

SUMMARY

- P. 2 INFLATION: Very moderate in November
A rise of 0.1% on average in the 12-nation Community.
- UNEMPLOYMENT: A rise of 130,000 in November
Due essentially to seasonal factors, say the Commission's experts.
- P. 3 PEOPLE'S EUROPE: The new Hippocratic oath
European Community doctors have adopted a European guide to medical ethics.
- P. 4 UNEMPLOYMENT: Local initiatives can generate new jobs
Over one million have found jobs thanks to local employment initiatives.
- P. 5 TRAINING: The key to a more effective work force
Continuous training - an investment with high returns.
- P. 6 WELFARE: Community releases funds and surplus food for cold weather victims
Its emergency aid programme will last through March.
- AGRICULTURE: From sausages to potatoes
ECU 280m. of Community aid to help the processing and sale of agricultural products.
- P. 7 ENVIRONMENT: The Delphic oracle reduced to silence
The historic site at Delphi could be overturned in search, not of the birthplace of our culture, but alumina.
- P. 8 CULTURE: The 12-nation European Community to go on stage
A European drama festival for 1988 is only one of several projects.
- WELFARE: "Handicapped" must not become synonymous with "jobless"
Community is helping the handicapped and potential employers adjust to each other.
- P. 9 SOUTH AFRICA: The EC doubles its aid for apartheid victims
But distributing this aid is beset with difficulties.

INFLATION: Very moderate in November

Consumer prices rose by a mere 0.1% between October and November in the European Community as a whole. But this very modest rise conceals, as always, sharp differences between the different member states. While prices fell by 0.2% in Spain and 0.1% in Germany and Belgium, they rose by 0.7% in Greece and by 0.9% in Portugal.

Over the 12 months ending last November prices rose 2.7%, as compared to 5.5% over the previous 12-month period. The fight against inflation clearly has not been in vain. However, the Community's two major competitors did even better. Prices in the U.S. rose 1.5% over the 12 months ending last October, while in Japan the rise was held down to a mere 0.2% over the 12 months ending November 1986.

Prices fell in two member states over the 12-month period. Both Germany and Luxembourg recorded declines of 1.2%. Price rises were modest in the Netherlands (0.1%) and Belgium (0.5%) but higher elsewhere: up 2.1% in France, 3.1% in Ireland, 3.5% in the U.K., 4.2% in Denmark and 4.4% in Italy. But the highest rates of inflation were recorded in Spain (8.3%), Portugal (10.6%) and Greece (19.8%).

UNEMPLOYMENT: A rise of 130,000 in November

The number of unemployed rose 130,000 in November for the European Community as a whole, bringing the total to 16.2 million. But much of the increase was due to seasonal factors, according to Eurostat, the EC's statistical office.

Unlike previous months, the rise in unemployment was greater among men than women in November - 1.3% as against 0.2%. Unemployment among the under-25s rose 0.5%, as compared to a rise of 0.8% in total unemployment in the Community. The number of young women registered at unemployment exchanges was unchanged, while that of young men rose 1%.

Total unemployment in the Community rose 1.1% last November as compared to November 1985. It fell in the U.K., Germany, the three Benelux countries and Denmark, but rose everywhere else.

PEOPLE'S EUROPE: The new Hippocratic oath

The sick also have rights, including the right to die in peace. And doctors have the two-fold duty to help them to the very end, even while respecting their wishes and dignity.

After two years of preparatory work and laborious discussions, given the sensitive nature of the subject, the Conference of the Order of Doctors and similar bodies set up by the medical profession in all 12 Community countries, have unanimously adopted a European code of ethics. It should guide the 900,000 doctors in their work, especially when it comes to dealing with the new problems arising from the conjunction of the rapid advances in medicine and the changes all advanced societies are currently undergoing.

Dr Joseph Farber, president of the World Medical Association, presented the new code to the European Commissioner with responsibility for a People's Europe, Mr Carlo Ripa di Meana. The Commissioner underlined its importance, for the new code will not only enable doctors to reconfirm their commitment to defend people's mental and physical health, but also to carry out their task while respecting the individual's rights.

"It would have been pointless", Mr Ripa di Meana declared, "to ensure that all Community doctors are trained to the same standards without paying attention to whether or not they follow the same standards of professional conduct".

The code's key points include an obligation to inform the patient of the effects of the treatment he is to receive, except in cases of emergency. The doctor must also obtain the patient's agreement, especially when the treatment prescribed is not without serious risk.

Where the illness is incurable, the patient's freedom to choose must be guaranteed, and his decision respected by the doctor, who must limit his intervention to reducing physical and moral suffering as required.

As regards organ transplants, it will be enough if two doctors, who are not a part of the transplant team, testify to the donor's death and the team itself makes sure that the donor, while alive, had not objected to his organs being used for this purpose.

The patient's beliefs and his dignity, in other words, are paramount. The doctor's true vocation is to help, but without imposing his own views on the patient.

