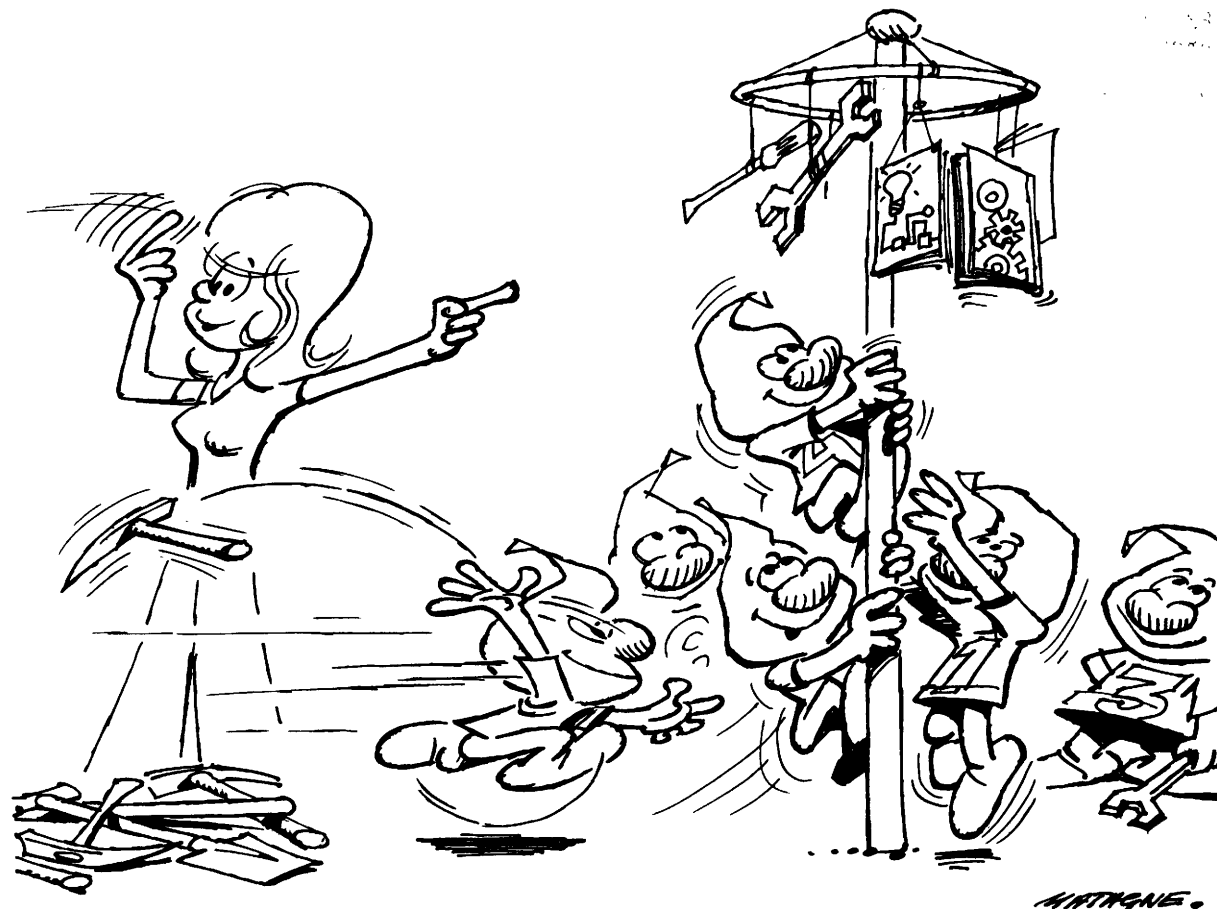


Brussels, 20 January 1976

No 3/76



### EURO-WHITE AND THE NINE DWARFS

In this week's episode of the adventures of Euro-White and the Nine Dwarfs unemployment and inflation strike. The crisis spreads to the Big Rock Candy Mountain and the Nine Dwarfs find that even they must learn a new trade. Fortunately the kindly European Social Fund comes to the rescue.

