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ENVIRONMENT:

WHAT HAS THE COMMUNITY DONE SO FAR?

What is the current status of the Communities' Environment Programme? Since its adoption by the Council in November 1973, the European Commission has put forward more than thirty regulations, directives, decisions, recommendations and resolutions. The survey reproduced in this week's issue of "Industry and Society" is of particular interest, since the European Commission will soon be faced with the task of outlining a second environment programme for 1976 to 1980.

THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY: FOR A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE is the title of a colour poster (96 cm x 66 cm) produced by the Commission's information service. It is obtainable free of charge from the Information Offices of the European Communities at the addresses listed on the back of page 1 of this bulletin.

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The information published in this bulletin covers the European Communities' activities in the fields of industrial development, protection of the environment and consumer welfare. It is therefore not limited to recording Commission decisions or opinions.

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The Communities' Environment Programme covers three main categories of action:

- . action to prevent or reduce pollution and nuisances;
- . action to improve the environment;
- . action by the Community and its Member States within the framework of international conventions, conferences and organizations.

Since November 1973 the Commission has put forward more than thirty regulations, directives, recommendations and resolutions covering these three fields.

A detailed analysis of progress to date is given below.

I. Anti-pollution projects

These projects called for a three-pronged approach: evaluation of the risks for human health and the environment which arise from pollution; protection of the natural environment; tackling pollution at source.

A. Objective evaluation of the risks that certain pollutants entail for human health and animal and plant life is a long-term task which requires in particular:

- . collection of information on the present levels of pollution in the environment and in biological tissues and on the research programmes in progress in this field;
- . comparisons between methods of measurement and between measuring instruments used;
- . a critical analysis of the work thus carried out and of scientific data which allow dose/effect relationships to be determined.

The work has run into numerous difficulties including the absence or scarcity of adequate, reliable scientific and statistical information, the employment of different methods of measurement which are difficult to compare, the differences of opinion between experts and the complexity of the studies required. Despite these problems, the Commission will continue to present proposals for regulations for the prevention of pollution, to be amended and improved upon with the growth of scientific knowledge.

On 25 April 1975 the Commission forwarded to the Council two draft Directives relating to the criteria of harmfulness of lead, the monitoring of the population in respect of the risk of lead poisoning and the standards for air quality in respect of lead.

In 1975 it will pursue its work on organohalogen compounds, hydrocarbons, oxides of nitrogen, photochemical oxidants, asbestos, vanadium, noise pollution and organic micropollutants in water.

B. Action to protect the natural environment

1. Protection of waters

Work relating to the protection of water quality aims to:

- . define at Community level water quality objectives corresponding to the various uses of water;
- . harmonize the methods for measuring pollutants in water and instigate exchange of information, based upon common methods, between water surveillance and monitoring networks within the Community.

As far as the definition of quality objectives is concerned, on 7 November 1974 the Council adopted a first Directive on the quality required of surface waters intended for the abstraction of drinking water in the Member States.

On 7 February 1975 the Commission forwarded a draft Directive on the pollution of seawater and freshwater for bathing.

Before the end of 1975 it will forward to the Council proposals for directives on the quality of water intended for fish breeding and shellfish breeding, together with a proposal relating to the quality of water for human consumption.

Finally, in 1975 and 1976, it will prepare directives relating to the quality of water for the irrigation of crops and for industrial uses.

The Communities' Environment Programme provides for harmonization and, where appropriate, standardization of methods for measuring pollutants and of the work done to facilitate exchange of information between the networks monitoring air and water pollution. On 7 November 1974 the Council requested the Commission to supplement the Directive on the quality of surface waters intended for the abstraction of drinking water by a Directive on the frequency of sampling and the methods of measurement which apply. The Commission has therefore started work in this direction within a group of national experts and a draft Directive will be forwarded to the Council before the end of the year.

2. Protection of the quality of air

On 22 November 1974, the Commission forwarded a proposal for a Council Decision establishing a common procedure for the reciprocal exchange of information between surveillance and monitoring networks based on data relating to atmospheric pollution by sulphur compounds and suspended particulates. This proposal should be adopted at a future Council meeting.

As already mentioned (cf. objective evaluation of risks), the Commission has also sent the Council a draft Directive on air quality standards for lead and is preparing to present proposals on air quality standards for Co, SO₂ and suspended particulates.

3. Protection of the soil

On 7 November 1974 the Council adopted a Directive on the storage and treatment of waste oils. It was invited to rule on a draft outline Directive relating to waste in general.

The Commission is preparing for presentation in 1975 a draft Directive on the storage, transport and treatment of toxic wastes. It will subsequently present directives relating to specific wastes such as wastes from stock-farming, quarrying, mining, etc.

