

Week of 19 to 24 January

COSMETICS : Not just skin-deep

Given their widespread usage by millions of women, men and children, cosmetic products are the subject of close scrutiny. Existing standards on the composition, labelling and packaging of cosmetic products can still be improved. This is the purpose of a new proposal by the European Commission which deals with the substances admissible in such products and also the testing methods to be used throughout the ten member countries to assure their safety. Under certain controlled safety conditions the limited use would be permitted of potentially hazardous substances as lacquers, colouring agents, silver nitrate and others in products ranging from toothpaste to antiperspirants. Laboratory tests would also be specified which have been worked out with government and industry experts to insure greater safety.

S U M M A R Y

POPULATION : p. 2 The Generation Gap
ENVIRONMENT : p. 3 A recipe for survival proposed
OPINION : p. 4 The European mood today

CLOSE-UP

: p. 6 Things to come

In the field of research and development, the choices made by European governments influence our future.

What is Europe in search of ?

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• . POPULATION : The Generation Gap

• No-one ever gets any younger, but this becomes an important factor for societies and their economies if an entire population profile changes.

Considerable attention has been focused in recent years on the low birth rate in most European countries. But a statistical analysis recently released by the European Commission in Brussels of the situation in the various regions of the member countries during the past decade sheds more light on this phenomenon. These figures confirm that in most regions the percentage of persons over 65 years old has increased and that the number of children from 0 to nine has declined. The decline in the number of younger children is particularly marked in Germany, where all regions registered at least 20 percent reductions in this age group. In some sections of the United Kingdom, the figures dropped by 14 percent.

The regions with the largest percentage of older persons include West Berlin, the Limousin section of France, the Ligurian region of Italy and Southwest England, along with the Midi-Pyrenees, Hamburg, Bremen, the Languedoc-Roussillon area of France and the Friuli-Venezia region in Italy. All these regions have well over 20 percent of their population over 60.

What, of course, is also important is the proportion of the population which is outside the normal working age in comparison with the portion which is in this prime period of life. This working population, in essence, has to provide the economic livelihood of a region and help pay for the existence of the older and younger residents. Because of the reduction in the birth rates, it was discovered that this dependence ratio, as it is called, had gone down in most regions of Germany, France and Belgium. On the other hand there were now more persons dependent on the labour force in nearly all regions of Italy, the Netherlands and Ireland, where there has been a fairly strong increase in the birth rate. The level of dependence is highest in the lesser developed regions of the European Community and the average in Italy is higher than the rest of the Community.

The regions with a large percentage of their population in the crucial 20 to 59-year-old working group, include the Oberbayern region in Germany, the Ile de France, Valle d'Aosta in Italy, the Limburg region of Holland, Luxembourg, and the Storkkbenhavn sector of Denmark. These tend to be the more prosperous regions in these countries and in the Community as a whole.

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ENVIRONMENT : A recipe for survival proposed

Ecologists and environmentalists from all over Europe have joined forces to produce a formula for cooperation to save the environment and natural resources which they say is also the best road to economic independence. With the advent of new leadership for the European Community, a number of major organisations took the opportunity to promote their recommendations for the future. So far industrialists and trade unions have captured most of the attention because of their accent on the basic issues of the widespread economic crisis. But another movement which perhaps received less notoriety took a more far-reaching but just as relevant view of Europe's future needs. A plan for policy and action at the European Community level was drawn up by the participants in the European Environment Bureau, an organisation composed of some 50 national and regional environmental groups in the Community member countries, which tries to influence and monitor Community programmes of importance to the environment.

While in the past it has concentrated on specific measures to protect or improve the environment, the latest plan proposed by this group to the incoming European Commission links its interests with other main Community activities.

"Only a society that is conscious of the value of its resources and the need to protect them by integrating economy and ecology can survive and sustain its prosperity", noted the proposal.

It called for greater awareness of the environmental impact of other major Community policies and of improvements that could be obtained by taking sound environmental decisions. Linking environmental planning with the current emphasis on industrial innovation, for instance, it noted that environmental controls and regulations frequently encourage the development of new technologies. It praised the efforts already underway at the Community level to encourage clean technologies for Europe and appropriate technologies for the developing world.

It also stressed how development of alternative practices and supplies in the important fields of energy and agriculture could lessen European dependence on outside sources. It urged an end to the promotion of nuclear energy and more efforts at developing renewable energy sources. It also declared that the farmer should not be regarded merely as a producer of food but as a guardian of the environment. Less reliance on chemicals, greater conservation of fishing waters and more concern about wood and timber policies were recommended.

Transportation, research, nature and wildlife are also areas where environmental awareness is needed, according to the authors of this important recipe for the future of Europe.

OPINION : The European mood today

The average European is satisfied with the workings of his government, is in search of security and well-being, is in favour of a more unified Europe, and has the greatest amount of trust in the Swiss. These are some of the findings of the latest European public opinion poll undertaken by the European Commission. The poll - called Eurobarometer - is published every spring and autumn, and offers a clear insight into the changing mood of Europe's 270 million citizens.

Luxembourg citizens are among the Europeans who are most satisfied with the way the political system works in their country. Eurobarometer notes that 76 % of them are happy with their democratic processes, followed by 73 % of the Germans who were questioned and 60 % of the Danes. The Italians (21 %) are the least satisfied with the political life and system of their country.

Europe's sense of satisfaction with its political institutions is, however, on the decline. Compared with results in October 1979, satisfaction with the status quo has declined in Belgium (- 13 points), Denmark (-11), the Netherlands (-10) and Ireland (-9). But while in Denmark and the Netherlands the "satisfied" distinctly outnumber the "dissatisfied", in Ireland the gap has narrowed and in Belgium the "dissatisfied" are now in the majority (51 % compared with 34 %).

