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** Problems of protecting the health of individuals, the population and the environment are rightly among the most important preoccupations of the public and the powers that be. The problems are many and the possible risks involved in the use of NUCLEAR energy in all its forms are high up on the list. The recent oil crisis too, has made the authorities put greater emphasis on nuclear energy. This new development implies the need for adequate measurement and control of the extra hazards to which man and the environment could now be subjected.
With this in mind, the European Community, practically since its inception, has been conducting a programme of research into HEALTH PROTECTION.

ANNEX 1 gives details of the work done and results obtained.

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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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** Under the Treaty of Rome each Member State of the European Community is obliged to apply the principle of "EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK". However, in spite of undoubted progress towards equal pay for men and women quite a bit of leeway is still to be made up. This is highlighted particularly by the report just issued by the European Commission on how the principle is being applied in the three new Member States of the Community - Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom.

ANNEX 2 gives a short summary of the report's conclusions.

** 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.

ANNEXES 3 and 4 are two articles sent to us by the Danish Home Economics Council and the Dutch Consumer Association respectively.

** For some less-privileged consumers, the issue of reduced price purchase vouchers could from now on mean a reduction of 50% in the price of BEEF. This is one of the decisions taken by the Community's Council of Ministers for Agriculture to stimulate meat consumption in the Community. At the proposal of the Commission, the Council of Ministers has also adopted a number of other measures.

An information campaign will be launched to ensure that European housewives are kept more up-to-date on the meat market situation. The Community will contribute three million units of account (1 u.a. = approx. US $1) towards financing this campaign.

The Community's frontiers will be closed to meat imported from non-member states until 1 November next.

Premiums will be granted to stock breeders for adult cattle other than dairy cows, and will increase progressively between August and February (from 20 to 70 u.a.). The Community will begin contributing towards financing these premiums from November onward. The aim is to prevent large-scale slaughtering during the autumn, which would inevitably bring with it the complete collapse of the meat market. As a result of these premiums, producers from now on can keep their animals on the farm and not slaughter them till next spring.

The Council of Ministers also took note of the Commission's plan to sell meat bought at intervention prices to certain groups at a 50% reduced price i.e., on a non-profit making basis. This follows the Commission's recommendation to reduce VAT on beef.

** 74% of all Europeans believe that Community action is not effective enough in those areas which at present are most important. This can be deduced from the first "Euro-Barometer" set up by the Commission between April and May 1974 with the aim of gaining more insight into THE DEVELOPMENT OF EUROPEAN PUBLIC OPINION. Enquiries among those interviewed highlighted the following points:

The problem currently regarded as most important in nearly every country is that of wages and prices (purchasing power, taxes, family budget and standard of living). Next in the list of the Europeans' main concerns come the economic crisis (jobs, unemployment and the energy crisis), domestic policies and the general "unrest" in society.

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In the short term, that is in four to five years, the problem of price increases will continue to be of primary importance, but other major preoccupations will be added to the list such as energy supplies and the protection of nature.

As compared with previous enquiries pro-Common Market attitude has developed in the six original Member States. 67% of people believe that it is "a good thing" (as against 63% in September 1973). But this favourable view of European unification is less widespread in the three new Member States. 48% in Ireland, 35% in Denmark, and 33% in Britain believe that it is "a good thing".

More serious efforts should be made by the Community to create a European policy and a European currency.

73% of Europeans believe that serious problems are more likely to be solved through joint action by Member States than by unilateral action (this proportion, 8 out of 10, is the same for the six founding Members).

Not enough information is available as to the European Community's activities.

** During the second quarter of 1974 A HIGH LEVEL OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY WAS MAINTAINED in the European Community. The level of employment remained high although figures for those out of work and partially out of work increased in some sectors. In spite of efforts made by Member States, prices increased appreciably - increases to the consumer were estimated to lie somewhere between 8.5 and 18%, depending on the country. The increase for the Community as a whole is likely to be

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13% in 1974 as compared with 8% in 1973. Finally, the Community trade balance has considerably deteriorated and the balance of payments' deficit could amount to more than 20 thousand million dollars for 1974.

** The Commission has just approved in principle the first applications for assistance from the EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND for RETRAINING WORKERS. The total amount of aid involved is approximately 63 million units of account (1 u.a. = approx. US $1), including commitments for 1975 and 1976. Of this amount 32.2 million units of account will be for workers whose jobs are affected by Community policies, e.g., workers leaving agriculture or handicapped workers. 30.4 million units of account will be used to intervene in an unsatisfactory employment situation, especially in declining regions and in industries affected by new techniques.