In addition studies have been commissioned on wastes or residues especially harmful to the environment, disposal or reutilization of slaughterhouse waste, the creation of tips for wastes from surface treatment of metals, composting, etc.

When the results of these studies have been analysed it will put forward such proposals as may appear necessary.

C. Tackling nuisances at source

1. Drawing up of standards relating to product specifications

The Commission has forwarded five draft Directives relating to product specifications.

As far as air pollution by certain substances is concerned, the Commission regrets that the draft Directive on the level of lead in petrol, forwarded to the Council on 7 December 1973, is still pending. It urges the Member States to make a special effort to align their points of view and decide rapidly on the adoption of a directive which will very substantially reduce air pollution.

Similarly the Commission attaches great importance to the adoption of a draft Directive restricting the level of sulphur in gas oil. It hopes that it will be possible for the Council to adopt this directive in the near future.

As to nuisances due to noise, proposals already presented deal with noise from motor vehicles, construction equipment, pneumatic concrete-breakers and jack-hammers. The Commission is preparing draft Directives on the noise from aircraft and from lawnmowers.

2. Pollution from industrial activities

- (a) On 20 January 1975 the Commission presented a report on pollution of water by the paper and pulp manufacturing industry and a draft Directive regulating the content of pollutant discharges into water arising from this industrial activity. The Commission feels that the handful of really heavily polluting industries must have Community-wide minimum standards of emission imposed upon them, limiting the flow of wastes discharged in the course of production.

The Commission has also presented a draft Decision fixing Community threshold values for persistent and bioaccumulable water pollutants. This Decision will in particular allow harmonized application within the Community of the Paris Convention, the Strasbourg Convention and the Convention on chemical pollution of the Rhine at present being negotiated. The Commission believes that the particularly dangerous character of these pollutants calls for emission standards that will apply throughout the Community.

- (b) More generally the Commission, in accordance with the Environment Programme, is pursuing studies on pollution attributable to certain industrial activities such as the iron and steel industry, the food industry, tanning, petrochemicals, non-ferrous metals, textiles and so forth.

Owing to the extent and complexity of the various technical, economic and social problems involved, the Commission will not be in a position to present the results of these studies or any proposals for dealing with these industries during 1975.

- (c) On 22 January 1975 the Commission sent the Council a programme on the management and storage of radioactive waste, which the Council should adopt before long. The object of this programme is to find effective solutions capable of ensuring the safety and protection of the public and the environment against the potential hazards associated with the processing, transport and storage of high-radioactivity wastes. Lastly, the Commission has sent the Council a proposal for a Council Directive on the collection, regeneration and/or destruction of polychlorinated biphenyls. It is at present preparing a draft Directive on waste arising from the production of titanium dioxide.

D. Action to back up pollution control

If it is to be effective pollution control must be backed up by scientific, technical and economic knowledge.

In the economic field the Council on 7 November 1974 adopted a Recommendation to the Member States relating to the apportioning of costs and the role of public authorities in

environmental matters. This Recommendation is a first step towards a uniform application of the "polluter pays" principle throughout the Community. On the same date, the Commission informed the governments of the Member States of the conditions under which state aids granted for environmental reasons could be regarded as compatible with the common market. Such aids, provided they are limited, temporary and on a sliding scale, may help existing undertakings to adjust to the new obligations imposed on them by Community or national environmental policies.

The Council also requested the Commission to report on the feasibility of approximating national laws on civil liability. The Commission has also undertaken to submit proposals for applying the "polluter pays" principle, particularly with regard to the harmonization of the relevant administrative machinery and application of the principle to cross-frontier pollution. Work is going ahead in collaboration with groups of national experts.

Work under the research programme in the field of environmental protection is being actively pursued at the Ispra Joint Research Centre (direct action) and under contracts signed with research organizations in the Member States (indirect action).

Significant results have been obtained by the JRC notably with regard to the multiple detection of inorganic micropollutants, remote sensing of atmospheric pollutants and a pilot project relating to the data bank on pollutant chemical products (which involves both direct and indirect action).

As far as research contracts are concerned, one hundred and thirty contracts have been or are about to be signed, for a total of over 5 500 000 u.a. (1 unit of account = approx. US \$1.2).

In the field of dissemination of information the Commission forwarded a proposal to the Council on 6 March 1975 for a Decision introducing a common procedure for the preparation and up-dating of a European list of sources on the environment. Arrangements for compiling this list and integrating it into the International Reference System now being developed by the United Nations Environment Programme have been approved by the two groups of experts which the Commission is required to consult under the Environment Programme. These experts have also discussed the feasibility of creating a number of specialized information systems. These systems cover:

- . environmental legislation;
- . collection and analysis of information on anti-pollution technology;
- . exchange of information during conferences on environmental protection.

