advisory committee attached to the Council's special representative for national refugees and overpopulation; this committee is required to assist the special representative in the accomplishment of his mission and to co-ordinate his work with that of the other international agencies. As in the past, the I.L.O. has co-operated with the various non-governmental organisations interested in migration. It was represented at a conference convened by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions to examine the problems involved in international migration. It also participated in the work of the liaison committee of the conference of non-governmental organisations interested in migration and the working parties established by this conference" (*Ibidem*, pp. 22-23).

ernments concerned to examine a certain number of points which had to be referred to them for decision in view of their political or financial implications. These points were examined in June 1956 and January 1957 by the Council of Ministers of the European Coal and Steel Community and by the Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs of the six States which are Members of the Community. The I.L.O. experts attended these meetings. The drafting of the Convention has now entered on its final stage.⁶³

European labour migration issues thus remained central to the concerns shared by the ILO and the EEC institutions, along with the classic issues of shorter hours and of wage levels. The fortieth session of the International Labour Conference in 1957 was informed that:

The I.L.O. has also helped the O.E.E.C. Manpower Committee to study the reduction of hours of work by supplying it with basic information on the subject. In collaboration with the Council of Europe the I.L.O. continued to play an active part in the preparation of the European Social Security Code, and in collaboration with the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community in the drafting of a Convention on the social security of migrant workers in States Members of the Community. It took part in the conference on occupational safety in coal mines that was convened by the High Authority after the Marcinelle disaster and supplied that conference with the documents on which its proceedings were based. Several European organisations, including the Council of Europe, the Northern Council and the Western European Union have also taken a close interest in the ratification and application of international labour Conventions of the I.L.O. The Council of Europe, the O.E.E.C. and the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community have also taken an interest in the work done by the I.L.O. as a consequence of the first European Regional Conference. After considering the report on that Conference the Governing Body of the I.L.O. decided to call to-

⁶³ International Labour Conference, Fortieth session - Geneva 1957, *Report of the director-general. Part II: activities of the ILO 1956-1957*, ILO, Geneva, 1957, p. 33.

gether two groups of experts, one to advise on the scope and methods of an inquiry into wages and social charges in Europe and another to study the social aspects of European economic co-operation. The inquiry on wages and related elements in labour costs in Europe, which was undertaken in accordance with the recommendations of the first group of experts, was continued in 1956, and 11 countries took part. Information on the coal and steel industries was collected by the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community as regards States which are Members of that agency. The I.L.O. is now analysing and tabulating the information received from the various countries. The second stage of the inquiry, which concerned over-all figures relating to social security schemes and national accounts, was launched in September 1956. The first results of the inquiry, which afford a basis for comparison of wages and related elements in labour costs in different European countries, will be published during 1957.⁶⁴

In 1958, the ILO examined the actual birth of the European Economic Community, inserting it in a chapter of the annual report entitled "The search for higher living standards," to be achieved through "closer economic co-operation". The report observed that:

The post-war years have witnessed encouraging progress in achieving closer economic co-operation between countries both in particular regions and on a world-wide scale. Through the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade steps have been taken to reduce restrictions on international trade. Each in its own sphere, the United Nations, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Monetary Fund have made important contributions. On a regional basis some of the most interesting experiments of our time have taken place in western Europe – the O.E.E.C, the European Coal and Steel Community, Benelux, and within the last year the signing of the treaty for the establishment of the European Economic Community and the declaration by the O.E.E.C. countries of their determination to secure the establishment of a European free trade area. Progress in freeing

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 65-66.

the channels of trade and in integrating more closely the economies of different countries can make a significant contribution to economic growth throughout the world. At the same time, it raises problems for employers and workers as well as for governments – such questions as whether and under what conditions international differences in labour costs, including social charges, constitute obstacles to the establishment of freer international markets; the need for and the nature of policies designed to reduce to a minimum the hardships which closer economic co-operation may involve for persons engaged in particular industries; the question whether, if freer international markets are established, it may be necessary for countries to shape and carry out their social policies with a greater measure of international consultation and co-operation than at present; and social problems connected with freer international movements of labour. The I.L.O. has been studying these problems in a western European context.⁶⁵

At the same time, the ILO's co-operation with European Community bodies on "the search for security" continued:

