

**WEEKLY****REPRODUCTION AUTHORIZED**Brussels, 9 July 1974  
No 27/74

\*\* By using the same methodology for measurements it is now scientifically possible to make qualitative and quantitative analyses of the damage that can be done by a number of pollutants to man's health and his environment. This was proved at an international symposium on "The latest progress in EVALUATING THE EFFECTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION ON HEALTH", organized by several international bodies including the Commission of the European Communities, and held from 24 to 28 June in Paris. The Commission is now in a position to make a more determined effort to fix reference levels so as to harmonize the environmental policies of the nine Member States of the European Community, an objective expressed in the Community Environmental Protection Programme (see IRT No 125).

ANNEX 1 gives a short summary of the results of the symposium.

This bulletin is published by the

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Further information is available from the Commission's press and information offices in the countries listed on the inside cover.

*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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\*\*From now on, the European Community will be adopting a new approach in its efforts to ELIMINATE TECHNICAL BARRIERS which are still holding up the free movement of goods within the Common Market.

ANNEX 2 gives details of the extent to which the Community will harmonize regulations whilst maintaining national diversity.

\*\*In order to encourage the flow of mutual information within the Community, we have asked the various television programme producers to tell us briefly what each television network broadcasting in the Community does to help consumers.

ANNEX 3 is an article on WHAT TELEVISION DOES TO HELP THE CONSUMER IN FRANCE.

\*\*We have asked various organizations in the Community responsible for consumer protection matters to supply us periodically with details of the latest developments on subjects of direct interest to CONSUMERS. It should be understood that these articles are the sole responsibility of their authors.

ANNEX 4 is an article sent to us by the German organization "Stiftung Warentest".

\*\*Between July 1973 and March 1974 the following increases in PRICES FOR CONSUMER PRODUCTS were noted in the various countries of the Community:

|          |       |
|----------|-------|
| BELGIUM  | 7.4%  |
| DENMARK  | 9.3%  |
| FRANCE   | 8.7%  |
| GERMANY  | 4.9%  |
| IRELAND* | 10.0% |

\*From May 1973 to February 1974.

|             |       |
|-------------|-------|
| ITALY       | 11.5% |
| LUXEMBOURG  | 6.2%  |
| NETHERLANDS | 7.2%  |
| UK          | 9.5%  |

\*\*On 3 July the information service of the European Commission invited about FORTY JOURNALISTS who cover ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS in member countries of the Community, to hear a report on the first year of operation of the Community Environmental Protection Programme. Details will appear in the next issue.

\*\*The Council of Ministers of the Community recently adopted a decision by which national policies for encouraging and promoting DATA PROCESSING will be given a COMMUNITY ANGLE. The main objective is to ensure that by the beginning of the 1980's the European data processing industry should be completely viable and competitive in all fields. From 1974 on the Commission will put forward proposals for:

setting up a number of joint projects on data processing applications where these are of interest to Europe as a whole;

collaborating in public authority purchasing policy, standards and applications;

promoting industrial development projects involving transnational cooperation, where these concern matters of common interest.

\*\*The new method of COOKING FOOD BY MEANS OF HIGH FREQUENCY RADIATION (particularly in microwave ovens) may have harmful effects on the human organism, although some of these effects are still being discussed at scientific level. On the basis of the experience gained in matters of protection against ionizing radiation, the relevant departments of the European Commission and a group of experts are currently preparing a draft recommendation to protect consumers against the hazards involved in using microwaves. The recommendation, which

the Commission should be forwarding to Member States in the near future, will facilitate harmonization of laws in an area where, at regulation level, things are far from being satisfactory or comparable in the various countries of the Community. Last year, it may be remembered, the Council of Ministers adopted a directive providing for safety standards for certain electrical appliances including microwave ovens. These standards also cover radiation emissions.

