



# a newssheet for journalists

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EUROFORUM

**ENVIRONMENT: Inching towards a cleaner Europe**

The Twelve have given the green light to several proposals from the European Commission aimed at environmental protection.

The very heavy agenda which confronted the European Community's environment ministers when they met on December 20 and 21, 1990, illustrates the extent to which the environment has become a priority for the Europe of 1992. The fact is the Twelve took a series of decisions, aimed mainly at reducing air pollution from exhaust emissions, improving hazardous waste management and protecting the ozone layer. They will return later to questions regarding the location of the headquarters of the European Environment Agency, municipal waste water treatment and the labelling of hazardous substances.

As regards motor vehicles, the Twelve decided to impose strict limits on exhaust emissions. From 1992 all new cars will have to meet very severe anti-pollution standards, which will put Europe in the lead in this matter.

Another important Council decision provides for the total elimination of CFCs throughout the Community by July 1997 - that is three years ahead of the date generally accepted by the international community. CFCs, or chlorofluorocarbons, are contained in aerosols and are harmful to the ozone layer.

A draft directive aimed at improving the management of hazardous waste was also approved by the Twelve, together with a resolution on improving the urban environment. In addition, ECU 25mn.\* were released for the Community programme for the protection of the environment in the Mediterranean region (MEDSPA).

\* 1 ECU = UK£0.70 or IR£0.77.

**SINGLE MARKET: Eliminating the last border checks on goods**

The Twelve give the green light to ending customs formalities for goods traded between Member States.

The European Community Council of Ministers and European Commission have put the finishing touches to their simplified customs formalities, which will make it possible to end all checks on goods at the Community's internal frontiers from 1 January 1993.

The Twelve in effect have reached agreement on two draft regulations from the European Commission, the first of which is aimed at ending border checks on lorries carrying goods and the second at making it easier to move works of art sent from one EC country to another for display at an exhibition or artistic or commercial event.

As regards intra-Community trade in goods, the Member States have agreed to do away with the Single Administrative Document (SAD) from 1 January 1993. It was introduced in 1988, when it replaced the 130-odd forms in use in the Community at that time. With the elimination of the SAD the last vestiges of customs checks at the Community's internal borders will disappear. From 1993 lorries carrying goods between two Member States will no longer have to stop at the EC's internal borders, with the exception of some of the trade between Spain and Portugal. Here the SAD could remain in use for a transitional period.

For Mrs Christiane Scrivener, the EC's Commissioner for taxation, "the elimination of the SAD marks a major step towards the completion of the single market."

The Twelve also decided to extend the use of the Community carnet to works of art, thus making it easier to move such works from one Member State to another for display at exhibitions and artistic and trade events. The free use of the carnet, with its 2-year validity, will in particular make it possible for its holder to export a work of art temporarily, without having to provide a bank guarantee. The Community carnet will also be available for exhibition carpets, classed as commercial samples.

With the extension of the carnet to works of art, practically all objects which are exported temporarily from one EC country to another will soon be able to benefit from it. The only exceptions will be very valuable objects or luxury goods which are subject to very high indirect taxes, such as furs, precious stones and jewellery. These provisions should apply from the beginning of this year to the end of 1992, when all checks on goods at the Community's internal borders should disappear.

**AUDIOVISUAL: The Twelve embark on wide-ranging activities**

The MEDIA programme has begun with the new year.

The European Community has not been marking time. On 20 December 1990, six months after it received the European Commission's proposals, the European Community Council of Ministers adopted the MEDIA\* programme. This was in marked contrast to the time taken to adopt numerous "European laws" or Community research programmes. For Jean Dondelinger, the EC's audiovisual and cultural Commissioner, it only goes to show the importance the Twelve attach "to this sector, seen as vital at the economic as well as cultural level."

The MEDIA programme could begin on 1 January 1991, the Twelve having endowed it with a budget of ECU 20mn.\*\* for the period from 1991 to 1995. The sum is not particularly large but it nevertheless is substantial when compared to the few million ECU spent during the programme's experimental phase, from 1987 to last year. Even so, this phase made it possible to test various methods of cooperation between specialists from the different EC countries and to chalk up a number of successes.

The definitive MEDIA programme will continue along the path set by its predecessor. It will stimulate all kinds of audiovisual activity, from artistic creativity to the marketing of the finished product throughout the 12-nation Community. The programme, however, will not directly finance any given production.

