



a newssheet for journalists

Weekly n° 15/89

8 - 15 May 1989

S U M M A R Y

- P. 2 A PEOPLE'S EUROPE: Ask INFO 92 ...
... for all you've wanted to know about 1992.
- P. 3 TELEVISION: Cross-border transmissions are on the way
The Twelve establish European rules of the game.
- P. 4 INTERNAL MARKET: 1,700 footloose customs officers
The European Commission launches a pilot exchange scheme for customs officers.
- THIRD WORLD: Community aid to voluntary agencies
They received ECU 266mn. in 1988.
- P. 5 SPORT: Football and the single market
The European Parliament criticizes the European football authorities.
- P. 6 ENVIRONMENT: Water, water everywhere ...?
The European Parliament is concerned at rising sea-levels because of the 'greenhouse effect'.
- P. 7 FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT: Like father, like son in the Community
The EC Court of Justice rules in favour of two Germans studying in the Netherlands.
- P. 8 HIGHER EDUCATION: 25,000 "Community" scholarships in 1989/90
Even so, ERASMUS is proving a victim of its own success.
- HUMAN RIGHTS: A European declaration shortly?
The European Parliament has proposed a declaration of rights to the Twelve.
- P. 9 CONSUMERS: Product safety on the agenda
The European Commission proposes cross-border protection for 1992.

Mailed from: Brussels X

Erasmus

A PEOPLE'S EUROPE: Ask INFO 92 ...

... for all you've wanted to know about 1992.

If you have a PC, or your television set is linked to your telephone, you can interrogate a new databank, INFO 92. From June 1 it will provide you a progress report on the single market, thanks to videotex.

INFO 92 will cover the 280-odd measures needed to complete the single market. Users will be guided in their search by means of menus, based on a tree chart, whose three main branches will deal with the removal of physical, technical and fiscal barriers. Each branch will be subdivided into chapters, which will be further subdivided, thus offering their user detailed information, if that is what he wants.

The information contained in INFO 92 will be constantly updated, both as regards measures already adopted and those still under discussion. As from next year INFO 92 will also contain details of national legislation embodying Community measures.

During a 4-month promotional period - from 1 June to 30 September 1989 - information retrieval will be free of charge for sequences of 10 minutes each. As from 1 October, the cost of consulting INFO 92 will be ECU 10* per hour on-line.

INFO 92 will be available in four languages as from June 1: English, French, German and Dutch. All other linguistic versions will be available by the end of June 1989, with the exception of the Greek, which will be available by the end of the year.

To log-in you will have to follow the instructions of your own PTT for accessing your national data network. You will then dial 429 121 for Luxembourg or 270 429 121 for the other countries. When the message CNO1 PLEASE ENTER NET COMMAND is displayed, enter the letter "o". When the message PLEASE LOGON, followed by IDENTIFICATION, are displayed, simply enter europe92.

Every entry must be followed by "carriage return" or CR. To call the European Commission's help desk in Brussels you must dial (2) 235 00 01 or 235 00 03.

For those wanting even more detailed information, INFO 92 will be available in a database version also. The cost of consulting the database is ECU 45 per hour online.

* 1 ECU = UK£0.65 or IR£0.78

TELEVISION: Cross-border transmissions are on the way

The Twelve establish European rules of the game.

If all goes well, the European Community's 300mn.-strong television audience will be able to watch the programmes broadcast anywhere in the 12-nation Community. The EC Council of Ministers adopted on April 13 the ground rules which will ensure that television programmes are not kept off the airwaves by the authorities in individual Member States. However, the rules of this television without frontiers must be given their second and final reading in the European Parliament at the end of May. If the text is rejected by the Euro-MPs, it will face an uncertain future. The fact is that its formal adoption by the Council would then require unanimity. But this condition is unlikely to be met, given that three countries voted against the text on April 13.

The "television without frontiers" directive seeks to protect children from violence and pornography and to limit advertising to 15% of air-time per day, with a maximum of 20% per hour. The Council's text does not require television companies to transmit a majority of European productions in the case of films and serials, as desired by the European Parliament. It simply invites them to do so "each time it is feasible", although the proportion must not fall below that achieved in 1988.

Under the directive all films produced in EC countries qualify as "European", as do films produced in the other West European countries belonging to the Council of Europe, given that the Council has concluded a Convention along similar lines. The productions of East European countries that enter into special agreements with the EC could also be regarded as "European".