[T]he I.L.O. helped to elaborate the European Convention concerning social security for migrant workers, drawn up by a committee of government social security experts from the member States of the European Coal and Steel Community, convened jointly by the I.L.O. and the High Authority of the Community. The Convention, signed in Rome on 9 December 1957, is conceived as a multilateral instrument and aims to establish certain common standards for the contracting countries in order to remove the differences in the various bilateral agreements between the member States of the E.C.S.C, to make good the shortcomings of these agreements and eliminate provisions which are unfavourable to the workers, and also to govern the relations, as regards social security, between the contracting countries which

⁶⁵ International Labour Conference, *The ILO in a Changing World. Report of the director-general to the 42nd Session of the International Labour Conference*, 1958, ILO, Geneva, 1958, pp. 56-57; see also the essay "Treaty Establishing the European Economic Community", in *International Labour Review*, vol. LXXVI, July-December 1957, pp. 400-406.

have not yet concluded bilateral and multilateral agreements. Provision is also made for the establishment of an administrative commission to assist in the application of the Convention.⁶⁶

Following its signing of a formal cooperation agreement with the European Commission in 1958, the ILO regularly underscored the importance of the European Common Market and the prospects for development offered by its establishment, while also pointing out the various social risks entailed. Concerning “employment and unemployment”, with specific reference to “future problems”, for example the ILO argued:

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 65. It was further observed: “In addition to the work done in co-operation with other international organisations of the United Nations family, a not insignificant and increasingly important part of the I.L.O.’s work derives from co-operation with the various regional organisations outside the United Nations group. In Europe, for example, the bulk of the I.L.O.’s regional activities has been carried out either at the request of or in co-operation with such organisations, including the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation, the European Productivity Agency, the European Coal and Steel Community, the Council of Europe, the Western European Union and the Central Commission for Rhine Navigation. In Latin America there has continued to be close co-operation with the Organisation of American States. In order to facilitate co-operation with these regional organisations the I.L.O. has entered into a series of regional agreements in recent years. Such agreements, which provide a framework for cooperation between the two organisations concerned, have been concluded with the European Coal and Steel Community, the Council of Europe and the Organisation of American States; and the I.L.O. is now in negotiation with the League of Arab States with a view to establishing a formal agreement governing relations between the two organisations” (*Ibidem*, p. 80). Thus the ILO could observe that “The tendency towards removal of obstacles to labour mobility in the framework of efforts to achieve economic integration has given new actuality to an old problem – that of conserving the full social security rights of migrant workers. The general European Convention on Social Security for Migrant Workers, which was worked out jointly by the I.L.O. and by the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community and signed on 9 December 1957 in Rome by the responsible Ministers of the countries concerned, is a decisive step towards the establishment of a wide regional system of protection for migrant workers and their families, regardless of their countries of residence and of employment. Further, the European Code of Social Security, together with the Protocol – both elaborated by the Council of Europe with I.L.O. co-operation – is being considered by the competent organs of the Council of Europe. The Code is an adaptation to western European conditions of the I.L.O.’s Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952. The Protocol, on the other hand, incorporates far higher standards of social security, and the practical experience of its implementation in European countries should provide valuable guidance for the further social security work of the I.L.O.” (*Ibidem*, p. 98).

The Common Market, inaugurated on 1 January 1959, is a landmark in the history of Europe. Its coming into existence focuses attention upon the adjustments in production for world markets, and hence in employment, which will have to be made in the years to come. The Common Market should help to expand trade between its members. To the extent that it is accompanied by economic growth its members may also in the long run buy more of the products of other countries. These will not necessarily be the same products as those countries sell to the European countries in question today. Fears have, however, been expressed that, as the Common Market countries proceed towards freer trade amongst themselves over the next 12 to 15 years, there may be some reduction in, or some check to the growth of, international trade across the Common Market boundary. Such apprehensions have been felt in other European, and in Asian and Latin American countries. The example of the Common Market has in some parts of the world stimulated interest in other proposals looking towards freer trade on a regional or worldwide basis. The European Economic Community is itself examining proposals for freer trade between the Community and the rest of the world, while preserving for its own members the full benefits and privileges of membership. Important changes in the volume and direction of international trade seem likely in any case; and these will have repercussions upon employment in the different countries and industries affected. These changes must therefore be the subject of a specially close study in the years ahead by those concerned with employment policy.⁶⁷

Regarding “institutions and social policy”, and more specifically “manpower organisation”, the ILO also observed:

The European Coal and Steel Community has taken measures to enable skilled workers from the coal or steel industry of one member country to move freely to the corresponding industry in another. Employment service experts from the six member coun-

⁶⁷ International Labour Conference, Forty-Third session - Geneva 1959, *Report of the director-general. Part I: Current Problems and Trends*, ILO, Geneva, 1959, pp. 24-25.