UNEMPLOYMENT: Local initiatives can generate new jobs

The fight against unemployment requires a dose of originality, or at any rate a creative spirit and a willingness to take initiatives. These are assets which smaller businesses often have more of than the bigger ones. That they can be very profitable has been amply demonstrated by small and medium sized companies as well as local employment initiatives (LEI) in recent years.

The LEIs in particular have attracted the attention of the European Commission because of their vitality and their achievements. Thanks to a close cooperation between individuals, action groups, employers, trade unions, local and regional authorities, they have often been able to generate additional permanent employment through such means as the creation of small businesses and cooperatives.

They have found jobs for those prepared to innovate and take risks. In many cases the LEIs have been the only, or one of the very few, sources of new jobs in disadvantaged regions. The fact that one million people have found jobs with the LEI is extremely encouraging.

It explains why the Commission has asked the member states to eliminate the obstacles to the establishment of LEIs, and to set up bodies to promote them and aid agencies to help them financially. It also wants the member states to make it easier for LEIs to obtain funds from traditional sources. The Commission, for its part, will examine how it can help them through the Community's own financial agencies, to the extent this is possible.

The member states must also encourage the creation of workers' cooperatives and other types of businesses in which management is shared. National legislations pose certain problems in this respect and the Commission hopes, therefore, to bring about a measure of harmonisation. It plans to set up a working group in fact to look into the possibility of establishing a Community-wide legal framework for launching workers' cooperatives of a voluntary nature.

The Community's financial institutions, especially the European Social Fund and the Regional Development Fund, already help development agencies. The Commission will see how far those supportive of the LEIs can have access to these and other funds.

The small have a stake in growth

TRAINING: The key to a more effective work force

Companies are using in-house training increasingly to meet specific economic objectives. It is no longer simply a question of providing training to rectify the effects of industrial reorganisation and the introduction of new technologies. Professional training is being used increasingly to anticipate the effects of investments made to improve productivity and the organisation of work.

The Commission wants to give a fresh impetus to the activities in this field. To this end it has analysed the priority areas in continuous professional training, taking as its starting point the conclusions of the Social Affairs Council of last June and those of the European Council which met in London last December.

A worker who improves his professional skills through training enriches not only himself but also the company that employs him. It is from this point of view that the Commission has proposed activities directed towards integrated training programmes, the multiplication of partnerships between companies and those providing training and which are supportive of company training programmes.

Another very important aspect of the problem is how to increase the awareness of workers and employers, as well as the organisations which represent them, to technological choice. This is a sensitive area, however. The fact is that workers sometimes are reluctant to make the additional effort required of them by technological progress.

This is why the Commission believes special attention must be paid to the exchange of information and experiences, as well as to gaining a better knowledge of work conditions and the relationship between the conditions of work and its organisation. The Commission envisages encouraging research, to be conducted jointly by consultancy firms and innovative companies, with a view to studying the various types of training that could be provided.

On the basis of the replies it receives to its communication from the Council, the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee, the Commission will submit proposals for a medium-term Community action programme to the Council at the end of the year, for implementation from 1 January 1989.

WELFARE: Community releases funds and surplus food for cold weather victims

Thanks to an emergency programme launched by the European Community in mid-January, blankets, fuel and food are to be distributed to those hardest hit by an exceptionally cold winter.

The European Commission has made ECU 2.5m.* available to the International Red Cross and Caritas International, who have been given the task of coordinating the distribution of blankets, fuel and other necessities.

In a separate decision the Community's agricultural ministers have undertaken to give surplus food free to charities that ask for it. The International Red Cross and Caritas are coordinating the requests. However, the charities will have to go directly to the national intervention authorities for butter, beef and veal.

The food distribution programme will end on 31 March and cost an estimated ECU 50m.

AGRICULTURE: From sausages to potatoes

Dozens of markets, warehouses and food processing plants will be built or modernised throughout almost the entire 12-nation European Community, thanks to the ECU 281m.* in aid authorized by the European Commission earlier this month.

The aid, to be spread over 687 separate projects, represents the second allocation for 1986 from the Guidance section of the Community's Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF). Its aim is to improve the conditions under which agricultural products are processed and marketed in the Community.

The share of the four Mediterranean countries - France, Greece, Italy and Spain - amounts to some three-quarters of the total aid. Spain, Greece and Italy each receive over 20% of the total. The only country left out of the second allocation is Luxembourg.

The sectors which have been allocated the largest sums are meat and fruit and vegetables. The bulk of the funds committed to the U.K., Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium and Spain are to be spent on the construction and modernisation of meat processing plants.

Aid to the fruit and vegetables sector is spread throughout much of the Community, including not only its southern member states but also the U.K., France, Germany and the Netherlands. Most of the projects relate to the preservation, processing and bulk sales of fruits and vegetables.

The U.K.'s share of nearly UK£ 12m. will be used to finance 64 projects. They include extension of meat processing facilities and expansion of grain storage facilities.