** The European Commission and the Department of State of the United States of America, by an official exchange of letters, recently established methods for COOPERATION between THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT in the field of ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION. This outline agreement provides in particular for the exchange of information on methods of measuring some pollutants and their harmful effects; pollution problems raised by some branches of industry; laying down quality criteria and objectives; and the effects of energy production on the environment. In order to plan, coordinate and review cooperation in these various fields, meetings of officials responsible for the policies will be held from time to time, along with meetings of experts, which will allow detailed discussion of specific subjects.

** The European Commission has just forwarded to the Council of Ministers a proposal for adding to the Community list of ANTIOXIDANTS (i.e., agents which prevent products from deteriorating when they come into contact with the air) which can be used in foodstuffs. The proposal has been made because the three new Member States use antioxidants which do not appear on the present list.

** The Departments of the European Commission have just completed a study of THE FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC POSITION OF LARGE FIRMS IN THE IRON AND STEEL SECTOR. The study compares the economics, finances and profitability of the firms. It is based on harmonized financial indicators established according to the European method of financial analysis. Additional information is available from the European Commission (Directorate-General for Industrial Affairs, 200 rue de la Loi, 1040 Brussels, Belgium).

** In 1973 the 17 African States, Madagascar and Mauritius, associated with the European Community, benefited from financial commitments by the Community amounting to 183.4 million units of accounts (1 u.a. = approx. US $1) drawn from the resources of the EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENT FUND. The European Commission has just published a brochure which gives a detailed analysis of projects financed in this way and shows the effects on the economy of the beneficiaries. The brochure is available from the European Commission (Directorate-General for Information, 200 rue de la Loi, 1040 Brussels, Belgium).

** A large number of officials of the European Commission will be attending an international congress to be held from 10 to 15 September in Luxembourg by the INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR RESEARCH ON CIVILIZATION DISEASES AND THE ENVIRONMENT (ISRCDE) and the World Union for the Protection

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of Life. The Congress will include a number of conferences and symposia on cancer, dental diseases, nutritional problems, water pollution, re-use of waste, and energy problems. Additional information is available from the ISRCDE Secretariat (10 rue d'Italie, 1040 Brussels).

HEALTH PROTECTION OF MAN IN THE FACE OF NUCLEAR HAZARDS

Problems of protecting the health of individuals, the population and the environment are rightly among the most important preoccupations of the public and the powers that be. The problems are many and the possible risks involved in the use of nuclear energy in all its forms are high up on the list. The recent oil crisis too, has made the authorities put greater emphasis on nuclear energy. This new development implies the need for adequate measurement and control of the extra hazards to which man and the environment could now be subjected.

To anticipate a danger, and nullify its harmful effects or control them so as to keep them down to an acceptable level means, above all, knowing and identifying, through research, the various links in the chain, very long sometimes, and sometimes most direct, connecting nuclear energy and man. Since 1960, the six and then the nine Member States of the Community have been working together to devise and carry out a Biology and Health Protection Programme. The aim of this programme is to discover the effects and hazards of radiation and nuclear energy and to develop the measures of protection that are needed.

The current programme is the third of its kind and covers the period 1971 to 1975. In addition to the section on radiation protection, for which a Community budget of 18 886 million u.a. was allocated (1 u.a. = approx. US $1), it also includes a supplementary programme dealing with the "application of nuclear techniques in agricultural and medical research", for which 5 610 million u.a. have been allocated.

Some outstanding results have been obtained under this Community programme. We will limit ourselves to a few examples of the work done and the results obtained, which have all required several years of work:

Of special interest in the assessment of radiation hazards are investigations into the long-term effects of ionizing radiation on human beings. Certain diseases have in the past been treated by means of radioisotopes and are still so treated today. The groups of patients involved have been examined in large-scale epidemiological studies, and are still under observation. These studies have yielded revealing indications of the extent to which radiation effects are dependent on the age of the patient, and on the linkage between effect and dose.

The transfer and build-up of radioactive elements in the human food chain have also been studied in various regions of the Community. In a number of limited areas, it has already proved possible to produce a remarkable synthesis of these results. Numerous factors, such as human biology, ecology, soil science, agricultural methods, and the method of feeding have all to be taken into account.

To protect people working in the nuclear industry, who, by the nature of their work, are exposed to the risk of assimilating radioactive elements, a study was made of the behaviour of such elements - particularly plutonium, the transuranic elements and fission products - in human metabolism, and their various effects noted. We now know more about the peculiar significance of the physico-chemical state of these elements in terms of their toxicological effects. Further research is however necessary.

