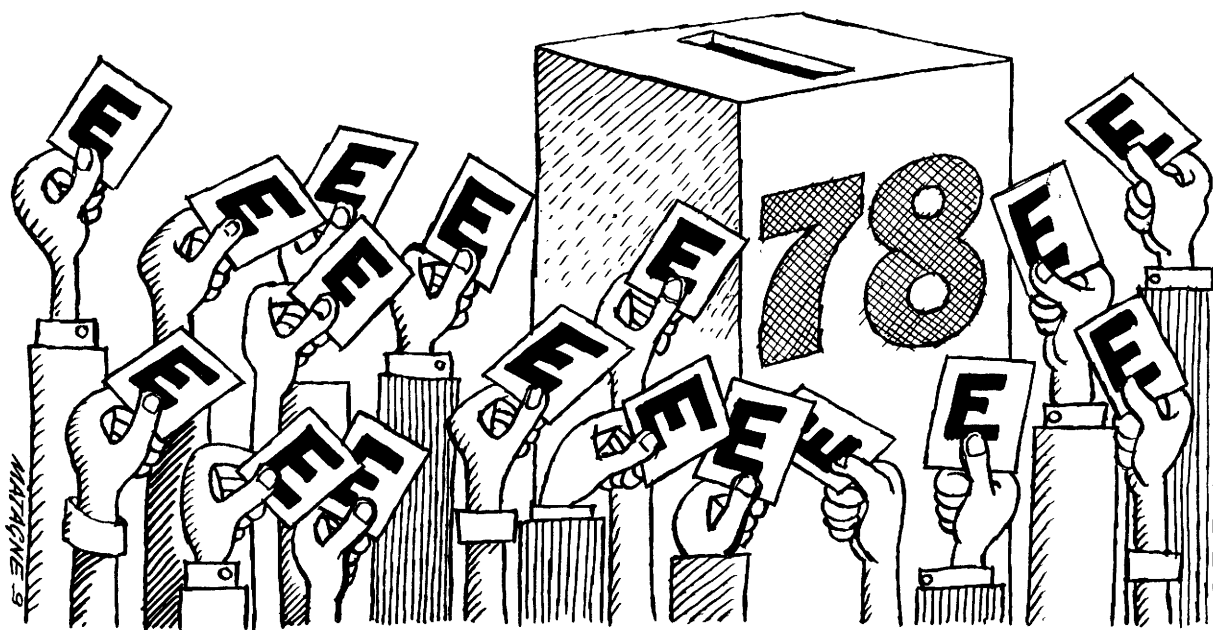


# euroforum

## europa day by day

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No 10/77



European elections : what the voters think (see page 3)

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++ EUROPEAN ELECTIONS : WHAT THE VOTERS THINK

Most common market citizens are in favour of direct elections to the European Parliament. But some dramatic differences exist between political parties from one country to another. Public attitude to the elections has been recorded in a number of opinion polls conducted for the European Commission and Euroforum draws together a few conclusions in ANNEX 1.

++ OIL OVER TROUBLED WATERS

The European Commission has warned the Nine that more effort is needed to make energy go further. An outline of the savings plan and other Commission proposals to keep Europe's lights burning in the years to come are presented in ANNEX 2.

++ CONSUMERS : COMMUNITY ROUND-UP FOR 1976

The European Commission has recently published its Annual General Report on Community activity in 1976. Euroforum reproduces the section dealing with consumer protection in ANNEX 3.

++ THE ECONOMIC SITUATION - SLOW PROGRESS

Certain events point to a not too distant end to the bad patch that has coloured the Community's balance of trade since mid-1975. The revival of economic activity after the summer break induced a recovery in Community trade that was visible in most countries in September. The improvement continued into November, but it seems that recovery is relatively restrained.

A recent survey of the economic situation made by the European Commission indicates that the psychological climate has stopped deteriorating in some of the more pessimistic countries. The number of unemployed people remained more or less stable up to the end of last year, total unemployment in December reaching around the 4,900,000 mark, which was 4.6 % of the working population. More recent statistics, however, indicate that half of this total in many countries were people less than 25 years old.

In several Community countries, the rise in consumer prices was noticeably moderate during the latter few weeks of 1976. On an annual basis, inflation reached an overall 8.5 % in December against 11.5 % in November and 15.5 % in the month before that.

