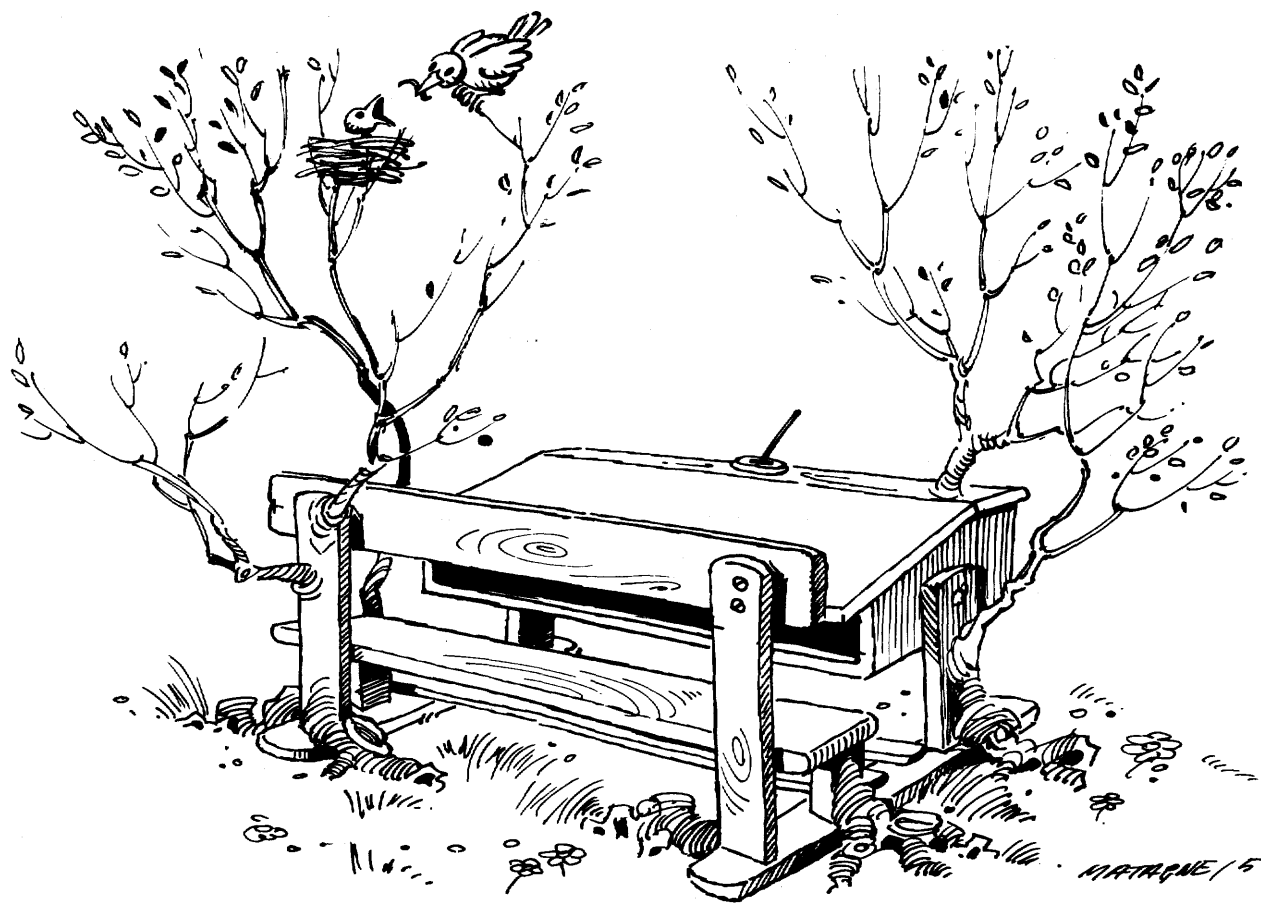


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Primary schools have started to open their doors to the environment (see page 3).

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IN THIS ISSUE

- ++ Environment : new education concept (p. 3)
- ++ Mediterranean : Community brings sunlight (p. 3)
- ++ Trade unions and consumers (p. 3)
- ++ Farm prices : BEUC meets the Parliament (p. 4)
- ++ European youth turns to the Community (p. 4)
- ++ European cinema (p. 4)
- ++ Non toxic packaging (p. 5)
- ++ TV and radio advertising (p. 5)
- ++ Public enterprises and competition (p. 5)
- ++ More uranium in Greenland (p. 5)
- ++ Health and coal mines (p. 6)

++ ENVIRONMENT : NEW EDUCATION CONCEPT

Environmental education should begin at primary school. From the age of nine, children should be motivated and made more aware of their surroundings. With this in mind, the European Community has set up an information network to link the schools already engaged in environmental education experiments throughout the Nine.

