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THE ENVIRONMENT - ONE YEAR OF COMMUNITY ACTION

From now on it is a matter of the Community translating into action, i.e., precise decisions, the proposals for combating pollution and improving the environment put forward by the European Commission to the Council of Ministers. Since the adoption by the Council of a Community Environmental Protection Programme a year ago (see IRT No 185), the Commission has forwarded to the Council nearly 20 texts - regulations, directives, recommendations or resolutions. In addition, the Commission has been notified of about 30 national draft laws or regulations on environmental matters; it has decided to propose the transformation of nine of these into Community measures. It is now up to the Council to decide on the

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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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various texts as soon as possible, and thus give practical expression to its will to implement a true European environmental policy.

Now, nearly a year after the adoption of the Community programme, it is possible to draw up a balance-sheet of the work done and decisions taken by the Community to improve the environment in the context of the action programme decided on.

1. Reduction of the level of pollution and nuisances

Here it is a matter of putting into operation whatever is necessary for reducing pollution to levels acceptable for both human health and the preservation of the natural environment.

The joint evaluation of risks resulting from pollution is the fundamental basis of a Community environmental protection policy. Criteria for the most harmful pollutants, i.e., the relationship between the concentration of a pollutant in a given element (air or water) and the effect of that pollution on human health or the environment, must be established. A certain amount of work has already been undertaken in this connection and we may now anticipate that before the end of the year appropriate criteria will be proposed by the European Commission for particles in suspension, lead, sulphuric anhydride, carbon monoxide, and noise. These criteria will of course be accompanied by proposals for harmonizing measuring methods and techniques.

The energy crisis has highlighted the fact that Europe must not only improve the terms under which fuel is supplied, but must also build up an electricity production system using more of particular

forms of energy, especially nuclear energy. As the report forwarded by the Commission to the Council of Ministers on the effects of the energy crisis on environmental protection emphasizes (see I&S Nos 14/74 and 18/74), increased use of nuclear energy brings serious environmental problems with it. The Commission attaches the greatest importance to the adoption of the resolution forwarded to the Council of Ministers on this subject, a resolution which defines in detail what measures should be examined or taken to reconcile energy production with environmental requirements.

It is on quality objectives for water that the European Commission has concentrated its first efforts in defining environmental quality objectives. The first draft directive on surface waters for the production of drinking water was forwarded by the Commission to the Council last January (see I&S No 3/74). If, as the Commission hopes, the Council of Ministers adopts this directive quickly, it will be a practical decision of great significance for environmental protection. Working with national experts, the departments of the European Commission are elaborating three further directives on fresh water and sea water in bathing areas and sea water for shell fish breeding.

In a few months' time the formulation of minimum standards for water to be used for human consumption in respect of the content of lead, mercury, cadmium, organohalogen compounds, toxic chemical substances and germs that are harmful to health, will be complete. A report on all these standards, which the Commission had drawn up, is currently being discussed by a group of experts from Member States of the Community.

The Commission is also closely monitoring the decisions concerning cleaning up the water of the Rhine taken at the highest level. It is participating in the work of the International Commission and, as and when necessary, will submit any appropriate proposals to speed up the implementation of the necessary purification measures.

Pollution of the sea has always been a central preoccupation of the European Commission. Thus, it was particularly pleased when, in February last year, a convention on marine pollution arising from land-based sources was adopted in Paris (see I&S No 9/74). The Commission hopes that the Community will take certain international initiatives, particularly at the Conference on the law of the sea which is currently taking place in Caracas (see I&S No 13/74).

The Commission has drawn up proposals aimed at limiting the lead content in petrol (see IRT No 214), and the proportion of sulphur in gas oil (see I&S No 7/74). Further directives, particularly on maximum lead content of oven-to-table ware, the composition of some toxic or dangerous substances (particularly paints and varnishes), and noise emission limits for construction machinery, are currently being elaborated by the departments of the European Commission.

Turning to industry, three sectors have been the subject of detailed study with both the national administrations and professional bodies concerned. These are the production of paper and paper pulp, titanium dioxide and steel.

The departments of the European Commission have paid particular attention to the problems raised by industrial waste, and the Commission has proposed that the Council of Ministers adopt a

directive on the storage and treatment of spent oils (see I&S No 12/74). In addition, a draft directive on toxic waste is being drawn up.

The Commission has been at pains to draw up a clear and detailed definition of the "polluter pays" principle (see I&S No 10/74), so that the rules for allocating costs resulting from counterpollution measures may be applied uniformly throughout the Community and new distortions of competition avoided.

Considerable progress has been made by the specialist groups appointed by the Commission to create a genuine European network for supervising and testing the quality of water in the most important rivers, and some air pollutants such as sulphur and dust.

Two groups of experts are considering methods for ensuring better dissemination of knowledge acquired in respect of environmental sciences. Practical proposals aimed at creating an information exchange network for the whole Community will be tabled by the end of the year.

Finally, more than 22 million units of account (1 u.a. = about US $ 1) have been appropriated for research programmes on the environment approved by the Council of Ministers. These are now being carried out.

2. Improving the environment

Agricultural policy is essential to any policy for preserving the natural environment. Following a proposal by the European Commission, the Council of Ministers has adopted a directive on

agriculture in hill-farming regions and certain less favoured areas under whose terms credits amounting to a maximum of 500 million units of account spread over four years may be granted by the Community as a compensation to farmers who agree to stay in these regions (see I&S No 17/74). The Commission has also proposed that the Council adopt a directive for promoting forestry schemes for improving agricultural structures.

The ecological consequences of applying modern production techniques to agriculture, particularly the intensive use of some fertilizers, the abuse of pesticides, mechanization and single-crop farming, are currently being studied. The studies will culminate in firm proposals.

