

# Euroforum



Retirement: time for a change of attitude. See page 3.

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# Euroforum

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## Retirement: time for a change of attitude

Everyone has to retire sometime. But in our work-oriented society few of us want to spend much time and energy thinking and planning for when our working lives are over.

It's true that for some older people the prospect of retirement offers a welcome release from unpleasant or stressful work, or just the long years of hard slog; as well-earned opportunity to relax, travel, or cultivate the garden.

But for many of us, it's our work which determines how we see ourselves in relation to other people and society in general. To a great extent, work gives us a sense of our individual status, merit and purpose in life. Work determines the nature and scope of our daily social contact. Retirement is a fundamental change and not everyone finds it easy to adapt to the increased leisure, loss of status and reduced income.

Our attitudes to retirement are going to become increasingly important in the years to come. The European Community's population is ageing, and with low birth rates in most Member States, by 1995 pensioners will comprise more than 14% of the total population.

Economic trends, the decline in many traditional industries where a lot of older workers are employed, and current high rates of unemployment, especially among young people, are causing many Member States to introduce early retirement schemes as

one way of releasing older workers from precarious jobs or long-term unemployment, or freeing jobs for younger people.

The current situation with regard to retirement varies considerably from country to country within the Community. The normal retirement age ranges from 60 for men and 55 for women in Italy to 67 for men and 62 for women in Denmark. In Germany, France, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands, the normal retirement age is the same for men and women. State schemes in seven of the nine Member States include provisions for early or deferred retirement.

In Belgium, men over 60 and women over 55 can request early retirement under certain conditions according to a 1976 Act of Parliament which made an earlier collective agreement between employers' and employees' organizations generally applicable. The new pensioner has to be replaced by a young unemployed worker under 30. About 52 000 early pensioners benefited from the scheme during its first three years of operation.

In January 1979 a general early retirement scheme was introduced in Denmark whereby those over 60 can receive an immediate enhanced State pension starting at the same level as unemployment benefit and gradually reducing to the general pension level of 50% of unemployment benefit at the normal pension age of 67. During this time they can work up to 200 hours a year.

The scheme is financed by contributions from both employers and employees and has been taken up by one-third of those eligible. Prior to this there had already been provision for early retirement on social or health grounds, and for deferment beyond 67.

In Germany, people have been able to choose to draw their pension between 63 and 67 since new pension laws came into effect in 1973. Early retirement is available in restricted circumstances. The changes were introduced on social grounds.

The general retirement age in France is 60, with early pensions available in certain cases to people with minimum contributions to social security. There is also the possibility of deferment.

A recent report by a French Ministry of Labour working party advocated a flexible approach to retirement rather than the general introduction of a lower pension age. Hours of work could be gradually reduced over the years immediately preceding retirement with any fall in income being partially compensated for out of pension rights. Voluntary partial retirement could be encouraged by adjusting the pension scales to give wage-earners a genuine choice between earlier or later retirement.

In Italy, early retirement takes the form of a seniority pension payable to people with 35 years of social security contributions and women can defer their pension to the age of 60.

Early retirement is also available in Luxembourg, but there is no provision for deferment. In the Netherlands there are collective schemes for early retirement. The general pension age in Ireland is 65 for men and 60 for women. There are no provisions for early retirement or deferment.

In the United Kingdom, pensions can be deferred, and though State schemes do not provide for early retirement, occupational schemes do, and so, in a selective way, does the Job Release Scheme, which applies to certain people who retire early and are replaced within the firm by an unemployed person. The scheme is reckoned to have reduced unemployment by 70 000.

With national situations differing so widely, no harmonization at a Community level is at present envisaged. However, in the context of discussion on work-sharing, over the past few years economic experts in the European Commission have prepared technical studies on the economic implications of early retirement.

Following a resolution adopted by the Council of Ministers at the end of last year, the Social Affairs Directorate of the Commission has been asked to present a specific communication on flexible retirement as a method of reducing working time.

Discussions are only at a general level so far, and nothing has yet been decided by the Commission. A survey of 9 000 people in the Community is examining people's attitudes to flexible and gradual retirement, and studies are underway to get a detailed

picture of the situation in all Member States, especially as regards costs. Other technical studies are also concerned with cost aspects and one is a special study of the Swedish system of gradual retirement which the present Danish system resembles.

Suggested guidelines for Community action are expected to go before the Standing Committee on Employment for consideration when it next meets in the autumn.

The education and training implications of the transition to retirement, and particularly early retirement schemes, is also a major theme of the current work of the Commission's Education Directorate on the continuing education and training of adults.

Together with two other aspects of this subject, transition to retirement will be discussed at a seminar of education, training and manpower specialists which the Directorate for Education is organizing in Berlin later this year, in conjunction with the Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP). In preparation for this seminar the Directorate has just produced studies on the transition to retirement.

In one of the studies, called 'Older Workers and the Transition to Retirement', the author, Michael Faulkner, analyses the problems of older workers in the Community and looks at current early retirement systems.

He points out that people over 55 are not a homogenous group and that their needs and abilities vary from occupation to occupation and indeed from person to person.

While early retirement schemes operating in most Community countries offer many older workers the most appropriate (and most desired) solution to their occupational or employment problems, for others retirement—whether voluntary or imposed—implies loss of purpose, financial difficulty, loneliness, rejection, and loss of useful skills and aptitudes.

Mr Faulkner underlines the importance of gradual retirement, and pleads for greater coordination of early retirement policies, training and guidance provision in order to prepare the older worker better for retirement, to help people during the post retirement period and, where appropriate to exploit opportunities and capacities for continuing occupation after retirement.

We must not jettison older workers through early retirement, he says, but offer them other alternatives if they want them.

With more and more people being retired earlier, this is bound to have important social and economic effects. We are going to have to plan our retirement policies with care and sensitivity.

## Socialists call for Bill of Rights for handicapped

The Socialist Group in the European Parliament is to put forward a motion calling on the European Community to draw up and enforce a Charter of Rights for Europe's 10 million handicapped people. The motion follows an initiative by four Irish members of the group—John O'Connell, Eileen Desmond, Liam Kavanagh and Michael O'Leary.

Dr O'Connell, who is a medical practitioner, considers that it is high time that a move was made in this area because he feels that blatant discrimination is being practised against the disabled in education, employment, the social services, as well as environmental restrictions.

'While the Community does allocate resources from the Social Fund for the creation and improvement of workshops for the handicapped', he says, 'it does not have an ongoing policy for the handicapped in the areas of education, employment or social welfare'.

Dr O'Connell feels that there has not been a genuine commitment to the handicapped at the European level. He believes that this is due to 'the lack of political will and indeed the vast ignorance which surrounds the problems of Europe's 10 million mentally and physically handicapped citizens'.

The move comes at an opportune time, since 1981 is the International Year of the Handicapped.

The motion expresses concern at the wide disparity of services and rights in the Member States for the disabled and the need for their harmonization. It says that, notwithstanding the amount spent by the Social Fund, the initial Community action programme for the vocational rehabilitation of handicapped persons has not made

a substantial impact on policy for the handicapped in the nine Member States.

The motion also urges a public information policy on the handicapped and deplores the fact that there is no positive policy for the hiring of handicapped people in Community institutions.

