



a newssheet for journalists

Weekly n° 12/89

10 - 17 April 1989

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EUROFORUMS

UNEMPLOYMENT: Community assistance for more than 2.5mn. unemployed
The European Social Fund to spend ECU 3,500mn. in 1989.

More than 2.5mn. unemployed persons will be helped this year by the European Community's Social Fund. The European Commission approved at the end of March 11,467 projects or programmes aimed at helping the jobless and presented by the governments of the 12 Member States. The latter will receive some ECU 3,500mn.* in Community funds for implementing their projects, including ECU 2,500mn. for young people under 25 years of age.

Three countries will receive over half the total amount; they are Britain (ECU 639mn.), Spain (ECU 602mn.) and Italy (ECU 593mn.). Some ECU 437mn. have been earmarked for France and ECU 48mn. for Belgium.

Several of the projects seek to train the unemployed in new technologies. Some 900 young people in the Lisbon area will thus learn computer-aided design and manufacture. French technicians will learn to use digitally controlled machine tools while 40 Dutch men and women will familiarize themselves with the mysteries of electronic information classification and retrieval.

Other projects will make it easier for the blind or mentally handicapped to find jobs. Yet others will combine the fight against unemployment with environmental protection. Thus in Sardinia some 370 long-term unemployed will learn to operate waste disposal plants and keep a watch on pollution, while in Bremen, in northern Germany, 20 persons will be trained in recycling in special workshops.

RESEARCH: A somewhat mysterious brain drain

The European Parliament calls for a detailed study of the subject.

The European Community is suffering from a brain drain, although neither its scale nor its consequences are fully known. Large numbers of highly qualified scientists are leaving the 12-nation Community in response to tempting offers - from the United States, more often than not. In a resolution adopted on March 16, the European Parliament asked the European Commission to carry out a detailed study of the phenomenon, by setting up a data bank listing those who have emigrated, together with the date of their departure, and to determine the causes of this exodus.

The resolution underlines the fact that the EC countries which are the poorest in technological resources could be the first to suffer from this brain drain.

* 1 ECU = UK£0.65 or IR£0.78

TOBACCO: The rules of the game for posters and the press

The European Commission proposes a regulation governing advertising.

The European Commission would have liked to ask the Twelve to ban tobacco advertisements from the press and from hoardings, given that this is the European Year of Information on Cancer. But the fact is that only two European Community countries, Italy and Portugal, apply such a ban. The Commission has therefore thought it preferable to authorize such advertising even while subjecting it to the same rules from one end of the Community to the other.

This, in fact, is the aim of the directive the Commission sent to the EC Council of Ministers at the end of March. It seeks to ban advertisements for tobacco products from all publications meant for those under 18 years of age as well as "indirect" advertising - such as the use of a cigarette manufacturer's logo on articles of clothing. The directive would also limit the contents of such advertisements to the packet of cigarettes, cigars, etc. and would require advertisers to indicate the tar level.

Under the Commission's directive, advertisements for cigarettes shown on hoardings or in the press would have to devote at least 10% of their area to warnings such as "Tobacco seriously damages your health" or "Smoking shortens lives". Advertisers could choose between 12 such warnings but would have to add one of two additional warnings: "Smoking causes cancer" and "Smoking causes heart diseases".

The European Commission wants to both reduce nicotine addiction, the cause of some 440,000 deaths in the Community each year, and to harmonize national regulations in the run-up to the single market in 1992, so as to ensure that differences between them do not distort trade.

However, harmonization does not mean a levelling out. Were the directive to be adopted, the Twelve would still be able to introduce stricter measures. The Commission's proposal, which is based on the regulation in force in Ireland, would nevertheless require countries with very flexible regulations, especially Greece, Luxembourg and Spain, to be less accommodating.

ENVIRONMENT: Baby seals are once more in the limelight

The European Commission wants a permanent ban on sealskin imports.

What will happen to baby seals after 1 October 1989? This is the date on which the present ban on imports of baby sealskins, introduced by the European Community in 1985, expires. The Norwegian government has already announced the resumption of hunting. To prevent a renewal of the massacres which horrified public opinion, the European Commission asked the Twelve in mid-March to impose a permanent ban on imports of baby sealskins into the Community.

The Commission presented a similar proposal in 1985, when the EC Council of Ministers prudently decided to settle for a 4-year ban. The Council nevertheless asked the European Commission to submit a report on the conservation of the two species directly affected - harp and hooded seals.

In its report, presented in March 1988, the Commission came out in favour of a continuation of the ban on imports and announced its intention to examine the situation again in 1989. Since then, wild life and environmental protection groups have campaigned on behalf of the seals. As many as 324 Euro-MPs, out of a total of 518, signed a declaration calling on the European Commission to propose a permanent ban on imports of sealskins. The final decision rests with the Council of Ministers.

VOTING RIGHTS: Euro-MPs want municipal elections to be "European"

The European Parliament approves the Commission's proposal.

