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COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL

Introduction of summer time in the Community

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1. Explanatory memorandum

At present a "summer time" system is in force in three Member States: the United Kingdom, Ireland and Italy. The French Government recently decided to introduce summer time as from 1976. The situation at present is as follows:

		Winter	Summer
United Kingdom, Ireland		GMT	GMT + 1
Other member countries		GMT + 1	GMT + 1
including:	Italy	GMT + 1	GMT + 2
	France	GMT + 1	GMT + 2 (as from 1976)

The periods in which summer time is in force differ from country to country:

United Kingdom, Ireland:	from 15 March	to 26 October
Italy:	from 1 June	to 28 September
France (as from 1976):	vernal equinox	to autumnal equinox (approximately)

It should also be noted that European Standard Time (GMT + 1) is in force in other European countries, including those with which the Community has very close links:

Switzerland, Austria
Norway, Sweden[1]

The following are some of the advantages and drawbacks which should be taken into consideration when assessing the desirability of adopting summer time:

(a) By setting back lighting-up time in the evening, summer time makes it possible to reduce peak evening electricity demand. On the other hand, it causes an increase in peak morning demand, but this is less than the reduction in the evening.

Electricity consumption remains more or less constant; there has been a slight increase as a result of summer time in Italy, 0.3 to 1% savings are expected in France and there has been no appreciable change in the United Kingdom.

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[1] As well as Albania, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Poland, Portugal, Spain.

(b) Any advantages for road safety resulting from the longer period of daylight in the evening are offset by the drawbacks in the morning. Statistics in the United Kingdom, a country with recent experience of both systems - British Standard Time (GMT + 1) was in force all year round from 1968 to 1972 - do not indicate that summer time has a significant effect on the number number of road accidents.

(c) Summer time has a beneficial effect on economic and social activity by making it possible to spread activities more efficiently over the day (for example, there is one extra hour of daylight for leisure activities or sports).

(d) Summer time entails a number of drawbacks for electricity producers and certain users: e.g.,time-devices must be altered for day/night tariffs and each year there is one 23-hour day and one 25-hour day.

(e) Harmonization of summer time throughout the Community would have a favourable impact on international transport, from the point of view of both operators and passengers, as timetables would be simplified. Nevertheless, it should be noted that for commercial reasons operators bring in their summer timetables on varying dates which, with the exception of Italy, are not the same as those in force or proposed for summer time. (This question could be examined separately at the appropriate time.)

From the foregoing the following conclusions can be drawn:

(a) The general desirability of harmonization throughout the Community could be outweighed by differences in geographical situations.

(b) The arguments in favour of introducing summer time may be regarded as sound but they are not considered to be decisive.

(c) It would be desirable to introduce uniform arrangements, including uniform dates of operation, for regions in comparable geographical situations, within the Community. For psychological and political reasons it would be advisable to avoid giving the impression that changes are being made in uncoordinated fashion.

(d) In view of the decision made by France (which is aligning on the arrangements in Italy, as far as principles, but not dates, are concerned) it would be desirable for all the countries on a similar longitude to be prepared to align as well. It would also be desirable if all the Member States concerned do align, for contact to be made immediately with the other European countries in a comparable situation (for example, Switzerland, Austria, Norway and Sweden).

Lastly, it must be realized that the situation described above would entail a change in time during the summer in the United Kingdom and Ireland compared with continental Europe. In fact this is not a drawback since it will make the hour difference constant throughout the year.

As a result, the situation in the Community would be as follows:

	Winter	Summer
United Kingdom, Ireland	GMT	GMT + 1
Other Community countries	GMT + 1	GMT + 2

Thus, apart from the abovementioned one-hour difference for the United Kingdom and Ireland, the hour would be the same time throughout the Community.

2. Commission guide-lines

Accordingly, the Commission considers that all the Member States could adopt summer time, for a period to be determined by mutual agreement, for the following reasons:

(a) by setting back lighting-up time in summer, such arrangements would be beneficial to economic and social activity and would be in keeping with the energy conservation policy to which all the Member States have subscribed;

(b) harmonization of the period in which summer time is in force would be an appropriate measure of unification in the organization of everyday life in the Community;

(c) furthermore, this measure would facilitate the harmonization of international transport timetables.

Should the Council accept this approach, the appropriate legal instrument would be a Council Resolution, as there is no legal basis in the EEC Treaty for the adoption of a binding instrument in this field.