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### SUMMARY

- P. 2 IMMIGRATION: EC ministers set guidelines for coordinating policies  
Moves towards phasing out border checks and fighting terrorism.
- P. 3 NUCLEAR: European Commission gives opinion on Cattenom  
No health risks for neighbours but sharing alarm systems needed.
- P. 4 DEMOGRAPHY: EC population reaches 322 million  
But European depopulation has already started.
- FOOD: EC Commission puts more cash into concentrated butter scheme  
EC surpluses for hotels, restaurants, clinics.
- P. 5 EXTERNAL RELATIONS: EC, Norway draw closer together  
Commission President meets top Norwegian officials.
- P. 6 AFRICA: New emergency fund for fighting locusts  
EC ready to help Africans any time.
- HEALTH: Nothing to fear from fluoride, Commission says  
European rules protect consumers.
- P. 7 FORESTRY: Euro-Parliament Committee calls for common policy  
How to protect forests while making them more profitable.
- P. 8 FOOD: Monitoring national promotion campaigns proves difficult  
Commission considers measures for spotting subsidies.
- EDUCATION: Euro-MP wants elementary textbook on Europe  
A map for to-day and maybe a textbook for to-morrow.
- P. 9 POSTAL RATES: A European jungle  
European Commission outlines situation.

This newsheet is published in six languages (English, French, German, Dutch, Italian and Spanish) by the Directorate-General for Information, Communication and Culture of the

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Its contents do not necessarily reflect the official views of the Community institutions.



IMMIGRATION: EC-ministers set guidelines for coordinating policies

EC interior ministers have agreed on coordinating moves towards both phasing out borderchecks between member states and fighting terrorism, drug trafficking and illegal immigration more effectively. Though some would say the two policies contradict one another, the twelve ministers are apparently prepared to meet the challenge.

At an informal meeting held in London on October 20th, they renewed their commitment to both easing intra-Community border-crossing and fighting terrorism and drug-trafficking more effectively. They made clear that achieving any of these aims at the expense of the other was out of the question.

In practice this will mean strengthening external border controls to be in a position to dismantle barriers within the twelve-nation Community, while at the same time ensuring smooth cooperation between national authorities in charge of security and immigration.

The Twelve are considering coordination and possible harmonisation of visa policies as well as systematic exchange of intelligence between police authorities about false and stolen passports. In addition, a common policy is to be set up to prevent illegal immigrants from successfully posing as political refugees.

To bring about speedy implementation of their conclusions, the interior ministers have decided to set up a special working group with the task of considering their suggestions and looking at the effectiveness of present measures such as internal border controls and spot-checks by customs officers. The group, which is composed of the ministers' closest advisers on immigration policy and of European Commission representatives, has to report to the EC heads of state and government by December.

Lord Cockfield, the European Commissioner in charge of the internal market, who attended the London meeting, welcomed the agreement. He stressed the fact that, despite growing concern for security, EC interior ministers had maintained the objective of providing for free movement in the Community by December 1992.

**NUCLEAR: European Commission gives opinion on Cattenom**

Though normal operation of the new nuclear power station at Cattenom in North East France should not by itself involve health risks for people living in neighbouring areas of Germany and Luxembourg, French plant management would do well to link their Luxembourg and German neighbours to their own alarm systems. These are the main points of a European Commission opinion adopted on October 22nd, two days before the entry of the plant into operation.

Under the EURATOM Treaty, the European Atomic Energy Community's founding treaty, governments of member countries must provide the European Commission with details of any plan for disposing of radioactive waste to determine whether operation of a new unit may result in contamination in another EC country.

In such a case, the Commission must give its opinion within six months after consulting a committee of scientific experts from member states. In the Cattenom affair the Commission's opinion was eagerly awaited because the French nuclear plant is about 9 km from Luxembourg and 12 km from Germany, and public opinion in both countries have shown concern about the new power station.

According to the experts, the disposal of radioactive waste in normal plant operation will not give rise to any exposure of France's neighbours above the limits set out in EC basic standards. Even in the event of a loss of primary coolant - the type of accident with the most serious consequences for the surrounding population - radiation levels would remain below EURATOM dose limits.

However, under exceptional circumstances such as a plane crashing on the power station site or an earthquake in the area, exposure could reach levels requiring specific measures by authorities in neighbouring countries, the experts say.

Although France already has agreements with Germany and Luxembourg on the exchange of information in the event of nuclear accidents, the Commission would like the French to agree with their neighbours on linking them to the automatic alarm systems in Cattenom, so that they could be provided automatically and permanently with monitoring data in radioactivity from the plant.

Besides, the Commission is considering extending the minimum six months delay between receipt of technical data on planned nuclear units from EC countries and entry of those units into operation.

DEMOGRAPHY: EC population reaches 322 million

There were 322,523,000 people living in the 12-nation European Community as of January 1st, 1986, up 900,000 on the previous year, according to the latest figures released by Eurostat, the EC's statistical office. But this slight increase must not hide the fact that European depopulation has already started, notably in the Federal Republic of Germany, where population was 29,000 lower in January than a year before.