X/36/76-E

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Directorate General of Information  
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*The information published in this bulletin covers, very freely, different aspects of the European Communities' activity. It is, therefore, not limited to recording official Commission decisions or opinions.*

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\*\* THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND

A total of 371.9 million units of account (1 u.a. = approx. US \$1.2) was allocated by the European Social Fund in 1975.

ANNEX 1 gives some idea of the type of scheme financed by the European Social Fund.

\*\* THE SITING OF NUCLEAR POWER STATIONS

There were 56 nuclear power stations in the Community in 1974, there will be almost 200 by 1985. By 2000, who knows? Mrs Walz, a Member of the European Parliament, considers that the time has come for the Community to adopt a harmonized siting policy.

Mrs Walz's arguments and ideas are outlined in ANNEX 2.

\*\* ORGANIC MICROPOLLUTANTS IN WATER

Information on the organic micropollutants to be found in water is essential to the success of a number of features of the Community's environmental policy.

In ANNEX 3 Euroforum explains why CREST - the European Scientific and Technical Research Committee - feels that work on the analysis of these pollutants should continue.

\*\* CONSUMER POLICY IN BELGIUM

ANNEX 4 contains a report by Mr J.-M. De Grave, a member of the Community's Economic and Social Committee who also sits on the Consumers' Consultative Committee, on the latest developments in consumer policy in Belgium.

\*\* TOWARDS A RECOVERY OF PRIVATE CONSUMPTION

The results of a consumer survey of about 40 000 households recently published by the European Commission indicate that private consumption in Community countries is likely to recover in the months ahead.

Consumers in all Community countries except Belgium seem to feel that this is a good time to buy durable goods. In Denmark and France this is explained by favourable income expectations, in other countries by the fact that fewer consumers feel that this is a good time to save.

Consumers' views on economic development are largely dictated by the way in which policies designed to control inflation or unemployment affect them personally. In Denmark the majority of those interviewed expect that the situation on the labour market will improve over the next few months. Respondents in Germany no longer expect a serious deterioration. Households in the United Kingdom and Ireland are still pessimistic but even there it is felt that unemployment will not continue to rise. By contrast consumers in Italy, the Netherlands and Belgium expect the situation to deteriorate further.

The results also show that in the countries hardest hit by inflation - the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark - price increases are expected to be more moderate in the next few months. Respondents in Germany, France and Belgium feel that there will be a slight acceleration while those in Italy and the Netherlands expect prices to rise more sharply.

**\*\* IN PARLIAMENT**

Consumer interests came up again and again when the European Parliament met in Luxembourg from 12 to 16 January. In addition to Mrs Walz's report on the siting of nuclear power stations, the House discussed reports on the problem of "red mud" (Mr Premoli), the quality of drinking water (Lord Bethell), lead pollution (Mr Noé) and safety windscreens in motor vehicles (Mr Seefeld).

**\*\* REDUCING MARINE POLLUTION**

A proposal for a directive which the European Commission recently presented to the Community's Council of Ministers would prohibit ships and aircraft from dumping a number of particularly harmful substances in the sea and would require them to obtain a permit before dumping others.

The prohibited substances include mercury and mercury compounds, cadmium and cadmium compounds, persistent plastics and other persistent synthetic materials, crude oil and hydrocarbons of petroleum origin, radioactive wastes (including low-level wastes), and acids and alkalis from the titanium and aluminium industries.

For ships or aircraft registered in a Member State the dumping prohibitions and the permit system would apply to the world's waters irrespective of the source of the waste. For ships or aircraft registered outside the Community they would apply to waters falling under the jurisdiction of the Member States and to the world's waters if waste of Community origin is being transported.

Despite growing recognition of the importance of this type of pollution most Member States have no legislation in the matter. Such national provisions as do exist vary so much as to distort conditions of competition within the common market. Indeed even the two international conventions in the matter (Oslo and London) differ, notably as regards the lists of dangerous wastes.

In its declaration of 22 November 1973 on the Community's Action Programme on the Environment the Council of Ministers recognized that marine pollution was already one of the most dangerous forms of pollution and would become even more so in the long term.

