

# Trade Unions and Employers in the Single Europe

Angela Byre

The approach of the European Community's Single Market, due for completion by the end of 1992, has proved a catalyst for a new and accelerated stage in the development of EC social policy and social law. A new Charter of Fundamental Rights followed up by a detailed EC-level Action Programme has set out the Community's *social policy agenda for the 1990s*. This in turn has begun to impact upon the policies and practices of trade unions and employers throughout the European Community.

In a study carried out for the Anglo-German Foundation in 1989 to 1991, fieldwork was undertaken in the United Kingdom to assess the early impact of the EC's new social agenda among UK trade unions and employers. This *illustrative fieldwork* sought to examine the views and aspirations of leading unions and employers to the main new EC social policy issues, as they prepared for the new Single Market environment. The study sought overall to give an indication of the developing EC social policy framework, and its translation in practical terms in the plans and policies of the two sides of industry in one of the EC's larger Member States. Parallel fieldwork was undertaken during the same period in West Germany, with a view to drawing eventual comparisons between the EC's social policy impact in two main EC countries.

This report concentrates on the UK part of the study. The report falls into two sections. The first outlines the background to and basic content of the EC's new social agenda. The second briefly reviews general Government, employer and trade union responses to the EC's initiatives, and then examines in detail the findings of the illustrative fieldwork undertaken in the UK among managers, personnel specialists and trade union officials in some 26 organisations.

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