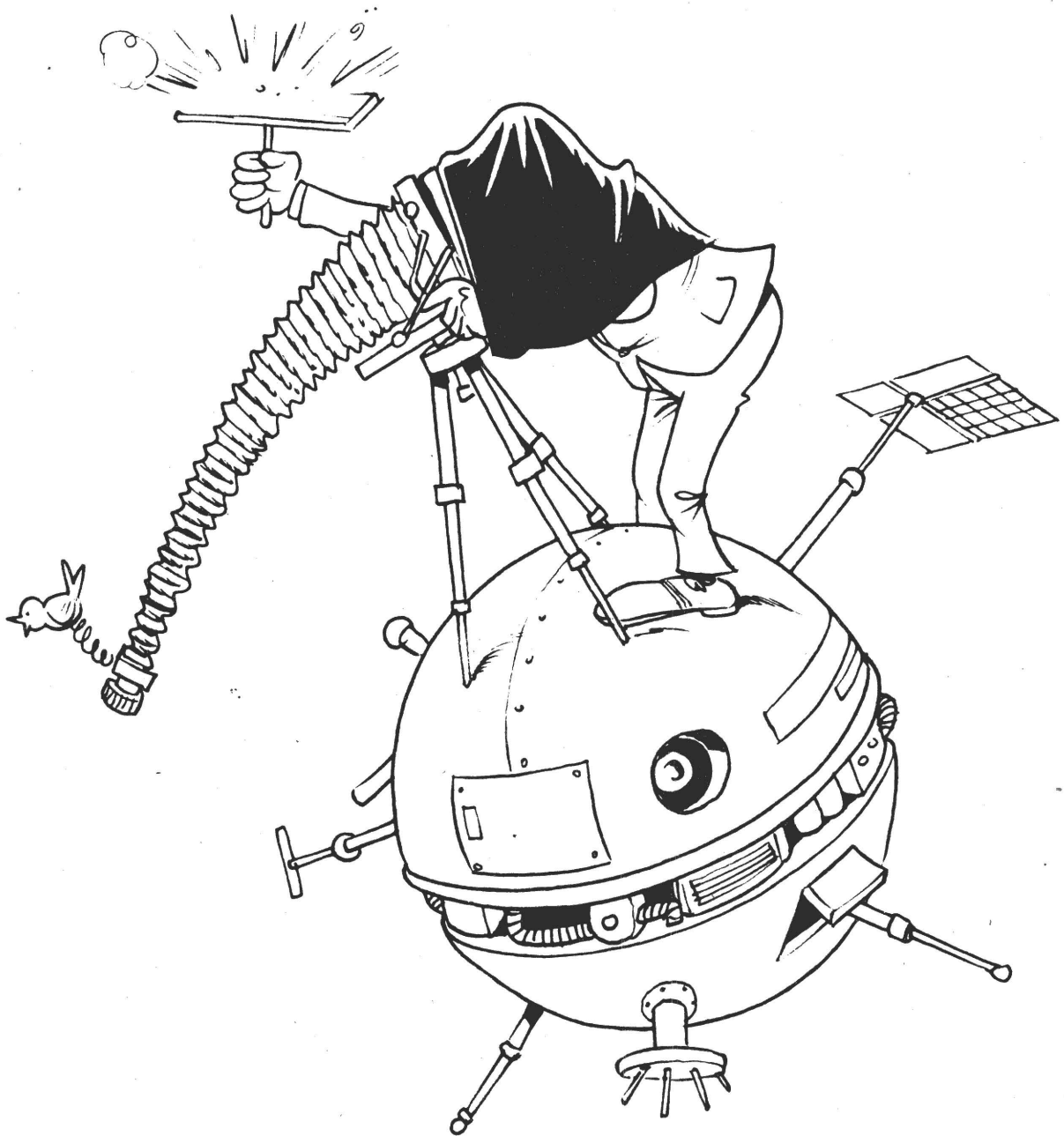


# Euroforum



Close encounters of a useful kind... See page 12.

# Euroforum

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Euroforum is published by:

Directorate-General for Information,  
Commission of the  
European Communities,  
Rue de la Loi 200,  
B-1049 Bruxelles,  
Belgium  
Tel. 735.0040/8040

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## Working women still being short-changed

Working women in the Community still have an uphill battle to fight before they win the war for equal pay. Making it illegal to discriminate against women workers is not enough, it seems.

Although a Community law came into force in February, 1976, decreeing that women should be paid the same as men for the same work of equal value, not one of the Nine Member States has gone all the way to ensure that this is so.

In a review of progress over the past three years which it has sent to the Council of Ministers representing the Member States, the Commission says that it intends to take proceedings against some of them because of the extent to which they have failed to apply the Community law.

It also plans to bring together employer and trade union representatives to find solutions to the thorniest problems that need to be solved, particularly job definition.

While discrimination against women has continued since the law was adopted, it has become more indirect and disguised. For example, equal basic rates may be fixed but these often bear no relation to the size of eventual pay packets. Similarly, men benefit much more frequently from the 'head of household' allowances and the Commission believes this concept should be replaced by the more equitable notion of parental responsibility.

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Berl. 2/68,  
Commission  
of the European Communities,  
Rue de la Loi 200,  
B-1049 Brussels.

A further problem has been the difficulty in defining exactly what is meant by equal work or, worse still, work of equal value.

The Commission feels that there are not enough inspection teams to ensure that the law is being observed, nor are there enough public agencies with enough power to promote the rights of working women.

Ironically, not enough women take their complaints to law. This has been particularly true in Luxembourg and Denmark. The exception is in the United Kingdom where 2 500 cases were brought in the first two years after the law was passed.

One reason for this could be that many women, particularly those at the lower end of the professional or social scale, are unaware of their rights. The trade unions could help here. Another is the fear that they may be victimized by their employer if they complain, particularly at a time like the present when jobs are scarce.

## Court's opinion favours lorry driver safety

A lengthy legal struggle over the introduction of mechanical devices designed to measure driving time and improve safety requirements for lorry drivers has reached another milestone.