**\*\* SAFETY BELTS**

The rules on the design and installation of safety belts (see I&S No 31/74) recently adopted by the European Community are more detailed and more stringent than existing

legislation in any of the Member States. It did not prove possible to include rules on the wearing of safety belts in the text for the simple reason that installation affects the manufacturer while wearing affects the motorist.

Within the Community the wearing of safety belts is already compulsory in the Benelux countries, Denmark, Germany and France (except in built-up areas between 0600 and 2200 hours). Outside the Community belts must be worn in Switzerland, Sweden, Spain, Czechoslovakia, Finland, Norway and Australia. There are no immediate plans to make the wearing of safety belts compulsory in Italy or Ireland. A bill published in the United Kingdom will, if adopted, give the Government powers to make "clunk click" compulsory.

**\*\* RESEARCH APPROPRIATIONS IN THE COMMUNITY**

Budgetary expenditure on R&D projects in the Community came to 9 855 million units of account (1 u.a.= approx. US \$1.3) in 1974 as against 8 970 million in 1973 and 6 000 million in 1970. These figures were calculated at 1970 exchange rates; at current exchange rates the figures would be 8 821 million u.a. for 1973 and 9 496 million u.a. for 1974.

Although research appropriations increased in absolute terms, growth rates tended to be lower: barely 10% between 1973 to 1974 for the Community as a whole as against 11% between 1972 to 1973.

Per capita R&D expenditure has increased in all Community countries; the figure for 1974 was 38 u.a. as against 35 u.a. in 1973.

**\*\* MARGARINE IS NOT A MEDICINE**

The wave of advertisements attributing preventive or curative properties to certain margarines has prompted the European Commission to consult the Scientific Committee for Food. The Committee's view of these claims is as follows:

"At present there is not sufficient evidence to justify the conclusion that polyunsaturated fatty acids prevent or cure arteriosclerosis or coronary disease. There is general agreement that their consumption in specific dietary regimes in place of other fatty acids results in a lowering of the plasma levels of certain lipids in some human subjects with certain hyperlipidaemias. Even such established properties should not, in the opinion of the Committee, be used in advertising preventive or curative properties in relation to human disease. Only in very exceptional cases should such statements be authorized with the aim of informing the general public."

In its proposal for a general directive on food labelling the European Commission suggests that references to preventive or curative properties be banned.

\*\* CASHING EUROCHEQUES

The agreement between European banks which set up the "Eurocheque" system stipulates that banks should charge 0.5% commission on each operation (irrespective of the number of cheques cashed), the minimum commission to be SwF 2 or the equivalent in other currencies. In Community countries this works out as follows:

Germany	DM 2
Belgium	Bfrs 25
Denmark	Dkr 5
France	FF 4
Ireland	£0.25
Italy	Lit 500
Luxembourg	Lfrs 25
Netherlands	F1 2
United Kingdom	£0.25

A group of French banks has now decided - unilaterally - to charge a minimum commission of FF 10 on cheques drawn in French francs. The European Commission is already investigating certain banking agreements and may well examine the French banks' decision in this context for conformity with the competition rules of the Treaty of Rome.

\*\* TOWARDS A COMMON MARKET IN INSURANCE

With freedom of establishment for direct insurance other than life assurance about to become a reality (on 1 February 1976), the European Commission has taken a second step towards a common market in insurance by proposing a European directive to facilitate the effective exercise of freedom to provide services by coordinating national provisions which now hinder it.

The European Commission's proposal would liberalize conditions for covering risks situated in a country other than that in which an insurance undertaking is established. It is therefore of special interest to those who would like to insure property abroad with "their" national insurance company or to those who believe that a foreign company will give them better or cheaper cover for risks situated at home.

\*\* STEEL FORECASTS

It is probable that the annual growth of steel consumption in the Community of Six, which averaged 4.4% in the period 1965-74, will be 3% for the period 1972-80. This is largely explained by structural changes in Member States' economies, the current recession and the low level of activity in the construction and motor industries. The growth rate of steel consumption is likely to decline in all countries over the period 1980-85.

The Community's steel exports will continue to increase until 1980 by which time accelerated construction of production capacities in former importing countries may cause them to slacken.

Lastly, the requirements of industries using steel indicate that there will probably be a shift to the utilization of special steels.

