

SUMMARY

- P. 2 ENERGY: Harnessing the wind
Three European contracts for building more powerful wind turbines.
- P. 3 HEALTH: Meeting the challenge of another Chernobyl
The Commission seeks to safeguard public health against radioactive food.
- P. 4 EUROPEAN INTEGRATION: 43% more "European" legislation than last year
The output of the "Delors Commission" in figures.
- TECHNOLOGY: Electronic data interchange comes to Europe
An action programme named TEDIS.
- P. 5 UNEMPLOYMENT: Stabilizes in October
16 million still unemployed in the 12-nation Community.
- INFLATION: More moderate in October
0.2% rise in October.
- P. 6 CONSUMER PROTECTION: Conference focuses on preventing burns
A European Conference seeks ways of reducing 3,000 deaths each year.
- P. 7 HIGH TECH: Europe needs both EUREKA and a Technology Community
The European Commission tries to promote cooperation between them.
- P. 8 SMALL BUSINESSES: ESPRIT opens up opportunities for R&D
Which many small businesses are taking advantage of.
- DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: A comprehensive strategy for debtor nations
The European Commission and the Baker Plan.
- P. 9 ENVIRONMENT: Cleaning up the Mediterranean
A Community pilot project for the Yugoslav port of Rijeka.
- TAXES: Squeezing the motorist is popular with several governments
Twelve very different ways of making drivers pay up.

EUROFOCUS wishes its readers a very merry Christmas and a happy new year.
The next issue will be dated 5 - 12 January 1987.

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

Commission of the European Communities,
Rue de la Loi 200 - 1049 Brussels - Belgium.
Tel.: 2351111 - Telex: 21877 COMEU B

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



ENERGY: Harnessing the wind

The European Community is becoming more ambitious in its efforts to harness the wind. A new generation of wind turbines will be coming into operation two years from now, thanks to the contracts the European Commission has signed recently with electricity utilities in Britain, Denmark and Spain.

The Community is providing ECU 6 million* towards the cost of building three large wind turbines, including one at Richborough, Kent. Their total cost has been put at ECU 20 million, and the National Wind Programmes of the three countries concerned are contributing the balance.

The Community plans to spend some ECU 18 million on the development of wind turbines over the period 1985-88, in the framework of its programme of R&D for non-nuclear energy.

Several hundred power stations using wind turbines are already in operation in the Community, representing an electricity generating capacity of 100 MW. The largest do not have a capacity exceeding 250 KW, however, the size which currently is the most cost-effective.

But if wind energy is to play a greater role, the construction of larger, more powerful wind turbines is necessary. At present turbines with a capacity of one megawatt or more have two handicaps: the electricity they produce is expensive and their reliability leaves much to be desired.

The three projects just launched by the Commission are expected to overcome these handicaps. The three new wind turbines will have rotors with a diameter of 55 or 60 metres, and stand on towers from 45 to 51 metres in height. They will have a rated capacity of one or two megawatts.

The design and construction of the three wind turbines is being entrusted to small and medium-sized companies. The project also provides for all the relevant information to be shared among the various participants.

* 1 ECU = UK£ 0.74 or IR£ 0.76.

HEALTH: Meeting the challenge of another Chernobyl

The European Community is determined to reduce the risks to public health from the radioactive contamination of foodstuffs in the event of a nuclear accident. The fact is that it took the 12 member states some time to agree on the measures needed to protect the public from foodstuffs contaminated by the radioactive fall-out from the accident at Chernobyl, even while ensuring continued cross-frontier trade in agricultural products.

The European Commission has proposed new framework legislation to deal with the significant contamination of food or drinking water following a nuclear accident or similar event. At the same time it has asked the member states to extend the present limits on contaminated foodstuffs until February 1988. These limits were introduced after Chernobyl, to allow free trade in food products throughout the Community.

The contamination resulting from the Chernobyl fallout will have largely disappeared by early 1988, according to scientists; in fact they do not expect next year's crops to be significantly affected by it. But produce in storage, including deep-freeze, both in the Community and in East European countries, may be contaminated above the present limits. As this produce will be arriving on the market until next autumn, the Commission believes it necessary to maintain the existing limits until February 1988.

This will also give the Twelve time to look at the framework legislation proposed by the Commission. This provides for action in one of two ways. The first would be the adoption of a regulation, by a semi-automatic procedure, to implement the maximum permissible levels, which would be set out in the new legislation. The second would be the adoption of a regulation setting these levels on the basis of such factors as the nature and place of the accident and the nuclides involved (e.g. iodine or caesium, which have different half-lives). In other words, even tighter restraints may be necessary if the accident were to take place in the very heart of the Community, for example.

The Community, meanwhile, is carrying out the most detailed analysis done anywhere in the world to date on the link between radioactive contamination of foodstuffs and diet. It is needed if the European Commission is to set acceptable limits to contamination, as it was asked to do by the EC Council of Ministers in May. An international symposium is to be held next April, in fact, to assess the latest scientific evidence. Only after this symposium will the Commission put its full proposals to the member states.