The environmental problems raised by the depletion of natural resources such as platinoids, chrome and phosphorus were thrown into stark relief by the energy crisis. Various studies are being conducted into future requirements in non-renewable mineral resources and these, too, will be followed by firm proposals.

With regard to town and country planning the European Commission has arranged for a number of studies whose results will be discussed with a group of experts in order to draw conclusions as to necessary action (see I&S No 14/74).

In connection with improving the working environment the Commission, in its proposal for a social action plan (see I&S No 1/74), has set out guidelines for action it proposes to take during the next few years to improve preventive measures in medicine, hygiene and safety at work. In November 1974 it will be organizing a colloquium on the improvement of working conditions in the Community (see I&S No 27/74).

As previously indicated (IRT No 213) the Commission has forwarded to the Council of Ministers a proposal for setting up a European Foundation for Improving Living and Working Conditions. It covers the establishment of an organization to coordinate and give financial support to any projected studies and pilot experiments currently being conducted independently of each other and on a relatively modest scale in most Member States.

With regard to creating public awareness on environmental matters, the Commission plans to issue a report on the state of the environment in the Community during the first half of 1975. It is also preparing educational papers specially for use by secondary school teachers and certain measures at primary school and university levels.

3. Information agreement

Last year the Ministers of the Member States of the Community adopted an agreement on the supply of information to the Commission and Member States with a view to harmonizing urgent environmental measures for the Community as a whole. The European Commission attaches special importance to this original instrument of Community policy which simultaneously allows it to benefit from the experience gained by Member States and to achieve the necessary osmosis between the national laws through the intermediary of Community regulations. Thus, of 33 draft laws communicated to it by Member States, the Commission has requested the relevant States to suspend the application of nine in order to allow it to present proposals for Community-wide measures.

Such is the balance sheet of actions undertaken by the European Commission in respect of the environment during the past 11 months.

The energy crisis has confirmed - if this were necessary - the interdependence of the problems raised by the development of industrial society. The crisis has highlighted the importance which must be attached to the phenomena of pollution, to the efficient use of natural resources and to the maintenance of a certain quality of life for the pursuit of balanced development.

Although the Community action programme is only in its beginnings, the Commission has some fears in respect of its application. It hopes particularly that the Council of Ministers will take quick and definite decisions on the proposals it has forwarded. The Commission also feels some anxiety over tendencies in some Member States which seem to indicate that Community measures for environmental protection will not be regarded as binding. Yet this binding character quite obviously constitutes the chief value and profound originality of the Community decisions.

PROPOSALS AND DECISIONS BY THE COMMUNITY IN RESPECT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Subject	Date proposed by the European Commission	Date adopted by the Council of Ministers	Mentioned in the publication "Industry and Society" (I&S) or IRT
Programme			
Resolution on a Community action programme in respect of environmental protection	17/4/73	22/11/73	IRT No 185
Information agreement			
Agreement between representatives of Member State Governments, meeting in the Council, concerning the supply of information to the Commission and Member States with a view to possible Community-wide harmonization of urgent environmental measures	22/3/72	5/3/73	IRT No 177
Adaptation to technological progress			
Draft resolution on adapting directives for protecting and improving the environment to technological progress	1/3/74	-	I&S No 10/74
"Polluter pays" principle			
Draft recommendation to Member States on cost allocation and intervention by public authorities in environmental matters	5/3/74	-	I&S No 10/74
Energy			
Draft resolution on pollution and nuisance problems related to energy production	2/5/74	-	I&S No 14/74 and 18/74

Subject	Date proposed by the European Commission	Date adopted by the Council of Ministers	Mentioned in the publication, "Industry and Society" (I&S) or IRT
Preserving the natural environment			
Directive on hill farming and some less-favoured regions	27/2/73	21/1/74	I&S No 17/74
Draft directive on forestry schemes	26/2/74	-	I&S No 9/74
Water pollution			
Council Decision concerning Community participation in the Paris Convention on the prevention of marine pollution from land-based sources	7/11/73	February 74	
Draft decision concluding the Paris Convention for preventing pollution from land-based sources	10/4/74	-	I&S No 9/74
Draft directive on the quality of surface waters for production of drinking water in the Member States	15/1/74	-	I&S No 3/74
Memorandum on the negotiations with a view to concluding the European Convention on protecting international fresh-water from pollution	26/4/74	-	
Air pollution by motor vehicles			
Directive adapting the Council Directive of 20 March 1970, concerning air pollution by gases from positive ignition engines of motor vehicles, to technological progress		22/5/74	I&S No 9/74

Subject	Date proposed by the European Commission	Date adopted by the Council of Ministers	Mentioned in the publication, "Industry and Society" (I&S) or IRT
Air pollution by motor vehicles (continued)			
Directive concerning measures to be taken against the emission of pollutants from diesel engines for use in motor vehicles	30/12/71	2/8/72	
Noise			
Directive concerning admissible noise level of motor vehicles		6/2/70	
Product standards			
Draft directive on the lead content of petrol	5/12/74		IRT No 214
Draft directive on the sulphur content of some liquid fuels	11/2/74		I&S No 7/74
Directive on requirements relating to the average level of biodegradability and labelling of detergents	16/6/71	22/11/73	IRT No 213 and 214
Directive on methods of testing biodegradability of anionic surfactants	16/6/71	22/11/73	IRT No 213 and 214
Industrial waste			
Draft directive on the elimination of spent oils	20/3/74		I&S No 12/74
Improvement of working conditions			
Draft regulation on the setting up of a European Foundation for Improving Living and Working Conditions	5/12/73		IRT No 213