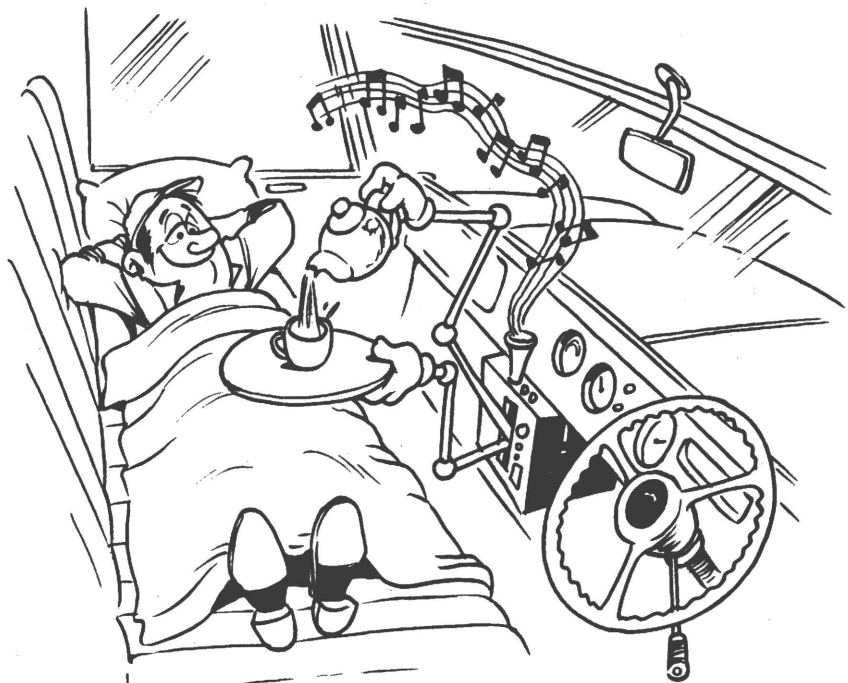
While the opinion is only advisory and not decisive, the Advocate General of the European Court of Justice has supported the European Commission in a case involving the British Government.

The British authorities have been charged with failure to introduce new Community regulations limiting the number of hours lorry drivers can operate their vehicles. These measures have been introduced in all of the other Member States except Ireland, which is in the process of implementing them.

The main measure involved is the installation of Tachographs. These are devices in the lorry cabs which record the actual time driven.

The British Government has argued that the system would cost too much for the transport industry and was unnecessary. As a result, the system which was applied by the other Community countries in phases beginning in 1975, has not been put into operation in the United Kingdom.

The Advocate-General told the Court that Community countries did not have the latitude to apply Community law as they chose but must implement regulations adopted by the Council of Ministers, where each country is represented. The Advocate-General therefore urged the Court to rule in favour of the Commission and against the British Government. The ruling should be given within a month.



## Protecting workers

What protection do workers receive when their firm goes bankrupt? The answer seems to vary greatly among the Nine Member States. The European Commission is concerned because this could affect the creation of a common market. It has proposed that the Nine should give their workers equal protection against business bankruptcies.

The European Parliament supports that idea. But it thinks that more compensation should be given workers. It suggests that a maximum equal to six months salary should be given. The Commission has proposed three months.

Parliament also thinks it wrong that workers should have to contribute to the compensation funds. Mr Vredeling, Commissioner responsible for Social Affairs, is prepared to amend the proposals. He says that public authorities and employers may contribute as well.

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### IN BRIEF

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If you are having a baby you are entitled to between 12 and 20 weeks maternity leave from work. But it all depends on which Community country you live in.

This is just one of the discrepancies between the Nine Member States where motherhood is concerned and the Commission is to carry out a study to establish exactly what are the entitlements in the various countries.

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### EMPLOYMENT

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## 6m. unemployed, but jobs go unfilled

A major preoccupation for virtually all countries is the fact that, in the midst of high unemployment, there are jobs that go a-begging.

Figures just released by the European Commission show that, while there are still more than 6 million workers in the nine countries looking for work, something like half a million jobs are available and unfilled. That's the average

number registered at national employment services in the nine Community countries during 1977. For example, there were an average of 154 000 jobs registered and unfilled in the United Kingdom during the year. The figure is even higher for Germany where there was an average of 231 000.

The problem is that the unemployed aren't always qualified for the vacancies or jobseekers don't know about them. For this reason the Commission feels that part of the drive to reduce unemployment must try to match qualification with the jobs available. This means more retraining for which the Community's Social Fund can pay more than half the cost.

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## TAXATION

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### Nine combine to beat the dodgers

Tax evasion is reputed to be a popular pastime in Europe. At least a considerable amount of attention has been focused on it.

A couple of years ago, the British humour magazine 'Punch' devoted a cover to the subject. And in France, an announced crackdown by the 'Fisc' provoked near rebellion and some suicides.

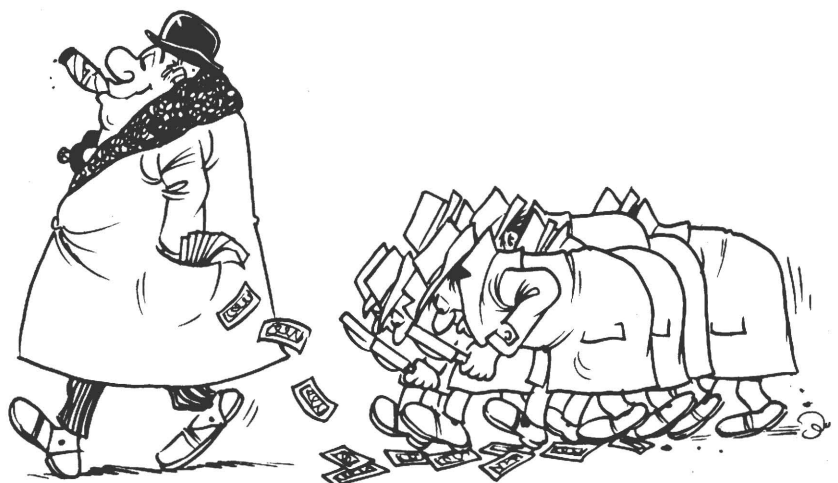
The subject is certainly controversial, but there is at least one aspect of the issue on which all European Community governments are agreed. That is to help each other in tracking down the really big game that roams across their borders.

A new Community law which has just become effective sets up a system of cooperation between the national tax authorities of the Nine. The law was adopted in 1977 and is largely aimed at big multinational companies which try to minimize their tax bills by intricate mechanisms.

Often it's very hard to keep track of the vast currency movements between the branches and subsidiaries of these giant firms as they buy and sell to each other within the same organization. The only way to keep it straight and come up with an accurate tax bill is for the authorities of the various countries involved to swap notes.

Under the new system they will exchange information without breaking their own laws on business secrecy that are aimed at protecting companies against excessive snooping.

So when a government now casts a suspicious eye on possible funny business by a company and its operations in another Community country, it won't have to stop dead in its tracks when it reaches the border. Instead, it will be able to count on help from other tax sleuths to make sure every taxpayer contributes his fair share and doesn't try to get a free ride at the expense of others.





## Irish driving is cheapest

The annual tax rates on private cars vary a great deal among the Nine Member States of the Community.

In general, Italians pay the least tax and the Danes the most. The Irish are the odd ones out in that many vehicles are exempt from road tax. Instead Irish drivers have to pay an annual registration and licensing charge of £5.

Italians having for example, an Austin Mini 1000 pay only one-fifteenth the road tax the Danes pay on the same car. British drivers pay seven times the Italian rate. They pay a standard rate of £50 for all makes of car.

### Annual Rate of Road Tax

#### AUSTIN MINI 1000

Belgium	£ 21
Germany	£ 37
Denmark	£ 103
France	£ 18
United Kingdom	£ 50
Italy	£ 7
Luxembourg	£ 21
Netherlands	£ 53

## REDUCING BARRIERS

### Vets to be as free as birds

While most of the European Community's attention has naturally been focussed on its citizens, it has been displaying some concern for its furry and feathered inhabitants.