EUROPEAN INTEGRATION: 43% more "European" legislation than last year

The Commission of the European Communities adopted nearly 7,500 legislative instruments last year. This was 43% more than in 1984 and was due to (1) preparations for the entry of Spain and Portugal, and (2) more vigorous action against violations of Community law.

Nearly half the new legislation in 1985 related to agriculture and was introduced in implementation of policy decisions of the EC Council of Ministers. But the Commission has jurisdiction in a number of areas, such as competition. It also has the right to propose legislative instruments to the Council. Last year it presented 654 such proposals, an increase of 17% over 1984.

TECHNOLOGY: Electronic data interchange comes to Europe

From a technical standpoint, there is nothing to prevent manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers anywhere in the European Community from using information technology to communicate with each other and with government departments. But they may be unable to do so because of a lack of the relevant European or international standards. Hence the European Commission's proposal to the Twelve for a Community action programme on Trade Electronic Data Interchange Systems (TEDIS).

Using computers to handle orders, bill customers, manage stocks and carry out similar operations can save companies both time and money. The electronic interchange of commercial information can represent a saving of up to 10% of the cost of the finished product, according to the Commission.

To remove the obstacles to the Community-wide data interchange, the Commission has proposed a 2-stage programme. During a 2-year preparatory stage common problems relating to standards, languages, confidentiality of information and the laws to be applied, would be tackled.

This stage, costing an estimated ECU 6 million*, would be followed by a second stage, during which pilot projects would be launched in specific areas.

* 1 ECU = UK£ 0.74 or IR£ 0.76.

UNEMPLOYMENT: Stabilizes in October

At some 16 million, the number of unemployed at the end of October in the 12-nation European Community was virtually the same as in September. Even so, it was an improvement over previous months, when unemployment had continued to rise. October even saw a slight fall, if seasonal factors are excluded, according to Eurostat, the Community's statistical office.

However, unemployment rose by 0.7% in the 12-month period to October, but at a slower rate than in August and September, when it was rising by 1.3%.

Male unemployment fell by 0.1% in October, while unemployment among women rose by a similar amount. Female unemployment in fact rose by 3.6% over the 12-month period, as against a 1.6% fall in male unemployment.

Unemployment among the under-25s fell by 0.3% in October. But the decline was 0.4% for young men, as against only 0.1% for young women. Youth unemployment fell by 1.5% over the 12-month period.

INFLATION: More moderate in October

The consumer price index for the 12-nation European Community rose 0.2% in October, as against 0.5% the previous month, according to Eurostat, the European Community's statistical office.

But there were substantial differences between individual member states as always. Prices rose by 2.6% in Greece, 0.7% in Portugal and 0.6% in Italy and the Netherlands. But they fell by 0.3% in Germany and 0.1% in Belgium. Elsewhere in the Community the rise was between 0.1% and 0.4%.

For the 12-month period ending October 1986, the Community's rate of inflation was 3.1%, as compared to 1.6% for the United States (in September) and of -0.4% for Japan. Eurostat has forecast an inflation rate of under 3% for the Community as a whole this year.

In 12 months prices have fallen by 1% in Luxembourg, 0.9% in Germany and 0.1% in the Netherlands. During the same period they rose by 11.4% in Portugal and 21.9% in Greece.

CONSUMER PROTECTION: Conference focuses on preventing burns

More than 3.000 persons, half of them children, die each year in the European Community from burns, while another 5,000 suffer burn injuries. It was not surprising, therefore, to find a European conference on burns and scalds attack the problem of fire prevention in the home head on.

The Conference, held in Brussels end November, was attended by doctors, researchers, manufacturers and representatives of consumer organizations, such as the European Product Safety Association. Its four major recommendations ranged from the collection of statistics to improved product safety, and from the adotion of European standards to better information for consumers.

The Conference, after having deplored the lack of information on just how burn injuries occur, went on to give its backing to the new European project which seeks to fill this particular gap - an information system covering accidents occurring in the home and during leisure activities.

The experts attached great importance to improvement of product safety, even though products themselves are responsible, apparently, for only 15% of accidental burn injuries. The European Commission in fact now envisages awarding prizes to manufacturers whose products are the safest to use.

The Conference also discussed standards and safety legislation. It wanted legislation regarding fire prevention to be more strictly enforced, and called for European standards, to be drawn up in consultation with consumer organizations.

The Conference also stressed the role of information and education. The experts felt that the media should give greater publicity to recommendations for avoiding accidental burn injuries. They believed teachers could play a similar role in schools.

After the Conference the European Commission announced that it will take account of its recommendations when making specific proposals to the member states in the framework of the Community's consumer protection and product safety policies.

HIGH TECH: Europe needs both EUREKA and a Technology Community

The trump card in today's fight for economic supremacy - some would simply say survival - is marked "high technology". When the European Council, the European Community's moving summit, met in Milan some 18 months ago it both decided to set up a European Technology Community and endorsed the moves then under way to create EUREKA.