MEDIA, in other words, will improve production conditions by facilitating the use of new technologies and providing fresh stimulus to cartoons, even while opening the doors of Member States' film archives to the whole Community. MEDIA will also stimulate investments in the audiovisual industry through new forms of association.

As regards distribution, MEDIA will make it possible to set up or strengthen European networks, both for cinema films and video-cassettes. MEDIA will also encourage the dubbing and subtitling of television programmes, as well as the distribution of works produced by companies other than the multinationals.

Finally, MEDIA will help develop film production in the smaller countries and in countries whose national languages are not widely spoken.

\* The French acronym for "measures to encourage the development of the audiovisual industry".

\*\* 1 ECU = UKf0.70 or IRf0.77.

**DRUGS: The Twelve deal a blow to the chemical connection ...**

... by adopting a system aimed at controlling certain chemicals used to make drugs.

The "makers" of all sorts of drugs, including cocaine, heroin, LSD and amphetamines, will have a hard time of it in the single market. The European Commission's Council of Ministers adopted in mid-December a system for controlling the trade in precursors - the chemicals often used in the illicit manufacture of "marketable" narcotic drugs from such natural products as poppy and coca leaves, or even by means of other chemical substances. The system will come into force on 1 July 1991.

The chemicals in question are used for a variety of purposes totally unrelated to the traffic in drugs. They are used, for example, in the manufacture of adhesives, paints and varnishes. The fact is that only a small part of the trade in these chemicals is in the hands of drug traffickers, which is why a total ban on their use has never been envisaged.

The sole aim of the "European law" adopted by the Twelve is to keep effective watch on trade in a dozen precursors. Their manufacturers, importers and distributors in the Community will have to keep special registers. The national authorities will have to notify the European Commission of exports of precursors in certain cases. If a consignment appears suspicious, the authorities will be able to ban its import or its export. Finally, the Twelve will need to impose penalties likely to dissuade unscrupulous traders from supplying the chemicals in question to drug traffickers.

But the European Commission wants the Twelve to do more in order to lock up the market in precursors. It also proposed in mid-December a "European law" establishing common rules for their production and sale. Only a handful of firms holding a special authorization will have the right, under these rules, to manufacture and market these chemicals. A similar system already exists for pharmaceutical products. The adoption of such rules by the Twelve, with a system of surveillance and registration into the bargain, would also help bring about the single market of 1993.

**AIR TRANSPORT: Towards more competition in European skies**

The European Commission wants to open airport doors to new entrants.

An increase in the number of European airlines will mean more choice for passengers and yet lower fares - provided the Gulf crisis does not drive up fuel prices. This is roughly the European Commission's line of reasoning; and it is also the logic of the Rome Treaty, the EC's "constitution", whose rules have long been ignored in the field of air transport. Under present conditions, a good way to encourage competition is to allocate aircraft take-off and landing slots at congested airports, often monopolized by established airlines, to new entrants.

In order to do this the Commission first laid down its terms as regards the agreements concluded between airlines over the distribution of empty seats in aircraft, fares and take-off and landing slots. Such agreements are banned in principle under the Rome Treaty, but the European Commission can authorize them if the end results are a better service and greater benefits for passengers. The existing authorization expires at the end of January but was renewed in December until the end of 1992. But the airlines will have to give priority to new entrants for at least half the new or unused slots which may become available - at least at those airports where the airlines themselves are responsible for allocating slots and where there are no "grandfather" - i.e. established - rights. The European Commission may withdraw its authorization if opportunities for new entrants are insufficient in its view.

As for the situation after 1992, the Commission proposed to the Twelve in December European legislation setting out common rules for the allocation of slots at congested Community airports. Thus governments would have to appoint traffic coordinators at airports which cannot meet demand during one hour a day at least. Precise rules for allocating slots would guarantee the rights of new entrants and there would be increased transparency in the allocation of slots, so that all the airlines would know just why slots had been given to one airline and not to another. It is now up to the Twelve to ensure that these proposals do not remain very much in the air.

**PUBLIC HEALTH: Free movement for dogs also**

Euro-MPs ask for a Community-wide system of dog registration.

Our four-legged friends, and dogs in particular, suffer even more than the rest of us from the existing obstacles to free movement within the European Community. This is because of fear of disease, especially rabies. After looking into the matter, the European Parliament is of the view that given the very diverse administrative formalities which dog owners must comply with when moving within the Community with their pets, a measure of harmonization is necessary.