\*\* THE QUALITY OF PEPPERS

The European Community produces more than 500 000 metric tons of peppers a year: 93% are grown in Italy, 3% in France and 3% in the Netherlands. To facilitate the marketing of quality peppers and ensure fair competition, the European Commission has proposed that peppers be added to the list of fruit and vegetables which must comply with quality standards.

THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND

In 1975 the European Social Fund paid out a total of 371.9 million units of account (1 u.a. = approx. US \$1.2), 130 million of this being earmarked for "Article 4 operations" the remaining 241.9 million being for "Article 5 operations".

Under Article 4 of the rules governing the European Social Fund, the European Commission can pay 50% of the cost of retraining persons who are leaving agriculture, leaving the textile industry or acquiring new skills in textiles, migrant workers, the handicapped, young people out of work or young people looking for their first job.

Under Article 5, the European Commission can help to finance retraining schemes for workers threatened with unemployment in the poorer regions, workers affected by technical progress or workers employed by groups of undertakings experiencing difficulties.

Some typical schemes backed by the European Social Fund and reflecting Community solidarity are described below.

1. Young people

In Belgium (Office national de l'emploi - National Labour Office) help in financing the cost of training courses in undertakings enabled 14 500 young people holding a qualification and seeking their first job to adapt their capabilities to those actually required to fill a given position.

In France (Secrétariat d'Etat à la formation professionnelle - State Secretariat for Vocational Training) special training schemes were organized to enable 30 000 young people to obtain employment immediately on completion of training.

In Germany (Bundesanstalt für Arbeit - Federal Labour Office) intervention was two-fold: firstly, for young people who have lost their jobs and, secondly, for young people who have not yet completed their training (approximately 28 000 in all). In both cases, the special courses provided are based on training and experience already acquired and instil not only occupational skills but also the basic principles of attitude to work, social protection and security.



In the United Kingdom (Training Services Agency) and in the Netherlands (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken - Ministry for Social Affairs) assistance is granted to undertakings to increase the number of apprenticeships for young people who have just completed compulsory schooling but cannot find employment either because they have no qualifications or because the qualifications they have are not in demand. In both cases the young people concerned are given the opportunity and the inclination to undergo training for available jobs under conditions which favour integration into the working environment.

## 2. Technical progress

Under a programme in France (Union des industries métallurgiques et mécaniques et Electricité de France - Union of the Metalworking and Engineering Industries and the National Electricity Board) approximately 2 500 persons are to be trained for new highly-skilled occupations in nuclear power stations. Qualifications of this sort are in very short supply and there are vacancies, mainly for staff responsible for manufacture, installation and maintenance.

Schemes in Italy (Unione delle Camere di Commercio - Union of Chambers of Commerce) serve the same purpose but are specially designed to train around 2 500 executives and highly-skilled technicians.

The Netherlands (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken) has a programme for the printing industry. Revolutionary changes in printing techniques are threatening the jobs of approximately 500 highly-qualified operators. They will be retrained and reemployed in jobs where they can use the new techniques.

Because there is no special directive from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF), the European Social Fund has taken action to help the inshore fishing industry in Ireland (Irish Fisheries Board). Some 150 self-employed fishermen who have no wish to change their status will be trained in modern fishing techniques.

## 3. Regions

There has been a considerable increase in the number of applications for regional assistance from the European Social Fund in Ireland; 66 applications were approved in 1975 as against 38 in 1974.

## 4. Agriculture

The Emilia Romagna region of Italy has a scheme to give 1 700 agricultural workers and small farmers an opportunity of acquiring new skills which would allow them to find permanent employment connected with soil protection, hydro-geological improvements and reforestation in their own region. The regional authorities guarantee reemployment to those who complete training, the object of the scheme being to stem the flight from the land and improve living conditions for those who remain in this mountainous area.

5. Textile industry

There is a limited but very significant scheme in the same region of Italy. A number of small clothing firms have amalgamated to survive. Under the scheme former home workers will be trained in industrial techniques and training will also be provided for management staff, dress designers and stylists. The training courses will last from 6 to 12 months and will affect 120 persons in all. It is hoped to stabilize the situation within two years as new structures are established.