The decision to set up not one but two major European organisations to meet the technology challenge might have seemed an act of desperation. But as a recent European Commission paper points out, there are both similarities and differences between EUREKA and the European Technology Community. While the latter is limited to the twelve member states of the European Community, the former includes not only the Twelve but also the six EFTA* countries and Turkey.

But their key objective is very similar. In both cases it is to enable Western Europe to develop - and master - the advanced technologies it needs if it is to be competitive in the years ahead on both its home and world markets. Although Community R&D programmes tend to cover a wider field of research and development than EUREKA, both focus on manufacturing technologies, computers, communications, advanced materials, biotechnology and 21st century forms of transportation.

Both are also trying to bring about cross-frontier cooperation between industry and the scientific community by encouraging joint projects, which bring together partners from different European countries. The European Commission in fact has proposed that EFTA countries be allowed to take part in certain Community programmes, thus taking EC/EFTA cooperation a stage further.

But there are differences between them as well. The Technology Community is mainly involved in precompetitive research, EUREKA in developing products, processes and services with a market potential. Hence the Community's readiness to put up as much as 50% of the costs. Community R&D projects, moreover, must fit into a Community framework, whereas EUREKA projects come directly from companies.

The Commission, not surprisingly, wants European countries to take advantage of the complementary features between EUREKA and the EC's Technology Community. In its paper to the Council of Ministers it has therefore outlined a number of possible cooperation arrangements, based on the Community's much longer and greater experience in not only financing R&D but also in setting up scientific and technological cooperation networks.

* European Free Trade Association.

SMALL BUSINESSES: ESPRIT opens up opportunities for R&D

A progress report on the European Community's programme of R&D in the information technologies, ESPRIT, is studded with the names of European multinationals. But the report, prepared by the European Commission, also underlines the part small and medium-sized companies are playing.

Their participation, the Commission recently told the Belgian Euro-MP, Jaak Vandemeulebroucke, is especially important because of their adaptability and capacity for innovation. It pointed out that small firms are involved in just over half the research projects currently being cofinanced by ESPRIT. In fact, of the 240 industrial companies engaged in this pre-competitive research, no fewer than 130 are in the small and medium-sized category.

The areas in which these companies are best represented are software technology and advanced information processing, followed by office systems and computer-integrated manufacture. They are least involved in the area of microelectronics, which requires a high level of investment.

Without ESPRIT, the Commission's report points out, many smaller companies could not afford to undertake major research projects or benefit from international cooperation.

DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: A comprehensive strategy for debtor nations

The heavy external debt many developing countries are burdened with seriously threatens the stability of the world economy, in the view of the European Commission. Solutions to their financial problems must therefore be found quickly. But the "real challenge", the Commission told the Belgian Euro-MP Jaak Vandemeulebroucke, is "to make the developing countries partners in world economic growth".

It saw the American initiative, widely known as the "Baker plan" after the U.S. Treasury Secretary who launched it, as "a useful step in the direction of a satisfactory solution". The plan involves additional lending of some US\$ 20,000 million to the most hard-pressed developing countries. It therefore reflects, the Commission told the Belgian Euro-MP, "an appeal for close cooperation between governments, international financial institutions and commercial banks".

But the Commission nevertheless viewed the Baker plan as one element of "a comprehensive strategy", requiring an effort by not only the debtor countries but also the major industrialized nations and financial institutions, public and private.

ENVIRONMENT: Cleaning up the Mediterranean

The European Community is helping clean up one corner of the heavily polluted Mediterranean. It is contributing about 20% of the total cost of a vessel specially equipped to collect and treat the oil residues which result when ships empty their ballast tanks into the sea.

The vessel, to cost an estimated ECU 1 million*, should be the first link in a chain of floating installations for removing oil residues from the Mediterranean. It will be put into service at the Yugoslav port of Rijeka. This is the country's largest port and receives some 5,000 ships a year, representing 60% of Yugoslavia's total maritime traffic. The integrated system to be installed at Rijeka will include a treatment plant on land, to which the vessel will bring the oil residues.

The installation should be ready by the end of next year. A similar demonstration project is planned for one of the Community's Mediterranean ports and a decision to this effect will be taken shortly. The projects are being undertaken according to a resolution agreed some 15 months ago in the framework of the Barcelona Convention, which groups all the countries situated around the Mediterranean.

TAXES: Squeezing the motorist is popular with several governments

Every European motorist knows that the price of a gallon of petrol varies from one European Community country to another. This is largely because of differences in the excise duties levied by individual countries. With the fall in oil prices, some have even wanted to raise excise duties.

The European Commission meanwhile is drafting proposals on the rates at which duties are levied on a range of products, as part of the programme for completing the Community's internal market.

The following table, prepared by the Commission, shows the excise duty in ECU* on premium grade petrol (per 1,000 litres or 220 gallons) as at May 20 of this year:

Luxembourg	204	United Kingdom	305	Greece	418
Germany	246	Spain	334	Portugal	464
Belgium	255	Ireland	387	Denmark	465
Netherlands	302	France	403	Italy	550

* 1 ECU = UK£ 0.74 or IRL 0.76.