If the directive crosses the parliamentary hurdle, it will make a fitting end to the European Cinema and Television Year, which ended on March 21 but was officially closed by its President, Simone Veil, on April 22 in Brussels. Projects in support of European film production and distribution were launched during the Year, which also witnessed preparations for a European film festival to be held in the United States this June, and an agreement among the television companies of six EC countries* to set up a European information network, Euronews, at the end of March.

* Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Spain and the U.K.

INTERNAL MARKET: 1,700 footloose customs officers

The European Commission launches a pilot exchange scheme for customs officers.

The creation of a single market will transform the activities of the customs administrations in all 12 European Community countries. The disappearance of the Community's internal borders will require more effective controls at its external borders. To help customs officers become more "European", the European Commission has decided to enable 1,700 of them to spend a year with their colleagues in another EC country.

This does not mean that Her Majesty's Customs and Excise officers will check on goods passing through the French port of Marseilles. The 1,700 officers will have no "operational" responsibilities but will acquaint themselves with the language and working methods of their colleagues. The entire cost of the exchange scheme, put at ECU 2.5mn.* for 1990, will be borne by the Community. Its modalities will be worked out between the European Commission and interested customs authorities.

The European Commission hopes to provide a maximum number of customs officers training in the requirements of the single market and encourage national authorities to work more closely with each other prior to 1992. It believes every customs authority could learn from the others. If the pilot scheme is a success, the Commission will propose a much bigger, multiannual programme to the Twelve.

THIRD WORLD: Community aid to voluntary aid agencies

They received ECU 266mn.* in 1988.

The European Community's voluntary aid agencies received ECU 266mn. from the EC last year. The sum, announced during the 15th general assembly of European voluntary agencies, held in Brussels in mid-April, may seem tiny in relation to the billions of ECUs paid out each year by the 12 EC countries. But the dedication of these agencies, and their independence from both the political and economic powers, make them especially effective, according to the European Commission. The Community's contribution to development projects carried out by the voluntary aid agencies amounted to ECU 80mn. in 1988, as compared to ECU 45mn. in 1986 and only ECU 2.5mn. in 1976.

* 1 ECU = UK£0.65 or IR£0.78

SPORT: Football and the single market

The European Parliament criticizes the European football authorities.

European football players, too, are "workers", and like other workers must enjoy the right to move freely between European Community countries, according to Euro-MPs. A majority of them lined up behind their rapporteur, Janssen van Raay of the Netherlands, in calling on the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), to change its rules for players and clubs in the EC.

At present clubs can field two or three "foreign" players at most, depending on the country. UEFA has always turned a deaf ear to the European Commission's demands that it change, even gradually, rules which increasingly appear out of date. For both Commission and Parliament UEFA's definition of "foreign", when applied to a national of an EC country, is especially unacceptable. Euro-MPs have now asked the Commission to take UEFA, the various national federations and football clubs in the EC, to court, in order to secure a gradual increase in the number of EC nationals that can play for a club in another Community country, pending the complete freedom of movement of football players. The Euro-MPs in fact want the Commission to use "all the legal means" at its disposal to this end.

Commission Vice-President Martin Bangemann has announced that he and his colleagues will tackle the two basic questions raised by Euro-MPs before the year is out. They are: (1) the freedom of movement of players and (2) changes in the contracts they sign with clubs: it is intolerable that players should be treated like merchandise.

As for the blow to the training of young players resulting from transfers of football players, the European Parliament felt the problem to be inexistent, given the multitude of teams, especially of amateurs. And as for "the identity of teams", it would be preserved by club managers and spectators; the fact that a team made up of 11 players from 11 EC countries was being fielded would make no difference, according to the Euro-MPs.

It would seem that the team representing Milan, which is currently favoured to win the Italian championship, does not contain a single player born in that city.

ENVIRONMENT: Water, water everywhere ... ?

The European Parliament is concerned at rising sea-levels because of the 'greenhouse effect'.

Given that nearly one-third of humanity lives within 60 km. of the sea, the rise of even one metre in the sea-level could have disastrous consequences, and require the displacement of hundreds of millions of people. Several European countries would be threatened, including the Netherlands, Denmark, northern Germany, a part of Belgium, the estuary of the Gironde, Venice

The European Parliament is concerned and its rapporteur, the Belgian Euro-MP Roelants du Vivier, has pointed to the 'greenhouse effect' as the main reason for the threat of world-wide flooding. There clearly is an urgent need to limit emissions of carbon dioxide and the other gases responsible for it. Other preventive measures cited by Mr du Vivier in his report are: less use of fossil fuels and greater emphasis on energy conservation; reforestation in place of widespread deforestation now taking place and, above all, changes in a number of human activities

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT: Like father, like son in the Community

The EC Court of Justice rules in favour of two Germans studying in the Netherlands.