II. Action to improve the environment

Work here has followed the guidelines set out in the programme. The Commission launched or pursued a number of studies on protecting the natural environment, on the environmental problems raised by the depletion of natural resources, and on town and country planning.

A. Protecting the natural environment

The Commission is gratified by the recent adoption by the Council of the Directive on mountain and hill-farming and farming in certain less favoured areas. It hopes that the Council will give a decision as soon as possible on the draft Directive on the encouragement of forestry activities for the improvement of agricultural structures.

The surveys in progress on the ecological implications of modern production techniques in agriculture have already revealed the areas in which an in-depth study is essential.

These are:

- . the determination of maximum levels for the spreading of liquid manure;
- . effects of the intensive use of organic or chemical fertilizers on the quality of agricultural produce, and on human and animal health;
- . questions connected with the design and construction of farm buildings in rural and tourist areas;
- . land redevelopment and the protection of the natural environment.

As far as the feasibility of developing methods of integrated control and biological control to protect crops is concerned, studies on the following will be pursued:

- . development of a system for the routine application of these methods;
- . marketing and distribution techniques for "biological" produce.

In December 1974 the Commission addressed a Recommendation to the Member States on the protection of animals threatened by extinction, its main concern being the protection of migratory birds. The Recommendation invites the Member States to accede as soon as possible to the international conventions on the protection of birds (Paris 1950), the conservation of wetlands as waterfowl habitats (Ramsar 1971) and international trade in wild species of flora and fauna (Washington 1973). If Member States have not acceded to these conventions within the next two years, the Commission reserves the right to present a proposal for a Directive to harmonize the relevant national laws.

B. Environmental problems raised by the depletion of natural resources

A Community-scale examination of the medium- and long-term availability of water resources in the light of increasing consumption and of its utilization is in progress.

An exhaustive study on mercury has been completed. It covers world resources, geochemistry, environmental pollution, production, consumption and future world and Community requirements.

An analysis of world resources of metals of the platinum group, fluorine, phosphorus, tin and lead is nearing completion.

The study on fluorine and phosphate mineral resources is in progress.

C. Town and country planning

A study of the environmental problems peculiar to town centres is nearing completion. The results of this study will be referred to a group of national experts.

The Commission has also begun work on an environmental classification of areas to allow identification and definition of the objectives to be pursued and the action to be taken. This is in response to a request made by the Council on 7 November 1974.

Finally, the Commission has made a determined effort to coordinate the contributions of the Member States in connection with preparations for the United Nations Conference on the Human Habitat, to be held in Vancouver in 1976.

D. Improvement of living and working conditions

In December 1974 the Council, on a proposal from the Commission, decided to set up a European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. Since then the Commission has produced the rules provided for in the Statute and will do its best to ensure that the organs of the Foundation are set up as soon as possible so that the Foundation can actually begin work in 1976.

E. Promoting public awareness and education

The Commission has been quite active in this area during the last six months.

In cooperation with the Council of European Municipalities and the International Union of Local Authorities, it organized a conference on environmental policy within the Community in Rome from 28-30 November 1974. This was attended by more than 400 local and national elected representatives and delegates from trades union organizations, professional bodies, national administrations and specialized institutes.

The Commission gave its support to the creation of a liaison office for non-governmental organizations working to protect the environment in the Community. This office became operational early this year.

In addition, the Commission is pressing ahead with the compilation of a report on the state of the environment within the Community.

In the field of education, the Commission is working towards the setting up of a network of primary schools which would pool their teaching experience in respect of environmental protection.

The Commission has given financial support to three specific projects:

- . the organization by the University of Paris VII, of a summer course on "New Sources of Energy";
- . a project to promote awareness of environmental problems among schools in a region of Southern Italy by organizing conferences, competitions, etc.;
- . an "environment documentation" centre at Liège, which will provide training for individuals who will awaken public opinion to environmental matters.

Lastly, it should be mentioned that the Commission publishes, in the six Community languages, a weekly bulletin entitled "Industry and Society" which reports at regular intervals on Community activities in the environmental field. The Commission also organizes colloquia from time to time with journalists specializing in this field.

III. Action by the Community and the Member States within the framework of international conventions, conferences and organizations

The Commission and the Council have continued their efforts to promote Community action or joint action by the Member States within the main international organizations, particularly the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Intergovernmental Marine Consultative Organization (IMCO), and the Economic Commission for Europe. These efforts have made the Community's viewpoint known to the international organizations and has resulted in very close cooperation with them.