++ WASTE : A HIDDEN TREASURE

Each year the Community creates about 1,700 million tonnes of waste. Ninety million tonnes of household waste, 115 million tonnes of industrial waste, 200 million tonnes of sewage, 950 million tonnes of agricultural waste, 300 million tonnes from the extractive industry - and so it goes on. And each year the Community produces 5 % more than it did the year before.

The Waste Management Committee was set up by the European Commission to coordinate work against waste in the Member States. It recently met for the first time and declared that priorities for Community and national action should be waste paper, packaging materials and toxic waste, and the re-use of waste as fuel and in farming. Other subjects discussed by the Committee and to be studied in the future were notably ferrous and non-ferrous wastes, sewage sludge, and waste from demolition sites, textiles and intensive rearing.

#### ++ COSMETICS

Some interesting facts relating to the Community directive on cosmetics (see Euroforum No 28/76) have been provided by the Commission in reply to a question from Pierre-Bernard Cousté of the European Parliament. Although it states that cosmetics must not harm human health through normal use, the directive reflects the state of scientific knowledge at the moment it was adopted. So if a country finds, on the basis of new information, that a cosmetic is noxious, even though it conforms to the directive regulations, it can take the necessary measures and then bring it to the attention of the Commission.

An aspect of the directive will be to align all national legislation to do with composition, labelling and packaging of cosmetics, though they will still have to conform to the requirements of other directives. Shampoos and soaps, for instance, must show a certain degree of biodegradability and pre-packaged cosmetic products must conform to the directive on pre-packaging.

#### ++ HELP TO FARMERS AND CONSUMERS

Up until now the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) has only been concerned with the rationalisation of agricultural production in its 'Guidance' activities. An exception has been made in the form of a subsidy of 400 million units of account (1 ua = approx. US \$ 1.1) for improving the processing and marketing of agricultural products that have already left the farmer but not yet reached the consumer. During the next five years the grant will be used to rationalise and develop storage, conditioning, conservation and treatment or processing of agricultural produce. Activities that improve trading and marketing or help improve knowledge of price formation could also benefit. Through the rationalisation of activities that will ensure good outlets for farm produce, the European Commission also expects this financial aid to benefit consumers through an improvement in the quality and presentation of products, not to mention a possible favourable impact on retail prices.

#### ++ EARTHQUAKERS

With the Friouli earthquake still in the minds of many, four Italian members of the European Parliament (Messrs. Pisoni, Ligios, Pucci and Vernaschi) have come up with the idea of setting up a European Research Institute capable of predicting seismic shocks which could be used as the basis of a European network of detection centres. The European Commission is presently examining the problems involved in predicting seismic

activity, putting particular stress on the development of more sensitive detection instruments. At a preliminary stage in its research, the Commission is not in a position to comment on the possibility of setting up such a research centre to study the problems of predicting earth tremors.

#### ++ CONSUMERS CRITICISE FARM PRICES

Although the proposed increase of an average 3 % in farm prices is the lowest for years, European consumer representatives are alarmed that the Commission continues to propose price rises in the present economic circumstances. The Bureau of the Consumers' Consultative Committee (CCC) has recently studied the Commission proposals for the 1977/78 marketing year and conclude that the rise is unjustified and unacceptable. But it has expressed satisfaction with Commission efforts to put more stress on improving agricultural structures, the organisation of agricultural markets and the distribution of produce in implementing the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

#### ++ SILENCE IS GOLDEN

Motors are going to have to be even quieter. The Council of Ministers has decided that the noise motor vehicles are permitted to make will be reduced, as from April 1, 1980, by between two and seven decibels compared with earlier provisions adopted by the Community in 1970. The largest reduction of seven decibels will affect buses, since they operate mainly in built-up areas where noise is considered particularly unpleasant. Coaches that run more on country roads than in towns must reduce noise level by five decibels, though this reduction will be applied only two years later because of the technical problems it might present to manufacturers.

#### ++ MISLEADING ADVERTISING

Misleading advertising has been a big consumer problem ever since the affair of Adam and Eve and the serpent and the apple. It also presents a problem for producers and advertisers who have been sceptical of the European Commission's attempts to develop a draft directive that can define exactly what misleading and unfair advertising is, let alone decide on appropriate action to be taken against it.

Advertising amounts to friendly advice for some and an expensive deception for others. Striking a balance between the two extremes is not easy. But it is not just a question of honesty between producers and consumers. Misleading advertising is a form of unfair competition aiming to attract customers to retailers or manufacturers whose products might not merit a second look. A major problem is if the advertising only appears to be misleading. What authority should have the power to decide whether an advertising campaign should be suspended for a legal ruling. And who should pay damages to advertisers whose campaigns are ruined as a result of unjust suspension. The Commission is currently working with those concerned in the hope of producing a Community directive to cater for these tricky legal points.