The Socialists feel that, in the International Year of the Handicapped, a principle of positive discrimination should be introduced in favour of the handicapped—a Bill of Rights in the form of a Community directive which would be implemented in all Member States. They would also like each Member State to sign the UN Declaration on the rights of the handicapped and to appoint a Minister of State for the handicapped.

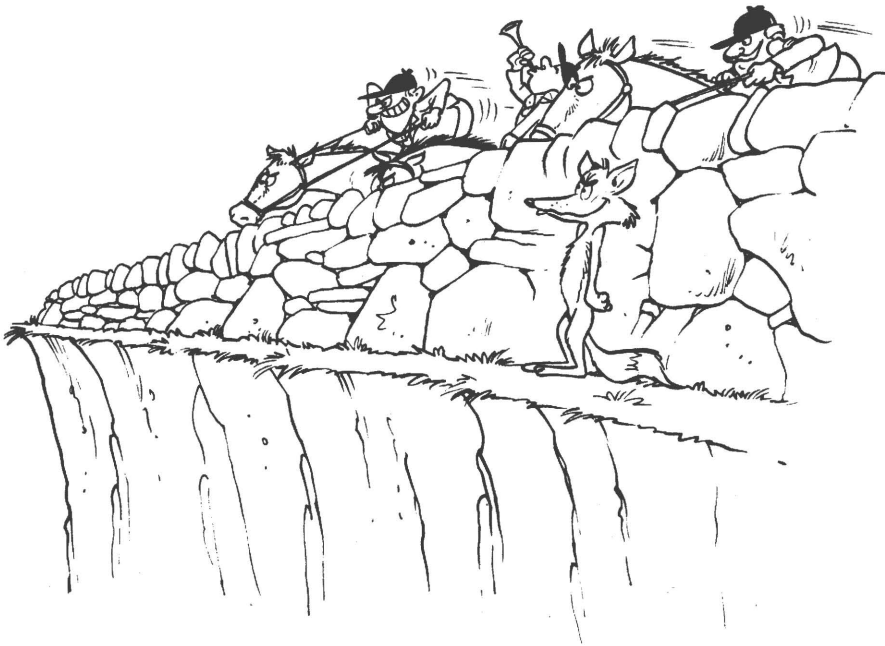
To bring pressure to bear on those Member States which are failing to cater for the needs of the disabled, the group has suggested a Community study on the level of social services which each provides for the disabled, covering such areas as income supports and conditions in homes and institutions.

While a minimum income for the disabled is seen as one way of enforcing the principle of positive discrimination, the motion suggests the introduction of a special scheme of subsidies for employers who take on handicapped workers. It suggests that all public and school buildings and public transport vehicles should be adapted for the use of the handicapped. It also recommends that disabled drivers should be able to buy low-cost cars suited to their special needs.

The Socialists believe that the integration of handicapped children in normal educational establishments should be a major goal, and they urge that the handicapped be better informed of their rights. They also feel that a specific, step-by-step information and education campaign should be carried out to educate the public in order to combat public prejudice and to eliminate public misconceptions about the handicapped.

### Right of entry

A number of European Parliamentarians are calling for free access to museums, exhibitions, monuments, historic buildings and areas of scenic beauty for the elderly, young people and the handicapped.



## Community action is needed to protect Europe's wildlife

Safeguarding the welfare of animals both wild and domestic in the nine Member States of the European Community is coming more and more to be seen as a job that can be most effectively coordinated at Community level.

In September last year, for example, the Environment Commissioner; Lorenzo Natali signed the Council of Europe Convention on the Conservation of Wildlife and Natural Habitats on behalf of the Community and alongside the Nine's national representatives.

The European Commission has now asked the Council of Ministers to give the go ahead for the Community to sign another international Convention, this time aimed at the conservation of migratory species of wild animals.

More than 22 countries (including six of the Community Member States) have already signed this Convention, which was drawn up by the United Nations Environment Programme in June last year.

The underlying principle of the Convention is that countries which have threatened populations of migra-

tory species should take concerted action to ensure their appropriate conservation and management. This action can take two forms: immediate and stringent protection of endangered species or joint international agreements for species that could be at risk in the future.

In addition to these protection and management plans, the Convention provides for measures to control hunting or capture of these species (which include gorillas, gazelles, whales, vicuna and alligators) the maintenance of networks of suitable habitats and the prevention, reduction or control of pollution harmful to migratory wildlife.

A special article has been written into the text of the Convention allowing the Community to sign as an entity, but it is only open to signature for a limited period. The Council of Ministers has until 22 June this year to give the green light for Community signature before this deadline expires.

The Community's current activities and powers in this field are partially covered by an existing directive on the conservation of birds.

This directive, adopted on 2 April last year, covers all migratory species of birds living in the Community.

The European Commission has just set up an advisor group composed of ornithological experts from the nine

Member States and scientific experts from bird protection organizations in the Community. The task of the group will be to assist the Commission in applying the directive on birds. Its first meeting was held at the end of March and the group will reassemble in late September.

One of the main aims of the Community's birds directive is to regulate the hunting and capture of certain species of birds. It lays down which species may be hunted, and the methods of hunting and capture which are henceforth to be banned. The use of hooks, lines, snares and nets, electrocuting devices, explosives, poisoned bait, automatic weapons, planes, helicopters and fast motor boats are outlawed.

The directive also covers birds' nests, eggs and habitats, to prevent disturbance by man. Certain exceptions, notably for research, educational and breeding purposes, have been written into the directives. In addition, the Member States are free to take stronger conservation measures if they so wish.

Perhaps inevitable; this directive has not met with universal approval. The European hunting lobby, especially in France where it is 2 million strong, has been particularly opposed. The views of French hunters were succinctly put to the Commission in a recent written question from two French Communist members of the European Parliament, Danielle De March and Henriette Poirier.

The MEPs took particular offence at the apparent suggestion nowadays that hunters were violators of nature and that they disturbed the ecological balance, when the ravages of industrial pollution, the use of defoliants and other agricultural and forestry methods were largely ignored.

They felt that the traditional hunting of thrushes and wood pigeons in the Var region of France, for example, should be excluded from the directive since the species concerned were not endangered nor was hunting commercial.

They argued that this type of power to determine what species could be hunted where and what methods could be used should be left in the hands of the regional and national authorities so as to observe regional traditions and democracy.

The two French parliamentarians insisted, in fact, that hunters were among the last guardians of the balance of nature.

The totally opposite view was put by another French European Parliamentarian Edith Cresson (Socialist). In another written question to the Commission, Mme Cresson argued that the 'massacre' of game in France was reaching 'alarming proportions', and said that the Community should be thinking in terms of a common hunting policy.

The common agricultural policy was also to blame for a drastic thinning out of game through the use of fertilizers, over rapid crop rotation and new farming methods, Mme Cresson claimed.

While not sharing this last opinion, and while making the point that a common hunting policy was not what it had in mind, the Commission replied that some steps relating to hunting had been taken.

In a draft resolution to the Council of Ministers on the objectives and principles of forestry policy, the Commission has set out the basis for sound management of flora and fauna, particularly by 'maintaining a healthy but not excessive population of as many species as are appropriate to a region and in harmony with local traditions'.

