



# a newssheet for journalists

Weekly n° 16/89

15 - 22 May 1989

## S U M M A R Y

- P. 2 TELEVISION: The Twelve want HDTV to be "Made in Europe"  
The television of the future will arrive in 1992.
- P. 3 BUDGET: ECU 70mn. to combat agricultural fraud  
The European Commission's budget proposals for 1990.
- INFLATION: It stabilized at a high level in March  
Up by 0.4% in one month and by 5% over a 12-month period.
- P. 4 ENVIRONMENT: Prizes for "green" industries  
The 1989 European prizes for a better environment are awarded.
- P. 5 CULTURE: Fresh challenges for Europe  
The European Commission proposes Community measures in support of books and reading.
- P. 6 EC INSTITUTIONS: The Commission's 19 information offices ...  
... get a face-lift and a bigger role.
- P. 7 HIGHER EDUCATION: 30.000 footloose students in 1992?  
The European Commission proposes the ERASMUS programme be extended.
- P. 8 ENVIRONMENT: After baby seals, the lynx, otter and covote  
The European Commission wants to ban the import of certain furs.
- P. 9 CONSUMERS: A European quality standard for tinned sardines?  
The European Commission proposes Community standards.
- FISHERY: ECU 57mn. to help modernize the industry  
The first allocation for 1989.

Mailed from: Brussels X

Erasmus

TELEVISION: The Twelve want HDTV to be "Made in Europe"

The television of the future will arrive in 1992.

Proof that Europeans can produce, transmit and display television programmes with a picture quality equal to that of the cinema and sound which matches the compact disc was provided in Brighton last September. The European Community, not surprisingly, is determined to secure world-wide acceptance of the European version of high definition television (HDTV), as the telecommunications ministers of the Twelve made clear at their meeting in Luxembourg on April 27. The fact is that HDTV should be available throughout Western Europe as from 1992.

This is only one aspect of the programme adopted by the ministers who, together with the European Commission, want European industry to be in a position to develop all the technological elements of HDTV, from chips to television sets, as quickly as possible. They also want European producers of cinema and television programmes to offer "high definition" quality films rather quickly and in sufficient quantity, so as to be well placed to compete effectively on world markets.

The fact is the International Radio Consultative Committee has not yet decided on the technical standards for HDTV. It must choose, in the summer of 1990 in principle, between the Japanese standard, Hivision, developed by the Japanese, and that developed by a European consortium, led by Philips, Thomson and Bosch.

The Americans, whose role probably will be decisive, have not yet finalized their position. After having shown a preference for the Japanese system, which is incompatible with the existing ones, their attitude now is one of wait-and-see. According to the European Commissioner for research and technology, Filippo Maria Pandolfi, this shift is partly due to European determination to develop their own technology, which would allow films made before the advent of HDTV to be shown on television.

The Twelve have decided to persuade not only the Americans but also the East Europeans, including the Russians, and others to adopt the European version of HDTV.

**BUDGET: ECU 70mn. to combat agricultural fraud**

The European Commission's budget proposals for 1990.

The European Commission will devote ECU 70mn.\* next year to combat fraud in the European Community's farm sector, provided the EC Council of Ministers and European Parliament approve the draft budget for 1990 which it submitted at the end of April. The sum requested to combat fraud might seem modest compared to a total budgetary expenditure of ECU 48.9mn. But this is the first time that specific provision is made for this purpose.

The Commission has made a further innovation in proposing that private bodies also carry out checks on the use of funds paid out by the Community to ensure that the prices received by its farmers are above world prices. Expenditure on such guarantees is expected to amount to ECU 26,800mn. next year, which is only slightly more than in 1989. It would represent less than 55% of the total Community budget, as against 57.6% in 1989 and 61% in 1988. Given the sums involved, it is not surprising that the agricultural sector leads the others when it comes to fraud.

The 1990 draft budget is 5.4% larger than that for 1989; even so, it represents only 1.1% of the Community's total GDP and 2.25% of official spending in the 12-nation Community. The Commission is asking the Council of Ministers and Parliament to increase by some 20% the sums earmarked for research and social and regional aid, and by more than 23% expenditure on environmental protection.

**INFLATION: It stabilized at a high level in March**

Up by 0.4% in one month and by 5% over a 12-month period.

The rise in prices did not accelerate in the 12-nation European Community in March, when the consumer price index went up by 0.4%. However, it rose by 5% over a 12-month period, the highest rise since January 1986.