++ EUROPEAN AIRCRAFT BACK ON COURSE

After a near collision with its American counterpart, the European aeronautical industry seems to be back on course. Representatives of the nine Community countries have reached agreement on priority aims, the first being to establish a coherent strategy for all levels of large passenger aircraft construction programmes. Duplication would be eliminated after different options have been considered.

This means making maximum use of the design and construction capacity that the Community already has at its disposal. European builders will work towards possible cooperation formulas with American industry.

But it will be necessary to define the criteria for economic viability before beginning a new construction programme. A sufficient number of orders or options is obviously important and will be better established after lengthy discussions between builders and airline companies as to precisely the kind of aircraft the market needs.

++ NEW CONSUMER STRATEGY

According to a director at the European Commission it is time consumers moved off the defensive and join producers and dealers in facing up to problems such as the threat to the environment, the accumulation of waste and the dwindling of natural resources. Speaking in London earlier this month, Mr Michel Carpentier of the Environmental and Consumer Protection Service, said that the consumer must fully assume his personal responsibility in modern society and be prepared to play an active role. He pointed out that the consumer is becoming the 'target' of tradesmen from having been on the defensive for so long.

While consumers do not intend to unleash a revolution, it is clear that they want a better place in society for the individual. Public authorities in most countries have already recognised this and given their support to consumer organisations. The role of the consumer advocated by Mr Carpentier could change from that of the critic to the adviser and partner in the main decision-making process that determines his future.

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EUROPEAN ELECTIONS : WHAT THE VOTERS THINK

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Most citizens of the European Community are in favour of direct elections to the European Parliament. This emerges from the results of the Eurobarometer opinion polls which have been carried out by the European Commission. A special adviser to the Commission, Mr. J.R. Rabier, analysed the results of opinion polls dealing with the European elections and his main findings are presented here.

Subject to ratification by the nine Member States, some two hundred million European citizens will be called upon in 1978 to vote for their four hundred and ten representatives. Even if the powers of the Assembly are not increased, it will be legitimised by virtue of the election of its members by direct universal suffrage.

Leading up to the elections there is likely to be intense political debate concerning the ratification in each country, and increasingly on the mode of this first European election - voting methods and size of constituencies - which will doubtless have its effect on public opinion. The political parties will be introducing manifestos and candidates. Expect an electoral campaign of unprecedented size and proportions until voting day.

One approach to predicting how Europeans are likely to cast their votes is to follow the periodic opinion polls that have been taken by the European Commission since spring 1974. Representative samples taken across the nine countries of the Community so far have produced the following results.

Change in public attitude in the new Member States

Ireland - the number of those in favour of direct elections have increased from 45 % in 1973 to 63 % in 1976, an increase of 18 %. The percentage against the elections has consequently dropped from 31 % to 14 %. The non-responses have remained about the same.

United Kingdom (not including Northern Ireland) - At the beginning of 1970 only 25 % of British people declared themselves to be in favour of direct elections whilst 55 % were against, and 20 % did not reply. By autumn 1973 the percentage in favour had risen to 33 % and settled at around 40 % between spring 1975 and spring 1976. By November 1976 it had risen to 57 % amounting to a 24 % increase from the end of 1973 to the end of 1976. The numbers of those against had decreased by contrast from 49 % at the end of 1973 to 22 % by the end of 1976. Non-responses stayed approximately the same.

As in Ireland the trend between 1973 and 1976 was decisively in favour at the expense of those against which decreased significantly.

Denmark - Danish public opinion has been much more cautious. From the end of 1973 to the end of 1976 those in favour increased from 36 % to 42 %, only a 6 % increase. Those against who were in the majority in 1973 (43 %) had swung into the minority position by the end of 1976 (37 %) but not by a very large margin. Non-response remained at about the 20 % level.

Public opinion in the six founder countries

Attitudes were generally in favour of direct elections to start with and have consequently only increased 13 % over our three year period, compared with + 18 % in Ireland and + 24 % in the UK. However there have been interesting differences between the six founder countries. Those that have increased most are France and Belgium, + 18 % and + 17 % respectively. Yet they still remain the countries relatively least in favour of direct elections.