The Community is working closely with international bodies on conservation agreements. The Commission is currently working on a regulation that would apply the 1975 Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (the Washington Convention, as it is commonly known).

The Commission is also studying the possibility of legislating to ensure that hunters know how to handle firearms properly, can distinguish between species and possess some rudimentary knowledge of the ecological role of fauna.

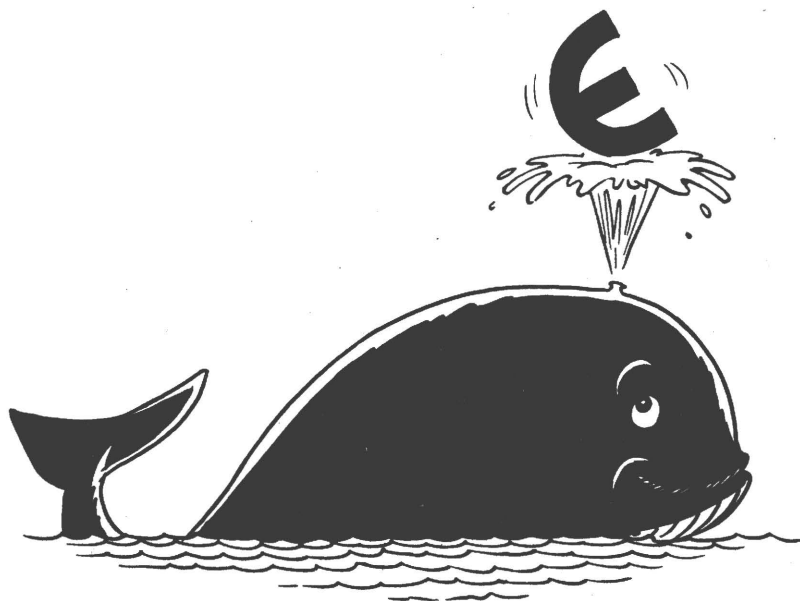
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## IN BRIEF

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### Danger underlined

The European Environmental Bureau, which represents environment groups throughout the Community, has called on the European Commission to act urgently to control trade in endangered wildlife species. It has also urged Member States which have not already ratified the Washington Convention on such protection to do so without delay.



## Community boost for Save the Whale campaign

The European Commission has backed a British initiative calling for a reduction of imports of primary whale products into the European Community.

Such controls would make an enormous contribution to the Save the Whale campaign. It is reckoned that the Community imports around 35% of all sperm whale oil, which is used largely as a lubricant, and about 14% of all baleen whale oil, which is an important ingredient in margarine.

The new Commission proposal aims to subject all imports of primary whale products into the nine Member States to import licences, beginning on 1 January 1982. Licences would not be granted to imports destined for commercial purposes.

Giving its reasons for the proposals, the Commission notes that international action to protect whales has so far either been inadequate or has been delayed, while whale populations are already diminishing at an alarming rate. Reconstitution of these populations will take a very long time and may even now prove impossible.

Our knowledge of the current situation is also insufficient, but it is vital to put an end to commercial whaling before species become extinct and the ecological balance of the oceans irreparably altered.

The following sorts of products are covered in the Commission proposal: edible whale meat, whalebone, whale oil and greases and non-edible whale meat.

In the past, the industries that have used whale products most consistently have been the precision engineering, fine leather, cosmetics and food industries.

The Commission does not think that these industries are likely to suffer any major difficulties over the ban, since perfectly adequate substitutes already exist for whale oil, the most common product used.

Furthermore, industry would have two years in which to adapt following approval of the Commission proposal by the Council of Ministers.

This proposal is only a starting point. Other secondary products would be added to the regulation at a future date, as a further step to ensure the survival of the world's largest mammal.

## The cost of pleasing rich men's palates

The practice of 'goose cramming' to produce pâté de foie gras has once again come in for sharp criticism, this time from a British member of the European Parliament.

Richard Caborn, a member of the Socialist group, asked the Commission in a written question whether it had

investigated this 'cruel process', whether it shared the 'growing distaste' of the people of Europe for this 'abhorrent practice' and whether it proposed to initiate regulations to control or eliminate the production of foie gras by this process.

Although the Commission has not itself made a special study of this problem, it pointed out to Mr Caborn that a Council of Europe enquiry did not consider that separate regulations to protect geese were required.

Geese are not the only farmyard creatures whose treatment is worrying MEPs. Michael Welsh, a British Conservative member, wanted the Commission to confirm a recent newspaper report that more than 10 000 chickens being transported to Italy on two Dutch lorries were found dead on arrival. They were apparently tightly packed in small cages and inadequately protected against the weather. Was this not a breach of Community rules, Mr Welsh asked, and was the Community going to take action?

The Commission replied that, while it could not confirm the accuracy of the report, it would ask the Dutch and Italian governments for their comments on it.

There are Community rules covering the international transport of live animals laid down in a 1977 directive. At present, the responsibility for seeing that these rules are respected, for investigating allegations of abuse and for taking appropriate action lies with the Member States. The Commission is, however, studying further steps that may be necessary to ensure better protection of live animals during transport.

While on the subject of chickens, the Commission has begun work on the protection of battery hens. This would eventually lead to a Community law that would ensure more humane standards in all Member States.

## Taking a look at uses, and abuses, of waste

The European Community throws away over £ 6 500 million every year, or £ 25 for every man, woman and child in the nine Member States.

This is the estimated value of the 1 800 million tonnes of waste produced in the Nine annually, which works out at 5 million tonnes per day. The European Commission reckons that the total is growing at the rate of 2 to 3% a year.

The biggest waste producer by far is agriculture, which accounts for 950 million tonnes each year. A further 300 million tonnes is sewage sludge, and 200 million tonnes is mining waste and ashes.

Industry produces the comparatively small amount of 150 million tonnes a year, while the Community's households put out about 90 million tonnes of assorted waste in their dustbins.

Some progress towards recycling and reusing waste products in the Nine has already been achieved. In 1975, for example, a directive on the reuse of waste oil was adopted. Nevertheless, only half of the 4 million tonnes of oil and other lubricants used annually in the Community are as yet collected for reuse. The rest goes down the drain.

Three other directives have been adopted controlling the collection and treatment of toxic wastes.

The European Commission is working on Community action projects for other types of waste, such as packaging, which makes up 30% of household waste. Particular emphasis will be put on drinks containers (which account for 10% of household waste in weight).

Collection and recycling of waste paper is another Commission priority. The 15 to 17 million tonnes of waste paper thrown out each year make up between 40 to 50% of the total volume of household waste.

The Community currently relies on imports for 50% of its paper supplies. These imports cost the nine Member States more than £ 5 000 million per year, second only to oil imports in value.

Nevertheless, some progress has been made. About one third of the 30 million tonnes of paper consumed annually in the Community is produced from waste paper.