Recently, while some of their colleagues were adopting a law that would significantly increase the protection for migratory birds, another meeting of the Council of Ministers was dealing with a measure that would allow the veterinarians who take care of our pets and farm animals and help to manage our wildlife to treat their patients anywhere in the Community.

While in principle Community citizens are free to travel and work anywhere in the nine member countries, in practice there remain a number of barriers, such as the national professional qualifications needed to exercise a profession or trade.

But, as a result of the new Community law, veterinary diplomas earned anywhere in the Community will be officially recognized as valid in other Community neighbours.

This means that the Community's estimated 40 000 veterinarians will be able to join the doctors, nurses, den-

tists and lawyers who had been previously freed from national restraints to practise throughout the Community. Now it remains to be seen if the veterinarian will be as free as the birds he sometimes cares for, or whether he will chose the domesticated life of the household pets that are also his patients.

## LIFESTYLE

### Smokers light up the taxman's eyes

Smokers throughout the European Community are probably well aware that they are taxed for their pleasure, but they may be surprised at how much revenue they provide for the governments of the nine Member States.

In 1976, tax revenues from tobacco totalled £6.75 billion in the Nine.

British smokers contributed £1.8 billion to government coffers. Only the Germans were taxed more heavily in the Community.

The Irish government collected only £98 million from tobacco taxes but then the population is very much smaller.

The French paid less tax than the British though the populations are roughly similar.

On the other hand the Danes who are less numerous than the Belgians paid more tax.



Tax revenues from tobacco in 1976

	Units of Account (million)	National Currency (million)
Germany	3 750	9 378 DM
United Kingdom	2 698	£ 1 808
France	1 414	6 637 FF
Italy	987	1 101 959 LIT
Netherlands	492	1 330 Guilder
Denmark	482	3 375 DKR
Belgium	385	15 338 BFR
Ireland	146	£ 0.098
EEC TOTAL	10 084	£ 6 750

## The high- and low-cost of falling ill

If you are ill you might as well be Italian because you would only have to pay about a third as much for your medicine as a German. The Dutch and Danes also have to pay a lot for their medicine, whereas the French and British pay little more than the Italians.

This is the conclusion of a 158 page report on 'Consumers and the Cost of Pharmaceutical Products' carried out by the Brussels-based Bureau Européen des Unions de Consommateurs (BEUC) which consists of consumer organizations from the Nine Member States.

BEUC studied the difference in prices of the same brands of pharmaceutical products in the Nine Member States. It also tried to find the reason why they differed. In its survey it looked at 77 branded products divided into three main groups—antibiotics, psychotropics and cardiovascular medicines—which together make up a large share of the drug market.

The results are given below with prices quoted on the basis of current exchange rates. Ireland and Luxembourg are not included.

### All products (77)

Average prices (Germany = 100)

Netherlands	91
Denmark	91
Belgium	62
United Kingdom	42
France	40
Italy	30

BEUC concludes that the large difference in prices shows that the big drug firms are able to set the prices they think the market will bear. It rejects the claim that fluctuating exchange rates are responsible for the inequalities. In the long term such differences would be ironed out.

BEUC carried out various checks to make sure that its results were valid. It compared average prices according to purchasing power parities. It also compared prices according to a mixed system of exchange rate and purchasing power. In both cases the results were roughly the same as in the table above.

The same was also true when BEUC compared prices for the three groups of drugs. The only difference was a slightly wider range in the prices of antibiotics. They were comparatively more expensive in Belgium and the Netherlands and comparatively cheaper in the United Kingdom.

Why are drug prices lowest in Italy, France and the United Kingdom? BEUC suggests it is because of governmental price control. The three governments control drug prices on the home market either directly or through health insurance schemes. In Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark there are no controls on the price of drugs.

What does BEUC suggest? It points out that the pharmaceutical industry is not like the washing powder, cosmetic or most other industries. It is directly linked to the good health of everyone. For this reason medicines should be safe, effective and economical.

While governments have generally been quick to regulate the safety and quality of medicines they have been less successful in controlling costs. This has meant that drug manufacturers have been able to earn excessive profits.

BEUC suggests that an International Drugs Commission be set up to:

- rule on the value of drugs on cost-benefit lines
- rule on the extent to which drugs can be substituted
- monitor research and development into drugs
- inform the public

BEUC proposes that a massive campaign be launched on a similar scale to road safety campaigns. The aim would be to inform the public that not every disease needs to be cured by drugs and that there is not necessarily a drug for every disease.

It is concerned that the vast majority of advertising aimed at both doctors

and the public is either wasteful or harmful. It suggests that all direct advertising to the public be banned. Strict standards should also be applied to the advertising of such products as health foods and cosmetics.

More information should be supplied to doctors on the relative merits of various drugs. Efforts should be made to keep them up to date on the latest drug developments. More training should also be given in non-drug therapies.

## Closer links for blood and kidney banks urged

The exciting new field of organ transplants is being seriously hampered in the European Community by a shortage of organ banks and a lack of coordination between the existing ones.

These dramatic new medical life-saving techniques have been the subject of a major study by the European Commission, which confirms that a 'serious' problem exists in this field in the Nine Member States.

The study was aimed specifically at examining the possibility of using data-processing networks to link up the information of blood and kidney banks throughout the Community.

The findings, which are currently being examined by the Commission in an attempt to find the best way of implementing them, recommended that measures be taken to link up the existing banks.

In this way a medical team handling a patient in one country could find out quickly what organs or blood types particularly rare groups, were available in another. As a result, more lives might be saved because organs and blood lacking in one country could be found elsewhere.

The Commission feels that there is a serious lack of organ banks in the Community and that the ones in existence are inadequate, partly because they are not accessible. However, as it pointed out in the European Parliament recently, its role in the health and medical sector is limited under Community law.

## Another look at Channel link

What do the recent proposals for a transport link between France and England across the Channel really have to offer?

As fascinating as the idea has been for centuries, a new study will now look closely at the special features and benefits of the various schemes which have been presented for a rail and/or road link across the English Channel. The study of the Channel tunnel and the other possible projects is just one of four important transportation research undertakings announced by the European Commission in Brussels.

The other three studies will carry on work already in progress which aims at forecasting the needs of the Community in the future.

One will assess the needs for long-distance passenger and freight transport. Another will look at what more could be done to get the maximum use and benefit out of the existing Community transport system.

The third will examine the possibilities of creating a new Community-wide railway freight liner system.

The studies, which will be completed before the end of the year, will be done by expert consultants throughout the Community and headed by the Netherlands Institute of Transport in The Hague and the Battelle Institute in Frankfurt.

## Call for Community coastguard service

Shipwrecked sailors may one day be rescued by lifeboats flying a Community flag if suggestions made by the European Parliament are adopted. A report recently debated by Parliament has called for the creation of a Community coastguard service.