Its report finds encouragement in the European Commission's decision to eliminate rabies within the EC. It notes that all Community countries, with the exception of Britain, Ireland and Portugal, are either already contaminated by rabies or run the risk of it. For Europe as a whole the World Health Organization recorded 4,535 cases of rabies, including 942 among domestic animals, during the third quarter of 1989. It nevertheless is possible to eliminate rabies, although the 2.5mn. stray dogs (out of a total canine population of some 34mn.) represent the main danger.

Hence the need for a system of dog registration offering every possible guarantee. It is only by this means, and thanks to effective controls, that one can ensure the free circulation, within the Community, of dogs which are accompanied by their masters, even while guaranteeing that Britain and Ireland will remain free of rabies, up to the moment when it can be safely claimed that the disease has completely disappeared from the Community.

To this end the European Parliament has called on the Commission to propose measures which would require that before any dog can enter the Community it must have a certificate showing that it has been vaccinated against rabies and undergo a blood test to confirm its immunity to this disease.

**FISHERIES: The days of driftnets are not yet over**

The Twelve hesitate to impose the ban sought by the European Commission.

Driftnets will remain in use in European and other waters for some time yet. The European Community's fisheries ministers did not want to ban their use when they met on December 20, 1990, as they had been asked to do by the European Commission some 10 days before. The Twelve nevertheless recognized for the first time that measures to prevent over-fishing are needed, and undertook to ban the use of driftnets before July.

These nets, which can be up to 30 miles long, catch whatever swims within their range, including protected species - which is why the Commission wants to ban the use of driftnets with a total length of more than 1.55 miles, as stipulated in the only international agreement on the subject in existence. The ban would apply to all trawlers in Community fishing grounds and all Community trawlers outside them.

**ROAD TRANSPORT: More room for long-distance lorry drivers ...**  
... inside heavy goods vehicles of limited length.

In the 1993 single market the maximum authorized length of long-distance lorries will be a shade more than it is at present: 18.35m. (60.2 ft.) instead of 18m. (59 ft.). But for safety reasons the length of these road trains will remain limited, as they are a danger to other road users when they are of inordinate length. But the "European law" the Community's transport ministers adopted just before Christmas also contains provisions aimed at making life more comfortable for the drivers of these juggernauts. It stipulates a minimum length of 2.35m. (7.7 ft.) for the cab, which must often double as temporary lodgings.

The "1992" model of road trains will be able to transport two containers, each more than 7.8m. (25.6 ft.) in length. But these containers will have to be designed for use on the railways as well, given that the Twelve also adopted that same day measures aimed at encouraging combined road-rail transport, recourse to which will benefit both traffic and the environment.



**EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: Catalan must be recognized as an official Community language**

Euro-MPs also favour the teaching of Catalan in schools.

By 182 votes to one, with three abstentions, the European Parliament adopted the Reding report and the resolution which advocates the recognition of Catalan as an official European Community language. Without going so far as to make it their 10th working language, "in order not to endanger the smooth working of the European Parliament", the Euro-MPs nevertheless asked that the EC Treaties and other basic documents be published in Catalan, and that the European Commission's offices in the regions in question use it in their written and verbal relations with the public. The Euro-MPs also proposed that Catalan be included in the Commission's programmes for learning European languages. The Reding report itself also called for Catalan to be used for the spread of public information regarding Community institutions through all channels of communication.

Two petitions were behind the vote, one from the Catalan Parliament, the other from the Parliament of the Balearic Islands. They called on the European Parliament to declare Catalan an official language of Community institutions. The EC has the largest number of official languages of any international organization, as it is the only one to apply the principle of complete multilingualism. The European Parliament has scrupulously followed this policy, in order to underline its attachment to the cultural diversity of Europe.

A neo-Latin language whose roots go back a thousand years (it became a written language in the 9th century), Catalan is spoken by the more than 10 million inhabitants of Catalonia and the Balearic Islands as well as the inhabitants of the Perpignan region of France and the Italian region of Sardinia. It is used by two television channels, one hundred or so radio stations and six newspapers with a total circulation of some 250,000 copies. In the two above-mentioned regions of Spain Catalan is a compulsory subject from kindergarten through university. Under the 1978 Spanish Constitution, Catalan remains the official language of Catalonia and the Balearic Islands, in the same way as Castilian - that is, Spanish.