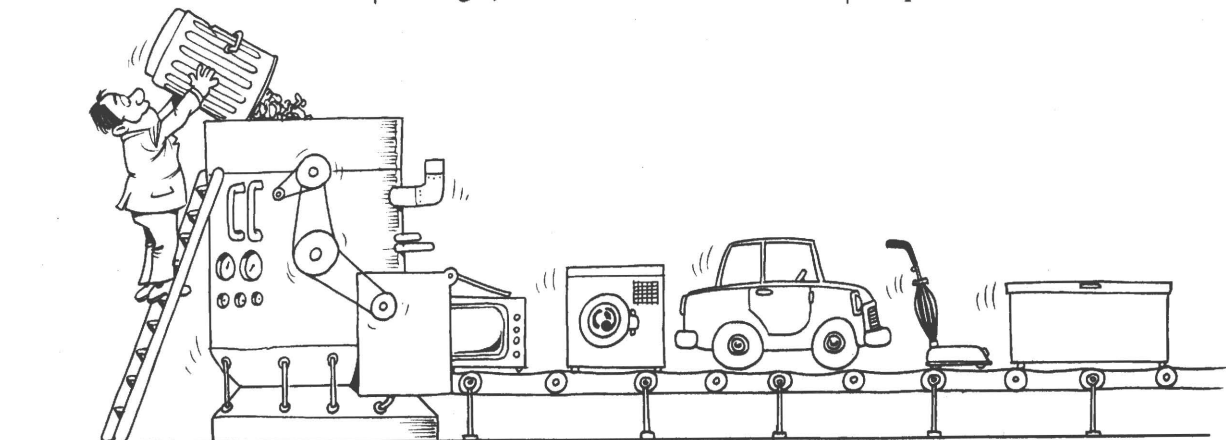
Experience has shown that the use of waste paper in paper production can save up to six times the energy consumption of the normal process and can significantly reduce pollution.

Both the risks to the environment and public health and the benefits involved in waste production and management need to be defined at Community level. As a further step towards this, the European Commission has organized the first ever European conference on solid waste management.

The conference is to be held at the Wembley conference and exhibition centre in London from 17 to 19 June.

Its central themes will be the Community's action and policy in the field, the value of waste as an energy source and as a raw material, and the environmental and economic aspects. The attitude of the public towards waste management policy will also be examined.

Examples from the Commission's experience with waste paper, toxic waste and agricultural and other waste will be used to illustrate the debates, which will be chaired by the director of the Commission's Environment and Consumer Protection Service, Michel Carpentier.



## FINANCE

## NIC, one-year-old, may be expanded

Last year, the Community lent just over £170 million to the United Kingdom, Ireland and Italy under a completely new scheme to support energy and infrastructure projects.

The money came from the New Community Instrument—known in Brussels more familiarly as the NIC or the Ortolì Facility after the Economics Commissioner, François-Xavier Ortolì, who championed its creation.

The latest loans from the NIC are two for Ireland amounting to IR £9.7 million to help develop peat bogs for fuel production, and one for Italy of £1 million to help improve electricity services.

The Community is currently setting great store on the need to cut oil imports and develop alternative and indigenous sources of energy. Last year, the NIC played its part in this strategy as well.

For example, just under £16 million pounds went to the construction of a natural gas 270 MW power station at Aghada (Co Cork, Ireland) and more than three times that sum was lent to the hydro-electric power station at Dinorwic in North Wales.

£28 million was allocated to energy projects in Italy. Under the first, in Piedmont, a hydro-electric pumping station will replace out-dated, high-consumption oil-fired power stations. The second develops the use of geothermal energy in Tuscany.

Under the agreement creating the NIC, the Community is authorized to borrow £620 million on international capital markets and lend them money to encourage infrastructure and energy projects.

£310 million has already been raised and the Commission is now seeking to double this sum. But it would like to extend the scope of the loans to include housing and advance factories.

The Commission argues that this is a logical extension of the NIC's role of fostering the revival of economic activity.

To qualify for support, the projects would have to meet certain criteria. They would need to be submitted by national authorities; be part of coordinated programmes; and encourage the growth of economic productivity.

The Commission and the European Investment Bank in Luxembourg work in close consultation in both raising and disbursing the loans. The Commission borrows the funds and places them in its own account at the Bank, which examines the projects and decides whether to grant the loan, after the Commission has said they are eligible for support.

## CONSUMERS

### Another angle on what it costs to top up your tank

Most of us these days dread calling into a petrol station. If you want to fill your tank you can become dizzy watching the digits totting up the damage.

In *Euroforum* 1/80 we showed that, while this is a burden all drivers must bear, some are less put upon than others. In terms of the retail price of petrol, we found that the Luxembourgers paid least and the Danes most.

Now, the European Commission has gone a little deeper into the subject and, in an effort to establish how petrol prices relate to real income, it has drawn up a comparison between the nine Member States of how long it takes the average worker to earn the price of a litre of petrol.

The Commission's research, which was carried out at the behest of a member of the European Parliament, British Conservative Robert Jackson, shows that the Luxembourgers are still best off. However, because of their high salaries, the Danes are not far behind them, paying comparatively less than drivers in the other seven countries.

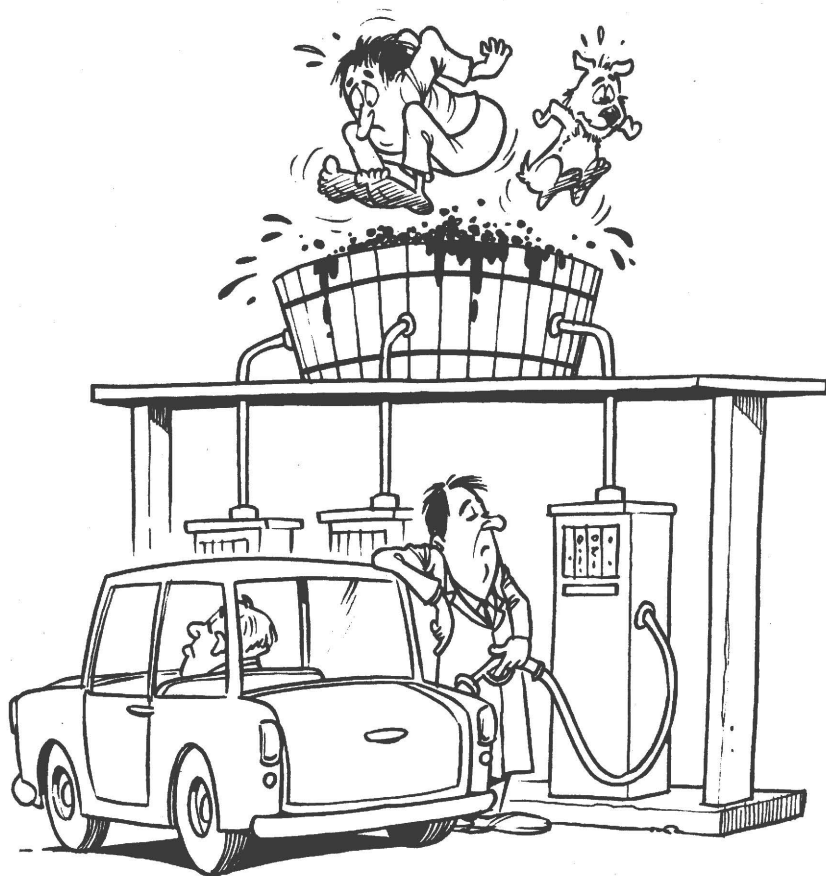
Our table shows the number of minutes (') and seconds (") needed to buy one litre of fuel in the three categories of petrol. These figures are based on average hourly earnings of manual workers in manufacturing industries in October 1979 and prices of motor fuels at the pump on 1 January 1980.

