



a newssheet for journalists

Weekly n° 4/90

29 January - 5 February 1990

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Mailed from: Brussels X

EUROFORUMS

1990: A very full work programme

The European Commission's programme for 1990.

Priority in building the single market, set for completion on 31 December 1992; proposals for the European Community of tomorrow, beginning with a proposal for a common currency, and an adequate response to the economic and political challenges from the Community's fast-changing East European neighbours are among the main items on the European Community's work programme for 1990, which its President, Jacques Delors, presented to the European Parliament in Strasbourg on January 17.

The President reminded his audience that preparing the frontier-free European "space" remains "at the heart of our action". Two subjects are of crucial importance here, for they are the key to throwing open the Community's borders to its citizens. The first is the free movement of people, free of checks by the police. This requires an agreement among the Twelve on immigration, the right of asylum and a watch on the Community's external borders. The second is the elimination of "fiscal borders" - that is to say, the appreciation of the 12 national VAT systems and the elimination of the duty-free allowances enjoyed by travellers. Jacques Delors has likened the results of the discussions among the Twelve on the second of these two subjects to a car "with glittering coachwork" but no engine.

The total success of the 1992 programme requires more than the elimination of the Community's internal borders. It requires help for the most vulnerable regions and social categories, for example, as well as European "social legislation". The proposals the Commission will be making in 1990 will particularly include measures aimed at protecting part-time workers; pregnant women; those in insecure employment or working on ships or building sites. The Commission will also take up the reorganization of working time and the case of cross-frontier workers.

As regards scientific and technological research, the Commission will propose a series of specialized programmes this year, given that the Twelve reached agreement in mid-December on a budget for a framework programme for 1990 to 1994. These activities should make European industry more competitive. Jacques Delors reminded the Euro-MPs that the Japanese car industry invests twice as much in research as its European competitors.

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Environmental protection is another important feature of the Commission's 1990 programme. This envisages a wide range of proposals - from fighting the main causes of air pollution, among them exhaust gases from trucks and Diesel-powered vehicles in general, to the creation of ecological labels for "green" products and effective waste disposal.

Scheduled for the end of this year is a conference of the 12 EC countries, which should pave the way for economic and monetary union, the first stage of which begins on 1 July 1990, and to a single Community currency. In the coming months the Commission, through its studies and analyses will help the Twelve approximate their economic policies, as envisaged under the first stage, and submit suggestions and alternatives for the follow-up to it. President Delors reminded the Euro-MPs that the first stage must be a success if the progress towards monetary union is to continue.

The Commission plans to give its opinion on the other issues which will condition the Community's future. They include the approximation of the foreign policies of the Member States, regarded as inadequate so far by Jacques Delors, and the powers to be granted the Community in future in relation to those of its Member States.

The Commission will have its hands full this year as regards the Community's external relations. The countries of Eastern Europe that have returned to the democratic fold need emergency aid at this stage; but their economic reconstruction will require both ideas and funds from the Community, which already has responsibilities towards dozens of countries around the world.

The European Community began the new year with nearly 60% of the 1992 programme to its credit. It has created 8.5 million jobs since 1984, as Jacques Delors pointed out in Strasbourg. But a good deal remains to be done, and the Commission President is hoping that before 1990 is over the Community's political leaders will start thinking on the major issues of European union.

A PEOPLE'S EUROPE: Silenced tongues

An information and documentation network on less widely used languages is set up.

The Irish, Welsh, Bretons, Corsicans, Sardinians, Frisians and others in the same league number 50 million in all - 50 million European citizens who daily use, at home, at work, in their leisure time, a language other than one of the European Community's nine official languages. Not dialects, not foreign languages spoken by a linguistic minority, such as the Slovenes or Albanians in Italy, not even Community languages which are spoken by a minority in another Member State, such as German among Alsations. But genuine languages, spoken since centuries, with a history, a tradition, a culture of their own, with a literature which often is much more than folklore. One European in six, in other words, is virtually obliged to use a language which, in the last analysis, is a foreign language to him and, in any case, is not his mother tongue. And this within a Member State of which he is a national and, consequently, in the European Community, of which he is a citizen.