tries have evolved a standard supra-national procedure which is used for all dealings among the six employment services. The European Economic Community is also considering the introduction of machinery which, while maintaining safeguards for the standards of living and levels of employment in all member countries, will make it easier for workers from one member country to take up offers of employment in another. Provisions for freer movement of workers into employment across frontiers require to be supplemented by maintenance of social security rights and co-ordination between the social security systems of the countries concerned. The number of bilateral and multilateral social security treaties concluded in recent years, particularly among European countries, indicates an increasing preoccupation with the need to provide adequate coverage for migrant workers and foreigners. There are, for example, a series of bilateral treaties signed by Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United Kingdom with a large number of other countries. Many multilateral treaties have also been concluded, the most important of which are the Convention on Social Co-operation linking the five Nordic countries and the interim treaties linking the members of the Council of Europe. Several European countries have signed the Agreement concerning Social Security of Rhine Boatmen, the European Convention for Workers Engaged in International Transport and the European Convention concerning Social Security for Migrant Workers, which has been transformed by the Council of the European Economic Community into Regulations of that Community.⁶⁸

The ILO's work relating to the European territory was thus projected towards the 1960s, its "regional action" highlighting the intention to further step up cooperation with the European Community institutions, which were constantly supported and aided in their policy-making during years that were to prove decisive for the establishment of a shared continental development strategy. For this reason, in 1959 the ILO reported:

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 64-65.

In Europe the I.L.O. convened a conference late in 1958 within the framework of its agreement with the Council of Europe, which provides, *inter alia*, that the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, whenever it deems it necessary to hold a European regional meeting of a tripartite character to deal with matters of interest to the Council of Europe which are within the sphere of action of the I.L.O., shall propose to the Governing Body of the I.L.O. that the latter convene such a meeting. The terms of reference of the conference were to examine the draft European Social Charter drawn up by the Council of Europe on the basis of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in addition to other international instruments, including appropriate international labour Conventions. The I.L.O. had been consulted in the preparatory stages of the draft and had prepared a preliminary comparative analysis of it in the light of the instruments of the I.L.O. The text of the draft Charter, which is designed to define the social objectives aimed at by member States of the Council of Europe and to guide the policy of the Council in the social field, covers the rights to work, to just conditions of work, to safe and healthy working conditions, to a fair wage, to organise, to bargain collectively, to protection of children and young persons, to protection of employed women, to vocational guidance, to vocational training, to protection of health, to social security, to social and medical assistance, to rehabilitation and resettlement of the disabled, to social and economic protection of the family, to social and economic protection of mothers and children, to engage in a gainful occupation in other member countries and to protection and assistance of migrant workers. The conference, which was held in Strasbourg and attended by tripartite delegations from the States which are Members both of the I.L.O. and of the Council of Europe, undertook a detailed examination of the draft text and formulated a number of comments on various articles. The draft Charter together with these comments will be further considered by the Council of Europe prior to its final adoption by that organisation. This conference was an important event within a wide range of I.L.O. activities which aim at assisting European countries in their efforts towards greater co-operation in social matters, efforts which are

being made in large part through regional organisations, such as the European Coal and Steel Community, the European Economic Community, the European Atomic Energy Community, the Western European Union, the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation and the Council of Europe.⁶⁹

The collaboration with these European institutions thus continued throughout the years, with special relation to issues of “supervisory training” and “social security,”⁷⁰ leading in 1961 to the institution of a permanent contact committee between the ILO and the EEC.⁷¹

⁶⁹ International Labour Conference, Forty-third session - Geneva 1959, *Report of the director-general. Part II: activities of the ILO 1958-1959*, ILO, Geneva, 1959, pp. 8-9.

