



A NEWSHEET FOR JOURNALISTS • REPRODUCTION AUTHORIZED

Nr. 24/80

BRUSSELS, June 30, 1980

Week of June 23 to 28

TOURISM: An important part of the European economy

- Despite the economic recession and a summer that is starting off in grim fashion, some 190 million tourists are nevertheless expected to spend their holidays in Europe this year. Together they will spend no less than some E100 billion and will provide a livelihood for the 9 percent of the population dependent on the tourist industry.

By making the movement of persons across frontiers easier, the European Community has contributed a lot to the development of this tourism. In addition, a number of European institutions, such as the European Regional Fund and the European Investment Bank have assisted several major tourist projects, especially in regions where tourism is an important part of the economy.

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How long can the European Community count on a sufficient supply of water? And what are the dangers posed by the increasing pollution of our rivers and seas?

This newsheet is published in six languages (English, French, German, Dutch, Italian and Danish) by the Directorate-General for Information of the

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

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DEVELOPMENT: Increasing EEC co-financing operations in Africa

Experts from the European Community's financing institutions and at least 10 Arab banks and aid agencies met in Brussels, June 17, to study the ways and means of increasing their joint financing - or co-financing - operations in the developing countries. The term "co-financing" refers to those operations where two or more financing agencies get together to contribute towards a development project being undertaken in a third country.

Broadly speaking, the international community can be said to be composed of three types of countries: those with large financial surpluses, such as the oil-exporting countries, who are looking for new and viable investments; those with technological know-how but not enough capital to undertake large-scale investments on their own, such as the industrialised countries; and finally, the poorer countries, who have neither financial resources nor technology but vast development potential to exploit both.

International financial experts have coined the phrase "triangular cooperation" which refers, in fact, to the bringing together of these three types of countries, to the benefit of all concerned.

The European Community has been involved in such cooperation efforts for some years now, particularly in the African countries which are members of the Lomé Convention, the wide-ranging cooperation agreement which links the EEC to 60 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries.

In cooperation with such international financing institutions as the World Bank, the Arab funds and the different United Nations specialised agencies, the Community has been co-financing development projects in Africa for over five years. Under the first Lomé Convention, the Community put up about £602 million for some 47 co-financed development projects in Africa. This was 32 % of the overall investment in the region, with the World Bank putting up 12 % and the Arab aid agencies financing 19 % of the total.

But such co-financing operations can be increased, particularly with the Arab aid agencies, who need to recycle their increasing "petrodollars" and are thus on the look-out for new areas and sectors in which to invest.

The recent meeting in Brussels focussed on the ways and means of increasing such cooperation between the EEC and the Arab Funds. This was the first such meeting between the two sides, as previous contacts have been more limited and restricted to one or two Arab financing institutions.

Although no formal decisions on increasing co-financing operations in the future were taken by the Brussels meeting, experts from both sides are to meet in Kuwait later this year to discuss the possibility of making such information exchange on co-financing operations more systematic and regular.

ENVIRONMENT : Silencing noisy bikes

Everyone has experienced the ear-shattering roar of the unsilenced or badly silenced motor-bike exhaust. Whether it is in the quiet of the countryside or just in a suburban street late at night, the noise is guaranteed to set your teeth on edge. But what can be done? The ultimate responsibility lies with the bike owner who should see that his exhaust system and silencer are in good working order. In certain EEC countries this moral requirement is backed up by legal penalties. However, at the end of the day, there is always the problem of how to enforce such measures. Europe's police are hard-pressed enough as it is without chasing after every noisy motor-bike exhaust that is reported to them. No, the best way of improving the situation and cutting down on this item of noise pollution is to set stricter requirements for bike manufacturers to meet if they want to sell their products on the European market. Design improvements can quite easily be made to improve the efficiency and working life of even the simplest exhaust system and more use could be made of new materials not so prone to the rigours of rust and high temperatures.

The problem was highlighted by a question in the European Parliament recently when Mr. Karl von Wogau (Germany - EPP) asked the Commission if there were not in fact many ways of cutting down on the exhaust-note of motor-bikes and mopeds. The Commission agreed with him and also to the second part of his question where he pointed out the danger to free competition on the EEC market if every country went its own way in setting regulations to deal with the problem. What, he wanted to know, was the Commission doing about harmonising such regulations? The Commission said that, within the framework of its Action Programme on the Environment, three things were being done in this area. First of all, several directives had been put into effect relating to the acceptable noise levels of motor vehicles and the Council of Ministers was at the moment discussing a proposed directive dealing with the particular case of motor-bikes and mopeds. Secondly, a study has recently been completed on the evaluation of traffic noise. Finally, in the area of housing standards the Commission plans to define and publish minimum levels for the quality of soundproofing in house building. It is hoped that these varied measures will at least go some way towards tackling part of this menace of the machine age - Noise.