In 1973 the three countries most in favour were W. Germany (69 %), Luxembourg (77 %) and Italy (64 %). By the end of 1976, Italy and Luxembourg had moved to 77 % and Germany to 76 %. The increase was slightly greater in Italy (+ 13 %) than Luxembourg (10 %) and Germany (+ 7 %).

In the Netherlands, which has consistently maintained a middle order position, the increase was 12 %.

Differences between groups interviewed

The results of the last opinion poll in November 1976 show for the Community as a whole that :

- on average men are more in favour than women (76 % against 65 %) ;
- age plays an important part : men of working age (25 - 54) are more in favour than old and young men, whilst amongst women those under 55 have a broadly favourable attitude whilst those over 55 are much more against. Young men and women have similar attitudes though women are slightly more in favour ;
- the size of the locality (village, small or large town) has little influence ;
- the level of education and, above all, income shows a significant difference in attitudes.
- the 'leadership index' tends to be best indicator (this index is arrived at by combining the replies to two questions dealing with a tendency to participate in political discussion and secondly the propensity to convince one's circle of friends.)

Attitudes of political groups

Public attitude to the principle of elections to the European Parliament does not coincide with traditional political divisions.

- In Italy, where the national average of those in favour is 76 %, the variation between parties is also relatively small (5 %). The party most above the average is the small republican party (P.R.I.) with 90 %. The other parties are approximately the same (82-84 %) with the exception of the Communist party (P.C.I.) which stands at 74 %
- In Luxembourg, (national average 73 %), the variation is also low (5 %). the Social Democrats take the lead with 84 % followed by the Socialists (S.L.A.P.) with 81 %. The Liberals (D.P.) are just above the average



and the Christian Socialists just below.

- In Germany, (national average 72 %), variation amongst parties is not significant. The Liberals (FDP) have 77 %, the Social Democrats (SPD) 76 % and Christian Socialists (CDU/CSU) 72 %. The Communists (DKP) and Nationalist (NPD) are well below the average.
- In France (national average 68 %) the variation is 6.5 %. Leaders are the Centrists (Reformateurs and Social Democrats) with 78 % followed by the Independent Republicans with 75 %. The Socialists have 72 % in favour, the Republicans of the Left 69 % whilst the Gaulists (U.D.R. formerly R.P.R.) are right on the national average. Below that average are the groups of the extreme left (67 %) and the Communists (59 %). Between the groups of the majority and those of the opposition the difference only amounts to four points (73 against 69 %).
- In the Netherlands the variation is very pronounced (12 points). Way above the national average we found (since the number of parties changes frequently) the groups of the left (PPR and PSP) with 85 % in favour, and the 66 or 70 Democrats with 83 %. They were followed by the Liberals (VVD) with 79 % and just above the average the Socialists (v.d.A.) with 60 % and the Catholics (KVP) with 69 %. The protestant parties (ARP and CHU) were more reserved (59 %) as were the small groups of the extreme right, and the Communists.
- In Ireland (national average 58 %) the variation is not marked. All the political groupings are above the average and it is the least politicised sectors who are least in favour. The members of the Coalition (Fine Gael and Labour) are more in favour than those of Fianna Fail (64 % against 59 %).
- In Belgium (national average 57 %) the dispersion is 6.5 %. Those in favour are more frequently members of the Volksunie (73 %), the Dutch-speaking Liberals (PVV) (71 %) or the regional French-speaking groups (67 %) and Flemish Socialists (65 %). The two Christian Socialist parties are a little above the average whereas the Walloon Socialists are the same as the national average (57 %). The whole Dutch-speaking electorate is slightly more in favour of the direct elections than the French speakers (64 to 60 %).
- In Northern Ireland the smaller representative sample makes the analysis slightly more tentative. The dispersion is very marked (17 %). The national average is 43 %. Members of the moderate groups (Alliance, UPNI, NILP) as well as the SDLP are more in favour than the those of the extremists (Unionist Convention, DUP, Official and Vanguard) with 61,50 and 36 % respectively).
- In Great Britain, the dispersion is very low (5 %). The Conservatives and the Liberals are both above the 42 % national average with 50 % and 48 % respectively. The Scottish Nationalists (SNP) and Welsh Nationalists (Plaed Cymru) coincide with the national average (42 %) whilst Labour supporters fall just below the average with 39 %.
- In Denmark the average is 37 % with a dispersion of 11 %. Above the average are the Conservatives (58 %) the Radicals (50 %), the small Centrums-Demokraterne group with 49 % and the Liberals (Venstre) with 42 %. The Progress party (Fremskridspartiet) is close to the average 39%. All other groups are below - the Social Democrats with 34 %, the Christians 32 % and the Popular Socialists 24 %.

