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"EUROPE AGAINST CANCER" PROGRAMME

COMMISSION NOTE

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The Commission of the European Communities is putting the finishing touches, with the valuable assistance of the committee of cancer experts set up at the beginning of the year, to a detailed plan of action for the first three years of implementation of the "Europe against cancer" programme, which was approved in principle by the Milan European Council. The proposal, which will be sent to the Council by the end of the year, covers the following spheres of action: prevention; informing the general public; training health workers; and research.

I. CANCER PREVENTION

In July 1986, the Council adopted a resolution setting out the broad lines of the prevention part of the "Europe against cancer" programme. The 1987-89 plan of action will give substance to that resolution by identifying some forty proposals for Community projects aimed at:

- intensifying the combat that began as early as 1959 against carcinogenic agents, whether they be ionizing radiation or chemical carcinogens;
- striving to reduce tobacco consumption and improve eating habits. These new areas of work are important because smoking and diet are each thought to be involved in about one-third of cancer fatalities. From 1987 onwards, the European Community will help support national activities in the context of the internal market, the common agricultural policy and consumer

protection in particular (upward alignment of taxation arrangements for manufactured tobaccos, harmonization of the labelling of manufactured tobaccos and foodstuffs, redirection of production towards varieties least harmful to health, bans or restrictions on certain types of advertising, etc.).

If certain reservations are to be overcome, in particular with regard to anti-smoking measures, it is essential that the European Council reaffirm the Member States' determination to act quickly and effectively along these lines.

II. INFORMATION AND EDUCATION ON CANCER

Community activities in the cancer-prevention field will be effective only if they are backed up by a well-informed population and by adequately trained health workers. To that end, the European Community should give extra support to the indispensable national efforts in the public or private sector by launching over the period 1987-89 a number of projects aimed at:

- making Europeans aware that the pooling of efforts, resources and experience remains the surest guarantee of success in the fight against cancer. The elementary advice on cancer prevention being prepared by the committee of European cancer experts should thus acquire greater persuasive force;
- avoiding fruitless and costly duplication of work, through the joint development of basic modules for informing the public and training health workers;

- promoting exchanges of experience, in order to derive maximum benefit from the successes and failures encountered in different quarters in informing the public and training health workers.

In addition, the Commission supports the proposal put forward by the committee of cancer experts that 1989 be declared "European cancer prevention year" and recommends the other European institutions to follow suit. With this in mind, the prevention and research parts of the "Europe against cancer" programme should be supplemented by activities aimed at informing the public and training health workers, which should be set in hand in 1987 in order to culminate in 1989 with "European cancer prevention year". The European Council could take such a decision.

III. CANCER RESEARCH

The Commission recently sent the Council a proposal for a Decision adopting a fourth programme (1987-89) coordinating medical research. For the first time in its existence, the programme incorporates the objective of combatting cancer, to which one-third of its estimated budget should be allocated.

The programme covers the following areas: the award of European fellowships to promote the mobility of cancer researchers; the coordination of epidemiological research with a view to improving cancer prevention, with special reference to nutrition and passive smoking; the coordination of research to improve screening and early diagnosis, in particular by promoting research on computerized tissue analysis; and the coordination of European research on the monitoring of multi-centre therapeutic trials.