The price rises in March were either weak or moderate in most EC countries. Even so, prices rose by 0.9% in Portugal and 2.7% in Greece, following the end of the winter sales of footwear and clothing in Greece. The Community's annual rate of inflation is now the same as the American; it remains far above that of Japan - 1.2%

\* 1 ECU = UK£0.65 or IR£0.78.

**ENVIRONMENT: Prizes for "green" industries**

The 1989 European prizes for a better environment are awarded.

European industry is not short of the "green" spirit - but it is not so easy to invent "ecological" products, judging from the 1989 version of the European Community's Better Environment Awards. Created last year, during the European Year of the Environment, by the European Commission and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the awards are in four categories.

The European jury had little difficulty in selecting the winner of the Environment Management Award. It gave the prize to the Baxi Partnership, a Preston-based firm, for the design and management of its foundry. Two other firms received a special mention for having reduced the level of pollution at their plants: British Gas and Lestrem, a French company making cardboard.

Two companies received the Appropriate Technology Award: R.J. Armstrong Evans, a company in the southeast of England that makes hydroelectric equipment, and Shanko, a Danish company specializing in floor coverings.

The Pollution Abatement Technical Award was not given this year. The jury took the view that none of the candidates for the prize was sufficiently deserving. It did, however, single out for a special mention a Danish and a French firm - the former, Haldo Topsoe, for a process for eliminating sulphur and nitrogen oxides; the latter, Sollac Florange, for its treatment of acid waste in the steel industry.

The poorest showing was in the category reserved for "green" products: the jury found no product to be entirely pollution-free. Last year the Green Product Award went to the French company, Wonder, for its "green" battery, free of all dangerous metals.

Only six of the 12 European Community countries took part in this year's competition.

**CULTURE: Fresh challenges for Europe**

The European Commission proposes Community measures in support of books and reading.

The European Commission has proposed a series of concrete measures, to be taken on a priority basis and aimed at encouraging the marketing of books, in Europe and the world. The proposals have been made in the framework of the plan to relaunch cultural activity.

The Commission is seeking to apply the EEC Treaty and European Community policies to the economic and social situation affecting the people, professional bodies and companies which devote themselves to promoting books in the Community, whether it be in the field of literary creation; the production, distribution and exchange of books or cultural interpenetration between producers and readers. The Commission's proposals treat the book as a specific product, one which is at one and the same time a cultural product - a means of expression and support for literary creation, research, information and communication - and an industrial product, an element of economic activity, like any other.

The Commission's plan, which is valid for the next two or three years, sets out both general guidelines and an initial series of significant activities relating to various sectors of the book production chain, from author to reader. Presented in the form of a communication to the EC Council of Ministers and European Parliament, it focuses on the fact that in the Europe of today books and reading are being strongly challenged by the development of audiovisual means of information and communication.

The Commission has selected four sectors for action on a priority basis. They are: the creation of an instrument to provide information on cultural and economic phenomena related to book publishing (cultural statistics); financial backing for translations (a pilot project to help finance the translations of contemporary literary works, European awards, the training and professional status of translators); the status of authors and, finally, the creation of a computerized network linking libraries.

The Community's ministers for cultural affairs clearly have their hands full at their next meeting.

**EC INSTITUTIONS: The Commission's 19 information offices ...**

... get a face-lift and a bigger role.

The European Community's growing importance in Europe and the world has prompted the European Commission to up-grade its 19 information offices, located in the capitals and major cities of the 12 Member States. These offices, staffed by more than 200 persons, serve as a link between the Commission and the Community's citizens and are the main source of information on the Community.

The Commission has just approved the proposals defining the new functions of its information offices, put to it by Commissioner Jean Dondelinger. In future, the offices must focus on the following tasks: report on political events in the Member States, especially parliamentary activities; give greater importance to radio and television, although without neglecting the press; provide practical and political information to the Commissioners and senior Commission staff during their visits and improve both cooperation and the flow of information between national and regional information offices.

The Commission's information department in Brussels must back these offices more effectively in future, informing them in advance of all important, forthcoming talks and conferences as well as the projects of the various other Commission departments. Commissioners Cardoso e Cunha and Dondelinger have been given the task of predicting the measures that will be needed at the administrative and staff level to up-grade the information offices. The task of informing the heads of these offices of the Commission's proposals was undertaken by its President, Jacques Delors, at a meeting specially convened in Brussels for this purpose.

**HIGHER EDUCATION: 30,000 footloose students in 1992?**

The European Commission proposes the ERASMUS programme be extended.

By next year, ERASMUS will have enabled nearly 40,000 young people to spend anywhere from three months to a year studying in another European Community country than their own. What is more, the time spent abroad will have counted towards their degree or diploma.