The treatment of cases exposed to severe radiation dosage, such as might arise in nuclear accidents, has been studied jointly in a number of institutes. Haematology and immunology play a particularly important role here, and investigation has been made of the possibilities of bone-marrow transplants, since this can sometimes save the life of a person who has suffered radiation injury.

In the area of primary effects, study is being made of the basic biological molecules to discover the changes induced by radiation in the molecule itself, since this is the starting point for radiation damage in the organism. Elucidation of such changes will be an important aid towards the treatment and prevention of radiation damage.

Given the increased pace of development in the nuclear industry as a result of the energy crisis, what is the outlook as regards radiation protection? As time goes by, innovations or improvements will certainly continue to raise the safety factor in nuclear industry. Three problems are particularly important in this connection namely, the construction and control of the reactors themselves; the transport of irradiated fuel; and the storage of highly radioactive waste. For each of these, various solutions are possible and "optimum safety" arrangements apply.

The care taken in the matter of safety in the nuclear industry has so far meant that it is one of man's safest ever industrial activities. There is absolutely no indication to show that it will not remain so in future, under normal operating conditions, as long as the principles governing safety at present are observed. On the other hand nothing can ever totally eliminate the possibility of accidents occurring - human error and technical faults will always represent unknown factors, whose effects in theory could become a cause for concern. Once again hazards of this type must be objectively assessed and the knowledge needed to avoid them, bring them under control or reduce them must be acquired.

The nuclear industry is not the only form of activity introducing the factor of "radioactivity" into man's daily life. The medical applications of ionizing radiation for instance have results which the public is often little aware of. No one would dream of doing without the many radiological and radiotherapy techniques that medicine employs and that have proved to be irreplacable. But research should make it possible to perfect methods of reducing exposure and dosage. This is also one of the aims of the Community research programme.

EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK - THE SITUATION IN IRELAND, DENMARK AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

Under the Treaty of Rome all Member States of the European Community are obliged to apply the principle of "equal pay for equal work". However, in spite of undoubted progress towards equal pay for men and women a great deal of leeway is still to be made up. Since it is the responsibility of Member States to implement this principle by means of laws, regulations and administrative provisions, the European Commission last January proposed to the Council of Ministers of the Community adoption of a directive aimed at effective implementation of the principle of equal pay for men and women in all Member States (see I&S No 2/74). In order to supplement the information gathered on how the principle was being implemented in the Community, the Commission has just published a situation report on application of the principle in the three new Member States.

It can be seen from this study that the situation is not entirely satisfactory in any of the three countries, despite varying efforts to respect the Community rule of "equal pay for equal work". If we take the area for which the authorities are directly responsible, we find that only the United Kingdom possesses an Act incorporating the commitments of the Treaty of Rome into its domestic legal system. This law will come fully into force at the end of 1975. In Ireland the Government has introduced a bill in the Dail which provides for the application of this principle by the end of 1975 as well. In Denmark no legislative intervention is being considered at present in this field which is deemed to be the sole responsibility of both sides of industry. Wage discrimination towards women still exists in the public service in Ireland and in Wage Regulation Orders in the United Kingdom and Employment Regulation Orders in Ireland.

This situation is reflected in collective agreements: examples of direct discrimination not only on the level of rates of pay but also on the level of job classification are still numerous in Ireland and the United Kingdom. The situation in Denmark is better especially since the national agreement of 1973. But in the absence of comprehensive legislation giving any worker the possibility of legal action, some problems still remain, for instance, workers not covered by collective agreements (few as they may be), the question of a legal guarantee that the principle of equal pay at the level of effective earnings shall be respected, and the lack of detailed occupational classifications.

In view of this situation the Commission is inviting the new Member States to take or promote the measures required to implement the Community Treaty commitment. It recalls in this connection particularly the proposal it submitted to the Council for a directive aimed at making certain minimum protection standards general in areas under the direct responsibility of the authorities (see I&S No 2/74). It also states its intention of inviting both sides of industry to meet at European level to negotiate an outline agreement dealing in particular with the system of classifying occupations.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN CONSUMER PROTECTION IN DENMARK

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 Danish Home Economics Council.

1. A former Minister becomes Chairman of the Consumer Council

Mrs Dorte Bennedsen, 34, a former Minister, has been elected to carry on Lis Groes's difficult task as Chairman of the Danish Consumer Council. The new Chairman has stated that she will not give any policy speech but has emphasized that the incomes' problem will be her main preoccupation. It is absolutely imperative that the Consumer Council address itself to this problem, she has declared. Whether we like it or not we shall have to discuss cutting back consumption before it is too late. Mrs Bennedsen has also stressed the role which schools should play in educating consumers. She feels that it is essential that such training should be given the moment behavioural habits begin to take shape.