Germany has been the only EC country to experience a fall in population so far. Over a year population stayed at the same level in Ireland, while increasing slightly in Belgium, Denmark, Italy and Luxembourg, and more substantially in all other Community countries, Spain and Portugal in particular.

In 1985 the number of births\* was down on the previous year in Belgium, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg and Portugal, whereas it went up in all other EC countries. In the same year the number of deaths\* increased everywhere in the Community except in Luxembourg.

Ireland still has the highest birth-rate among the Twelve (17.6 per 1000 population) and Germany the lowest (9.6 per 1000 population). Although the number of marriages is declining in the Community as a whole, it is rising in Denmark, Germany, Greece, Ireland and the Netherlands. The U.K. still leads the marriage league with 6.9 marriages per 1000 population with France coming last with 4.9 marriages per 1000 population.

\* No figures available for Spain.

FOOD: EC Commission puts more cash into concentrated butter scheme

The price of butter sold from EC warehouses for processing into concentrated butter is going to be reduced by 263 ECU/100 kg\*\* instead of 243 ECU/100 kg at present. The European Commission has decided to increase aid for the concentrated butter scheme in the hope that a further price reduction will tempt manufacturers of cooking and pastry products to buy more EC surpluses.

Concentrated butter is intended ultimately for consumption in hotels, restaurants, clinics, etc. and prices for competing products have been declining lately.

Between November 25th, 1985 and September 29th, 1986, sales of butter for processing into concentrated butter amounted to 27,822 tonnes, which is very little compared to the 1.5 million tonnes EC butter mountain. Belgium and Germany took the lion's share with more than 8,000 tonnes each and more than 6,000 tonnes were sold in the Netherlands. But concentrated butter had no success at all in either Italy or Luxembourg.

\*\* 1 ECU = UK£ 0.71 or IRL 0.76.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS: EC, Norway draw closer together

In 1972 Norwegian voters said "no" to entry into the European Community in a referendum by 53.5% against 46.5%. But since then the EC and its northern neighbours have been drawing closer together nonetheless, with relations now covering all areas of interest to the Community. This has been highlighted by Jacques Delors's official visit to Norway last month, during which the European Commission President met top Norwegian officials.

In a three-day visit, Mr Delors had talks with the Prime Minister Mrs Gro Harlem Brundtland, with King Olav V, several members of the government and various political and business figures. In recent years, bilateral meetings held at various levels have become more numerous.

The framework for EC/Norway relations is a free-trade agreement for industrial products along the same lines as those concluded by the Community with other EFTA countries\*. Since January 1984, industrial products have enjoyed free movement between the EC and Norway, without any customs duties or quantitative restrictions.

The relationship goes even further actually. Sectoral bilateral agreements have been concluded in such diverse fields as fisheries, cheese and steel. Furthermore Norway has been linked to Euronet, the European data transmission network since 1984, in the same way as Sweden, Finland and Switzerland. In addition the EC and Norway signed a framework agreement on scientific research and technology last June.

Even though some areas are not covered by agreements, there is much scope for regular experts meetings for exchanging views and information from energy and consumer protection to environment, transports and monetary policy.

In any event trade has not stayed behind. Between 1973 and 1985 Norwegian exports to the EC increased more than tenfold, while Community exports to Norway quadrupled. Oil and natural gas rank high in Norway's exports to the European Community, which sells mostly machinery, transport equipment and chemicals to its Nordic neighbours.

\* Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Switzerland and Austria.

AFRICA: New emergency fund for fighting locusts

The EC is ready to help Africans meet any new locust invasion without delay, thanks to an ECU 650,000\* emergency fund just set up by the European Commission.

The new fund would cover the cost of buying pesticides and hiring planes for spraying as well as other expenditure involved in any anti-locust action in one or several countries.

This year locusts have already plagued drought- and famine-stricken areas of Africa, threatening to ruin highly valuable harvests.

Total EC spending for helping Africans to combat locusts will reach ECU 10 million for the whole of 1986, including an action programme launched in September.

HEALTH: Nothing to fear from fluoride, Commission says

Allowing fluorization of drinking water in several EC countries does not result in any risk for the health of Europeans, the EC Commission says. In reply to a question by a British Euro-MP, John Marshall, the Commission makes clear it will not try to dissuade countries which add fluoride to their drinking water from doing so.

According to the Commission's information, Ireland is the only EC member state where fluorization of drinking water is mandatory. But in some other Community countries regional authorities are entitled to make it compulsory.

The Commission states that current European rules protect consumers effectively from having too much fluoride in their food, as a Directive adopted in 1980 lays down the maximum admissible fluoride concentration in drinking water.

To meet Mr Marshall's main concern, the Commission adds that fluoride carried over to products manufactured in contact with water or to which water is added during processing has been taken into account in the Directive. For example, processed food made in Ireland using fluoridated water does not exceed maximum permitted levels.

**FORESTRY: Euro-Parliament calls for common policy**

Though it may cost a lot of money, it is possible to protect European forests effectively while at the same time making them more profitable, according to Euro-MP Georgios Romeos. In a report recently adopted by the European Parliament Committee on Agriculture, Mr Romeos calls for an EC common forestry policy, which would be independent of agricultural policy, fully comprehensive and provided with substantial finance.