Revolutionary movements are not likely to gain much support in most EEC countries, where only a small percentage is in favour of revolution as a means of changing society. In France and Greece, however, about 10 % of the population does favour this option.

Over 60 % of the Europeans favour a progressive "reform" of society as we know it today, but even this majority is on the way down. Eurobarometer blames this evolution on the "crisis".

Europeans today are more in favour of defending society against "subversive" acts than about a year ago, but the movement has lost supporters in Germany where in the years 1977 and 1978 as many as 54 % of the population declared itself opposed to "subversion", compared with 46 % today. In France and Ireland, only 22 % of the population favours such defence movements.

72 % of all Europeans approve the efforts to unify Western Europe, ranging from 84 % in Luxembourg to 48 % in Denmark. A slight decline in this mass of support is nevertheless discernible. Eurobarometer stresses that "this

may be due to disappointment with the efforts being made to unify Europe or because, in a period of crisis, people have come to expect less of the Common Market".

The Danes (33 %), the British (22 %) and the Greeks (23 %) are most against the European integration process, but those in favour of the EEC far outnumber those against.

Membership of the European Community is another matter. 49 % of the British consider that membership of the EEC "is a bad thing", compared with 24 % who are for it. 29 % of the Danes and 26 % of the Irish are also opposed to EEC membership, although those in favour of it number 32 % in Denmark and 47 % in Ireland. The Dutch and the Luxembourgers have the largest number of citizens who favour Community membership.

European Community enlargement to include Greece and eventually Spain and Portugal does not seem to have provoked "involvement" of the average European man or woman. More than half the interviewees did not answer the question or were "not sure" but, of those who did, most were in favour of enlargement. The warmest welcome comes from the Italians, the Germans and the Dutch.

In the Community's newest member - Greece - 38 % of the people think that accession to the Community is a "good thing", while 21 % are against it. Those in favour of EEC membership belong to Greece's rightist parties. The Germans, followed by the Luxembourgers find their fellow-countrymen and women the most trustworthy. The Italians are most suspicious of each other. The poll also proves that, of the Nine, those in whom the others, on average, put the most trust are the Danes, the Luxembourgers, the Dutch and the Belgians. The Italians were on the bottom of the list, although this distrust seems to have diminished over the years.

The Swiss are seen as "model democrats" and a "happy people" by a majority of European citizens, who also trust the Americans. The Japanese are viewed as less trustworthy, but it is the Chinese and Russians who are viewed with most suspicion. However, while distrust of the Chinese has diminished over the years, the Russians have not improved their rating since 1970.

Things to come

Following a period of strict austerity as a result of the oil crisis, research and development (R + D) in Europe seems to be on its way up again. The amount spent on R + D has been steadily increased since 1978 which shows that the governments of the European Community are well aware of the crucial role research will play in Europe's economic future. Approximately half of the R + D in EEC member countries is government financed, while industry foots the rest of the bill. Government funds for R + D represent between 0.5 and 1.3 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product of EEC countries and 1 and 6 per cent of the national budgets for public spending.

The importance of scientific and technical research in the Community's future economic performance, especially where competitiveness of the Ten is concerned, makes a comparison with the U.S. interesting. In America, where as is well known R + D is by no means treated as an after-thought, public financing of R + D is only 1.3 times that in the Community.

Although there are important differences in the way the various EEC governments divide up their R + D funds, there is a certain similarity between the main categories that exist at the European level and the areas certain governments choose to emphasize.

First of all there is the category entitled "general promotion of knowledge", which groups together all research done at universities and institutes (which are, of course, state financed). This category accounted for approximately one-third of the total public spending for R + D in the Community in 1979. The Netherlands stand out here, allotting 56 per cent of its government R + D budget to the general promotion of knowledge.

The second largest category in terms of the amount governments spend on R + D, accounting for 14 per cent, is energy research. Italy spends more than 25 per cent of its government research funds on projects in the energy field. These figures do not represent the full extent of research on energy in Europe, since they do not include research done by public enterprises. After energy research comes industrial technology, which was given 11 per cent of the EEC government funds for R + D in 1979. It is the German government which places the most emphasis on this area, devoting 30 per cent of its research funds to industrial technology.

During the past few years, mostly as the result of public pressure, there has been a greater emphasis on research on social and human subjects by European governments. Among the areas being studied are the planning of

human environments, health and the quality of life in society. There have been steady increases throughout the Community in the amounts spent on such research, aimed at improving the day-to-day life of EEC citizens. For Belgium, it represents a major priority, accounting for 28 per cent of the 1979 government funds for research - approximately twice the Community average.

Military research is an example of an area for which the level of government funding varies substantially from one country to another. The 25 per cent Community average for the portion of government funds that go to military research does not provide a clear picture. Defence is of great importance in the United Kingdom, using up more than half of the total the government allots to research. This approaches the dimensions of military research in the United States. The French government also attributes sizeable importance to defence, giving it 35 per cent of its research funds. On the other hand, some of the other EEC members fall substantially under the Community average in this sector. Increases in spending on military research are, however, anticipated in Europe as well as in the United States. In Europe, the United Kingdom and France are expected to continue to provide most of the funds. Although the amounts devoted to military research appear considerable, much of this research can also develop technology that is useful in other fields, especially industrial innovation. The subjects the European governments decide to look into reflect the main preoccupations of our times. Improving the well-being of their citizens, meeting the challenge of politically turbulent periods, anticipating what the future holds for our industrial societies these are the mammoth tasks of our researchers.