## OIL OVER TROUBLED WATERS

The price of oil is rising whilst public opinion is becoming more reticent about the nuclear alternative. To meet Europe's growing energy requirements over the coming years it seems that we will have to do more than switch off the occasional light to conserve energy. In a series of reports on the energy situation, the European coal market and the European energy savings programme, the European Commission has warned the Nine that much greater effort is required to learn how to make a little energy go a long way.

### 40 million barrels

The high and increasing level of dependence of the industrialised world on oil from the OPEC countries has been a crucial problem since 1973 when these countries finally bared their economic teeth. Over the next decade, world demand for oil is expected to increase by one third and will stand at something like 30 to 40 million barrels per day (these figures are already higher than 1976 forecasts). It is unlikely that producers will find it in their interests to produce this much, even if they intend to increase production at all. Some of them expect their resources to be exhausted within fifteen years and those countries with large reserves will not necessarily be in need of the income from increased production. The principle oil-producing country Saudi Arabia will be faced with world demand for its oil of around 12 million barrels per day, whilst it only needs to produce some 5 million per day to cover its own ambitious development programme. As the European Commission stated last October, this situation puts considerable pressure on such countries to increase oil prices. Such increases would seriously harm world economic growth.

Most of the increase in demand for oil will come from outside the Community. Most governments are, however, conscious of the need to diversify the energy requirements of their countries while saving as much energy as possible at the same time.

### Encouraging results

The Community's efforts to save energy since the 1973 oil crisis have been quite encouraging. In 1976 we consumed 2.5 % less energy than in 1973, whilst still attaining a growth rate of 4 % GNP. We have reduced our imports by 7.5 % but have been assisted by a number of other factors such as the economic recession with its reduced industrial activity and the good weather. The latest indications for the future are somewhat alarming. If our nuclear energy capacity in 1985 was limited to the 95 Gigawatts actually in operation, in construction or still planned, instead of the 125 Gigawatts which was the objective last October, energy deficit involving greater oil imports could not be avoided. This would entail an additional 60 000 million dollars per year at current prices. Oil would still be needed to meet 50 % of our needs. Taking account of imports of coal and gas, eight years from now the Community would still be importing 55 % of its total energy requirements.

### Wild waste

The OPEC producers have made it clear in the North-South dialogue and elsewhere that the industrialised world's present and intended use of oil is excessive. Last year the Community maintained that the aim should be to develop national energy resources to ensure continued economic growth over the coming decade without increasing oil imports. This is the basis for its programmes, but to ensure this the Community will now be required to intervene in other ways, particularly :

- the Community needs a more dynamic and effective energy saving programme ;
- greater encouragement has to be given to the development of national coal production and its outlets ;
- as regards nuclear energy, doubts as to the role it should have in the programme should be cleared up and public confidence re-established. It will also be necessary to continue research and development work on safety and other related problems ;
- the Community needs a strong programme if new energy sources are to gain maximum benefit, even if the contribution of such sources will still be very modest by 1985. The work on nuclear fusion should be continued in any event, since it is the principal hope for meeting energy needs in the next century.

### Half hearted saving

It is difficult to evaluate the economies that have already been achieved since consumption patterns in recent times have been greatly affected by the low level of economic activity. Most observers feel that savings resulting from measures taken by Member States themselves have been small and are at most only a half of the total 7 % reduction in energy consumption per unit GNP recorded between 1973 and 1976.

Governments have yet to come to terms with problems such as which sectors should be economised in most to achieve the best practical results and whether it is sufficient to rely only on price mechanisms, publicity and information campaigns.

### The future of energy

One of the most essential things the Member States and the European Commission should do is encourage a more lively public debate on the possible future of energy supply and demand and try and identify the European and world framework within which action has to be taken. Tomorrow's energy problems need to be looked at as intensively as today's economic problems are. But for such a debate to take place and be effective, the statistical instruments and methods for evaluating the net benefits of energy saving have to be improved. It is a two-fold problem consisting on the one hand of trying to cut wastage and on the other trying to ensure economic growth.