Earlier this year the European Commission has drawn up an outline for a Community action programme for forestry to be discussed by the EC Council of Ministers and the European Parliament (see Eurofocus 3/86). Suggestions included stepping up afforestation and the productivity of existing forests.

Mr Romeos criticizes the Commission's proposals on the grounds that they put no real emphasis on existing woodland areas and that they fail to provide for adequate financing. But his main target is the EC Council of Ministers, who allocated a mere ECU 496 million\* for the period 1979-1984. By way of contrast the EC budget for the same years has totalled ECU 20,000 to ECU 25,000 million.

Georgios Romeos argues that the poor profitability of EC forests and the high price of EC produced timber can be largely put down to land fragmentation. As a matter of fact private forests account for around 60% of total woodland areas and of 3 million owners, only 50,000 have more than 50 hectares of woodland.

As a rule, state-owned forests are larger and better managed than private ones, Mr Romeos notes. However, the profitability of private forests could be increased by helping woodland owners create associations and joint undertakings.

As for converting agricultural land into woodland, a Commission suggestion, the report states that thorough surveys would have to be carried out before and that fairly high subsidies would have to be paid to affected farmers.

Besides, the report calls for tougher measures to prevent forest fires and stresses the need for careful maintenance of woodland. Mr Romeos would also like the EC to grant aid for the marketing of resin and for cork, of which Spain and Portugal are big exporters.

1 ECU = UK£ 0.71 or IRL 0.76.

**FOOD: Monitoring national promotion campaigns proves difficult**

Advertising campaigns with such slogans as "Eat Belgian butter", "Irish milk is good for you" or "French wines are the best" may have been paid for with national government money in breach of European Community rules. But keeping under constant review all promotion campaigns of this kind is extremely difficult, as the European Commission has admitted in reply to a question from the Dutch Euro-MP, Pieter Dankert.

Under the Treaty of Rome, the European Community's founding treaty, national governments may not pay subsidies to manufacturers in their own country at the expense of competitors in other EC member states. Although this rule can be implemented effectively in industry and to some extent in agriculture, it is more difficult to apply in the case of promotion campaigns for national food products.

Since 1984 the European Commission has been looking at better ways of investigating public subsidies paid for advertising agricultural products. It is in fact considering asking the Twelve to adopt specific measures aimed at spotting subsidies likely to distort competition within the Community. However, it makes clear its officials cannot monitor each televised announcement, poster or newspaper advertisement.

**EDUCATION: Euro-MP wants elementary textbook on Europe**

Primary schoolchildren in the twelve EC member states might learn how to grow up as "European citizens" if they were provided with an elementary textbook on Europe. A Spanish Euro-MP, Manuel Cantarero del Castillo, recently asked the European Commission whether it was prepared to compile such a book.

Though it approves of Mr Cantarero's suggestion, the Commission points out in its reply that its limited resources would only allow for a contribution to a nationally financed project. Besides, the Ministers of Education of the Twelve have decided to introduce a European dimension in teaching.

For the time being, secondary school pupils are the ones who get a chance of learning more about the European Community as the European Commission has released 650,000 copies of a Community map intended for distribution in all EC countries.



### POSTAL RATES: A European jungle

Europe often seems to be a vague and remote notion when it comes to posting a letter or a card to another EC country. In reply to several questions by worried Euro-MPs, the European Commission has recently outlined the whole situation.

National postal authorities in the EC implement their own policy without taking any orders from either their own government or the European Community. In 1979 the European Commission adopted a recommendation calling on member states to apply inland postal rates to intra-Community mail. But a "recommendation" is not legally binding.

In practice, there are basically three ways of dealing with mail to other EC countries, the "generous" way, the "nationalistic" attitude and the give-and-take policy.

"Generous" postal authorities in 5 countries - Denmark, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and lately the U.K. - have chosen to apply inland rates to letters weighing less than 20 gm and to postcards. In Italy the "European" inland rate only applies to postcards.

At the other end of the spectrum, postal services in the three newest EC member countries, Greece, Spain and Portugal, charge double rate for letters and postcards to the rest of the Community. As an exception, mail sent from Portugal to Spain is treated as inland mail.

In the remaining EC countries - Belgium, Germany, France, and, as far as letters are concerned, Italy - postal authorities only apply inland rate, as a rule, on a reciprocal basis. Otherwise, higher rates are charged. In Germany, inland rate applies to all standardized format letters to Community countries.

Harmonising postal rates throughout the EC would probably be even more difficult than applying inland rates to intra-Community mail, because, as the Commission points out, various postal services operate under different economic conditions. Thus in June, this year, sending a postcard to an inland destination cost ECU 0.08\* in Spain and ECU 0.35 in Denmark.

In these circumstances, the replacement of national by European stamps, as suggested by Euro-MP Dieter Rogalla, remains a distant dream.

\* 1 ECU = UK£ 0.71 or IR£ 0.76