After long decades, even centuries of a veritable oppression and linguistic imperialism on the part of languages considered "national", a new spirit is abroad in the case of these "silenced" tongues. The autonomy of the regions in question has played an important part, and governments have introduced the study of these languages alongside the country's official language. Newspapers have once again reappeared in these languages, as have radio and television programmes. There is movement at the Community level also. At the initiative of the European Parliament the European Commission has been asked to manage certain activities aimed at safeguarding and promoting languages and cultures which are not as widely used. This is only fair; after all, they are a part of European history and can only enrich our heritage even further.

The European Commission already supports actions aimed at encouraging exchanges of information and experiences. It co-finances certain educational projects as well as some of the work of the Dublin-based European bureau for lesser used languages. The Commission has just announced the creation of an information and documentation network which will improve these information exchanges, between the minorities themselves as well as with third parties.

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Four existing centres have offered to act as the first pilot centres, by laying the foundations of an electronic databank and studying how the various public and private bodies in the different regional or minority language groups could be involved in this initiative, which has been baptized MERCATOR. This network is open to all centres which meet the necessary conditions.

The four centres are: University College of Wales at Aberystwyth, Fryske Akademy in the Netherlands, Siemem in Barcelona and the French Committee of the European office for the lesser used languages. The task of coordinating their activities is being undertaken by the Fryske Akademy.

These centres have been asked to study the following topics: the media; legal and institutional aspects; general studies and education.

The databank will eventually contain bibliographical information, names of institutes and experts and statistical and other information. MERCATOR should be in a position to provide reliable information, addressed to different audiences: decision-makers, researchers, teachers, journalists, the young, etc. It could also provide a question and answer service, prepare and distribute publications, etc.

MERCATOR intends to send out very shortly a brochure, describing the network, to a maximum number of public and private bodies within the European Community. It will describe the objectives and operating practices of the network, and invite all interested centres and associations to make themselves known.

For further information, write to :

FRYSKE AKADEMY
Coulonhûs
Doelestrjitte 8
NL-9811-DX Ljouwert/Leeuwarden.

TRADE: Wanted - young executives for training in Japan

Last date for applications: 1 July 1990.

The European Commission is looking for executives with marketing or managerial experience, around 30 years of age, nationals of one of the 12 European Community countries and with at least two years professional experience and a marked interest in international affairs. It wants them to take part in its executive training programme in Japan, which runs from May 1991 to November 1992.

For the eleventh consecutive year the European Commission is offering young European executives a chance to spend 18 months in Japan, 12 of them learning the language, even while taking part in a programme of seminars and factory visits, followed by six months of in-house training in selected Japanese companies.

The aim of the operation is to enable European companies to enter the difficult Japanese market more easily, thanks to specialists who have first-hand experience of the country. Since 1979 more than 350 European executives have taken part in the Commission's training programme. Many of them are now working in Japan for European companies.

The training programme, considered by many as the main action undertaken by the Commission to facilitate European exports to Japan, acquires special significance this year. The fact is the Japanese government is encouraging its citizens to buy more foreign products, and the Commission wants to encourage European companies to take advantage of this. As a result, applications from executives working in small and medium-sized companies and in companies with the potential to succeed in Japan, are especially welcome. But the Commission also wants to encourage applications from companies which have not taken part in its programme so far.

Applications will be received from February through June of this year, the deadline being 1 July. They should be sent to KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock in London (Ms A. Routledge, telephone 236 80 00 and fax 248 65 52) and to KPMG Stokes Kennedy Crowley in Dublin (Mr B. Ward, telephone 73 55 66 and fax 73 58 00).

JOB CREATION: ECU 3,500mn. to fight unemployment

Help for eight countries in the years 1990 to 1992.

The European Community's Social Fund (ESF) will provide a total of ECU 3.560mn.* to eight EC countries, between now and the end of 1992, to help them fight long-term and youth unemployment. The U.K. will receive the lion's share, with more than ECU 1,000mn. Other major beneficiaries are: France (ECU 872mn.), Italy (ECU 585mn.) and Germany (ECU 573mn.). The smaller EC countries will receive more modest amounts: the Netherlands (ECU 230mn.), Belgium (ECU 174mn.), Denmark (ECU 99mn.) and Luxembourg (ECU 7mn.). The less well-off Community countries (Ireland, Greece, Portugal and Spain) are provided special aid, aimed at economically backward regions.

