



a newssheet for journalists

Weekly n° 7/90

19 - 26 February 1990

S U M M A R Y

P. 2 ENVIRONMENT: How can you check on the implementation of Community legislation?
Denmark scores the most points while Italy and Belgium get the dunce's cap.

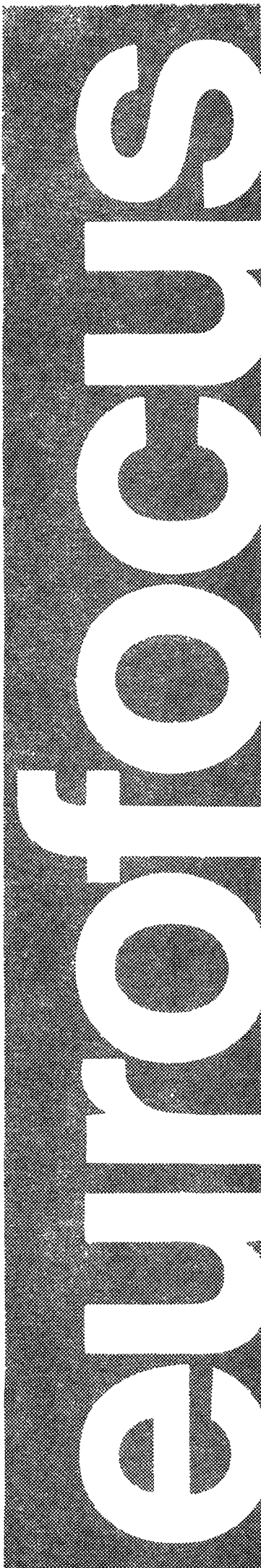
P. 3 HEALTH: Rabies is not a scourge in the Community
In no case of death from rabies was the disease contracted in the EC.

P. 4 INVESTMENTS: More than 40,000 new jobs, thanks to "European" loans
A record level of activity for the European Investment Bank in 1989.

P. 6 COAL: Decline in jobs and output, rise in imports
1989 is similar to previous years.

TRANSPORT: Europe leads in rail transport
A report by the European Commission as high-speed trains make their mark.

Mailed from: Brussels X



ENVIRONMENT: How can you check on the implementation of Community legislation?

Denmark scores the most points while Italy and Belgium get the dunce's cap.

No more than five formal notices, no reasoned opinion and no submissions to the Court of Justice: Denmark is well ahead of its EC partners when it comes to implementing the Community's environmental legislation, according to the league table drawn up by the European environment commissioner, Mr Ripa di Meana. Italy and Belgium are at the bottom of the table, especially as regards the number of Court submissions (11 for Belgium and 7 for Italy), which is tantamount to saying that their governments systematically turn a deaf ear to the notices and reasoned opinions sent them. Worse, even Court decisions have failed to move them. "An intolerable situation", was how Mr Ripa di Meana put it, "especially as these two States are not only not poor but also founding members of the Community and have taken part in the discussions on the environmental directives and their implementation from the beginning."

The Commissioner did not mince matters; he even gave details of four cases in which each of the two countries has stubbornly refused to conform to the Court's rulings on cleanliness of bathing water and the disposal of toxic wastes. Not that the other Member States are blameless. France, Germany and the Netherlands, to mention only a few, reacted in the same way when the Court ruled they had not implemented Community legislation on the protection of wild birds.

"Environmental legislation is not properly implemented throughout much of the European Community", according to Mr Ripa di Meana. The situation is all the more difficult since the Treaties stipulate that the implementation of Community law in the environmental field is the responsibility of the Member State, even though they go on to state that the Commission must ensure that this implementation is effectively guaranteed. Now only a minority of the Member States have worked out a coherent and substantial policy of environmental protection; the others basically limit themselves to incorporating directives drawn up and adopted by the Community into their domestic legislation. And as this is not always the case, we come full circle and there is environmental deterioration. As of 31 December the Commission had listed 362 cases in which Community environmental legislation is either badly or only partly implemented by Member States.