ERASMUS, of course, is the European Community's inter-university exchange programme launched some two years ago. Its success has prompted the European Commission to propose to the Twelve that it be expanded, so as to allow some 30,000 students to take part in it during the academic year 1992/93 alone. This would require the budget for 1990-93 to be doubled to ECU 192mn., from the present ECU 94mn. for 1987-90. The fact is that the number of applications already received by the Commission is some three times larger than it can handle with the present budget.

The Commission also wants students to spend a minimum of six months abroad, and to study the language of the country they will be going to. It believes that both would be possible with a larger budget.

The Commission also would like to extend the programme to cover students excluded so far. They are mainly students who have completed one set of studies in one Community country and would like to embark on another in a different country.

Even if the Twelve accept the Commission's proposals, ERASMUS II will benefit a mere 2% of Community students. If national exchange programmes and Community programmes limited to researchers or economists are taken into account, the proportion rises to 5 or 6%. Even this is well below the 10% envisaged by Commission President Jacques Delors when ERASMUS was launched.

\* 1 ECU = UK£0.65 or IR£0.78

ENVIRONMENT: After baby seals, the lynx, otter and coyote

The European Commission wants to ban the import of certain furs.

If baby seals have been saved from sudden death, other fur-bearing animals, such as the lynx, beaver and otter are still being killed in a particularly brutal manner, especially in Canada, the United States and the Soviet Union. As these countries do not ban the use of leg-hold traps, the European Commission is asking the Twelve to ban imports into the Community of furs of eight\* animals from countries which have not yet adopted the relevant international standards.

The leg-hold trap is designed to capture animals by means of metal, usually steel, clamps, which close tightly on their limbs, lacerating the skin and often breaking the bones. Five European Community countries have already banned its use - Britain, Denmark, Germany, Greece and Ireland - as have 60 countries throughout the world.

Most EC countries which do not operate a ban on leg-hold traps nevertheless severely restrict their use. The Community itself adopted an international convention on the conservation of European wildlife in 1982, which bans the use of traps for certain species.

The European Commission asked the Twelve last year to ban the manufacture, sale and use of leg-hold traps. Its proposal is being considered by the EC Council of Ministers and European Parliament. The latter has been campaigning against such traps for several years now. Last July 272 Euro-MPs, out of 518, signed a declaration calling for a ban on their use.

Research into humane trapping methods is already well underway in several European countries and elsewhere in the world; these include instant killing devices as well as live holding devices. But as this research is expected to continue for several more years, the European Commission has proposed that the projected ban on imports take effect from 1 January 1996 only. This would give the exporting countries time to introduce new techniques.

\* Beaver, otter, coyote, wolf, lynx, bobcat, sable and raccoon.



**CONSUMERS: A European quality standard for tinned sardines?**

The European Commission proposes Community standards.

With a view to improving the quality of tinned sardines, the European Commission has just asked the Twelve to adopt Community standards by harmonizing their existing standards. Setting stricter standards in all 12 Member States would have the advantage of giving consumers a better product and producers higher profits.

In 1985, the latest year for which statistics are available, the 12-nation European Community caught more than 333,000t. of sardines, representing 37% of the world catch. More than 20% of European production was tinned. The main EC producers are Portugal, Spain, France and Italy.

Community consumption was put at just over 74,000t. in 1985. Spain led with 567 grams per head per year, followed by France (492 grams) and Greece (260 grams). Under the regulation now proposed by the Commission it would be illegal to market as "sardines" tins containing other fish or only a tiny quantity of sardines. The projected regulation also sets quality and packaging standards.

**FISHERY: ECU 57mn. to help modernize the industry**

The first allocation for 1989.

The modernization of the European Community's fishing and fish farming industries should receive a fresh stimulus, thanks to the ECU 57mn. in aid, released by the European Commission at the end of April. This is the first allocation for 1989 from the Community budget, and it will benefit mainly the EC's southern half. A second allocation, announced for October, will be largely devoted to other regions.

Some ECU 28mn. have been earmarked for building new boats; ECU 11.6mn. for modernizing existing ones and more than ECU 17mn. for fish farming. Of the ECU 57mn. Spain is to receive ECU 19mn., Italy ECU 9.8mn., France ECU 6.9mn., Portugal ECU 6.2mn. and Greece ECU 5.7mn. In selecting projects to be financed from Community funds, the European Commission has sought to ensure that there will be no increase in capacity and no damage to the environment.

\* 1 ECU = UK£0.65 or IR£0.78.