6. The handicapped

Two experiments are in progress in Germany (The Heidelberg Centre). The first is to provide automated training by computer, including training for the blind by means of an "audio-visual" system which uses Braille symbols. Under the second handicapped persons will be trained in computer skills.

In Belgium (Fonds national pour le reclassement social des handicapés - National Fund for the social integration of the handicapped) work is in progress on an experiment which shows that the poorly-sighted can use computers to apply data-processing techniques to management.

7. Migrant workers

In the United Kingdom (Department of Employment) the Social Fund has made 10.5 m u.a. available to provide schooling for the children of Commonwealth immigrants who are unable to cope in normal primary classes.

In Italy (Ministero del Lavoro e della Previdenza Sociale - Ministry of Labour and Social Security) a programme has been launched to help some 30 000 Italian migrants who have returned to their homeland. Reception and information facilities will be provided and workers will be channelled towards available jobs.

THE SITING OF NUCLEAR POWER STATIONS

There were 56 nuclear power stations in the Community in 1974, there may be 200 by 1985. This is enough to explain why Mrs Walz, Member of the European Parliament and author of a report on "the conditions for a Community policy on the siting of nuclear power stations taking account of their acceptability for the population" is worried.

Mrs Walz recognizes that we cannot do without nuclear energy, but she wants it to be produced and used in such a way that it will not harm the economy, democracy or the environment. The European Parliament's Committee on Energy, Research and Technology obviously agrees with her and Parliament itself adopted her resolution when it met in January.

Annexed to Mrs Walz's report is a working document which details the licensing procedures and analyses the site selection criteria for nuclear power stations in Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United States.

A look at this document will show that Mrs Walz has good reasons for recommending a Community definition of installations subject to authorization. Although the regulations in force in the various countries follow a similar pattern (submission of the application to the national authorities, consultation at regional and/or local level, technical approval, final decision at national level), it is clear that their purpose is viewed and defined in widely different ways.

Mrs Walz also maintains that the general public must be kept abreast of developments at all stages of a project and informed of any problems or difficulties that arise. "It seems clear" she says "that some of the implacable opposition to nuclear energy, which is based on emotional rather than rational considerations, would not have attracted so much attention from the general public if the scientific world itself had not remained silent for so long and if the authorities concerned had involved the public from the beginning in the establishment of nuclear power stations."

In all planning permission procedures there is a stage at which local and regional authorities are asked for their opinion. But their role is invariably advisory, often indeed a mere formality. The way in which this phase of the procedure is handled by the central authorities detracts from its significance and scope.

This can only harden public opinion and convince local representatives that they are being deliberately excluded from plans which are agreed at high level but from which they stand to suffer.

To take another point Mrs Walz finds it incredible that, seventeen years after the Treaties of Rome came into force, there is still no provision for transnational regional consultation on plans to site a nuclear power station near an intra-Community frontier.

To return to procedures, Mrs Walz notes that the final decision is sometimes taken by the Economic Affairs or Industry Ministry on its own, sometimes by the latter in conjunction with either the Health and Environment Ministry or a specialized nuclear energy agency. A definite line of conduct should be laid down at Community level, "not simply to achieve harmonization for its own sake, but to provide all the citizens of the Community with the same guarantees." Mrs Walz believes the final decision should be shared by the Health and Environment Ministry, the Ministry for Economic Affairs and the Ministry for the Interior.

Why shouldn't nuclear installations be sited underground? Mrs Walz points out that underground siting could reduce the hazard represented by large quantities of actinides and fission products. Underground construction of nuclear fuel processing and fuel element production plants might also be a good idea.

Shipments of radioactive elements have to be protected against air accidents, sabotage and theft. Because of the increase in the number of nuclear installations, effective protection is possible only if the number and size of these shipments are kept to a minimum and subjected to surveillance by specialized units. Mrs Walz believes that transport problems would be eased by the creation of "nuclear parks" combining power reactors, fuel processing plants and waste storage facilities.

This arrangement would also make it easier to prevent misappropriation of small quantities of fissile material - an all too frequent occurrence - and to check compliance with international regulations.