This service would cover not only search and rescue operations. It would also be responsible for the inspection duties involved in a common fisheries policy when this is eventually agreed. The service would also be involved in the fight against marine pollution and in research for the protection of the marine environment.

The rescue of ships in distress in the Channel sometimes needs the combined efforts of English, French, Belgian and Dutch lifeboat services. This would be better coordinated if there was a Community service.

If a common fisheries policy is going to work, then checks will have to be carried out to make sure that fish catch quotas are being respected. Fishermen might be more cooperative if the controls were carried out by boats flying a neutral flag.

Normally only the European Commission can make proposals for Community laws. However, in this case, Parliament is suggesting that the Commission should make a proposal on its behalf.

Another report suggests that the Nine Member States should get together and choose the same types of vessels, helicopters and aircraft used by the coastguard services. At the moment six types of helicopter, 14 types of aircraft and numerous types of vessels are used.

If the Nine could agree on common equipment this would save costs and improve the competitive position of the European aeronautic and shipbuilding industries. NATO has been debating the same question regarding military equipment for several years.

## Such flags may be inconvenient

Not many Community-owned ships sail under flags of convenience. These are generally the preserve of shipowners who have registered their vessels in more exotic places.

Nevertheless, the Commission is carrying out a study of how many Community nationals operate in this way and it also hopes to find out why they have chosen to sail under flags of convenience.

The study is expected to be completed this year and the Commission will then decide if any action needs to be taken to curtail this practice.

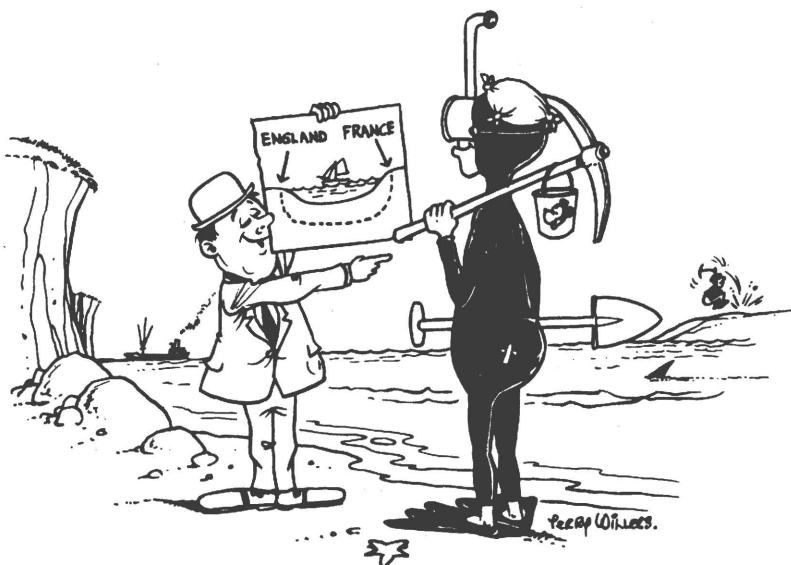
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## IN BRIEF

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The European Commissioner in charge of research, Guido Brunner, has become patron of a new organisation, the European Academy for Continuing Medical Research. Its purpose is to coordinate medical research in the Community. Mr. Brunner is the Commissioner who was responsible for steering through legislation which has made it possible for doctors to practise anywhere in the Community.

A Green Paper on asset formation is currently being prepared by the Commission. It will be published in the first half of 1979.



## Price restraint needed, but CAP still fits

Farm incomes in the Community grew more rapidly in real terms than those in other sectors last year. That is part of a pattern that goes back to the beginning of this decade.

The Common Agricultural Policy has been good for farmers. But, more and more, consumers are demanding what the CAP does for them.

This clash of interest was acknowledged by Agricultural Commissioner Finn Olav Gundelach at the Green Week in Berlin on January 25, when he warned it would be necessary this year to ask farmers to accept a rigorous price policy.

'We must', he said, 'recognize problems where they exist and we must admit that the growth of agricultural output in 1978 was frequently not justified by market needs. We do not, and we will not need much of the milk, butter, skimmed milk powder and sugar that farmers have produced.

'If we do not act now we shall soon be faced with absolutely massive stocks or with excessive expenditure because we have already pushed our sales to the absolute limit'.

Mr Gundelach, who is currently preparing his proposals for agriculture prices for this year, said that he would not ask for a rigorous price policy if he felt it would create intolerable hardship for farmers.

Mr Gundelach announced on 31 January that the Commission had agreed to propose to the Council of Ministers a package for 1979 which includes a freeze on prices measured in units of account—the common Community currency—measures to combat surpluses, a phasing out of monetary compensatory amounts, and new priorities for structural reform. The Council is now considering the Commission's proposals.

'I think agriculture can live with it', he said.

He also made it clear that lower prices alone were not enough to reduce production and surpluses. In the dairy sector, for example, where stocks currently stand at 400 000 tonnes for butter and 665 000 tonnes for milk powder, the Commission is planning to continue charging a levy on surplus milk which will be used in a massive

campaign to encourage consumers to drink more milk and spread their butter more thickly.

Despite the need for these measures, Mr Gundelach vigorously defended the fundamental soundness of, and the need for, the CAP against critics who believed it should be, in his words, 'dumped overboard'.

The Commissioner pointed out that the CAP did not exist in a vacuum but was as much a part of our economy as industry which also had to be supported by subsidies for production, investment, employment, market development and so on. In addition, he remarked, our different social policies provide, among other things, a basic income for the six million who are currently out of work.

'Not one of these payments raises fundamental debate', Mr Gundelach pointed out. 'Why, then, should payments to agriculture, as long as they are rational and effective, be considered undesirable? After all, it is a vital sector of our Community economy'.

The Commissioner added: 'I have said before and I still feel deep in my bones that our present agricultural policy is based on sound principles. It offers justice to consumers and producers and is still the adhesive element of the Community. Change is certainly necessary but it is adaptation that is called for rather than revolutionary reform'.

## IN BRIEF

The Community's Social Fund has made a grant of £ 15 000 to help recovered alcoholics obtain training so that they can return to work. This is a pilot scheme which will be carried out in the United Kingdom where there are an estimated 15-20 000 alcoholics.

The European Commission is preparing a paper which will set out its ideas on civic rights, it told the European Parliament during its January session.

Negotiations on Spain's application to join the Community are due to open formally on February 6. Spain applied for membership last year. The other applicants are Greece, with whom negotiations have been completed, and with Portugal with whom they are in progress.





## CONSUMERS

### Action plan for consumers will be ready soon

More help is on the way for the hard-pressed consumer. At the moment the European Commission in Brussels is putting the finishing touches to its second action programme aimed at giving consumers more protection against faulty goods and dishonest trading, and more information about their rights.

This new guide for future policy, in addition to continuing the action forecast in the first plan adopted in 1975, is expected to stress prices.

For instance, the Commission wants to look more closely at the way prices of drugs and pharmaceutical products are determined. Recent studies (see story in this issue) have noted rapidly rising prices and consumption. It therefore wants to judge whether producers or distributors are taking unfair advantage of market conditions to push prices up needlessly.