⁷⁰ “The I.L.O. has continued its assistance to the regional organisations of the Western European countries in the drawing up of agreements and Conventions in respect of social security. During 1958 the preparatory technical work in connection with the introduction of a European system of social security for migrant workers designed to facilitate the free movement of labour within the area of the countries which are members of the European Economic Community was completed under a joint working arrangement between the European Economic Community, the European Coal and Steel Community and the I.L.O. The application of the new system is supervised by an administrative commission to which the I.L.O. lends its technical co-operation in conformity with an agreement concluded between the two organisations. The European Convention on Social Security of Workers Engaged in International Transport, concluded between 12 European countries under the auspices of the I.L.O., entered into force on 1 October 1958 in respect of Poland and the Netherlands, which had ratified the instrument in January and August 1958 respectively. In January 1959 draft administrative arrangements drawn up by the I.L.O. were submitted to a meeting of representatives of the competent authorities of the 12 signatory countries. The meeting adopted the draft text with minor modifications, but the governments reserved their final positions as regards the arrangements until the end of March 1959. The I.L.O. is taking an active part in the preparatory work in connection with the revision of the Agreement concerning the Social Security of Rhine Boatmen which was concluded in 1950 with its assistance. A questionnaire drafted by the Office has been sent to the signatory countries, and the I.L.O. will later prepare the text of a revised agreement for submission to the countries concerned. Assistance in establishing European standards of social security has continued to be given by the Organisation to the Council of Europe. In 1958 two texts were completed with I.L.O. assistance. A draft European Code on Social Security embodies the minimum standards for European countries and is based on the provisions of the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952, with certain modifications designed to raise the standards somewhat above those laid down in the Convention; and a draft European protocol on social security establishes more advanced standards” (*Ibidem*, p. 38).

⁷¹ J. Van Daele, M. Rodriguez Garcia, G. Van Goethem, M. Van Der Linden (eds.), *ILO*

5. Conclusion

In many ways, in the aftermath of World War II there were no victors in continental Europe; there existed only, if to varying extent, defeated countries. The United States, on the other hand, had won the war, but now faced a dangerous new enemy across the European theater. These considerations swiftly led to the idea that the European states had a deeply shared interest in tackling their problems of moral, political, economic and social reconstruction together.⁷²

Against this background, the democratic governments of Europe sought to offer a new perspective to the liberal state model, which was in many ways unable to control the pace of social change and so sought to strengthen its position even by developing a welfare state framework, which was nevertheless inextricably bound up with the supplementary aid of intermediate bodies.⁷³ In the socio-political sphere, they had to cope with a crucial, fundamental contrast characterizing the contemporary world, namely the relationship between State and society. This demanded pervasively modern economic and social policy choices that departed from the patterns of the past.

The nodal theme of the imbalance between wealth and democracy was therefore a conditioning factor for the future even beyond Europe. National interests, cultural movements and pragmatic orientations all helped to smooth the path towards European economic integration. Throughout the 1950s, the ILO's collaboration with European Community institutions played an important role in this development, leading up to the launching of the EEC at the beginning of 1958.

As we have seen, on the basis of its own aspirations and expertise, and dealing with its own internal institutional dynamics, the

histories. Essays on the International Labour Organization and its impact on the world during the twentieth century, cit., passim.

⁷² A. Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe 1945-1951*, Berkeley, 1984.

⁷³ For the Italian case, see G. Gregorini, *Il merito della povertà. La Congrega della carità apostolica in età contemporanea tra spazi sussidiari, nuove marginalità e culture sociali*, Bologna, 2016.

ILO accompanied the initial stages of the process by highlighting potential critical issues while constantly favouring the logic of enlargement of markets and economic integration, in the knowledge that the model of development being pursued could be a crucial invention unprecedented in the history of the European continent and crucial to its future.

Even today we cannot observe the completed transition from a Europe of markets to a Europe of development.⁷⁴ In some ways, today's Europe is still not social enough.⁷⁵ Countries where welfare is limited (the majority of the most recent members) are aware that their competitive advantage lies in low labour costs, limited social services, and low taxes. Social inequalities between the various Member States remain a constant feature of the European Union. Clearly, by comparison with the conditions of the 1950s regarding compatibility between social asymmetries and commercial integration/liberalization, the constraints placed now (and in the future) by these same asymmetries and the mechanisms of monetary unification are far harsher. In many ways, the Common Market for goods resulted in economies of scale in production, but did not create the necessary solidity that should have followed from the liberalization of capital, given that the parallel common policies for economic development were, on the whole, weak.

It is therefore necessary to work, in a continuing collaboration with the ILO, towards overcoming these sharp social contradictions, recovering and updating the priorities of the decisive years of the 1950s,⁷⁶ however difficult this may prove to be between "the stall and new start" of European integration.

⁷⁴ L. Mechi, "Du BIT à la politique sociale européenne: les origines d'un modèle", in *Le Mouvement Social*, 244 (3), 2013, pp. 17-30.

⁷⁵ M. Ferrera, A. Hemerijck and M. Rhodes, *The future of social Europe*, Lisbon, 2000.

⁷⁶ R. Perron, G. Thiemeyer, *Multilateralism and the Trente Glorieuses in Europe. New Perspectives in European Integration History*, Neuchatel, 2011.

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