However, the Commission points out that there are considerable differences in the relative levels of hourly earnings between the Member States. These are due in particular to the varying composition of the different national labour forces—the breakdown by sex, age, skill and so on—different fiscal and social protection systems, and the different proportions of average gross earnings versus total net family income.

If it's any consolation, therefore, these figures should be interpreted with caution.

Country	Situation at end of 1979		
	Type of fuel		
	super (4 star)	normal (2 star)	diesel (D.E.R.V.)
Germany	5'17"	5'2"	5'14"
France	10'5"	9'26"	6'51"
Italy	10'41"	10'20"	4'19"
Netherlands	6'0"	5'52"	3'57"
Belgium	6'16"	6'9"	4'1"
Luxembourg	4'24"	4'17"	2'46"
United Kingdom	7'36"	7'28"	8'3"
Ireland	7'58"	7'48"	6'20"
Denmark	5'7"	5'2"	3'5"





### Alternative sources: does the answer lie in the soil?

With little possibility of the energy crisis abating, experts throughout the world are busily trying to discover alternative sources of energy, particularly sources which would be economical relative to the cost of imported oil.

In the European Community, various experiments are being carried out, many of them with the backing of Community funds, into the possibilities of developing nuclear capacity and in harnessing the energy of wave, tide, wind and sun.

A further source of energy could be certain agricultural produce, and some countries, notably Brazil and the United States, as well as France and Italy within the Community, have been carrying out studies to explore their potential.

One member of the European Parliament, Mr James Scott-Hopkins, who is leader of the European Democrats Group, thinks this is eminently sensible. In particular, he is

interested in seeing some of the Community's surplus farm produce used to provide an alternative source of fuel to oil.

Mr Scott-Hopkins recently asked the European Commission to calculate what quantities of alcohol suitable for use as fuel, either as an additive for petrol or in specially-adapted power stations could be derived from the Community's own surpluses of wine, sugar and other produce as well as from sugar produced in the Lomé countries which is admitted to the Community at a preferential rate.

He also wanted to know how the cost of producing this alcohol would compare with the cost of producing petrol, as well as what the Community could save on dear imported oil.

In addition, Mr Scott-Hopkins wanted to know how much it would cost to subsidize alcohol produced from sugar and wine, either by direct subsidies to oil companies or by cutting petrol taxes, compared with the present costs of disposing of surplus wine and sugar.

On the face of it, an attractive idea, particularly as the average surpluses from Community sugar production are of the order of 1.2 million tonnes

a year and wine production last year was expected to exceed consumption by around 24 million hectolitres, the equivalent of about 2 million tonnes.

However, as the Commission demonstrated with its calculations, the idea is not as practicable as it may seem.

Firstly, how much alcohol would actually be obtained from wine and sugar surpluses? If we take the average wine surplus over recent years and converted it, we would get around 50 000 tonnes of alcohol. The figure for sugar is 770 000 tonnes.

Sugar imported from outside the Community at preferential rates would yield a further 830 000 tonnes, giving a total of 1.6 million tonnes.

Since the calorific power of this alcohol is roughly two-thirds that of petrol, this means that, as a fuel, one tonne of alcohol is roughly equivalent to 0.7 tonnes of petrol.

Based on these calculations, the amount of alcohol that we could hope to obtain from wine and sugar surpluses would represent only 0.24% of overall oil imports into the Community in 1978.

A further problem arises with the comparative cost of converting wine and sugar into alcohol. At the present level of agricultural prices, neither could at the moment compete with petrol.

The cost of producing a litre of alcohol from wine would be about £1 and from sugar beet between 28p and 34p. By comparison, the cost of high-grade petrol in the Community last August was, before tax, between 10p and 14p depending on the country.

The subsidies which would be necessary if alcohol obtained from agricultural surpluses were to be used as a fuel would have to be the equivalent of the difference between the cost of producing this alcohol and the cost of petrol before tax.

This means that the subsidy for wine would have to be around 96p per litre, and for sugar beet 26p. In comparison, current subsidies for the distillation of surplus wine work out at around 34p per litre of alcohol and the refund on the exporting of sugar—to compensate exporters for the lower price obtainable outside the

Community—is the equivalent of 20p per litre.

A further problem posed by the possible use of alcohol derived from wine and sugar as a substitute for oil products is the unreliability of supply because of unpredictable harvests. For example, there was a bumper wine harvest of around 150 million hectolitres last year, compared with 132 million hl in 1978 and 128 million hl in 1977.

Nevertheless, the Commission is following developments around the world very closely. It is also financing feasibility studies in a number of countries—for example, Sudan and Upper Volta—on the use of local agricultural raw materials or their sub-products to produce alcohol.

Many other developing countries, particularly those which are signatories with the Community of the Lomé Convention, have shown interest in these projects and talks are underway with some of them which could lead to an extension of this research.

In the meantime, it looks as though we will have to continue to pay the asking price for our oil and drown our sorrows with surplus wine or sweetened tea.

## IN BRIEF

### Purer air

Community measures to cut down on pollution from the exhausts of motor vehicles seem to be having some spectacular results. Since 1970, the emission of carbon monoxide has been reduced by 55%; unburnt hydrocarbon emissions have been reduced by 40% and nitrogen oxide emissions have been cut by 15%. A further Community law on the lead content of petrol, which should further reduce pollution, comes into effect next January.

### Cleaning up

The European Parliament has called for £315 000 to be made available to help Bretons cope with recent oil pollution which has damaged their beaches and fish stocks.

### Pooling ideas

Five major Community car manufacturers—Fiat, Peugeot-Citroen, British Leyland, Renault and Volkswagen—together with Volvo of Sweden, are to coordinate their research in a number of areas such as fuel combustion and aerodynamics.

## Wanted: ideas on making the best use of the sun

The European Commission is offering prizes totalling around £15 750 to designers of housing making the best use of the sun's powers for heat and light.

In an open letter to competitors Energy Commissioner Guido Brunner says that new ideas for using the sun, whether in new or rehabilitated houses, will make a valuable contribution towards reducing the Community's dependence on fossil fuels.

The Commission hopes the competition will be especially attractive to younger architects and engineers and will stimulate interest in housing taking advantage of the climate through what is called 'passive solar design'.

Nine prizes are being offered in three categories: multi-storey housing, clustered housing and single dwellings.

Top prize money of around £3 000 will be awarded for best designs in the first two categories.

The closing date is the end of August and the prize winners should be announced in September.