The Commissioner in charge of consumer affairs Richard Burke said recently that prices and the role and quality of services in the economy will be among the main thrusts of the Commission's forward consumer planning.

Another important ingredient is expected to be the development of a more active approach to the promotion of consumers interests. This may take the form of greater consumer participation in decisions which affect them and possibly greater cooperation and consultation between producers and distributors on the one hand and consumers on the other.

Of course, the Commission will continue to press the Council of Ministers to approve a number of its proposals such as those designed to combat misleading advertising, protect consumers against defective and dangerous products, and improve the information the consumer needs to choose well in these difficult economic conditions.

### Bon appetit!

While consumer safety is one of the major priorities for all Community authorities, there are some major diffe-

rences in the way they go about this important task.

Food inspection is a good example. The number of food inspectors employed by member countries varies enormously, from one inspector for every 25 000 inhabitants in the Netherlands to one for every 750 000 residents in Belgium.

However these figures which include both field inspectors and laboratory technicians, gives only a rough idea of the personnel engaged in these activities and the degree of efficiency in doing the job.

In France there was approximately one for 41 600 inhabitants, in Luxembourg one per 35 000 and Denmark one per 100 000 to 150 000 persons.

## ENVIRONMENT



### Celebrating the sun

European environmentalists who are interested in the promotion of solar energy are to celebrate our friend The Sun on what one hopes will be a sunny day next June.

The 'Jour du Soleil' is being organized by a Paris-based organization 'Espace pour Demain' ('Space for Tomorrow') on behalf of the European Environmental Bureau. The patron of the event is the President of the European Commission, Roy Jenkins.

The organisers believe that solar energy is a technology acceptable to

all which, among other benefits, will help to create employment and help the development of the third world.

According to 'Espaces pour Demain', the organization of this event on June 23 will be the first such occasion on which the main environmental organizations in the nine Member States have come together.

It is calling on all ecologists and their organizations to send their ideas for the day to:

M. Henry de Cazotte,  
Espaces pour Demain,  
7, rue du Laos,  
75015 Paris.

The European Commission believes that solar energy has a bright future and it is proposing that Community financial support be given to solar energy exploitation projects at a rate of between 25% and 49% of their total cost.

## MONEY

### More protection for wise (or unwise) investors

If you are lucky enough to be an investor, or if you would like to become one, do you feel that you know enough about companies that are trying to attract your savings?

If not, you will be pleased to know that a new system designed to give the public more information about firms listed on the Community's stock exchanges has been proposed by the Commission.

The idea is that companies whose shares are traded in exchanges in the Nine Member States should publish fuller information about their financial situation.

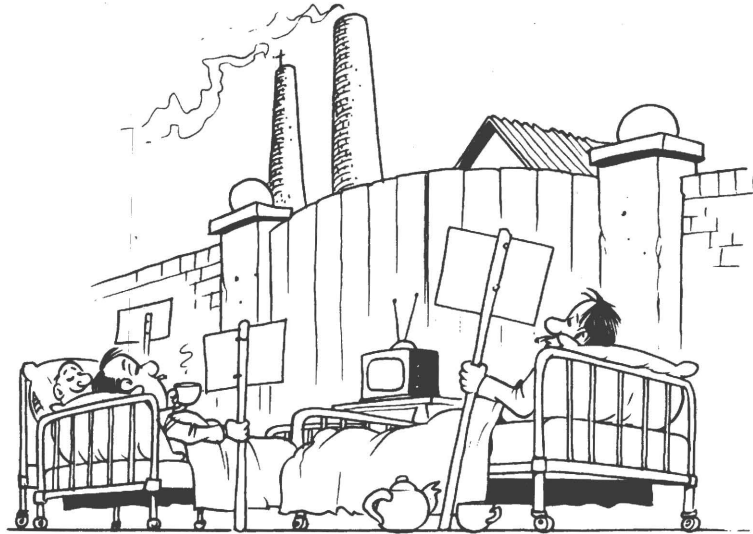
The measure is a follow-up to two others, both of which are also designed to give potential investors more information and also make it easier for both individuals and companies to invest anywhere in the Community.

The first of these measures, which was approved in principle by the Council of Ministers last December, sets out basic requirements before a company can be quoted on a stock exchange. The second, which is expected to be adopted early this year, specifies the type of information a company must give when it is going public.

**Germans strike least: Italian record worst**

Strikes, lockouts and other social conflicts are on many people's minds these days.

Among the major stoppages we have had this year have been the unusual lengthy strike in the German steel industry that spanned several weeks and was the first in the industry for decades, and the crippling stoppages among transport workers that have brought the United Kingdom almost to a standstill.



1977	EUR-9	Germany	France	Italy	Netherlands	Belgium	Luxembourg	UK	Ireland	Denmark
Number of days of work lost (in thousands)	29 899	24	3 666	14 495	236	664	—	10 142	442	230
Number of days of work lost, per thousand	352	1	214	1 000	61	215	—	447	605	116

Dramatic labour upheavals of this type highlight the fact that no European country or system is free from industrial tension. Figures just released by the European Community help put the subject in focus.

In 1977, Italy led all Community countries in the number of days lost because of labour strife with a record that amounted to nearly half the entire Community total. Italy's 14.4 million days lost represented the lion's share of the entire 29.8 million days lost in the whole Community that year. The country also led the others in the number of days lost on average per thousand workers with 1000 compared with the Community average of 352.

The United Kingdom ranked second in this respect with 10.1 million days lost and an average of 447 days lost per thousand workers. Ireland was the only other country which topped the Community average per thousand workers with 605. The total number of days lost was 442 000.

All others were below that average and only France joined Italy and Bri-

tain in recording more than one million days lost with over 3.6 million days lost.

By contrast, Germany was the least disturbed by such strikes, lockouts and other forms of friction with a total of 24 000 days lost and an average of one day lost per thousand workers.

**Multinationals—Community view is spelt out**

The European Commission is not engaged on a crusade against multinationals, those giant business corporations that are accused of everything from price-rigging and tax-dodging to helping promote revolutions and topple governments.

But it is interested in creating a balanced legal framework for their cross-frontier operations, it has been made clear by Viscount Etienne Davignon, who is the Commissioner in charge of industrial relations.

He indicated recently that the Community has sought on the one hand to remove obstacles to such trans-frontier activities while at the same time aiming for appropriate laws to regulate the problems likely to arise as a result of these activities.

The Commissioner sees both benefits and problems arising from the operations of multinationals. But he believes that mutually-acceptable laws and codes should be sought.

Proposals being prepared by the Commission will relate to industry generally rather than specifically to multinationals because multinationals are hard to define. In addition, the Commission does not want to discriminate against them because many of the practices of which multinationals are accused are not confined to them alone.



## THE ECONOMY

### Italians are hit hardest by inflation

Each year the same amount of money buys less and less. The Italian housewife trying to fill her shopping basket is only too aware of this fact.