The target areas

The sectors where rapid solutions need to found are :

1. The energy requirements for the heating of residential, industrial and commercial buildings. The state of the sector dealing with thermal isolation and associated materials.
2. The car industry, in view of standardising the measurement of fuel consumption, and reducing this consumption and extending vehicle life.
3. The electrical equipment industry, particularly as regards domestic usage to standardise the measurement of energy consumption, reducing energy consumption whilst prolonging equipment life.
4. Energy conversion, with a view to reducing losses in production
5. The possibilities of more savings in other large energy consuming industries.

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CONSUMERS : COMMUNITY ROUND-UP FOR 1976

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The European Commission has now published its Annual General Report on Community activity in 1976. The section dealing with consumer protection is reproduced here.

Main developments

When adopting a preliminary programme for a consumer protection and information policy on 14 April 1975, the Council emphasized that the aim of the programme was to protect the health, safety and economic interests of consumers and to improve their education, information and representation.

Progress has been made in the various fields covered by the programme. The Commission has put two of the most important priority measures before the Council, and other initiatives have been taken particularly as regards consumer information and education.

The Consumers' Consultative Committee, set up by the Commission on 25 September 1973, expanded its operations in 1976 giving its opinion on several texts submitted by the Commission.

Achievements

As regards foodstuffs, the Commission departments continued with the revision of the list of additives to adapt Community regulations to technical progress and to ensure better health protection for consumers.

On a proposal from the Commission, the Council deleted nine substances from the list of authorized colouring matters. It laid down the maximum amount of erucic acid in the oils and fats used in foodstuffs and agreed on the main provisions of an outline directive on materials and articles intended to come into contact with foodstuffs.

The Commission continued with its work to limit the amount of pesticide residues in cereals used as foodstuffs, in foodstuffs of animal origin and feedingstuffs, and submitted to the Council a proposal for a directive restricting the marketing and use of plant protection products which contain certain active substances (mercury, organochlorine pesticides) and are capable of affecting human health.

As regards veterinary matters, the Commission sent to the Council proposals for amendments to the Directive of 15 February 1974 which are designed to make substantial changes in the chilling of poultrymeat and to give guarantees in respect of hygiene. There is also a proposal for a directive concerning the examination for trichinae in pigmeat imported from non-member countries. When the Council has completed its work on the proposal for a directive concerning meat-based products, a very high level of hygiene should be attained for all these products in intra-Community trade.

Some of eighteen directives adopted by the Council under the general programme for the removal of technical barriers to trade directly concern consumers, in particular those on motor vehicles and cosmetics. The Council continued with its examination of the proposal for a

directive on the classification, packaging and labelling of pesticides. The Commission started to prepare a draft directive on toys, for which safety is particularly important

As regards the protection of the economic interests of consumers, the Commission adopted two proposals for Council directives in the areas assigned priority in the programme, one concerning liability for defective products, and the other the protection of consumers vis-à-vis contracts negotiated away from business premises.

In addition, the Commission began to prepare two draft directives concerning consumer credit and misleading advertising. Preparatory work was also started on unfair clauses in contracts and correspondence courses.

The Commission commenced drafting a proposal for a directive on the unit pricing of foodstuffs in order to help provide better consumer information on business premises.

Following the Montpellier Symposium on Judicial and Quasi-judicial Means of Consumer Protection in December 1975, the Commission prepared a summary report which was sent to the Member States and to Parliament.

The Consumers' Consultative Committee (CCC) examined several files referred to it by the Commission, including those on product liability, deceptive advertising, unit pricing, consumer credit, unfair clauses in contracts and doorstep selling. It also continued with its work on the common agricultural policy.

In order to extend and intensify the dialogue established with consumer organizations, the Commission arranged a symposium for representatives of the consumer organizations of the Member States of the Community on 2 and 3 December 1976. On this occasion the consumer associations showed greater interest in the work of the Community and tabled several specific proposals to be used as guidelines in action undertaken by the Commission in the future.

In the course of the year, the Commission continued with the studies undertaken in conjunction with consumer organizations in the field of consumer education at school and information for adult consumers ; it also began the collection of data on teaching methods and experiments in the Member States in order to prepare a paper. The subsidies granted by the Commission in 1975 also enabled several consumer organizations to start work on the labelling of textiles, consumers' transport requirements, general terms of sale, and rules on labelling.

In July the Commission presented the results of a preliminary opinion poll of 10 000 consumers in the nine Member States. This poll provided information on consumers' concerns and aspirations and their needs as regards information.

Several information brochures on consumer organizations, the European consumer survey, and a bibliography on consumer protection are to be published early in 1977.

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