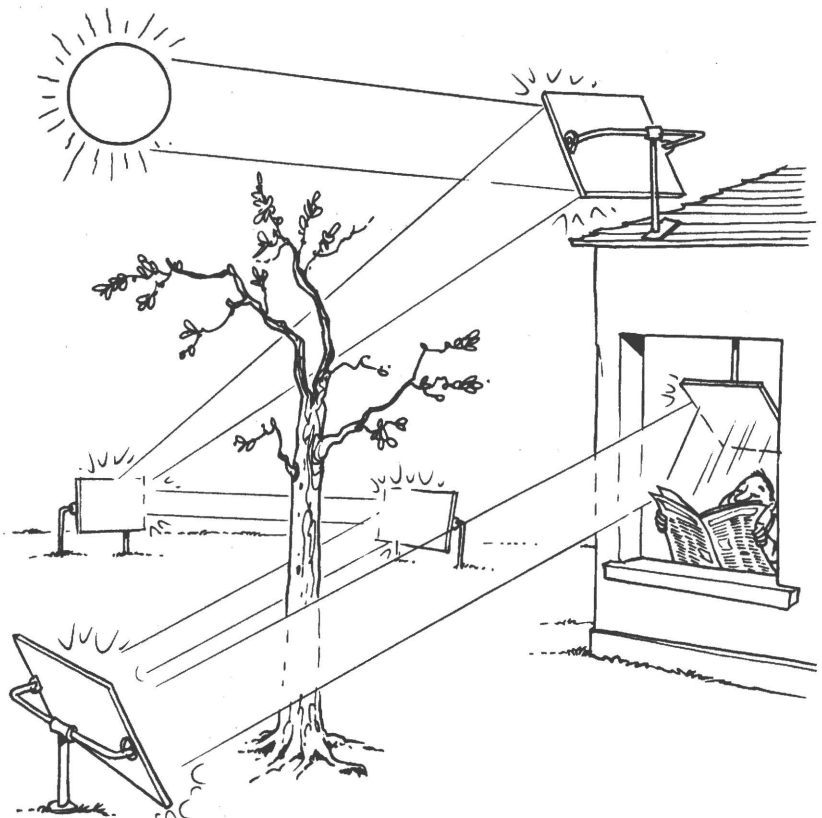
Enquiries about entry forms and conditions of the competition should be directed to the following address: Ralph Lebens Associates, 8 Paddington Street, London W1.

The Commission has just approved Mr Brunner's proposal to provide almost £2 million for 10 more projects in the Member States to demonstrate the usefulness of solar power.

These represent a second series of demonstration projects. A first series of 16 projects was selected in December 1978 at around the same cost.

The Commission can provide finance for solar power projects designed to prove their worth on an industrial basis, and its financial aid can be up to 40% of total costs. The aim of the programme is to encourage the development of energy sources alternative to oil and thus to reduce the Community's dependence on oil imports.

The 10 projects now selected are sited in Italy, Belgium, the United Kingdom, France and Germany. They include solar energy systems for houses, farms, swimming pools, a school and an electric car.



## What do Europeans think about their children?

Is the stork heading for redundancy? A first glance at survey called 'The Europeans and their Children', which was carried out in the nine Member States of the Community by the European Commission, seems to suggest that having children is going out of fashion.

Over the past few years the birthrate in most Western European countries has been declining and two-thirds of the men and women questioned in the survey thought two or fewer children was the ideal size for a family.

It's a view held particularly strongly by young people and those who have small families at present. What's more, a large minority of under-40s believe that you don't necessarily need to be a parent to find ultimate fulfilment. The proportion is highest among those with a university education — especially women: there the figure rises to 47%.

Most extremely, 42% of Community citizens believe that the future is too uncertain to run the risk of bringing children into the world. Here it's the less educated and less well-off who are most concerned.

All this may look like bad news for the stork but, in fact, as the survey points out, it's not necessarily bad news for the family. Two-thirds of the Community citizens do believe that 'parenthood is the ultimate fulfilment of men and women' (with France and Italy in the lead) and that 'to bring a child into the world shows faith in the future'. An overall majority of Community citizens refuses to accept that the future is too uncertain for children.

Data on the ideal size of family confirm, says the survey's author, that the present discussion is not about refusing to have children, but whether to have a third one or not. It is felt to reflect a dual aspiration — to the value of family life on the one hand, and well-being, quality of life, and the future on the other — for the subject and his or her children. The tendency to restrict the ideal size of the family, the author concludes, goes



hand in hand with the continuing importance of the family to Europeans today.

The survey, which was carried out on the occasion of the International Year of the Child for the Commission's Directorate-General for Employment and Social Affairs, was concerned with four particular areas: the material and practical problems encountered in bringing up children; time spent at work and with the family, and child-minding arrangements; attitudes to schooling and problems encountered; attitudes to children, their upbringing, and place in society.

On the practical side, the survey found that it is the families with three or more children which have the severest financial and housing problems, a major reason being that the largest families are to be found among those with relatively low incomes. Not that their difficulties have put these parents off the idea of having large families — for most of them the ideal family includes three or more children.

Smaller, better-off families — where both parents are more likely to work — point more to problems of child-minding, and it seems there's a considerable discrepancy between what parents would like to do and what they have to do given the facilities currently available.

Whatever the size, social status or wealth of their family, most parents are agreed that they do not spend enough time with their children. For many, it's the pressure of work and ill-matched school and working hours that are to blame.

Most favour flexitime or shorter daily working hours as the best way of improving the situation, though there are supporters for reducing the number of working days per week and extending annual holidays. The possibility of up to two years unpaid

'parental leave' after the birth of a baby would be welcomed by a majority of parents.

On the educational front, the survey found that most parents still felt it was important for their children to have the opportunity to study further than they themselves had. But one parent in five said that one of their children had had to cut short his or her studies, or might have to do so — the most common reason being financial.

Modern parents themselves get quite a rough ride in the survey. A vast majority of the public in most countries feels that parents not only fail to spend enough time with their children, but also that they are not strict enough with them and tend to over-indulge them. Quite a few think they don't take enough notice of their children's opinions, and it's only today's parents who think they are closer to their children than their own parents were to them.

Society fares little better in the survey. More than half the respondents — parents and childless, young and older — believe that society doesn't take the true needs of children into account. The author feels this general belief needs further clarification in future surveys.

In the meantime, the survey concludes that we shouldn't dramatize all the difficulties, worries and criticisms people mention in connection with their way of life, methods of upbringing and the social environment in which children are growing up (although particular attention should be paid to the feelings of dissatisfaction of most low-income households and large families).

Just over half of those questioned felt at least fairly satisfied with the life they lead. One in five even admit to being very happy!

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**EUROPEAN COUNCIL**


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## No solution yet to dispute over UK budget payments

The European Council of Heads of State and Government, which met in Luxembourg at the end of last month, failed to arrive at an agreement on the level of the United Kingdom's contribution to the Community's budget.

The meeting was described by Commission President Roy Jenkins as 'the most tantalizingly disappointing' he had attended. However, he said that agreement between the British Prime Minister, Mrs Margaret Thatcher, and the other eight leaders was nearer than he had believed possible.

The differences at the end of a harrowing session were very narrow. For 1980, the British budget contribution could have been reduced to the average of 1978 and 1979, which the Commission calculates at around 325 million. This would have saved the UK approximately £750 million before taking into account proposed higher prices for farm produce.

For 1981, the other eight Member States would have been prepared to agree that any refund should be applied, in money terms, on an equal level to this year. Mrs Thatcher, however, wanted an increase in repayments in 1981 in accordance with the increase in the budget. This left for 1981 a difference of around £90 million between her demand and what the others felt was the maximum they could offer.

However, the real sticking point was the duration of the validity of the offer, rather than the final amount at issue.