2. The Consumer Ombudsman becomes a reality

In a previous issue (see I&S No 23/74) a draft law on marketing conditions and one on offices for consumer complaints was mentioned. Apart from some amendments these laws were adopted before Parliament recessed, which means, amongst other things, that a consumer ombudsman in Denmark will become a reality from 1 April 1975 on. The law provides that the consumer ombudsman must be a doctor of law and the Danish Press is already busy drawing up a list of complaints which may be submitted to this very important person.

3. Informing consumers at their place of work

The national Danish Home Economics Council has extended its information activities in order to establish direct contact with consumers at their place of work. A small exhibition illustrating the Council's activities and the results of its recent surveys will be shown for several days at various work-places, but great emphasis will be laid on personal contact. Members of the Home Economic Council will be present daily, for several hours and employees from different firms will be able to ask questions and request advice. The exhibition will be a replica on a smaller scale of a large exhibition organized last year in a number of provincial towns, which helped to strengthen the Council's influence considerably.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN CONSUMER PROTECTION IN THE NETHERLANDS

The following article was sent us by the Dutch Consumer Association.

1. Advertising Code Commission

Advertising appearing in Dutch dailies and periodicals must comply with rulings imposed by the Dutch advertising code. The advertising code commission sees to it that these provisions are respected. It includes advertisers, publishers, and advertising agency and consumer association representatives. The commission checks whether advertisements comply with the code. If they contravene the rulings, a recommendation goes to the newspapers and periodicals that they no longer publish such advertisements in their columns.

So far the advertising code commission has concerned itself only with advertising about which it received complaints. But this is to change. The commission will now be able to launch inquiries on its own into the content of advertising. The commission will also have more authority over advertising appearing in newspapers and periodicals, as a result of a number of measures. To begin with, from now on, without waiting for the commission to act, its chairman will be able to prevent publication of any advertisement which seems to contravene the code. Secondly, the commission will be able to decide that advertisements by any given advertiser may not be published for a certain period of time, without prior authorization by the commission. Thirdly, any incomplete advertising item from now on may be considered misleading and will therefore be prohibited.

2. Restrictions on confectionery advertising by radio and television

In the Netherlands, the Advertising Council supervises radio and television advertising. This Council which includes representatives of advertisers, advertising agencies, publishers and broadcasting and consumer organizations, lays down the rules with which 'commercial' spots have to comply, concerns itself with any complaints against these, and advises the Minister for Cultural Affairs, Recreation and Social Welfare, who is responsible for radio and television. The Advertising Council recently enacted a regulation on commercials for sweets (acid drops, pepermints, liquorice, chocolate and others), based on the principle that confectionery advertising promotes consumption, which is one of the causes of dental trouble.

The new regulation on commercials stipulates that:

(i) they must neither portray persons less than 14 years of age nor have them speak;
(ii) they must not deliberately aim at influencing children in favour of the advertised product;
(iii) they must not be broadcast before 19.55 hours;
(iv) as far as TV advertising is concerned, throughout the programme they must include a picture of a toothbrush conforming to the Advertising Council's instructions and at least is a tenth of the size of the screen.

3. Periodical vehicle tests

The Minister for Transport and Waterways has submitted a draft law to the National Assembly which will make possible periodical, obligatory testing for motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers. According to the draft, the first phase will begin next year with the checking of vehicles ten years old and over. From year to year checks will extend to new vehicles and those previously checked will be rechecked. The checks will be carried out by the "Union touristique royale des Pays-Bas" (Royal Netherlands Touring Union), which is to set up a network of vehicle testing stations in the provinces for this purpose. According to current estimates, 535 000 private cars and motor cycles, and 79 000 service vehicles and trailers will be checked in this way during the first year in which the law applies. During the second year, the figures will be 795 000 and 104 000 respectively; and 1 240 000 and 135 000 respectively in the third year. These figures will show a rapid increase in succeeding years.

4. Draft decision on ready-cooked meals

Not long ago, the consultative commission on the law concerning goods, which advises the government on the legal provisions to which products must be subject, finalized a draft decision on ready-cooked meals. This contains rules which will guarantee the hygienic preparation, processing and preservation of croquettes, meat pies, rice balls, lumpias, pizzas and other prepared products.

At present these ready-cooked items are subject only to the general provisions of the law in respect of goods for sale, which requires such products must have no harmful effects on health, that their ingredients must be of good quality and that they must be perfectly fresh when sold.