The European Community Court of Justice has recently ruled in favour of two young Germans who had been refused scholarships in the Netherlands for similar reasons: the Dutch authorities refused to regard them as the children of workers belonging to another Community country. They maintained that the father of one of the students had left the Netherlands, while the father of the other was an international civil servant, and, therefore, not really employed in the Netherlands.

One of the students, A. Moritz, had been a student in Dutch primary, secondary and technical schools, as his father was employed in the Netherlands. When the latter returned to Germany, his son followed him, but was unable to continue his studies, as the German authorities refused to recognize the diploma he had been awarded on finishing secondary school. Mr Moritz therefore returned to the Netherlands and applied for a scholarship to continue his studies. But his application was turned down.

The case was referred to the EC Court of Justice by a Dutch court. The former held that the child of a worker from another Community country retained his rights of "European citizenship" in the country in which his father had worked, even if the latter had returned to his country of origin, provided that (1) he could not continue his studies because the two countries in question did not recognize the diplomas granted by each other and (2) he had no choice but to return to the country in which he had begun his education. In such cases, the Court held, the child had a right to all the benefits enjoyed by citizens of the country in question, including the right to a scholarship.

The other student, P. Echternach, faced the same problem, as the son of an official of the European Space Agency, based in the Netherlands for a time. The European Court of Justice held that he had the same rights as the son of any European worker resident in the Netherlands. Like his comrade, A. Moritz, he was entitled to a scholarship in the Netherlands.

HIGHER EDUCATION: 25,000 "Community" scholarships in 1989/90

Even so, ERASMUS is proving a victim of its own success.

ERASMUS scholarships should make it possible for some 25,000 students, from the 12 European Community countries, to spend part of the 1989/90 academic year studying in another EC country. But the sum available for the third year of this inter-university student and teacher exchange programme will be insufficient to provide scholarships for all the 31,194 students who applied for them, the European Commission believes.

Once again ERASMUS has become a victim of its own success. Despite a 75% increase in its budget in a year, the European Commission's selection committee faces a difficult task. The fact is that scholarship applications from students have risen by 64% and from teachers by 13% in relation to 1988/89.

Meanwhile Community institutions of higher education have submitted more than 2,200 applications to the Commission for financial backing for their inter-university cooperation programmes, which provide the framework for the exchange programmes.

A large number of scholarship applications were received from Britain, France and Germany, while there was a sharp rise in the number of applications from Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, Greece, Denmark and Portugal. The Commission is expected to announce the results at the end of May.

HUMAN RIGHTS: A European declaration shortly?

The European Parliament has proposed a declaration of rights to the Twelve.

The European Parliament has chosen 1989, the year that marks the 200th anniversary of the French declaration of the rights of man, to propose a "declaration of basic rights and liberties" to the 12 European Community Member States and the EC Council of Ministers. The Euro-MPs adopted such a text on April 12, in the belief that the single market, set for 1992, requires that the rights and liberties of all Community citizens be protected equally.

Parliament's declaration embodies a series of rights we take for granted, even if their significance is not always clear: the right to life; equality before the law; freedom of thought, religion, opinion and information; the right to privacy; property rights; just working conditions; social aid; education, etc.

CONSUMERS: Product safety on the agenda

The European Commission proposes cross-border protection for 1992.

The European Commission has adopted a proposal for a directive aimed at protecting the European consumer in the context of the single market of 1992.

In order to prevent a situation arising in which products are banned in one Member State but not in others, thus shaking consumer confidence in them, the Commission's proposal provides for a harmonization of safety requirements. Manufacturers, importers and retailers will be obliged to put only reliable products on the market, thus ensuring that the consumer cannot become a victim of the free circulation of dangerous products in the border-free Europe of 1992.

The proposal also envisages a mechanism which would allow sales to be suspended at once, should the Commission conclude that a given product presents "an unacceptable risk" to consumers in several Community countries. In the case of "serious and immediate" risks the national authorities would restrict, even suspend, sales. In the event of problems regarding the safety of a product, the European Commission could start a process of consultations and enquiries or straightaway take a decision regarding the marketing of the product in question.

The Commission would like the directive to come into force as from 1991, as this would allow consumer protection to be strengthened in those Member States in which it is not altogether assured (Greece, Portugal and Spain), without calling into question the more advanced legislation in force in the other Member States.

The fact that the Commission's proposal does not require a unanimous decision of the EC Council of Ministers should facilitate its adoption.