In Annex 1, Euroforum takes a look at the enterprising project.

++ MEDITERRANEAN : COMMUNITY BRINGS SUNLIGHT

In comparison to the North of Europe, the Mediterranean regions have one great advantage : the sun. Their main disadvantage is a low standard of living. To bring about a better balance within the Community, the European Commission intends to tackle the problem of Mediterranean agriculture.

In Annex 2, Euroforum details the concrete projects which the European Commission has proposed in this field.

++ TRADE UNIONS AND CONSUMERS

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) which represents 39 million workers in 18 countries, aims to defend the interests of its members both as consumers and workers, and has just adopted a consumer programme to guide its members.

The ETUC wishes to see controls introduced to regulate prices. The organisation also stresses the importance of ensuring that the common agricultural policy takes consumer interests fully into account.

Legal protection of consumers is in their view insufficient. Consumers and producers should have equal rights.

To avoid both wastage and inflation, products which are marketed should correspond to specific quality and durability criteria. They should be subjected to appropriate tests before they are sold.

The health of consumer-workers should always have priority over producer interests, the ETUC stresses. All dangerous products whose effects are not fully known should, consequently, be withdrawn from the market. Legislation against all types of pollution should be strengthened, both at the national and European level.

To improve consumer information and education, the ETUC suggests that consumer representatives should have access to the mass media.

All misleading advertising should be subject to severe legal sanctions.

Out of profit motives, a number of areas are neglected by private industry despite the potential collective social gains. Public authorities should invest in these areas.

The ETUC also wishes sales and distribution channels to be reformed so that all have equal access to goods.

In conclusion, the ETUC calls on its 31 national trade union affiliates to take an active interest in all consumer problems.

++ FARM PRICES : BEUC MEETS THE PARLIAMENT

The European Union of Consumer Organisations (BEUC) was received, 3 February, by the Agriculture Committee of the European Parliament. Discussions covered the common agricultural policy, farm prices and in particular, the problem of structural surpluses. Miss Eirlys Roberts, director of BEUC, stressed that consumers refuse to pay high prices for products which are being sold to third countries at subsidised prices. BEUC wishes the guaranteed price for the surplus products (milk, beef, sugar, wine and cereals) to be frozen. The Parliamentarians were generally receptive to the suggestions put forward by the consumer representatives.

++ EUROPEAN YOUTH TURNS TO THE COMMUNITY

Unemployment is the most urgent problem facing young people and a solution has to be found at the Community level. The same is true for many other current problems : environment, energy, economic reform, the control of multinationals, rights of migrant workers.

This was the basic conclusion of a meeting of representatives of the principal non-governmental youth organisations, held at the initiative of the European Bureau of International Youth Organisations.

A delegation from the Bureau was received by Mr. Henk Vredeling, Vice President of the European Commission. They informed him of the intention of Europe's youth to work towards creating a truly European public opinion.

++ EUROPEAN CINEMA

Europe's film industry is very much in the doldrums, but can the Community do anything to lend a hand? The European Commission finds there are two areas where their economic situation may be improved : harmonising the national aid which is given them, and abolishing the restrictions which still exist regarding rights of establishment, the offering of services and the movement of labour. On top of this, it would certainly be more profitable if the distribution of films in the Community were better coordinated.

++ NON TOXIC PACKAGING

It is becoming increasingly more common to buy food packed in transparent plastic. One of the most common materials used for covering edible foods is polyvinyl chloride (PVC). This product is produced from a gas called vinyl chloride monomer (VCM) which, tests on animals have shown, is a harmful substance and potentially carcinogenic.

From now on, PVC materials and products may only contain a maximum of 1 mg of the gas VCM per kilo of finished product, when they are intended for use with food. The Council of Ministers has just adopted the proposal sent by the Commission in January 1977 (see Euroforum 2/77). This directive will come into force in November 1979 at the latest.

From that date, virtually no trace of VCM gas may be permitted in foodstuffs or drinking water.

++ TV AND RADIO ADVERTISING

COFACE - the European Communities Committee of Family Organisations - has just sent out a questionnaire to its member organisations entitled "Television and radio : regulation and consumer participation". Analysis of the results collected should present a clearer view of the presence of advertising in these media, and the nature of the legal provisions and bodies who regulate it. In the second phase of the project, COFACE will gauge the level of consumer participation in the regulation procedures. The results of the enquiry will be published at a later date.