\*\*From 5 to 7 November 1974 the European Commission will be holding a conference on IMPROVING WORKING CONDITIONS. Specialists representing government bodies, employers' associations, trade unions, research institutes and universities will be attending (see I&S No 5/74). At the conference, whose theme will be "Work-planning, technological development and human motivation", experts will discuss all the social, political, technological and economic aspects involved in work-planning, and how far work can be made more humanly satisfying and interesting, while at the same time taking advantage of all available technological resources. Four seminars, each covering a specialist field, will be held in Brussels in September before the main conference. The subjects will be: "Automation - industrial robots and artificial intelligence; the motor industry; the service industries (banking, insurance, and administration); and the processing industries. The results and findings of these seminars will be put before the conference's working groups.

\*\*At its last session the Community's Economic and Social Committee (ESC) consisting of employers and workers representatives, adopted an opinion on the following proposals put forward by the Commission:

Note on MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES (see IRT No 210): the ESC approves of the note as a whole and emphasizes the need to make multinational companies subject to the same Community laws as European companies.

"POLLUTER PAYS" PRINCIPLE (see I&S No 10/74): whilst approving the draft put forward by the Commission, the ESC expresses regret at the fact that it is only a recommendation, not a directive.

LEAD CONTENT OF PETROL: while drawing the attention of the Commission to certain difficulties arising for some of the industries concerned, the ESC approves the proposal for a directive.

MANUFACTURING AND ADVERTISING STANDARDS FOR SPECIAL PHARMACEUTICAL PRODUCTS: the ESC expresses itself very favourably on the proposals put forward by the European Commission.

\*\*With a view to harmonizing MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY STANDARDS at European level, the Council of Ministers has just adopted a directive proposed by the Commission aimed at approximating the laws of the various Member States on rear view mirrors, field of vision and windscreen wipers, for tractors used in agriculture or forestry.

\*\*The Commission intends to continue with and intensify its activities with regard to PROMOTING VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR ADULTS, and to disseminate information on the latest experiments in this field as widely as possible. A special feature in this connection will be a seminar on data-processing training for adults. This will be another seminar in the vocational training series and will be limited to some fifty participants from senior management, currently engaged at high levels in the field of data-processing training. Establishment of a European vocational training centre for adults, which is planned for 1975, will permit the development of activities already undertaken to promote adult training (see I&S No 13/74).

\*\*Oil supplies to the Community, oil refining, distribution, prices, taxes and the oil industry's problems in the European context are among the subjects covered in a leaflet entitled, "THE COMMUNITY OIL SECTOR - MEDIUM-TERM FORECASTS AND GUIDELINES". This has just been published by the European Commission and is on sale at the Publications Office of the European Communities (PO Box 1003, Luxembourg).

ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION AND HEALTH - TIME FOR REMEDIAL MEASURES

Where environmental pollution and its harmful effects on human health are concerned, the investigation and emotive stage is now over and we must embark on remedial measures. With this aim in view, more than 700 specialists from 50 countries of the five continents attended an international symposium on "The latest progress in evaluating the effects of environmental pollution on health". This was organized by the Commission of the European Communities, the World Health Organization and the United States Environmental Protection Agency, and held from 24 and 28 June in Paris. Research workers were able to compare the results of their analyses in more than 160 papers, round table discussions, and debates.

The information supplied during this symposium will definitely make it easier to finalize an international agreement on the criteria to be applied for certain substances such as cadmium, mercury, lead, sulphur oxides, and particles in suspension. One result of the symposium was greater insight into the connection between certain chronic complaints and the environment, for example, chronic bronchitis, which stems from polluted air in cities, and nervous complaints triggered off by the noise and stresses of modern living.

But perhaps the most important result to come out of this international conference is the fact that research workers were almost unanimous in regarding research work in a new, comprehensive and more realistic light. In this connection, and although it has been decided to conduct research into some new fields (the problem of the threshold for carcinogenic substances, the effects of harmful substances on the foetus, adaptation mechanisms in organisms), the symposium indicated the need to go beyond the isolated research carried out on the effects of a few substances on health. The problems must be seen as a whole

since their "target", in other words man, is exposed to all of them, whatever they may be - air pollutants, medicines, food additives, cosmetics, household products, or stresses. It is the combined assault of these various pollutants and harmful substances to which man is subjected every day, and that should therefore be studied in its entirety and not merely in a fragmentary way.