Her German counterpart is, on the other hand not quite so aware of the problem.

No wonder, considering prices in Italy rose five times as much as those in Germany during 1978.

According to the Community's consumer price index Italian prices rose by 11.5%. German prices rose by only 2.3%. These percentages are based on an estimate for December, the latest figures available.

The average for the Nine Member States was 6.4%. This compares favourably with the USA, where prices rose by an estimated 8.5%.

British and Irish shoppers had to put up with an 8.0% price increase. Apart from the Italians the only others who were worse off were the French, who suffered a 9.5% increase.

#### Consumer prices in the Nine (per cent)

Nov. 77/Nov. 78

Germany	+ 2.3
Luxembourg	+ 3.9
Belgium	+ 3.9
Netherlands	+ 3.9
Denmark	+ 7.1
United Kingdom	+ 8.0
Ireland	+ 8.0
France	+ 9.5
Italy	+ 11.5
Nine	+ 6.4

### Nine's citizens remain thrifty

Remember when you used to have more money to save? Well 1977, the most recent year for which figures have been compiled, seems to have been one of those years.

Figures released by the Community's 1500 savings banks show that their balance sheets rose by more than

13%. In addition, the savings banks' central institutions' balances also rose during that year by over 11%.

That's not bad, but 1976 was an even better year with individual banks' balances up by 17.5% and the central institutions' jumping up by 20%. We'll have to wait a while to see if figures show 1978 was as good a year for our piggy banks.

## ENERGY

### Nine back search for new sources of heat and light

Heat from the sun, energy from the depths of the earth and new forms of alternative power have just received another push forward.

Ever since the energy crisis of 1973-74, considerable attention has been focussed on ways of cutting down on energy consumption and on looking for new sources. While they have differed on a number of other aspects of energy policy in the past, the Energy Ministers of the Community showed their agreement recently on persevering with this type of research.

At a meeting a few weeks ago, they agreed to help finance 46 projects

throughout the Community devoted to such exploration. The Community will spend £23 million at first.

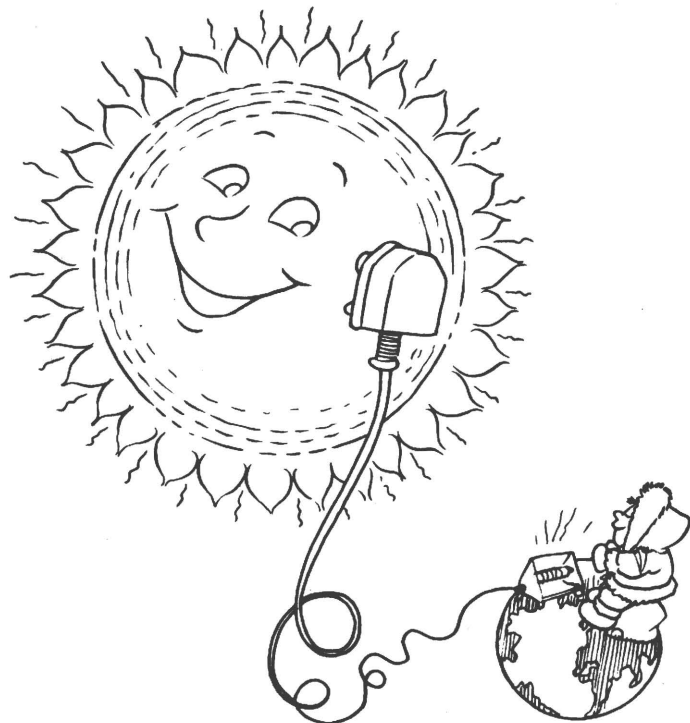
This will go for research into geothermal energy—the use of steam and heat produced in the earth itself—solar energy, the changing of coal into gas, and energy savings. The latter will involve such new projects as investigating better ways of insulating homes.

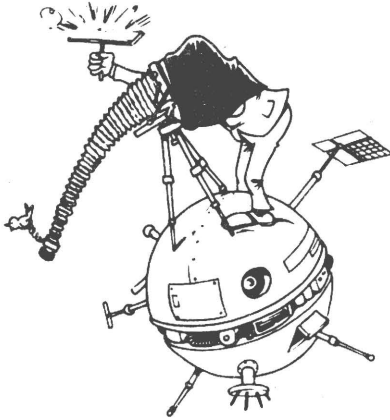
The interest in these new fields of research is evident. When the Commission asked the research centres of Europe for suggestions for projects that it might consider worth financing, it received 461 propositions. Some 326 were aimed at energy savings in general, and 135 on solar energy.

On the basis of this response, the European Commission wants to budget more funds on a regular basis to help sustain continued research in these fields.

Experts at the Community Joint Research Centre also say that the use of solar heat for mass production of hydrogen could cut Europe's oil requirement by 3%. Other studies are aimed at storing solar heat.

For instance, by the end of 1980, solar energy will be pumped into the Sicilian power system. Ground will be broken in April for construction of this new system that will be fed by mirrors covering a surface of 8000 metres<sup>2</sup>. The project itself is financial partly by the Community and partly by the member countries.





## Close encounters of a useful kind

Space-age technology is increasingly being used to help poor parts of the world obtain food and develop their resources. The Community is a firm believer in the value of this new-fangled hardware.

The use of satellites and distant sensing has been part of the Community's efforts to assist the Third World for some years. It all began in 1972 when projects it sponsored led to an inventory—prepared by aerial photography and sensing devices—of the rice and coffee crops in Madagascar.

Since then the Community's Joint Research Centre has worked with the European Space Agency, to which most European countries belong, and with developing countries in the Lomé Convention to intensify the use of such space science. Countries in the Mediterranean region have also benefited. The focus has been on remote sensing of the earth's resources, weather forecasting and telecommunications.

Currently the Joint Research Centre is looking closely at using such technology to prepare inventories of forestry or agricultural resources and the management of water resources and water storage.

It is also considering aid to set up a regional centre in West Africa to handle information from eight countries in the drought-plagued Sahel region. This information will help weather forecasting in the region, one of the poorest in the world, and thus contribute to better management of what agriculture exists.

## President pays first visit to West Africa

With the negotiations for the renewal of the Lomé Convention already well advanced the President of the European Commission Roy Jenkins recently visited three West African countries who signed the 1975 trade and aid pact with the Community. This was Mr Jenkins first visit as President to West Africa.

The three countries chose by Mr Jenkins were Senegal, Mali and Ghana. He met their Presidents and discussed their relations with the European Community, particularly the operation of the Lomé Convention and progress made in negotiations for its renewal. Under the terms of the Convention, the Community admits the bulk of the exports of 56 Third World countries to its market duty-free, compensates them for poor harvests and helps develop their economies by means of financial and technical aid.

Senegal and Mali are important groundnut producers and Ghana an important cocoa exporter.

Mali, which is one of the drought stricken Sahel countries, is the poorest of the three, with a per capita gross national product (GNP) of only 100 dollars per year. Under the Lomé Convention, the Community has fixed an aid programme worth nearly \$100 million.