++ PUBLIC ENTERPRISES AND COMPETITION

How well are the Community rules of fair competition respected when the losses suffered by nationalised industry are made good out of public funds, and when nationalisation is used to keep non-profitable industry in business?

This was a question recently put to the Commission by a member of the European Parliament. Some of the financial support to public enterprises can be justified by the special costs a particular industry may incur to achieve a certain specific objective. The Commission still needs to be able to check that these aids are not incompatible with the Community free competition rules and the Commission has consequently initiated a study on the nature, extent, employment and financing of public enterprises and industries which receive special benefits. This study should be completed in the near future.

++ MORE URANIUM IN GREENLAND

More uranium than predicted has been discovered in Greenland. The European Commission and the Danish government have jointly

been financing a uranium exploration project in Greenland and the latest results indicate that one of the fields, Kvanefjeld in the south west of the country, is much larger than anticipated. Reasonably assured resources amount to some 27,000 tonnes and supplementary uranium is estimated at 16,000 tonnes.

The uranium content of the mineral is, however, lower than in the majority of other fields being developed elsewhere.

Also, a new uranium extraction process will be required to exploit the mineral resources of Kvanefjeld.

++ HEALTH AND COAL MINES

Workers in coal mines are exposed to a number of dangers and health risks, among which figure pneumoconiosis and silicosis. Pollution from dust, fumes, noxious gases, noise, makes the work even more hazardous. The European Commission has been tackling the problem of industrial hygiene in mines for many years now, and since 1957, it has financed three research programmes dealing with dust and health (total cost 12,900,000 units of account). This research has resulted in notable progress, though it is a long process. Solving some problems brings forth others, and standards have to keep up with technical progress.

The Commission is now proposing a new five year research programme which will be endowed with 7 million European units of account (EUA). The project has been given the support of three professional, scientific and governmental consultative committees. The project now has to receive the green light from the ECSC consultative committee and the Community's Council of Ministers.

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ENVIRONMENT : NEW EDUCATION CONCEPT

Whilst some school children are studying the local river which passes through their town, others are analysing the pollution risks which threaten their locality and others are tracing the history of their town through the ages. These three examples are signs that things are changing in schools. Education is no longer ignoring the environment.

To help this trend along its way, a new project is being drawn up at the Community level to bring together into a single network, all the pilot schools in member states who have introduced environmental education into their curriculum.

Knowledge and know-how

In May of last year, the Council of Ministers decided to set up an information network to link these primary school experiments. This project - part of the Environmental Action Programme - has been drawn up by experts within the European Commission and national education officials, and is based on a study which was undertaken on the environmental education of 9-14 year olds in the Community. The study comes to the albeit tentative conclusion that education in member states is beginning to take more seriously the need to make a child more aware of his surroundings. Community experts and national officials are agreed that this implies:

- 1) Expanding knowledge The problem here is which method to choose. Environment is a general and rather vague term. The best solution is perhaps to give the child the opportunity to discover the environment himself and to draw his own conclusions, whether it be by studying the materials used to build a house, or examining the biological structure of a forest and its natural equilibrium, or studying the appliances present in the street of a city (public telephones, letter boxes, etc.)

Expanding know-how In this way, the child will learn to appreciate, value and safeguard his surroundings.

Increasing motivation Making the child more aware of his environment involves strengthening his motivation. An essential element of this is to give the child the opportunity to share with his friends - particularly those of other countries - the experience and knowledge he has gained. This can be facilitated by using various techniques - film, tape, etc.

Network of 14 schools and centres

The child has to be introduced to a number of basic and concrete concepts, for example, water, waste and recycling.

From this, a European environmental education network involving the exchange of experience and knowledge could play a major role.

To begin the network, the organisers of the project have chosen 14 schools or centres in Member States. These schools have children in the 9-11 year age group and all have already embarked on some activity in the field of environmental education. For the present, the number involved is being limited since the scheme is at the experimental stage (see list in annex).

The intention is not, of course, to set up a complex and bureaucratic network. The project can only work if the students are being consulted and are asking questions themselves, whilst being assisted by expert coordination. With this in mind, the first seminar was held in Dublin last June 20 and 21, and enabled the basic programme to be established:

- each school should embark on a project devoted to an aspect of its local environment, with the assistance of films, slides, recordings, drawings, etc. and should be prepared to share its results with other schools;
- a communications network should link the various schools;
- each pupil should be encouraged to visit other schools;

A preliminary stock-taking of the results of this experiment will be given at a seminar next June when project leaders and pupils will be present.