Concerted action by the Commission and the Member States within the Conference for Safety and Cooperation in Europe enabled the Member States to adopt a common standpoint on the environment.

On 17 March 1975 the Council adopted a Decision concluding the Paris Convention for the prevention of marine pollution from land-based sources. The Commission is taking part in the work of the Committee responsible for ensuring implementation of this Convention.

On 11 December 1974 the Commission submitted a draft Decision concluding the European Convention on the protection of international watercourses against pollution.

The Commission was present as an observer at the UNEP Conference on the pollution of the Mediterranean held in Barcelona on 28 January 1975 and at a follow-up meeting in Geneva. The Commission will soon be presenting a proposal for a Council Decision authorizing it to participate in negotiations with a view to the signing by the Community of an Outline Agreement containing a protocol relating to the prevention of pollution of the Mediterranean from land-based sources, which is being drawn up on the initiative of UNEP.

The Commission takes part as an observer in meetings of the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine against Pollution. It will shortly send the Council a proposal for a Decision authorizing participation in negotiations with a view to the signing by the Community of a Convention on chemical pollution of the Rhine.

Lastly, it should be noted that the Commission is participating as an observer in the work of the Committee set up by the Treaty of Oslo on the dumping of toxic waste in the North-east Atlantic.

IV. Information agreement

The agreement on information for the Commission and the Member States with a view to harmonization throughout the Community of priority measures to protect the environment, signed on 5 March 1973 by the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, means that the Commission is notified on a regular basis of draft laws, regulations and administrative provisions.

At 15 April 1975 the Commission had received nearly a hundred notifications, including 22 laws or regulations, 67 draft provisions and six international agreements.

Of the 67 draft provisions received, 12 related to water pollution, 11 to air pollution, 11 to wastes, 10 to noise and 23 to draft outline laws or other instruments.

The table which follows shows that legislative activity is intense, particularly in three Member States.

It must be remembered that the first two Directives adopted by the Council on 7 November 1974, on the quality required of surface waters intended for abstraction of drinking water and the elimination of waste oils, were drawn up as a result of notifications by Member States.

Ten other proposals for directives have been forwarded to the Council or are in the course of preparation under the information agreement.

The following table shows that the information agreement has, on the whole, been applied satisfactorily. The Commission nevertheless regrets that it was notified of a number of regulations too late to allow it to put forward proposals for Community measures.

Member State	Notifications			Comments
	Draft laws	International agreements	Total	
Belgium	2	-	2	
Denmark	-	3	23	20 notifications of regulations already in force
Germany	27	2	30	Standstill procedure applied to 6 drafts 1 notification of a law
France	28	-	29	Standstill procedure applied to 11 drafts 1 notification of a decree
Ireland	-	-	-	
Italy	3	1	4	Standstill procedure applied to 1 draft
Luxembourg	1	-	1	
Netherlands	2	-	2	Standstill procedure applied to 2 drafts
United Kingdom	4	-	4	
Totals	67	6	95	22 notifications of laws

Conclusions

During the last 17 months, therefore, a large number of projects have been prepared, studied and discussed. Some of them are already leading to major decisions.

Generally speaking, priorities and time limits have been adhered to but it has not been possible to pursue all the intentions featured in the programme, mainly because of the technical complexity of the problems, the multitude of subjects, and the small number of officials assigned to these tasks.

The number of draft laws prepared by the Member States and forwarded to the Commission under the information agreement shows that awareness of the importance of environmental problems is widespread and that some Member States are particularly active.

In November 1974 the Council approved a number of additional guidelines for the Environment Programme. It asked the Commission to submit proposals

- . on harmonization of the various measures taken within the Community to protect its aquatic environment;
- . on analysis of the demand for water and identification of a minimum of available water resources and on the environmental classification of areas to allow identification and definition of the objectives to be pursued and the action to be taken;
- . on the measures to be taken with a view to reconciling increased energy production with environmental requirements.

The Council also pointed to the close link between waste prevention and environmental policy.

Thus the main features of the second programme should logically fit in with the general objectives and principles already adopted, having due regard to the experience gained.

Its aim should be to ensure continuity of the action taken in 1974 and 1975 to protect and improve the environment, to promote a more thorough application of certain principles, such as the need for preventive action and long-term common objectives, to intermesh environment policy and anti-waste measures more closely, and to link the Community's environment policy more effectively with the search for solutions to the problems raised by far-reaching changes in the world economy to pave the way for adjustment of European living conditions to these changes.