

HEALTH

Effects
of long-term unemployment
on health



of long-term unemployment on health

European Health Committee

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Pe	age
Preface	5
Chapter I — Introduction of the problem	7
— A change in the nature of the crisis	7
— Structural causes of contemporary unemployment	8
— Long-term unemployment	9
Chapter II — Methods to assess the linkages between unemployment and health	13
— The research process	13
— Hypotheses and theorems	14
— Controversy	15
— The topics	19
— Review and outlook	21
Chapter III — Dimensions and characteristics of the problems	23
— Effects of health on unemployment	23
— Effects of unemployment on health	24
— Risk groups	30
Chapter IV — Health policy options: some proposals	35
— General health activities	35
— Specific health activities	38
— Trans-sectorial activities	42
— Research	45
Appendix — References	47

PREFACE

The Council of Europe first took up the question of unemployment and health in the early part of the decade following the conclusion of the first conference of European Ministers responsible for public health (Madrid, September 1981), which was concerned with prevention of illness and promotion of health: "conscious that long-term unemployment can itself be a risk factor, particularly for the young, ... it was necessary to intensify studies on the health risks linked to unemployment and to take appropriate action to combat this problem". The conference also agreed that the future health status of each population was "more likely to depend on governmental decisions and action in a wide range of fields, than on the action of each Minister of Health"; it was therefore "essential to establish co-ordination between different ministries so as to create an all-embracing and coherent policy".

The European Health Committee (CDSP) at its 13th meeting (20-23 June 1983), subsequently decided to undertake a study of the effects of long-term unemployment on health, which would also be the subject of the priority medical fellowships granted by the Council of Europe in 1984. In the mean-time, the Council's Steering Committee for Social Affairs (CDSO) commissioned a study of the psychological and social consequences of unemployment—especially long-term and repeated unemployment—on the individual and the family: measures taken or contemplated in the social field; the study to be carried out by the 1984/85 study group of the coordinated social research fellowships programme. Similarly, the Conference of European Ministers responsible for Family Affairs, organised by the Council of Europe in Malta in June 1985, was devoted to "The effects on the family of the economic crisis and, in particular, of unemployment".

In these various ways the Council of Europe has aimed to highlight the impact of unemployment on society and health and to enable member countries to develop appropriate responses to the different problems.

The CDSP decided to undertake its study through a group of consultant experts from four member countries:

Federal Republic of Germany: Prof. Dr. Schwefel, MEDIS-Institut der Gesellschaft für Strahlen- und Umweltforschung, Ingolstädter Landstrasse 1,

D-8042 Neuherberg (with assistance of Dr. P. Potthoff from the same institute).

France: M.B. Senault, Chargé d'Etudes à l'Observatoire Régional de la Santé, rue Robert Blum, F-54700 Pont à Mousson.

Spain: Dr. J.E. del Llano Senaris, Seminario de Nobles 4, Madrid 8.

United Kingdom: Miss G.M. Westcott, Nuffield Centre for Health Services Studies, 71-75 Clarendon Road, Leeds LS2 9TL (first meeting).

Ms M. Bartley, Department of Social Administration, University of Edinburgh, Adam Ferguson Building, George Square, Edinburgh EH8 9LL (second meeting).

The Group was assisted by the following officials from the Council of Europe:

- Mr H. Scicluna, Head of Health Division,
- Mr P.W. Davies, Administrator, Health Division.

The terms of reference were:

"In the light of the studies carried out in certain institutes in member states, by the World Health Organisation and the European Economic Communities, the experts are asked to:

- a. identify any health problems caused by long-term unemployment and capable of resolution by the health services, and
- b. suggest ways in which these problems could be solved cost-effectively."

The consultants were also to take account of the reports submitted by holders of the 1984 priority fellowships:

At their first meeting in December 1984, the consultants submitted preparatory reports, based mainly on experience in their own countries, and discussed the implications of the various research findings. The second meeting, in September 1985, was devoted to an examination of draft contributions to the Group's report which had been prepared in accordance with the outline drawn up at the first meeting; the final version was agreed, subject to some further refinement of detail.

[The CDSP considered the Report at its meeting in November 1985 and, following further consultations, agreed to publication at its 19th meeting (24-27 June 1986).]