List of schools and centres participating in the European Environmental Education network project.

GERMANY

Görres-Gymnasium
Koblenz
Rheinland-Pfalz

Stadt. Hauptschule Barmenheidt
Gewerbeschulstr. 109
56 Wuppertal - Ba

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Han-sur-Lesse
Place Communale
5432 Han-sur-Lesse

Ecole Communale d'Aublain
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6464 Aublain

DENMARK

Bakkenskolen
Skolebakken, 166-168
6700 Esbjerg

FRANCE

Ecole d'Application
de l'Ecole Normale de Foix
Plateau de Montgauzy
09000 Foix

Centre Permanent
d'initiation à l'environ-
nement de Bagnères de Bigorre
(Hautes-Pyrénées)

U.K.

Balgownie Primary School
Bridge of Don
Aberdeen

Wood End Junior Mixed School
Harpenden
Hertfordshire

ITALY

Scuola Elementare
"Giacomo Leopardi"
Via Parco della Vittoria, 30
00100 Rome

IRELAND

Scoil Mhuire na Dea-Chomhairle
Johnstown
Dun Laoghaire
Co. Dublin

LUXEMBOURG

Centre National de la Jeunesse
Château de Hollenfels
Hollenfels

NETHERLANDS

Openbare Lagere School
"De Springschans"
Wilddreef, 1
Leiderdorp

SCHOLA EUROPAEA

Europese School
Europa Wijk No. 180
2400 Mol
Belgium

For more details on the project, contact Mr. Anton TRANT,
Director of the Curriculum Development Unit, University
of Dublin, Trinity College, 28 Westland Row, Dublin 2.

MEDITERRANEAN : COMMUNITY BRINGS SUNLIGHT

Despite the advantages that Southern Europe undoubtedly enjoys, the sun does not do enough to raise the standard of living of the rest of the European Community. Low productivity, small-scale industry, low incomes - Mediterranean agriculture is on the decline. This imbalance is likely to get worse in the absence of new industry and under the threat of competition from farm products from other Mediterranean countries.

Farming priority

The European Commission has proposed a number of concrete measures to the Council of Ministers which could bring immediate and urgent help to this region. For the moment, the Commission is limiting itself to agriculture but it is fully aware of the importance of introducing integrated economic development projects embodying all aspects of regional and social policy.

There is little margin for manoeuvre, however. Mediterranean agriculture has to be improved, jobs have to be assured, acceptable wages guaranteed, further surpluses avoided and protectionist measures towards third countries prevented. Reconciling all these objectives will be difficult.

Improving the market

The European Commission intends to devote 160 million units of account each year (1 u.a. = + 1.2 dollars) to improve the market for farm produce. Olive oil, for example, will continue to receive aid, though assistance will be restricted to olive trees which already exist, so as to avoid the creation of new surpluses. The consumption of olive oil must also be stimulated to enable the market price to come into line with the lower prices of other vegetable oils. Lowering the market price would be compensated by aid to olive oil refiners, whilst financial assistance will be given to producers.

Fresh fruit and vegetables is another area where Community action could be beneficial. It will be necessary to encourage new orchards and direct producers towards quality products, again with the incentive of national aid. Here once again, producer groups will receive financial support which should stabilise the market and regularise supply.

The Commission's plans for wine involve preparing an overall wine programme which would limit the quantity but improve the quality of wine, and concentrate wine production in the most suitable regions.

Transforming the countryside

Over a five year period, the European Community should spend more than one billion units of account to change agricultural structures in the regions. Irrigation projects for the Mezzogiorno, replanting more suitable vines in the Languedoc Roussillon area, reafforestation projects, road improvement projects, extending electricity networks and water networks - the whole of the Mediterranean countryside has to be considered, but the beauty of the area must not be destroyed. The wellbeing of the inhabitants has to come first.

The region and its inhabitants

Farming is not all, and the Commission proposes to give financial aid to programmes undertaken by national authorities in a number of fields. Some deal with flood control, others concern small and medium sized industry, developing tourist areas (particularly out of season activities) or increasing the efficiency of the craft sector which plays an important role in the economy of the least developed regions in the Mediterranean.

By helping the Mediterranean regions, the Commission is hoping to help improve the overall balance of the Community. With over industrialisation in the North, the European Community runs the risk of toppling over if it does not give more attention and the required support to the South.

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