Senegal and Ghana are slightly wealthier with per capita GNP's of \$390 and \$580 respectively. The Community's aid programmes for the two countries are worth \$77 million and \$65 million.

While in Accra, the capital of Ghana, Mr Jenkins said that the new Convention can be a 'trail-blazer' for a wider relationship between the developing countries and the industrialized world. He said that, despite the fact that Europe is suffering from inflation and unemployment, 'it is determined to consolidate and develop the achievements of the first Lomé Convention'.

## IN BRIEF

Negotiations between the Community and Yugoslavia aimed at an expanded trade and economic cooperation agreement may open this month.

## Parliament and Council still at loggerheads

The European Community's budget is not generally acknowledged as being a policy area that arouses much public interest. In the last few months, however, it has been thrust into the political limelight as the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers, which are jointly responsible for adopting the Budget. Each defend what they consider to be their own legitimate powers.

Legal experts in Brussels, Luxembourg and national capitals are now trying to work out an acceptable solution to all concerned, but as Euroforum went to press, none could be seen on the horizon.

The procedure whereby the Community adopts its Budget is both long and technical. Early in the year the Commission prepares its forecasts of Community expenditure for the following year. This is then examined, and invariably cut, by the Council of Ministers. Then, equally invariably, the European Parliament reinserts most of the money cut by the Council.

The Budget now goes back once more to the Council, which has the final say on items of compulsory expenditure i.e. all money that is needed to pay for policies that are specifically provided for in the Treaties, such as the Common Agricultural Policy.

The Parliament, however, has the final word on non-compulsory items—all those areas not specifically required by the Treaties. The most important of these is the Community's Regional Policy.

If the Council wishes to reject any proposal by the Parliament to increase non-compulsory expenditure at its second reading, there must be a qualified majority (41 out of 58 votes).

For the 1979 Budget, this requirement was not met for the first time when both Italy and the United Kingdom refused to oppose the Parliament's proposal that the Community's Regional Fund should be increased by some £290 million. Thus, the Parliament considered the proposal was adopted

and endorsed this at its final reading—shortly before Christmas.

It was at this point that there was open disagreement between the Parliament and the Council, which claimed that the Parliament could only increase this year's Bpdget by £80 million—well below the extra amount voted for the Regional Fund.

The argument, ostensibly over how to reconcile these two aspects of the Community's budgetary procedure, is really one over the respective powers of the two institutions. No end is yet in sight, but national officials have been delegated to study and interpret rules to find a solution and to ensure that such a situation never arises again.

Last year's Budget was around £8 billion.

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## THE INSTITUTIONS

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### Three Wise Men preparing for the future

While most of us are preoccupied by the icy weather and staying upright on slippery pavements, the three wise men of Europe have quietly started work.

To be more precise, they are studying what changes need to be made to the structure and functioning of the Community's institutions.

They were given this task by the Nine Heads of Government at the last summit meeting in Brussels in December.

The three wise men will be looking at the way in which the European Commission, Council of Ministers, Parliament, Court of Justice and Court of Auditors operate. They will look at ways of speeding up and improving the decision making process.

The idea of appointing the three wise men belongs to President Giscard d'Estaing. It was therefore natural that they should choose Paris as their first port of call, especially as France currently holds the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.

Towards the end of January they visited Brussels. There they had talks with Roy Jenkins, President of the European Commission, with Mr Hommel, Secretary General of the Council of Ministers and with the ambassadors of the Nine Member States to the European Community.

In February they will go to Luxembourg for talks with representatives of the European Parliament and Court of

Justice. Later on they will visit the capitals of the Nine Member States.

Who are the three wise men? A Frenchman, a Dutchman and an Englishman—all three well known in their own countries and experts in Community affairs.

Firstly there is Mr Robert Marjolin who was a close colleague of Mr Jean Monnet, one of the founding fathers of the European Community. Marjolin was Secretary General of the Organization for European Economic Cooperation from 1948 to 1955. He headed the French delegations. He was Vice-President of the European Commission until 1967.

Secondly, there is Mr Barend Biesheuvel, a former Dutch Minister of Agriculture and Prime Minister of the Netherlands in 1971-72.

Thirdly there is Mr Edmund Dell who became Minister of Trade in the British Labour Government in 1977 but resigned a few months ago in order to go back into banking.

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## GENERAL AFFAIRS

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### French flavour for the next few months

For the first six months of 1979 the European Community will be run the French way. This is because it is France's turn to hold the Presidency of the European Council of Ministers—the main decision making body in Community affairs.

Recently the French Foreign Minister Mr Jean-François Poncet told the European Parliament in Strasbourg what the main priorities of the French Presidency are. He said these were direct elections to the Parliament, the introduction of the delayed European Monetary System and the settlement of the Community's budget for 1979.

Mr François-Poncet said that the June elections would give parliament new vigour but that it should continue to respect the rights of the other Community institutions and of the national parliaments. He stressed that although the elections would give parliament a big psychological boost they would not change the role it has played since 1958.

Mr François-Poncet was optimistic that the difficulties delaying the start of the new European Monetary System would soon be solved. He thought a solution would be found for the French demand to phase out monetary compensatory amounts the units

used in the Community's internal farm trade to maintain common prices.

On the budget (see separate article in this issue) Mr François-Poncet insisted that the maximum rate could not be exceeded without approval by the Council of Ministers. The Community's budget for 1979 has not yet been agreed because Parliament is demanding that more money be given to the Regional Fund.

The French Foreign Minister also said that he looked forward to progress in the negotiations to enlarge the Community to include the three Mediterranean countries. In particular he hoped that the Greek accession treaty would be signed before the end of June. However he warned that enlargement posed many difficulties.

Another area in which he hoped progress would be made was in the negotiations for the renewal of the Lomé Convention. This is the trade aid pact between the Community and 56 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. At the same time other developing countries—the 'non-associates' should not be neglected, he added.

One sticky area singled out for mention was fisheries. The French Minister hoped some headway could at last be made on this sensitive subject.

Finally he said that Community leaders would attend two meetings of the European Council ('Summits') in March and June.

### Moving into a new chair

The European Economic and Social Committee (ESC), has a new Secretary General—a Frenchman Mr Roger Louet.

The 144-member Committee represents employer organizations, trade unions and special interests groups, such as farmers and consumers, at Community level. Its role is to represent the opinions of these groups when Community legislation is being prepared.

Mr Louet is no stranger either to the ESC or to European Affairs. He has been the ESC's Director General for the past six years. Before that he was spokesman for social affairs at the European Trades Union Confederation.

Mr Louet has also served for several years on the administrative council of the International Labour Organization in Geneva.



## The European elections—who can vote where

The first direct elections to the European Parliament in June will be a big event in the construction of a united Europe. However not everyone will be able to take part in this historic occasion.

For example, Britons and Luxembourgers living abroad will not have the right to vote. The only exceptions to this rule are British government officials and members of the armed forces.