The Community therefore has a difficult but very important role to play in the implementation of environmental legislation. The European Commission counts heavily on public opinion to force

(Contd.)

(Contd.)

governments to give way. Last year Brussels received 460 complaints from individuals or ecological organizations, as against only 11 in 1984. The Commission has decided, therefore, to publish each year a report on how Community environmental legislation is being implemented in the various EC countries. "Our aim is not to put certain Member States in the dock," Mr Ripa di Meana has pointed out; "on the contrary, we want to look for ways of helping them implement Community directives correctly and effectively" - thanks to a continuing dialogue and cooperation between the Commission's own departments and the national authorities. The solutions envisaged include the creation of a Community environmental fund. It would enable the Community to share in the costs, often very heavy, which the implementation of Community directives involves - with the possibility of excluding those at the bottom of the league table from this source of financing.

HEALTH: Rabies is not a scourge in the Community

In no case of death from rabies was the disease contracted in the EC.

In 1988 two persons died from rabies in Britain and Belgium. Between 1980 and 1988 there were 14 deaths from rabies in the European Community; but in no case did the victim contract the disease in Europe.

This information was given by the European Commission Vice-President Henning Christophersen, in reply to a question from a British Euro-MP, Mr Anthony Simpson, who expressed concern over this important problem. Mr Christophersen noted that all 14 victims had been infected in a developing country, and added that no reliable information is available as to the total number of persons who have contracted rabies in the 12 EC countries.

The fact is that it is impossible to tell if a person who has been treated for rabies had contracted the disease. Rabies is invariably fatal, however. In France, for example, 14,654 persons turned up at the 64 anti-rabies centres in the country in 1987. It is impossible to say, however, how many of the 7,890 persons who were treated for rabies had become infected. In any case, no death from rabies was recorded in France that year.

INVESTMENTS: More than 40,000 new jobs, thanks to "European" loans

A record level of activity for the European Investment Bank in 1989.

More than 40,000 new jobs were created in the European Community last year, thanks to lending by the European Investment Bank (EIB), the Community's own bank. In a favourable investment climate - 1992 is within sight - the EIB lent a total of ECU 12,200mn.* last year, up from ECU 10,200mn. in 1988. In two years EIB lending rose by 56%, as its directors underlined when presenting the 1989 balance sheet in early February.

The projects backed by the EIB represented 1.2% of total investment in the 12-nation Community in 1989 - the Bank lends between 20 and 50% of the total cost, depending on the project. But it accounted for a higher proportion of total investments in the Community's poorer Member States: 6.3% of the total in Portugal, 3.7% in Ireland, 2.9% in Greece and 2.4% in Italy.

Reducing regional inequalities remains the EIB's priority: it accounted for more than ECU 7,000mn., or 64% of all loans in 1989. This was 43% more than in 1988. Two-thirds of this sum went to the economically less advanced regions: Portugal, Greece, Ireland, Northern Ireland, the Italian Mezzogiorno and certain Spanish regions. Loans to these regions are used to improve transport, telecommunications, energy supplies and to stimulate business investments, beginning with investments in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The fact is that exactly 7,605 SMEs received EIB loans in 1989, for a total of more than ECU 2,000mn. Over 60% of them are in the Community's less developed regions, and consist mainly of industrial firms employing fewer than 50 persons. Loans to SMEs are usually made through national banks. Their effect on employment is far from negligible: 80% of the jobs created last year, thanks to the EIB, were in SMEs.

The EIB also boosted "green" investments last year. Projects aimed at protecting the environment and improving the quality of life received ECU 1.700mn., an increase of 40% over 1988. More than half this amount was devoted to the treatment of liquid waste and improving the quality of drinking water in no fewer than seven EC countries: Britain, Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Italy

(Contd.)

(Contd.)

and Spain. The British and German authorities recently had a brush with the European Commission over the quality of their water; meeting Community standards is not something that can be taken for granted. The EIB has also helped pay for the cost of reducing atmospheric pollution from thermal power stations, refineries and other major industrial installations; nor has it overlooked projects for waste treatment and soil protection.