The European Parliament once more has come out very clearly in favour of the right of all Europeans living within the European Community to vote in municipal elections, whatever their country of origin. On March 15, the Euro-MPs adopted, by 246 votes to 56, with 13 abstentions, a slightly modified version of the Commission's proposal on this subject.

The decision lies with the EC Council of Ministers, which is sharply divided on the issue. Hence the Commission's decision to propose transitional measures in the case of municipalities (they are mostly in Luxembourg) with more than 20% of "foreigners" from other Community countries. The European Parliament is prepared to envisage an exemption in their case, but only once.

SPORT: Europe will be on display at the 1992 Olympic Games

The programme will include ECUs, flags and new technologies.

The 1992 Olympic Games will have a strongly European flavour. To begin with, they will be held in two European Community cities: Barcelona and Albertville in the French Alps, where the winter Olympics will take place. What is more, the 1992 Olympics will be held in a year which should see the completion of the single European market. The European Commission, not surprisingly, has decided to use the Games as a show-case for Europe. In mid-March it approved a wide-ranging promotional programme which includes use of not only the 12-star Community flag but also the ECU and the latest European technologies.

Some two billion people - over one-third of the world's population - are expected to follow the opening and closing ceremonies in Barcelona on television. The winter Olympics in Albertville should attract some 1.5 billion viewers. Competitors from the 12 European Community countries will sport the Community flag alongside their national colours, provided the European Commission can convince the national Olympic committees that are still holding out of the impact this would have on viewers. The Commission is trying to ensure that the Olympic flame will visit all 12 EC capitals on its journey to Barcelona. It is also planning a special prize for the best Community athletes.

It is essential, in the Commission's view, that European industry be given the opportunity to present its version of high-definition television at the 1992 Games, together with its system of mobile telephones and electronic messages and credit cards, which both athletes and visitors could use to make payments, put through telephone calls and travel at the site of the Games.

These cards could prove an effective way of promoting the ECU, the European currency unit, among athletes and accompanying officials only or, eventually, all visitors to the Games. The ECU could also appear on commemorative stamps and medals. The Commission in fact would like it to be used to finance the Games as well: an ECU-denominated loan, for example, could be used to meet a part of the huge costs envisaged by the organizers: over ECU 1,500mn. for the Barcelona Olympics and some ECU 450mn. for the winter games in Albertville.

The European Commission is also offering the organizers its technical assistance in an area in which it enjoys an excellent reputation: simultaneous translation.

EC PUBLIC OPINION: Europeans expect a great deal from "1992"

The results of the latest Eurobarometer survey of public opinion.

Three out of four Europeans have heard or read about the project to create a single market by 1992; 62% of them believe it will bring about changes - and for the better, according to some 90% of them. This is one of the key findings of the Eurobarometer public opinion survey carried out last autumn on behalf of the European Commission in all 12 European Community countries.

For two of three Europeans the message of "1992" is one of hope; only one in five fears the single market, according to the survey, whose results were published in mid-March. The survey also shows that of the dozen advantages of the single market, those which interest Europeans most of all are the ability to make payments without complications within the EC, to go and live in whichever Community country they like, the possibility to buy at home products lawfully sold in other EC countries and the possibility to transfer money freely from one EC country to another.

Europeans are equally interested in the social aspects of the single market. More than 90% of those who expressed an opinion favoured Community regulations in the field of safety and hygiene at the place of work and the mutual recognition of professional qualifications. More than 80% thought that collective EC agreements would be "advantageous".

In the Community as a whole, support for the 1992 project seems to have grown since the previous Eurobarometer survey, carried out in the spring of 1988. However, if the single market has won fresh converts in Portugal, Ireland and the United Kingdom, it has lost ground in Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

Some 53% of those polled last autumn found the idea of a European government seductive, as against 49% last spring and in the autumn of 1987. As one would expect, the results varied greatly from country to country: nearly three Italians out of four and two Belgians out of three were in favour, while more than three Danes out of five were against.

As for the elections to the European Parliament this June, they aroused greater interest last autumn than six months earlier. In most Community countries, over half of those polled claimed they planned to vote. However, no more than 34% intended to vote in Britain, 45% in Luxembourg and 47% in Belgium (assuming that voting was no longer compulsory in the last two countries).

ELECTRICITY: More nuclear and hydroelectric power

Statistics for the 12-nation Community for 1988.

The share of nuclear power in electricity production in the 12-nation European Community came to 33.9% last year, as against 32.9% in 1987. Hydroelectric production also rose last year, when its share amounted to 12.5%, as compared to 11.7% in 1987. Even so, conventional thermal power stations - coal, oil and gas - still account for the bulk of the electricity produced in the Community, although their share is declining - 53.4% last year, as against 55.8% in 1987, according to Eurostat, the EC's statistical office.