Danes, Germans and Dutch living abroad will only be able to vote if they are resident in another Member State of the European Community.

Belgians, French, Irish and Italians are luckier. They can vote even if they live abroad. Italians who live outside the Community and Irish anywhere abroad must, however, return home in order to cast their vote. Belgians and French can go to their nearest consulate.

In six of the Member States the right to vote is restricted to nationals. The exceptions are the United Kingdom, Ireland and the Netherlands.

In Ireland there is a unique arrangement whereby citizens from any other Member State resident there may vote for Irish candidates. Irish citizens may vote in the United Kingdom if they are resident there.

In the Netherlands, citizens from other Member States will be able to vote if they could not vote in their own country's election.

The minimum voting age for eight Member States is 18. The exception is Denmark where it is 20.

## Socialists agree on appeal

The Union of European Socialist Parties, already the largest in the European Parliament, met in Brussels in January to introduce its campaign in the first election to the Community's assembly in June.

The paper adopted at the Brussels gathering is called 'An Appeal to the European Electorate' and is highlighted by a charter of economic rights for Community citizens that is designed to improve their economic situation and the general employment climate.

Reflecting some of the differences between the various Socialist, Labour and Social Democratic parties in the Member States, the document says that 'any further transfer of powers from national governments to the Community institutions or from national parliaments to the European Parliament can take place only with the clear assent of the national governments and parliaments.

The debate over the powers of the European Parliament has already become a major political issue in both the United Kingdom and France and will probably be increasingly discussed as the election campaign progresses.

The main thrust of the paper approved by top Socialist leaders from the Community countries was on the need to maintain employment and restructure the economic system. Specific proposals included shorter working hours to encourage additional employment. The parties also approved greater aid to the third world, improvement of job opportunities for women and the young, and increased efforts to help the consumers and the environment.

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## EXTERNAL RELATIONS

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### Closer links with Romania likely

Historic negotiations between East and West may begin soon. The European Community and Romania are currently preparing for talks on a commercial accord between the two in what would be the first time a country belonging

to the Communist Comecon economic grouping had entered into such a general treaty with the Community.

While the Community has had separate and limited accords with Comecon countries, including Romania, and now has a full commercial pact with China, there has always been a reluctance by Comecon countries to conclude such framework documents. Relations between the Community and the Comecon itself have been stalled for years, largely over this issue.

However, the Bucharest government, which has frequently taken a more independent line than some of its Comecon neighbours, has repeatedly expressed an interest in closer relations with the Community.

Beginning in 1974, bilateral talks have led to Romania benefitting from the Community system of preferences for imports from developing countries and to accords on trade in textiles and steel. Last year Romania said it was interested in negotiations on an accord covering all other products as well. This is what will happen as soon as the Community Council of Ministers can approve a joint position on the terms of such a pact.

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## IN BRIEF

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The European Commission has named five outside experts whose job will be to make it more efficient. It is particularly anxious to improve its working methods before the Community is enlarged to include Greece, Spain and Portugal. The review body will be headed by a diplomat, Dirk Spierenburg.

The Commission has denied in the European Parliament that there is any disagreement between Community Member States that would put its 1979 food aid programme at risk. It said all Member States shared its opinion that food aid was an essential part of the Community's programme of aid to the Third World.

The European Commission is to ask the European Investment Bank, which makes low-interest loans to industry, if it can make loans at even lower rates of interest for the preservation of historic monuments in the Member States.

'The establishment of a directly-elected European Parliament, providing the first opportunity for some 200 million European electors to go to the polls in the same election, is the Community's most ambitious and most difficult step to date'. (Commissioner Christopher Tugendhat).



## Consumer protection doesn't stop at the border

To her horror, Mrs Massey returned home to Britain from the first family holiday trip to the Continent and found that her shiny new Italian coffe-making machine not only did not turn out espresso the way it tasted when she had it in Florence; after emitting strange, gurgling sounds, it died a sputtering death.

Our fictional housewife began to sputter herself after repeatedly being rebuffed when she tried to get the product's guarantee honoured. After several such vain attempts in shops near her home, and by mail, the ex-coffee machine saw service as a flower vase and umbrella stand.

Unfortunately, this type of incident has become an increasingly frequent by-product of the fact that in recent years international shopping has ceased to be exclusive pleasure of the jet-set.

Hordes of Continental European buyers storming across the Channel hell-bent on filling up the family car with inexpensive English goods are by now a familiar sight in English towns.

Similarly, many Belgians drive the few miles across the Dutch border to Breda to purchase everything from clothes and household appliances to indoor plants and certain types of food. And an impressive number of Germans cross the Rhine to do their weekly shopping in Strasbourg.

Foreign shoppers, all looking for greater variety and value based on the differences in national currencies, are like strangers in paradise, dazzled by the novelty.

A natural travelling-companion on this international-style shopping spree is international consumer protection. The customer may not always be right—no matter what language he or she complains in. But he or she should be able to make a case when a complaint arises.

Instead of just being 'out of sight and out of mind' as far as the foreign manufacturer was concerned, the European consumer now has an international ombudsman on its side.

Since the European Community Treaty gave all Community citizens equal rights throughout the common marketplace, the Community authorities in Brussels felt it was reasonable to assume that manufacturers' guarantees should not stop at the national border.

For example, in 1970, the Community insisted that the guarantee on 'Omega' watches be valid throughout the Community. Then, in 1974, the German car manufacturer BMW was the target of a similar action to force it to repair cars still under guarantee without charge in whatever Community country they were taken for these repairs. Again, in 1974, the European Commission was just as severe with the Constructa firm, the Munich subsidiary of Siemens specializing in electrical appliances. Last year, the electrical appliance company Zanussi was also persuaded to make its guarantee truly a Community-wide one.

As a result of these legal interventions by the Commission, it has become a generally-accepted responsibility for manufacturers of whatever nationality to stand behind their product guarantees wherever their products are sold in the Community.

But, for the customer, having this legal right is not enough. The payoff is

getting the coffee-maker repaired without having to go through impractical legal action or time-consuming red tape. How can the average consumer in Birmingham reach the ear of the European Commission in Brussels with a complaint? A letter outlining the details of the complaint addressed to the European Commission, Directorate-General for Competition, 200 rue de la Loi, 1049 Brussels will do the trick. Advice can also be obtained from Community offices in London, Cardiff, Edinburgh, or elsewhere throughout the Community (see back cover for addresses).

If the Commission experts judge that a manufacturer is not respecting Community trade or competition rules by not honouring his guarantee they will ask him for an explanation. Frequently, the problem will be taken care of at this stage. But, should the company turn a deaf ear to the complaints, the Commission can repeat its legal actions taken in the earlier precedent-setting cases.

In addition, consumer organizations such as the European Bureau of Consumer Unions play an important role in defending consumer interests.

So the European consumer has more and more rights and better-defined protection to cope with the new trend in international shopping.



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ISSN 0379-3079  
Catalogue number : CC-AC-79-002-EN-C