INDUSTRY : Keeping small and medium-sized enterprises informed

Important EEC efforts over the last few years have centred on encouraging small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) to develop, thereby dealing a blow to unemployment in the Community, helping with improving matters in depressed regions and generally stimulating the Common Market's economy. But the problem with the SME's is that they cannot benefit from economies of scale in things like legal and managerial advice and office equipment. The EEC is trying to help them out in the area of information. First of all the Commission regularly edits a list of all the various initiatives taken by the national governments to help the SME's and also a table of the various commercial laws in the Nine. The Commission also encourages the use of the 'Euronet' information system which is particularly useful to SME's. Finally, there will be at the end of the year an "Information Day" organised by the EEC to find out more about the information needs of the SME's so as to keep them more up to date with European commercial developments.

PARLIAMENT : The China syndrome

East and West met in an ancient border city recently with two women at the head of groups representing these two ancient societies. The place was the modern building that houses the European Parliament in Strasbourg, in France, but just across the border from Germany. The participants were delegations of the European Parliament and the Congress of the Peoples' Republic of China. And the leaders of these groups were Simone Veil, President of the Parliament, and Deng Yingchao, the widow of former Premier Dzou Enlai.

This meeting was the latest contact in an important series that began following the signature of a five-year trade cooperation agreement between the European Community and China in 1978. Since then, the links have grown more numerous, and have been symbolised by such visits as that made in February 1978 by European Commission President Roy Jenkins.

These have come in the wake of the Chinese programme of modernisation of their society, inspired partly by the policies of Dzou Enlai and his "four modernisations" of the army, industry, agriculture and education. Deng Xiaoping, a disciple of Dzou, is now actively pursuing such policies. Welcomed in Strasbourg by Simone Veil, Dzou's widow said she was convinced that the development of relations between the two peoples could contribute to world peace. She said the European Parliament was an important symbol of European unity and she also welcomed the stands of the Parliament on Afghanistan and Kampuchea.

AGRICULTURE: Hopping around Europe

A hearty mug of beer is among the list of most popular drinks just about everywhere in Europe. It's therefore not so surprising that the European Community represents some 38 percent of the world's production of hops. And, as a result of technical improvements, this output is continuing to increase despite a reduction in the amount of land devoted to its growth. Given these results, the European Community is considering cutting back the amount of financial aid it has granted to hops growers. This aid will be scaled down to some £ 3.4 million in 1980 from the level of about £ 6 million in 1979. The European Commission is nevertheless determined to provide whatever is necessary to support the position of Europe on the world hops market.

AGRICULTURE : Nursing the victims of the green revolution

While the world for years concentrated on the production of pesticides and other means of plant protection, considerable attention is now being focused on defences against the more harmful consequences of these products. Ecologists and farmers were among the first to sound the warning against the possible hazards of such chemical agents. They drew attention to the fact that foreign substances introduced into the environment to protect plants against parasites and diseases sometimes worked their way up the human and animal food chain to produce secondary effects. In addition, they were concerned about the cumulative impact of chemicals on the land, which sometimes required later remedial action. In other words, what was sometimes referred to as "the green revolution" to encourage greater food production also unleashed untold environmental consequences.

The need now is to reconcile all these objectives -- how to simultaneously protect plants, health and the environment.

A recent effort to study the most modern techniques being used in Europe and the rest of the world was a conference on the "integral protection of cultivated plants," co-sponsored by the European Commission and held in Valence, France.

The aim of this gathering attended by more than one hundred participants from agricultural and environmental organisations, the chemical industry, consumer and farm groups was to examine ways of lessening the dependence on pesticides. The focus was on protection of fruit orchards, but attention was also given to production of major crops such as grains, vegetables and greenhouse production. Most of this output is centered in France, Italy, the Netherlands, Germany and the United Kingdom but is also, of course, present in all European and other countries.

What this conference examined were methods of replacing the systematic application of chemicals with a combination of more proven sanitary methods that sometimes used the biological interaction of various plant or animal species and also a better selection of chemical pesticides.

For agriculture, the environment, the consumer and the chemical industry, the stakes are extremely high since a successful middle course has to be found that provides effective protection of the food supply as well as safe products from the chemical industry.

One specific challenge currently being faced is protection against a bacteria that is increasingly affecting potato crops in Europe. But there are similar dangers to other crops, the general environment and public health which will have to be dealt with.

TOURISM: A handy check-list for holiday use

More and more vacationers are returning home from their voyage with not only souvenirs but also duty-free products. But many probably don't take full advantage of these possibilities since they are unaware of the increasingly liberal European Community rules on the subject. New proposals on this have also just been introduced by the European Commission in Brussels for the Council of Ministers of the member states to consider soon.

It proposes that the value of goods benefitting from duty-free entry should be raised to about £ 140 as from July 1, 1980 and to about £ 200 beginning in 1982. But until these limits are approved the amount accepted is still £ 120. This applies to all types of goods in addition to the quantities of alcohol, perfumes and cigarettes authorised.