Ireland's share of IR£ 9.8m. will finance a total of 33 projects. Some IR£ 5.4m. of this will be spent on 13 projects in the meat sector.

* 1 ECU = UK£ 0.74 or IR£ 0.77

ENVIRONMENT: The Delphic oracle reduced to silence

The historic site at Delphi could be overturned in search, not of the birthplace of our culture, but alumina.

Unhappy Cassandra! Useless for her to warn of the danger which threatens the historic site at Delphi; the world's mockery is her only reward. A project to mine alumina now threatens what remains of the sacred city which was a beacon to the Ancient world from the 7th to the 4th centuries B.C.

The archaeological treasures at Delphi obviously cannot tip the balance against aluminium oxide, despite the metal's lightness. The temples to Apollo and Athene, the theatre, stadium, the treasures of the Athenians are only the tip of an iceberg of incalculable cultural value.

But this is precisely their fate: they are priceless and unsaleable, whereas the value of the deposits of alumina is quickly established. It is this simple fact that has already buried Eleusis and its mysteries in a forest of refineries and cement works.

The European Commissioner for cultural matters, Carlo Ripa di Meana, has told concerned Euro-MPs that for years the Commission has drawn the attention of the member states to the need to protect the Community's architectural heritage. It has even proposed a number of specific measures in the fields of taxation, research and conservation.

All that is necessary must be done to protect Delphi, while safeguarding Greece's economic interests. The opportunity could also be taken to alert public opinion to the very grave risks from pollution to all of Europe's monuments.

Alas, even in Delphic Greece, prophets were frequently ignored.

CULTURE: The 12-nation European Community to go on stage

A European drama festival for 1988 is only one of several projects. For the first time the European Community is taking a keen interest in the theatre. The European Commission recently convened in Brussels a 2-day meeting of a dozen experts, one from each Community country. Of the half dozen ideas and projects they launched, the most dramatic - as it were - is for the creation of a European drama festival.

This will be an annual event, starting from next year. Theatre companies will play simultaneously in 12 cities, one in each Community country. Only the smaller towns and cities will be chosen.

The festival should not cost the Community budget a penny, as it could be financed by patrons and sponsors, according to the European Commissioner for cultural affairs, Carlo Ripa di Meana. Coca-Cola has already offered to help and replies are awaited from a number of European companies.

The experts also envisage setting up a European school of drama and theatre management in Frankfurt. A special committee to carry out these projects, and plan others, has already been set up.

Community specialists are expected to perfect a method of simultaneous translation, to allow theatre-goers to follow performances in any Community language.

Also on the agenda is the search for new formulas for co-productions involving major European theatres, collaboration with existing international theatre companies and the joint production by television companies of European shows.

WELFARE: "Handicapped" must not become synonymous with "jobless"

Last year the European Social Fund spent nearly ECU 140m.* to facilitate both the vocational training or re-training of handicapped people and the reorganisation of the workplace to accommodate them. This aid helped finance projects in these fields throughout the 12-nation European Community.

Italy and Ireland received the largest sums - ECU 30m. and ECU 25m. respectively. In 1985, prior to the entry of Spain and Portugal into the Community, such aid amounted to ECU 132m. and included some ECU 34m. for the U.K. and ECU 28m. for Ireland.

* 1 ECU = UK£ 0.74 or IRL 0.77.

SOUTH AFRICA: The EC doubles its aid for apartheid victims

The European Community is doubling its aid to the victims of apartheid to ECU 20m.* this year, according to its Development Commissioner, Lorenzo Natali in an announcement to the press during the visit to Brussels of Mr A.E. Dàngor, Director of the Kagiso Trust (peace foundation), a South African humanitarian organisation.

The decision to help apartheid victims financially was taken for the first time last year, when ECU 10m. were allocated. Up to 90% of the money was effectively spent inside South Africa last year, according to Mr Natali.

This was made possible by close cooperation between European charities, on the one hand, and four South African non-governmental organisations on the other. The four included the Kagiso Trust, whose director has just held talks with the European Development Commissioner and representatives of the Trust's European partners on how to use this year's aid.

Community aid has been devoted so far mainly to educational programmes for South African blacks. But aid programmes must be implemented in very difficult conditions; in fact the European Commission did not reveal at first the names of the South African organisations which had received Community aid funds in order to protect them.

The situation has not improved since then. The South African police burst into the offices of the Kagiso Trust on January 7. This led to a protest from the European Commission, which asked the South African ambassador in Brussels for an explanation. Four members of the Trust are in prison now, according to Mr Dangor.

The Kagiso Trust acts as a link between European charitable organisations and the various South African groups giving social, medical and educational help to the victims of apartheid. The Commission, Mr Natali declared, would like to strengthen its link with the Kagiso Trust and the three other South African organisations.

* 1 ECU = UK£ 0.74 or IR£ 0.77.