ORGANIC MICROPOLLUTANTS IN WATER

An initial inventory of compounds identified in various waters by a team of research workers from a dozen countries lists more than a thousand different compounds and it is assumed that this is only the tip of the iceberg. Most of these compounds are of natural origin but many of them originate from human activities (industrial and municipal effluents, oil spills, washout from soil, etc.). It is essential that the real hazards of these micropollutants be defined. It is known that many of them are highly toxic to mammals (e.g. a number of carcinogenic compounds have been identified) but their ecological implications can only be guessed at for the moment.

It has been established that some of these compounds are not eliminated, or are only partially eliminated, in the processing of drinking water; indeed some of them are converted to even more toxic derivatives by chlorination and ozonization. Then again some persistent organic micropollutants, notably chlorinated compounds like polychlorobiphenyls, can accumulate in the food chain and reach remarkably high concentrations in fish, birds and mammals.

The low concentrations and great variety of compounds present in samples make separation, detection and quantitative determination difficult. At present chromatography combined with adequate detection devices offers the best solution. But this calls for sophisticated and expensive equipment.

Furthermore gas chromatographic separation techniques can only be used for volatile compounds. Many organic water pollutants are too polar to be volatilized without extensive decomposition. A possible solution here might be high-pressure liquid chromatography which has already been used by a number of laboratories in the European Community.

The analysis of organic micropollutants in water is clearly of interest to the European Community not only because it calls for scientific resources beyond the reach of any country but also because more information is essential if existing or proposed texts are to be implemented. We have only to think of the directives on the quality of surface water intended for the abstraction of drinking water; on the pollution of sea water and fresh water for bathing; on the quality of drinking water; on quality objectives for water for fish-breeding; on the reduction of pollution caused by the dumping of dangerous substances in Community waters; and, last but not least, the Paris Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution from Land-based Sources.

Given this background, the Council of Ministers could not fail to recognize the Community's interest in this project and has therefore instructed the European Commission to coordinate a research programme with the help of a management committee.

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN CONSUMER POLICY IN BELGIUM

Mr J.-M. De Grave, a member of the Community's Economic and Social Committee who also sits on the Consumers' Consultative Committee, has sent us the following report on consumer policy in Belgium.

1. General

The deeds constituting the Centre de Recherche et d'Information des Organisations de Consommateurs, a research and information centre for consumers' organizations, were signed before a notary on 10 October. The Centre has been founded by the consumer organizations forming the Consumer Council (cooperatives, unions, publishers of test reports, women's and family movements) and will be managed entirely by them. The Belgian government recognizes that the Centre will provide a public service and is prepared to help financially (Bfrs 50 million has been promised for 1976). The Centre will not be open to the public; it is seen rather as an agency servicing organizations which will disseminate research findings.

Early in the year consumer organizations asked the Minister for Economic Affairs to create a Directorate-General for Consumer Affairs in his Ministry. The Minister agreed in principle and promised to establish an Inspectorate-General (one step lower in the hierarchy) as a transitional measure but even this seems to have been shelved for the moment.

The Law of 14 July allowed consumer organizations to apply to the President of the Trade Tribunal for an injunction against misleading advertising. Following a successful action leading to an injunction against the Veparco company for a totally ineffectual product which, it was claimed, made hair grow again, consumer organizations took a civil action and won their case thus creating an interesting precedent.

2. Foodstuffs

A number of Royal Decrees were adopted recently following the Benelux agreements. Consumer organizations expressed surprise at these decrees which on the whole are less stringent than draft EEC directives and indeed Belgian regulations. For instance, the obligation which has existed since the nineteenth century to indicate the source of edible oils (olives, corn ...) was abolished. Since they were not consulted by the ministers concerned, the consumer organizations have now invoked the right of consultation recognized under the preliminary EEC programme.

Bakers, consumers, Ministers for Public Health and Economic Affairs had agreed that the rules applying to bread should be amended to meet consumer wishes (standardization of weights, reduction of salt content, labelling ...). The Ministry for Public Health went back on its agreement and the introduction of new rules has been postponed.

The Minister for Public Health has refused to allow consumers to nominate their own representatives on the Foodstuffs Advisory Committee.