But the Bank is trying not to limit its aid to "ecological" projects. Before granting a loan it looks to see if the projected investment is environmentally sound and conforms to existing "green" laws. The EIB even encourages those promoting projects to win their "green" spurs by doing more than they are required to by law.

It is not always easy to impose such requirements, especially in the energy field, one of the main outlets for EIB loans - ECU 1,700mn. in 1989, for projects ranging from the use of lignite in Greece to the exploitation of North Sea oil and gas fields and the construction of electricity generating stations using wind power in the Netherlands.

The EIB also helped finance investments in the transport sector in 1989, including the Channel tunnel. It also provided loans for a variety of major industrial projects, including new models of the Airbus in Britain and Spain. Tourism was not overlooked; the Bank provided funding for both the restoration of the Ducal Palace in Genoa and the Eurodisney amusement park near Paris. The countries which received the lion's share of EIB money in 1989 included Italy (ECU 3,700mn.), Britain (ECU 1.700mn.) and Spain and France (ECU 1.500mn. each).

1 ECU = UK£0.72 or IR£0.77.

COAL: Decline in jobs and output, rise in imports

1989 is similar to previous years.

By the end of 1989 there were 22,400 fewer coal miners in the 12-nation European Community than the previous year; their numbers had fallen to 232,500, nearly 10% fewer than in 1988. These figures, published by Eurostat, the Community's statistical office, in early February, confirmed the declining trend in employment which has characterized the coal industry for several years.

Last year it was the Belgian coal industry which experienced the highest number of job losses, relatively speaking - over 27%. Both Britain and France also suffered a sharp decline in employment - around 17%. The decline was limited to 4.3% in Germany and to 3.1% in Spain.

As in previous years, job losses went hand in hand with a fall in production - by 3.1% for the Community as a whole. This was only fractionally more than the 3% recorded the previous year.

To off-set the fall in production, several EC countries imported more coal, with the result that the Community's imports rose by 4.1%, continuing a trend begun several years ago. France set a new record, with a rise of nearly 30%; but this was due mainly to bad weather and breakdowns in the country's nuclear power stations. German imports, on the other hand, fell by more than 16%, the country having used its reserves to offset declining production.

TRANSPORT: Europe leads in rail transport

A report by the European Commission as high-speed trains make their mark.

The European railway industry is the biggest and best in the world: biggest in terms of output, best in terms of the quality of its output, nearly one-third of which is exported. The industry is not short of trump cards, as is clear from the European Commission's report, published at the end of January, to back up its proposals for a common railway policy, presented at the end of 1989 (see Eurofocus 39/89).

(Contd.)

(Contd.)

The most dramatic European railway project remains the future network of high-speed trains, linking Glasgow to Frankfurt, and Lisbon to Copenhagen. But the European Commission believes Europeans must look beyond the frontiers of the single market: some 1,500 high-speed trains will have to be built in the world in the next 20 years, excluding Japan, which manufactures its own rolling stock. European companies could expect to land some handsome contracts.

But this assumes that the Europeans pool their efforts, especially at the technological level. Why couldn't Community research programmes, which have already boosted other sectors, do as much for the railways? The Commission is confident they could, and plans to make specific proposals shortly. But it fears that the Community's budget may prove inadequate to the task, and rule out research into noise reduction, for example.

But the fact is the train remains a noisy means of travel. The Twelve have yet to adopt the proposal, aimed at harmonizing noise levels downwards, which the Commission tabled some seven years ago. The latter plans to return to the attack, putting forward other "ecological" solutions for the railways, such as reducing the negative impact of new lines on the environment and putting tracks underground in their passage through urban centres.

Railway lines have already become less obtrusive. A double track, ten metres wide, is all that is needed to carry 40,000 persons per hour. Buses would require a motorway 35 metres wide to carry the same number, and private cars a motorway 135 metres wide.

The Commission has pointed out that trains run on electricity, 57.2% of which is furnished by thermal, 38% by nuclear and the remaining 4.8% by hydroelectric or geothermal power stations. What is more, pollution at these stations can be controlled.