The nine leaders also discussed the international situation and expressed grave concern at the trend of recent events, particularly in Afghanistan, Iran and the Middle East. They said in their final communiqué that they felt that these events now more than ever require the Nine to show cohesion. They also denounced acts of violence against UN troops in the Lebanon.

At a meeting in Brussels on 6 May, the Community's Foreign Ministers set the end of this month as a deadline for an agreement on the problem of the UK's budgetary contributions and on the level of farm prices for this year.

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## TAXATION

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### What needs to be done to promote economic union

The European Commission, on the initiative of Taxation Commissioner Richard Burke, has adopted a report on the scope for convergence of tax systems in the Community. This indicates the main tax measures that are recommended for the next few years if a greater degree of economic integration is to be achieved, most notably the harmonization of tax rates.

It also identifies, through an analysis of the taxation structure in the Member States and of the principal taxes to be harmonized, the outstanding difficulties to be overcome if these measures are to be successful.

Conflict between tax harmonization and the freedom of Member States to use tax as a budgetary and economic instrument has so far been avoided because, except in the case of capital duty, Community action has related only to the structure and bases of taxation and not to the rates. This situation will change when tax harmonization is extended to cover tax rates. Member States will then be confronted with a number of fundamental issues.

The first issue is political. It is whether Member States will agree to relinquish their tax autonomy and whether national parliaments, in particular, will agree to give up a part of one of their fundamental prerogatives, namely the power to vote taxes freely.

The second issue concerns the room for manoeuvre which Member States will have in pursuing their budgetary and economic policies.

The closer alignment of VAT and excise duty rates, which is necessary if tax frontiers are to be abolished,

need not necessarily result in complete standardization. Differences may remain, so that some degree of flexibility could be retained under the harmonized system.

Large areas of taxation, such as personal income tax, are not directly covered by the harmonization process and these will remain essentially under national control.

Convergence of tax systems will, however, bring about a change in the tax structure in Member States and as such, may have indirect effects on other areas of taxation. This could give rise to numerous difficulties, notably political objections, possible changes in the pattern of consumption and thus in production and trade, effects on the cost of living and a need to change the financing of social security.

Notwithstanding all these difficulties, the Commission believes that the measures advocated are within reach provided there emerges a strong political resolve to make progress. Without this, the numerous constraints imposed by tax harmonization may not be tolerated by the Member States.

The Commission recognizes that the harmonization should be a gradual stage-by-stage process, and Member States must be allowed sufficient room for manoeuvre. The processes of tax harmonization and economic integration must be kept in step.

The Commission believes that a significant level of tax harmonization is a necessary condition for the achievement of economic union. Fiscal frontiers will not be abolished unless Member States adapt their taxation systems towards a common pattern.

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### Fewer jobless

As in previous years, with the ending of winter the number of unemployed in the Community dropped sharply in March. The figure at the end of the month was 6.3 million, a drop of 220 000 on the February total. The percentage fall was from 6% to 5.8% of the civilian working population.

### Retail margins

In an effort to determine exactly where the money we spend on food goes, the European Commission is carrying out a number of studies to assess what share of the retail price of food paid by the consumer is accounted for by production costs.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**Energy tax**

Sir,

I was most interested to read in the copy of *Euroforum* 4/80 dated 29 February, 1980 under the heading of 'Energy' that Energy Commissioner Guido Brunner has proposed a tax on oil which, at even a modest £ 1.30 per tonne, would yield around £ 600 million. The article went on to list the kinds of projects which Mr Brunner suggested could be supported with the revenue from such a tax and I was disappointed to see that this list did not include any form of help for public transport.

conomy expenditure cuts in Britain have affected most walks of life and over the next few years we are going to see reduced expenditure in public transport by the phasing out of grants for new buses and additional expenditure incurred by various new types of legislation which we are told are brought about by the need to comply with EEC regulations. Consequently, at a time when public transport to my mind should be receiving an injection of funds and a boost to morale to meet future energy conservation needs, it is in fact receiving what amounts to a kick in the teeth.

I write to enquire whether Commissioner Brunner would consider adding to his list of projects to benefit from a tax on oil some investment in public transport. Perhaps I should add that by 'public transport' I do mean the every day types of bus services that are operated in all cities and towns in Britain rather than special elaborate projects such as monorails and light rail projects.

P.J. Sephton  
City of Lincoln  
Transport General Manager  
St. Marks,  
Lincoln, LN5 7BA

**The future of fusion**

Sir,

The article published by *Euroforum* on 28 March, entitled 'JET aims to provide cheaper and cleaner nuclear power', contains a number of extremely unfortunate mistakes which are due to the obvious desire on the author's part to give his reader the impression that fusion offers a number of advantages.

(i) Nuclear fusion is not 'clean': just like fission, it generates considerable quantities of radioactive waste. It is therefore wrong to say that 'the ultimate fusion products are non-radioactive'.

For further information on this subject I would refer you to 'Fusion and Fast Breeder Reactors', IASA, RR-77-8, by W. Häfele and J. Holdren, p. 256.

(ii) The risk of nuclear 'runaway' has nothing to do with the fact that 'the amount of fuel needed is small'. In the work referred to above (p. 323) it is stated that there is a risk of accident, releasing tritium, in a fusion reactor.

(iii) Lithium reserves are hardly more plentiful than those of uranium since they amount to the equivalent of 2 500 TW of electricity per year (as opposed to 2 000 TW for uranium) (see *idem* pp 4 and 5).

(iv) Lastly, the author in his naive way believes that electricity produced by a fusion reactor will be 'cheap'. The price of electricity produced by a fusion reactor, and even more so a fast breeder, depends very little on the cost of the fuel. The same will apply to fusion reactors as applies to solar power stations—if not more so—since it is the very high capital costs that are the main factor.

If the aim of the article is to 'sell' fusion to public opinion in the same way fission was sold 20 years ago then I am afraid public opinion is in for another disappointment.

Jacques Devooght  
Free University of Brussels  
Faculty of Applied Sciences  
Department of Nuclear Metrology  
Avenue F.-D. Roosevelt, 50  
1050 Brussels.

**A question of language**

Dear Sir,

Since some of your readers are clearly interested in linguistic problems I should like to inform them of the existence of the 'Alliance linguistique'.

Our non-profit-making association, which does not seek ties with any particular language—national or otherwise—advocates the adoption, via democratic institutions, of an easily computerized back-up language for international communications.

Strictly from the utilitarian viewpoint, the use of such a language would make communication easier while safeguarding the common linguistic heritage. Hence it should satisfy Europeans who are exasperated by 'Eurobabble' (or any other obnoxious mixture) and those fighting for the survival of minority languages and cultures.

Robert Besson  
10, rue Général Delestraint  
01000 Bourg-en-Bresse  
France

**Cruelty to animals**

Sir,

Our members have sent us copies of an article that was published in *Euroforum*. In the section headed 'News at a glance' we read that legislation on slaughtering methods is now being applied satisfactorily by all the Member States of the European Community.

I can assure you that this is by no means the case and that we in France have been obliged to ask our President to intervene personally to put a stop to breaches of our 1964 and 1970 'decrets'. Things have now improved considerably, following this intervention, except for the fact that sheep and calves are still being strung up and having their throats slit while still conscious—and this is not a question of ritual slaughter!