Several cases of fraud involving wine have drawn attention to the fact that six years after the adoption of Community rules on wine, Belgium has failed to appoint supervisory bodies or to introduce sanctions for infringement.

### 3. Prices

The price freeze which ended on 31 December succeeded in slowing the rate of price increases.

On 1 January 1976 taxi fares went up by 41%. The reason for this is that tips have now been included in the charge.

A law freezing all rents from 1 December 1975 is in course of preparation.

### 4. General conditions of sale

The legislators may take some time to suppress inadmissible clauses in general conditions of sale. Consumers have therefore attempted to modify such clauses themselves by means of agreements. After two years of discussions, agreement with the motor industry is in sight. The agreement will not give consumers everything they want but it does provide minimum protection of consumer interests and the informed consumer can try to introduce further amendments to his advantage.

### 5. Miscellaneous

The Law of 3 April 1975, under which words to the effect that "Smoking can damage your health" must be printed on cigarette packets, has entered into force. Some consumers would like it to go even further.

Consumers are considering bringing an action against the Minister for Communications. They have asked him twice, unsuccessfully, to apply the decree which prohibits the relaying of advertising material by cable television. The decree is ignored despite the fact that Belgian law does not allow television advertising.

A Government grant will be paid between now and 31 December 1976 to cover 25% of the cost (maximum Bfrs 25 000) of improving the heat insulation of housing or the efficiency of central heating units.

During talks on the economic recovery plan two unions, the CSC and FGTB, stressed the need to improve the quality of life, security and the quality of goods and services. Consumers expressed similar views in connection with the economic plan for 1976-80.

A Foundation for the Improvement of Living Conditions is to be set up to mark the 25th anniversary of the coronation of King Baudouin.

The law on the building of hypermarkets has come into force. Regular meetings of provincial and national advisory committees began in December. Consumer representatives (cooperatives, unions, women's and family movements), jointly appointed by all the consumer organizations, will meet with representatives of small business, the hypermarkets, farmers, industry and unions representing distributive workers.



## **PRESS AND INFORMATION OFFICES OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES**

### **BELGIUM**

1049 BRUSSELS  
Rue de la Loi 244  
Tel. 735 00 40

### **DENMARK**

1045 COPENHAGEN K  
4 Gammeltorv  
Postbox 144  
Tel. 14 41 40

### **FRANCE**

75782 PARIS CEDEX 16  
61, rue des Belles-Feuilles  
Tel. 553 53 26

### **GERMANY**

53 BONN  
Zitelmannstrasse 22  
Tel. 23 80 41

1 BERLIN 31  
Kurfürstendamm 102  
Tel. 886 40 28

### **IRELAND**

DUBLIN 2  
29 Merrion Square  
Tel. 76 03 53

### **ITALY**

00187 ROME  
Via Poli, 29  
Tel. 68 97 22 à 26

### **LUXEMBOURG**

LUXEMBOURG  
Centre européen du Kirchberg  
Tel. 479 41

### **NETHERLANDS**

THE HAGUE  
29, Lange Voorhout  
Tel. 070-46 93 26

### **UNITED KINGDOM**

LONDON W8 4QQ  
20, Kensington Palace Gardens  
Tel. 727 8090

### **CHILE**

SANTIAGO 9  
Avenida Ricardo Lyon 1177  
Casilla 10093  
Tel. 25 05 55

### **GREECE**

ATHENS 134  
Vassilisis Sofias 2  
Tel. 743 982/83/84

### **JAPAN**

102 TOKYO  
Kowa 25 Building  
8-7 Sanbancho  
Chiyoda-Ku  
Tel. 239-0441

### **SWITZERLAND**

1202 GENEVA  
37-39, rue de Vermont  
Tel. 34 97 50

### **TURKEY**

ANKARA  
Kavaklıdere  
13, Bogaz Sokak  
Tel. 27 61 45/46

### **UNITED STATES**

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20037  
2100 M Street, N.W.  
Suite 707  
Tel. (202) 872-8350

NEW YORK 10017  
277 Park Avenue  
Tel. 371-3804

### **URUGUAY**

MONTEVIDEO  
Calle Bartolome Mitré 1337  
Casilla 641  
Tel. 98 42 42