Currently, the amounts permitted to be imported from another Community member country, per person, are the following:

- . 4 litres of still wines, such as Bordeaux, Burgundy, Chianti and others;
- . 1.5 litres of spirits above 22 degrees in alcoholic content or,
- . 3 litres of alcoholic beverages under 22 degrees, sparkling wines (such as Champagne) or fortified wines;
- . 700 grammes of coffee or 300 grammes of coffee extract (which the Commission wants raised to 1000 and 400 grammes, respectively);
- . 300 cigarettes or 150 cigarillos, or 75 cigars, or 400 grammes of pipe tobacco;
- . 75 grammes of perfume or 3/8th of a litre of Cologne water.

For travellers returning from non-Community countries the amounts are generally 2/3 of the Community allowance.

In addition, the Community and eight other European countries have recently signed an agreement to facilitate the border crossing for coach travellers, that should also lead to a reduction in fares for this type of transport.

For motorists, the green card is no longer required in Community countries or Austria, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden and Finland.

All travellers who come under the social security system in their home country are advised to ask their insurance company for the special "E111" form, this to obtain reimbursement of medical expenses and hospital costs during a stay in another Community country with the exception of Great Britain where medical care is free of charge. Even if no one wants to become ill during their holiday, it is still safer to take all precautions.

THE STORY OF WATER

Essential for life in all its forms, water covers two-thirds, or rather three quarters of the earth's surface. It would therefore seem strange to talk of a possible water crisis. But the World Health Organisation announced recently that some thirteen million children will probably die this year in the developing countries because they drank water which was not fit for drinking.

European Community countries do not have to face such serious water problems. But the dry spell which affected Europe in 1975 and 1976 showed up certain weaknesses of the EEC countries' water supply systems. Moreover, there is a progressive decrease in the amount of available water which can be consumed directly by humans. The European Commission has looked into this crucial problem. It is clear that the current water resources can be considered adequate for another twenty years. But an overpopulated and indeed, overindustrialised Europe is polluting its lakes, and rivers. Nature, including animals and vegetation, therefore has to be protected. The problem is a complicated one, as some countries are more responsible for this pollution than are others, essentially because of their geographical situation.

Even if there is enough water in the EEC, it is not always evenly distributed. There is an average of one metre of rain in the Community each year, but the average reaches four metres in some countries, and is as little as ten centimetres in others. Europe's water requirements are expected to double by the year 2000. Community experts indicate that this increase in needs will vary from one country to another: there will be a 226 % increase in the Netherlands, 166 % in Luxembourg, compared with 63 % in Germany and 26 % in France. Community action is also important as: underground water resources and rivers do not always follow national frontiers. The Meuse and the Rhine are European... but their pollution also is "European" rather than "national". EEC countries face an important question: how can they protect "their" waters from pollution from neighbouring countries? The task has been taken up by the European Community which uses a number of methods to protect the EEC's water resources: directives, the fixing of water quality objectives, a ban on discharging polluting elements into the waters. This action is formulated by European Commission experts.

The quality objectives are aimed at limiting or reducing the pollution of Community waters. The Community directives were adopted initially for drinking water. In June 1975 and in 1978, methods of verification of quality, and the frequency of such controls were introduced. Following this, the Community turned its attention to bathing waters, including rivers,

lakes and coastal waters. A directive adopted in 1975 gave the Nine ten years to take action to improve the quality of such bathing waters. Finally, the Community has turned its attention to fishing waters. Fish, shellfish, crustaceans, etc. need to be protected from pollution, and particularly from mercury pollution, a poison which led to the Minimata catastrophe in Japan.

Mercury discharges into the waters just have to be stopped. This means an increasing number of Community regulations on the subject. In May 1976, the Commission introduced a system of prior authorisation for the discharge of toxic waste which was either included on a black list or a grey list depending on just how dangerous it was. Underground springs and water resources are also protected by specific rules. Two Community directives adopted in November 1973, determine the production of detergents. In February 1978, the Community turned to pollution by titanium dioxide which provokes the creation of "red mud" which destroys the biological balance of the seas, as was the case recently in Corsica. Similar action is needed to reduce waste paper being discharged into the seas... but more efforts will have to be made by 1987 to reduce the more serious types of pollution.

And now we come to the problem of oil slicks, which has made the news quite often recently because of the recent disasters on the French coasts. Two and a half million tonnes of used oil is produced in the Community every year. This represents one fifth of total industrial pollution. The only solution would appear to be the recycling and recovery of the used oil. The Community countries have yet to ratify the different international conventions on the question which have been around since 1954. The Community must, therefore, develop its cooperation with its neighbouring European countries, and must study and analyse the ways and means of combatting the different forms of water pollution.

There is also a need for information exchange on pollution problems between the Community countries. Other action which could be undertaken includes the drawing up of inventories on the underground water resources, the problems of environmental pollution, common monitoring methods, studies on the Nine's water resources, long-term water supply problems, etc. Whether we drink it, bathe in it, or fish in it, water is an indispensable part of our daily lives. But what kind of water will this be? Europe's water is as much a part of its heritage as its castles and churches. Every European should be aware of this and do what he or she can to preserve the purity of Europe's waters.