The European Commission approved its Community support frameworks to combat unemployment over the next three years on 20 December 1989, after meetings with interested Member States. The Commission has decided to give priority to vocational training, job creation in the areas with high unemployment levels and the modernization of industry. Here the ESF will help train the unemployed and young people in the new technologies.

The Commission will also favour actions aimed at encouraging self-employed activities and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). In addition, women, the handicapped and migrant workers have an important place in the Community's programme of social assistance.

The funds provided by the ESF represent, as before, a contribution from the Community's budget for measures proposed and implemented by national, regional or local authorities, who themselves bear part - usually 50% - of the cost.

Community support for the fight against unemployment is part of a package of financial aid, the broad lines of which were agreed on by the Twelve in February 1988, in order to ensure that the Community's weakest regions and social categories stand a good chance of benefitting from the advantages of the 1992 single market.

* 1 ECU = UK£0.74 or IR£0.77

ENVIRONMENT: The EC takes the lead in the race to eliminate CFCs
The European Commission favours eliminating by 1997 the substances which attack the ozone layer and provoke the greenhouse effect.

The European Community produces some 450,000t. of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) each year. This is nearly half the world production of 1.1mn. tonnes. But it is precisely these CFCs, which give aerosols their propulsive power, that are mainly responsible for the destruction of the ozone layer, which protects us from the sun's ultraviolet radiation. It is the disappearance of the ozone layer which provokes the greenhouse effect.

Scientists from all over the world have warned that the production of CFCs must be stopped if an ecological disaster is to be avoided. The European Commission has taken the lead in proposing their total elimination by 1997, which is three years ahead of the deadline set at the world level. According to the European Environment Commissioner, Carlo Ripa di Meana, the proposal "marks a new and decisive stage in the critical area of safeguarding the world's environment".

In any case, it is an important step forward, and shows that the Community is ready to act and set an example to the rest of the world. If the Twelve accept the Commission's proposal, it will clearly strengthen the review of the Montreal Protocol. This international agreement, which provides for the elimination of CFCs by the year 2000, is to be signed next June.

TRANSPORT: A rise in air traffic

11% more passengers and 9% more freight in November 1989.

After rising steadily during 10 months, the air traffic of the 21 members of the Association of European Airlines recorded a jump of 11% in passenger traffic. This was the highest increase since March 1988. The seat occupancy rate rose even more sharply, given that available capacity rose by only 9%. The main reason for this rise was the growth in European traffic, up by 13.1%.

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The volume of freight carried by the airlines rose by 9% in November 1989, a much higher rate of increase than in previous months. The biggest increases were recorded on flights to Latin America and the Middle East, followed by flights within Europe and to the East. There was a slight fall in freight shipments to Africa.

There was a certain improvement in punctuality also, as compared to 1988. But it was nothing to brag about: 21.7% of aircraft left more than 15 minutes late, an improvement over November 1988 of a mere 0.7%. And the statistics for December 1989 point to a deterioration

CULTURE: Seville to host world's fair Expo '92

A German architect's design for the EC's pavilion at the fair wins first prize.

An international jury, presided by the European Commissioner for culture and information, Mr Jean Dondelinger, awarded the first prize for the design of the European Community's pavilion at the 1992 world fair in Seville - Expo '92 - to a German architect, Karsten K. Krebs.

Explaining the jury's choice, Mr Dondelinger noted that the award-winning design "best expressed the message of the unity of Europe which the Community plans to put across during the fair." The fair over, the building would be a continuing Community landmark, should a decision be taken not to tear it down.

As for the architectural value of the design, the European Commissioner insisted that it was in the monumental tradition of architecture, although its creation required advanced techniques. Finally, the design fitted in very well with the rest of the Community's presence at the Seville fair, Expo '92.

The jury awarded the second and third prizes to two French architects, MM Bernard Camous and Pierre-Michel Delpeuch respectively.