Nuclear power continues to dominate electricity production in France, with nearly 70% of the total, and Belgium (65.5%). It accounts for a substantial part of the electricity generated in Spain (36.1%) and Germany (34%). Its share is more modest in the case of Britain (19.3%) and the Netherlands in particular (5.2%). Nuclear power plays no part in the other Community countries; Italy, in fact, has turned its back on it since the 1987 referendum.

Hydroelectric power accounts for much of the electricity generated in Luxembourg and Portugal, with 62% and 56% respectively of the total. It accounts for one-fifth of French electricity production and nearly one quarter of the Spanish and Italian production. Elsewhere, its share is below 10%.

Total electricity production, which had already increased by nearly 3% in 1987 in the 12-nation Community, continued to rise at this rate last year. Electricity consumption went up in all Community countries, at rates ranging from 1.3% in the case of France and Denmark to more than 10% in Luxembourg.

COAL: Imports more or less stable in 1988

The US remains the Community's main outside supplier.

The European Community imported more than 95mn. tonnes of coal last year, an increase of 4% over 1987 but roughly the same quantity as in 1986. The United States was the major supplier, accounting for more than 34mn. tonnes. It was followed by Australia (19.2 tonnes) and South Africa (19mn. tonnes). Other extra-EC suppliers included Poland (8.5mn. tonnes); the Soviet Union, whose exports have risen sharply these last two years, to reach 2.5mn. tonnes, and Canada (2.3mn. tonnes).

HEALTH: Tar = cancer

The mortality rate from lung cancer is directly related to the tar content in cigarettes.

Smoking high-tar cigarettes greatly increases the risk of death from lung cancer, according to scientific studies. For every 100 deaths from lung cancer of smokers of high-tar cigarettes (between 25.8 and 35.7 mg/cigarette), there were 94 deaths of smokers of cigarettes with a tar content of between 17.6 and 25.7 mg/cigarette and 79 deaths in the case of those smoking low-tar brands (below 17.6 mg/cigarette) over the period 1966 to 1972. Among female cigarette smokers, the corresponding figures were 100, 73 and 57.

These figures have been adjusted to take account of the number of years of addiction to the weed, on the one hand, and the number of cigarettes smoked daily, on the other. Taken in conjunction with certain discoveries in fundamental research, these statistics have led cancer specialists throughout the world to recommend the introduction of an upper limit of perhaps 15 mg/cigarette. The final goal would remain the elimination of tobacco consumption.

It is worth bearing in mind that the mortality rate from lung cancer is 7 in the case of non-smokers, as against 100 in the case of those addicted to high-tar cigarettes

"EUROPE, MY COUNTRY": An original look on the Europe of tomorrow*

Its author, a Belgian Euro-MP, is interviewed by Belgian radio and television.

Fernand Herman, the author of "Europe, my country", is a well-known member of the European Parliament. In Strasbourg last February he tried to breathe new life into the proposal for European union, aimed at giving the European Community a more democratic political foundation. It would increase the legislative powers of the European Parliament, which remains so far the only European institution to hold general elections.

Interviewed by a Belgian journalist, the Euro-MP described his long combat in favour of Europe. He demonstrated that the originality of his book lies not only in its form but also the richness of its contents. "Europe, my country" in fact offers clear answers to questions that millions of Europeans are asking about the Community that is taking shape. It should help those who believe in the European ideal to distinguish between what has already been accomplished and the challenges posed by the creation of the single market in 1992.

*Available only in French for the present. "Europe, mon pays", Editions Espace, 193pp.

BRIEFLY ...**Third edition of a European Community boat race**

The third edition of the European Community boat race will take place from July 23 to August 14. Called the Open U.A.P. of the European Community, it will be backed by the European Commission, as in previous years. The race will start at Hamburg, which celebrates its 800th anniversary this year and end at Toulon. The multihulled sailing boats will call at Scheveningen, near The Hague; Southampton; Lorient in Brittany; Vigo in northwest Spain and Vilamoura, in southern Portugal. All seven ports will organize European festivals to coincide with the boat race.

The EC beer market comes under scrutiny

The European Commission decided in mid-March to take a long, close look at the European Community market for beer, in order to make sure that there are no trade barriers to hamper the flow of this thirst-quenching beverage. The European Competition Commissioner, Sir Leon Brittan, has asked his department to scrutinize the tying arrangements between pubs and breweries, in the U.K. and elsewhere. The European Commission authorized certain categories of agreement in 1983. Sir Leon Brittan wants to make sure that beers will flow unhindered in the single market in 1992.

Tourist guides take their case to the European court

For several years now tourist guides from various European Community countries have been complaining of the restrictions imposed by the French, Italian and Greek authorities, which prevent them from doing their job when accompanying groups to one of these countries. The fact is that those providing information to tourists, whether from inside a bus or on the sidewalk, must have the qualifications laid down by French, Italian and Greek law. The European Commission, which views this requirement as contrary to the freedom to provide services within the Community, decided at the end of March to take the three countries to the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg. A similar problem would arise in the case of Spain and Portugal, as both countries follow roughly the same policy in this matter.