I know that the same thing is happening in other Community countries and I hope that, little by little, such bad practices will disappear thanks to action by societies for the protection of animals and by the authorities concerned.

Jacqueline Gilardoni  
Founder - President  
Œuvre d'assistance aux Bêtes  
d'Abattoirs  
Maison des Vétérinaires  
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75011 Paris



## THE NEWS AT A GLANCE

### Tribute to Tito

Commission President Roy Jenkins was among those who sent condolences to the Yugoslav people on the death of President Tito. Mr Jenkins described the former Partisan leader as the architect and defender of the independence of his country, to which he had given an international role. The Community and Yugoslavia recently signed a new trade and cooperation agreement.

### More control

The European Parliament has demanded that it be consulted when the President of the Commission is given his mandate at the end of this year. It wants to hold a debate in his presence ending with a vote of confidence ratifying his appointment. It also wants to be consulted on Commission policy and to have the right to approve that policy before the new Commission takes office.

### Longer lease

The European Parliament's ad hoc committee on women's rights is hoping that its mandate can be extended beyond this summer until the end of this year.

### A new deal?

A final negotiating conference on the establishment of a common fund which would be set up by the industrialized countries to stabilize the world commodity markets is to be held from 5 to 18 June. This should pave the way for renewed 'North-South' discussions scheduled for New York in September which are designed to work out a complementary relationship between the industrialized and Third World countries.

### New relationship

Negotiations for a new trade agreement between the Community and India are expected to get underway soon. Commission President Roy Jenkins has just completed an official visit to Delhi for talks with Indian leaders.

### Fact-finding

The Political Affairs Committee of the European Parliament is planning to send fact-finding missions to Kampuchea and Argentina. The first is to determine the essential needs of the Kampuchean war victims and to check if existing aid is being properly distributed (See *Euroforum* 8/80). The aim of the second visit is to get details about thousands of Argentinians who have disappeared.

### High-level delegation

The Foreign Ministers of the ANDEAN group (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela) paid their first official visit to the European Community earlier this month. They met the Nine's Foreign Ministers as well as members of the European Commission. Negotiations for a trade cooperation agreement between the Community and ANDEAN group are expected to begin shortly.

### Arab plea

The chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Palestine National Council has appealed for Europe to take a peace initiative by introducing a new resolution on the Middle East crisis in the UN General Assembly. He was in Europe for talks with parliamentarians.

### Aid for Angolans

The Community is contributing £125 000 towards a £950 000 emergency relief programme set up by the Red Cross to help some 300 000 people who have been driven from their homes because of fighting in Angola. It is also providing food aid worth around £200 000 and has appealed to the nine Member States to make bilateral contributions.

### For drought victims

The Community is to send £440 000 worth of aid to Senegal to help drought victims. This is in addition to £190 000 already donated.

### Faulty counts

Angry Euro parliamentarians are demanding an investigation into why their newly-installed electronic voting system is not working to their satisfaction.

### A plot unhatched

Our story (*Euroforum* 3/80) on egg-laying habits ascribed undue prowess to the Community's hens. In translating tonnes into kilos we misplaced a decimal point. 82 kilos should therefore read 8.2 kilos, 152 kilos 15.2 kilos and so on.

### Human rights

The European Parliament has condemned the violation of human rights in Czechoslovakia.

### Closer relations

The commercial and financial cooperation provisions of the agreement between the Community and Yugoslavia signed in Belgrade on 2 April are expected to come into effect on 1 July.

### Favouring mobility

The European Parliament has come out in support of a Commission proposal which would give all Community citizens—not, as at present, simply those who are engaged in an economic activity—the right of residence in any Member State of their choice.

### Pope in Parliament

The Pope is reported to be planning to visit Strasbourg next year. Among his ports of call will be the European Parliament.

### More cooperation

A number of cooperative movements in the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Denmark are to come together in the hope of influencing economic and social policy at a Community level. They plan to interest other cooperative movements in the Member States.

## What we eat is purely a matter of taste

How stable are our eating habits? The answer seems to be 'very', according to experts gathered together for a symposium on nutrition, food technology and nutritional information held in London recently under the auspices of the European Commission.

This is not to say that they do not change at all. There is no doubt that increased prosperity in all Community countries over the past 20 years has led to changes in the food we eat because there is greater variety in the shops and we are now better able to afford to buy delicacies which used to be unattainable luxuries.

Twenty years is a fairly short time to have brought about the changes that have occurred. Eating habits build up slowly and were, in the past, based principally upon economic and geographical criteria. In other words, we ate what the soil of our own country could produce and what we could afford. Habits thus acquired are slow to change, no doubt because we are innately conservative and our food has come to form part of our heritage.

Alongside this are our own personal views and needs. For all sorts of reasons we become attached to the foods we eat—for example immigrants, in the changes they make on settling in a new country, change their food habits last of all—and many of us turn to our favourite



dishes for psychological as well as physiological reasons.

Better wages and better supplies of all items of food have therefore led to changes of diet throughout the Community. Even so, tradition keeps its hold over the basic patterns, so that, according to figures produced by the OECD for 1975, Italians remain the biggest consumers of cereals (in the form of pasta), fruit and vegetables in the Community, while at the same time eating more meat than in the mid-sixties.

The Irish still carry off the gold medal when it comes to potatoes, followed by the Belgians, with the French, Germans and British sharing the bronze. The Irish also eat more meat than the others, though here they are very closely followed by the French, with the Germans and the Belgians not far behind. The British, in spite of traditions such as the Sunday joint, are more modest in their consumption of meat.

In the period 1960-64 to 1975, consumption of potatoes and cereals dropped in all Community countries, while consumption of meat, fruit and vegetables went up everywhere. For instance, the Italians showed an 80% increase in meat consumption (which still left them at the bottom of the league) while the Dutch discovered fruit in a big way—their 63% increase in consumption put them in first place by 1975.

The changes we make in our patterns of eating are those we want to make—certainly it would seem that we had all been waiting for the chance to eat more meat—and, as the nutritionists see it, we appear to be either blithely unaware or even impervious to the nutritional value of the food we eat. (Presumably, we have our own ideas of what is good for us). Advertising, too, apparently only really affects the brand we choose, not the basic product.

The general impression is that nutritionists are hampered by the fact that they do not at the moment have very precise views on what to recommend to maintain and improve the health and well-being of the population while respecting different customs and traditions.

Existing documentation is limited and it was generally felt at the symposium in London that what is lacking is some means of comparing over- or under-consumption as between various Community countries and between the various strata of population within the Nine. Equally, the impact that lifestyles may have on nutrition is a matter deserving more careful study and consideration than it has so far received.

All in all, then, our eating habits make their own way in this world. We eat what we find palatable and what we enjoy. As one of the speakers at the symposium concluded: 'The only evidence of major external influences on behaviour patterns at this national level have been those determined by scarcity, rationing or punitive use of price. On an everyday basis, change is because consumers believe that a new choice will more appropriately satisfy their taste, their pocket and their social and psychological needs rather than because we tell them.'

It looks as if the nutritionists have an uphill task to persuade us to eat what is good for us.

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