What causes the greatest anxiety for the future perhaps is the cumulative effect of pollutants and their combinations. Research should therefore concentrate more on the systematic analysis of given environmental situations affected by different pollution sources and thus representing varied assaults on the human organism. Nor should it be forgotten that the effects of pollution are to be added to the hazards inherent in nature herself. A great deal has been said about the mercury content of fish for instance, yet a considerable amount of this mercury comes from volcanic lava erupting naturally on the seabed. Thus industrial waste only partly explains the presence of mercury in fish.

Those attending the symposium also stressed how important it was for industry, trade and medicine to pass information on to research workers. The importance of implementing preventive measures was also emphasized: a strict and compulsory method for the prior evaluation of risks arising from new products and new techniques should be worked out.

On the basis of the papers tabled at this international symposium, for which it provided the co-Chairman and the Secretariat, the European Commission is now in a position to make a more determined effort to fix reference levels which will enable it to harmonize the environmental policies of the nine Member States of the Community, an objective

expressed in the Community Environmental Protection Programme (see IRT No 185). The international meeting just held in Paris has proved that, using the same methodology for all measurements, it is now scientifically possible to make a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the damage that can be done by a number of pollutants to man's health and his environment.

COMMUNITY HARMONIZATION VERSUS NATIONAL DIVERSITY

From now on the Community will be adopting a new approach in its efforts to eliminate the technical barriers which are still holding up the free movement of goods within the Common Market.

It is true that there has been free movement of goods within the Common Market since 1 July 1968. Customs duties and import quotas have been eliminated, and arrangements have been made to extend this facility to the three new Member States. Before truly free movement of goods can take place, however, two barriers still have to be removed - the first due to differences in the VAT regulations operating in member countries, which the Community is currently attempting to harmonize; and the second involving national technical provisions as to the manufacture and packaging of products. It is the latter which actually constitutes "the technical barriers to exchange".

Thus, for example, regulations in one country require that car manufacturers fit laminated glass windscreens in cars, whilst the regulations of another country do not require this type of glass. The same is true for ordinary consumer products. In some Member States for instance the regulations on margarine packaging require it to be packed in cubic containers, whilst in others only cylindrical containers are permitted. Such differences impede the free movement of goods and in the end raise barriers around Member States that are as effective as customs duties.

Removing these technical barriers has always been one of the Community's main preoccupations. In the past few years some 100 proposals have been forwarded by the Commission and about 60 provisions have been adopted. The most notable results concern the industrial sector (textiles,

electrical goods and, above all, the car manufacturing industry) where some standards, particularly safety standards, have now become applicable in all member countries of the Community. Foodstuffs have also been affected by measures aimed at standardizing methods of preserving and packaging.

Though at first the aim was to eliminate all differences between the various national laws and to substitute Community legislation, the European Commission soon realized that this method was too restrictive, and would be slow of implementation. In spite a loudly proclaimed determination to achieve results, this policy has run into a great many difficulties in the shape of legal and technical texts to be adopted, language barriers, differences between the vested interests of Member States, and the difficulty of agreeing on measurement and control methods. In addition, existing barriers are often associated with social measures, the political character of which is clear. And in many cases the resources devoted to implementing measures, have proved to be out of proportion to the results achieved. To take the question of beer as an example, only 7% of total production is traded between Community members. Measures to harmonize all beer production, simply in order to make it easier to trade 7% of the production, would hardly be reasonable. The same goes for bread, where it is hard to conceive of a single Community bread manufacturing regulation replacing all the local varieties now in production. All-out research to achieve such harmonization would not be in the interest of consumers whose habits and tastes would be interfered with.

