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THE SINGLE MARKET: It gets top priority this year

Jacques Delors and his fellow Commissioners draw up their work programme for their last year in office.

The goal Jacques Delors and his fellow Commissioners have set themselves in their last year in office is to take the European Community sufficiently far down the road to the single integrated market as to make it impossible for the Twelve to turn back. But the European Commission has set itself a number of other tasks as well. They range from the reform of the common agricultural policy to the development of the Community's external relations to a reduction in regional disparities.

Presenting the Commission's programme to the European Parliament on January 20, President Delors noted that the goal of the single market, to be reached by end 1992, would provide a fresh source of energy for the building of Europe.

The Commission expects the Twelve to agree on several key aspects of the single market, especially the mutual recognition of degrees and diplomas in higher education, television without frontiers, the liberalization of capital movement and transport. For its part, the Commission will send the Council of Ministers texts dealing with company taxes, the opening up of public procurement and the elimination of checks on the carriage of goods by road, among other things.

For Jacques Delors, the creation of the single internal market will have a multiplier effect. The progressive elimination of economic frontiers should lead the Twelve to harmonize their regulations and policies in the other fields which constitute the Commission's main objectives for 1988, in his view.

The Commission thus will try to secure a better coordination of those Community aids which are meant to reduce disparities between regions and social groups. It will draw up new research programmes and try to secure the adoption of new Community regulations in the field of the environment. The Commission will also endeavour to develop the European monetary system and the role of the ECU, the Community's own currency.

The Commission obviously has not overlooked the forthcoming summit of the Community's heads of state or government, which is expected to launch fresh initiatives in the fight against agricultural surpluses and take a major step towards improving Community financing.

Nor has the Commission forgotten the Community's role on the world stage. For Jacques Delors the EC must show itself equal to its international responsibilities. However, it must be able to count on itself in a world in which many of its trading partners, from the United States to the Third World, are hardly in a position to offer it handsome export opportunities.

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While all the measures foreshadowed in the European Commission's work programme, beginning with the creation of the single market, will, in principle, open new prospects for the inhabitants of the 12-nation Community, the Commission also envisages a series of measures which seek to make Europe more real to the man in the street.

Thus 1988 will witness the creation of a European system of civil protection, based on a permanent network of correspondents and a publication listing all the facilities already available in the Community's member states. In addition, the actions already undertaken in the health field will be reinforced, especially the fight against cancer.

1988 should also witness a growing number of activities aimed at helping young people get to know each other better: youth exchange programmes, book publishing and language courses. Finally, 1988 being the European Television and Cinema Year, Europe will be the star turn on both big screens and small ones (see Eurofocus 4/88).

NUCLEAR WASTE: Finding out more

Explanations in the European Parliament after the recent scandals.

Europeans want to get to the bottom of the recent scandals over the trafficking in radioactive materials; and the European Commissioners as well as Euro-MPs tried to do just this during the session of the European Parliament on January 20. At the same time they have announced a number of initiatives aimed at throwing a little more light on nuclear waste and other controversial substances.

The European Environment Commissioner, Stanley Clinton Davis, for example, has convened a meeting of experts from all European Community countries on February 15, to look at the problems raised by the management and handling of nuclear waste in the Community. Mr Davis feels that one should be able, by means of effective regulations, to check the movement of nuclear waste from one end of the Community to the other.

Nicolas Mosar, the Energy Commissioner, has invited members of the European Parliament's Energy Commission to see for themselves the safety checks carried out by EURATOM inspectors. They are expected to do so sometime in February. Finally, Parliament itself has decided to set up a commission of enquiry on the subject of radioactive wastes.

Mr Mosar told Euro-MPs that the European Commission has some 140 inspectors, whose job it is to check on the transport of fissile materials between EC countries and between them and third countries. He stated that the staff of the inspection service had been increased in recent years, along with the equipment. The investigations are continuing.

HEALTH: Cigarettes are coffin nails

The European Commission sends the Twelve two new proposals in the fight against cancer.

Young smokers reaching for a cigarette could find themselves faced with the words "Smokers die young" engraved in the packet. And pregnant women could be confronted with the stark message "Smoking when pregnant can injure your baby and cause premature birth".

These are only two of the warnings which every packet of cigarettes will have to carry before the end of 1992. Manufacturers will be able to choose which of the warnings they want to appear on their packets, together with the compulsory warning "Tobacco seriously damages your health" and the tar and nicotine yields.