To protect national and regional products and manufacturing methods, therefore, which constitute the charm and originality of our countries, and which it would be sad to see swallowed up in dull uniformity, and in order to by-pass the delays and technical complexities of total harmonization, the Commission from now on will give precedence to the "optional harmonization" approach to removing technical barriers. This

flexible method meets both the need for free movement of goods (since it allows Community rules to be established) and national and regional characteristics (since in this context each government can, if it wishes, always accept national products conforming to the regulations previously in force, alongside "Community" products).

In this way, depending on the size of his firm, the extent of his ambition and existing competition, every manufacturer will be free to adapt his products to the new Community regulations (which will give him access to the whole Community market) or to keep within current national regulations. From now on complete harmonization will be introduced only when it is indispensable to guarantee minimum protection (as regards biodegradability standards for detergents for example) or where it is a question of a name representing a certain quality (cut glass, say).

Finally, as regards complicated equipment which is not mass produced, where it would be unnecessarily restricting to draw up Community specifications, the Commission considers that it will suffice to authorize the appropriate authorities of the country in which the product is manufactured to check that the equipment conforms to the standards of the importing country. Thus a German manufacturer producing equipment for export to France though invariably conforming to French and not German standards, will at least have his products checked by authorities of the Federal Republic once they are manufactured, which will obviously simplify the whole procedure and constitute a much more practical formula.

This new approach to the problem of technical barriers to trade within the Community should also mean that the necessary harmonization can be speeded up, as recommended by the Council of Ministers of the Community in its resolution concerning Community industrial policy (see IRT No 208). It should also allow consumers a wide choice and permit them to reap full benefit from the vast market represented by the European Community.

WHAT TELEVISION DOES TO HELP THE CONSUMER IN FRANCE

In order to encourage the flow of mutual information within the Community we have asked the various television programme producers to tell us briefly what each television network broadcasting in the Community does to help consumers.

The following article was sent to us by INC (l'Institut national de la consommation - national consumer institute).

1. In 1961 French television set up the "Telex Consommateur" (consumer telex) programme. Its aim was twofold:

to inform housewives on what products were available on the market at relatively low prices so that they could buy to the best advantage;

to stabilize the market by letting housewives know when large supplies of seasonal products became available.

However, it very soon became necessary to include an indication of quality when giving a price, and to define for each product such items as standards, packaging criteria, preservation, and taste. Hence a new programme was devised including:

national "flashes" broadcast from Tuesday to Saturday inclusive and lasting 90 seconds, which give the price changes for a list of products;

"Jeanne achète", a weekly animated cartoon series lasting three minutes. In 1968 this became "Consommateur -Information" (consumer information) and was redesigned to match the housewives' level of development and knowledge.

The Consumers' information and protection office, (Directorate-General for Internal Trade and Prices) was responsible for conducting these

programmes in collaboration with a national network of correspondents. Since informing and protecting the consumer is an INC responsibility, however, it was asked to take charge of "Consommateur-Information" on 5 January 1970.

By agreement with the French Broadcasting authority, ORTF, and in return for a fee, French television permits INC to put out programmes and makes a producer available. These programmes go out daily at 1910 hours, except for Sundays, on the first channel and last three minutes on Mondays, and 90 seconds on other days. They are now called "50 millions de Consommateurs" (50 million Consumers) like the monthly magazine. INC also has a contract with a film company, to produce films.

When it took over responsibility for these information programmes the management of the Institute felt that the programme should change its style, but keep its flair. The programme was therefore slightly altered: a topic for the week is introduced on Mondays and discussed for three minutes. It is then taken up again, in 90 second spots, on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and sometimes Thursdays (depending on how important the subject is), to give a fuller picture. On Saturdays there is an animated cartoon which is a competition as well (viewers are asked an easy question and have until the end of the programme to find the answer), and the subject for the following week is announced. The remaining 90 second spots (Thursdays and Fridays) are either devoted to promoting the magazine, "50 millions de Consommateurs", or deal with a current topic.

A wide range of subjects is dealt with, selected in collaboration with consumer organizations belonging to the INC administrative Council. For instance, during the first quarter of 1974 the following topics were brought up: milk, holiday bookings, comparative tests by INC, soundproofing, labelling of food products, biological farming, evictions, oils.

2. Unlike television networks in most Community countries, French television has not yet devised any programmes, other than those by INC, that are specifically designed to inform the consumer. However, several programmes such as "vivre au présent", "les dossiers de l'écran", "aujourd'hui madame", and "actuel 2", do from time to time include such subjects and on these occasions INC representatives sometimes take part.

Finally a series of 90-second regional programmes called "Consommateur-Information" should be mentioned. These are financed by the Directorate-General for Internal Trade and Prices and produced by regional consumer associations, e.g. UROC (Unions Régionales d'Organisations de Consommateurs - union of regional consumer associations) and broadcast information on problems specific to a given region.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN CONSUMER PROTECTION IN GERMANY

We have asked various organizations in the Community responsible for consumer protection matters to supply us periodically with details of the latest developments on subjects of direct interest to consumers. It should be understood that these articles are the sole responsibility of their authors. The following article was sent to us by the German organization "Stiftung Warentest".

1. The Federal Cartels Office, a body responsible for preventing any activities that would restrict free competition, has lately concentrated particularly on the problem of rising prices. Provisional measures it took recently in respect of oil companies that were planning to increase their prices have been quite spectacular. As a result of pressure from the Federal Cartels Office all oil companies have cancelled their intended price increases for the time being. A superior court is currently examining the measures taken by the Federal Cartels Office to see whether it acted legally.

The action taken by the Cartels Office against the biggest German manufacturer, Volkswagen, has also caused a great stir. The Federal Office plans to forbid this group to implement its intended price increase. In both cases the Cartels Office accuses the group concerned of unfairly exploiting a dominant position in the market.

In several other consumer goods sectors, particularly foodstuffs, several companies have been required to give up their practice of recommending prices; here, too, the firms concerned were suspected of trying to impose particularly high prices on the market by using the recommended price system. The list of infringements drawn up by the Federal Cartels Office involves, among others, manufacturers of potato-based products, and a large manufacturer of pharmaceutical products.

2. Faulty control of beef production is currently under sharp criticism in German consumer circles. Whilst consumers are having to cut back their consumption because of high prices and a growing number of families can no longer meet their needs, the Government's cold stores are overflowing with unsaleable stocks, and products available at much lower prices on the world market are, at the same time, being increasingly barred from domestic markets. This year the Federal Republic will have to raise several hundreds of million marks for warehousing and export aids.

In addition imports of beef at lower prices from third countries do not bring lower prices on the domestic market, since the price of imported meat increases by over 50% the moment it crosses the border, because of the system of levies and compensatory payments.

The Consumer Working Party therefore proposes that the Federal Government use some of its large excess stocks of meat to put a momentary brake on the price spiral in the internal market, instead of selling these stocks abroad at the taxpayer's expense.

### 3. Better protection against marriage bureaux

Clients of marriage bureaux often run into legal difficulties if they want to cancel their contracts with these agencies. In an interesting decision the Schleswig Higher Regional Court stated that the client has the right to cancel his contract without notice and that the agency must reimburse him if the fee was paid in cash. In its decision the court of appeal notes further that current provisions in respect of hire purchase sales also apply to the services of a marriage bureau if these have been paid for by a loan (another instance where the consumer has been protected). In the opinion of the court a contract entered into with a marriage bureau may be cancelled at any time if the client loses confidence in the agency.

4. A consumers' representative on the Consultative Committee for radio programmes

For the first time a consumers' representative, the Vice-President of the North Rhine-Westphalia consumers' association, has been elected to the Consultative Committee of Westdeutscher Rundfunk's radio programmes. The Committee comprises twenty representatives from various social and political groups and, among other duties, is consulted on programme planning (particularly with a view to balanced programming).