This is the gist of one of the two proposed Community directives which the European Commission has sent the 12 European Community member states in the framework of the fight against cancer. The second deals with tar yields. Taken together, they must also be seen in the context of the single internal market, which requires the harmonization of national regulations on the labelling of tobacco products and the maximum tar yield of cigarettes.

The Commission has taken Irish legislation, as the most advanced in the matter, as its model. Smoking is directly responsible for 200,000 deaths in the EC each year, according to Commission Vice-President Manuel Marín. "People are free to smoke", he said. "But smokers must be warned they run the risk of getting cancer or heart disease".

The second directive adopted by the Commission, also at the initiative of Mr Marín, seeks to harmonize the national provisions relating to tar yields. The World Health Organization wants yields reduced quickly to a maximum of 15 mg per cigarette. The European Commission accepts this figure and has proposed that it be in use throughout the Community before 31 December 1992. But it has gone a step further and recommended a further reduction to 12 mg before the end of 1995, in line with the recommendations of the Committee of Experts.

The Commission believes its proposals should not pose adaptation problems for either the tobacco industry or retailers. Cigarette manufacturers can reduce tar yields by using better tobaccos, paper, filters and preparations.

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The Commission recognizes that growers who plant varieties with a high tar yield will face serious adaptation problems. Hence the decision to bring in the lower levels by stages. The Commission also plans to use the common agricultural policy or the Integrated Mediterranean Programmes to redirect production towards (1) varieties less dangerous to health and (2) other productions, including cotton, corn, fruit and vegetables.

The European Commission is also seeking price increases. If death by tobacco were to become a luxury it might lead people to think twice before lighting up. In any case, the Community cannot afford the luxury of 20,000 deaths a year and hundreds of victims of a variety of diseases.

INFLATION: Slightly higher in 1987 ...

... but lower than in the United States.

Prices rose by a mere 0.1% last December in the 12-nation European Community as a whole. The consumer price index went up by 3.2% in 1987, as compared to a rise of 2.9% the previous year. Even so, the Community can congratulate itself on having done better than the United States (4.5%) for the first time since 1979.

Prices rose only moderately in most EC countries in December. They even fell slightly in Britain and the Netherlands but rose by over 1% in Greece and Portugal.

The gap between the different member states narrowed in 1987, as compared to the previous year, but remained substantial. While consumer prices rose by 0.2% in the Netherlands, on an annual basis, they were up by 15.7% in Greece (the only country with double-digit inflation in 1987). However, in 1986 Portugal also had an inflation rate in excess of 10%.

POPULATION: A gloomy outlook for the 21st century

Population forecasts for the year 2025.

A smaller but much older population, and as many jobless as at present: this is the gloomy forecast for the years 2020 to 2025, prepared by Eurostat, the European Community's statistical office.

The population of the 12-nation Community will rise slowly until the year 2000, after which it will begin to fall, according to Eurostat. There will be some 330m. Europeans in the year 2000, but the Community will have seen its population fall by some 2% in the 40 years between 1985 and 2025.

The working population will rise slowly until 1995. It will stabilize at around this level until 2010, after which it will decline rapidly. The experts claim the number of retired people will exceed those entering the labour market by 1.2m. in 2025. This is the reverse of the situation in 1981, when the number of young people joining the labour force exceeded those reaching retirement age (65 years) by a record 1.2m.

Unemployment is expected to remain at practically the same level until 2025. While the number of under-25s without jobs will slowly fall, unemployment among older people will rise by as much, according to Eurostat.

ANIMALS: Free movement of dogs and cats also?

The European Commission must submit its proposals to the Twelve.

While it is relatively easy for humans to cross the European Community's internal frontiers, dogs and cats have a much harder time. Household pets (and their owners) are likely to be tied up in red tape in most Community countries, according to the Dutch Euro-MP, Gijs de Vries.

The European Commission has reassured him that it will be sending the Twelve, "in the foreseeable future", proposals for harmonizing the documents owners must present when crossing into another Community country for a short stay with their pets.

MEDIA: Television without frontiers

The European Parliament approves the Commission's proposals with some changes.

The European Parliament has approved the European Commission's proposals for a directive on cross-frontier radio and television broadcasting. Nearly all the changes made by Parliament were accepted by the EC executives.

Most of the members who took part in the debate, in plenary session supported European creativity and freedom of choice for viewers and listeners. The rapporteur, Roberto Barzanti, described the proposal as both "a necessary and urgent first step" and "inadequate and partial". The European programme industry is still vulnerable to American and Japanese competition, so that it is necessary to protect it by means of a system of quotas.

Commission Vice-President Lord Cockfield recalled the proposal's objectives. These include the elimination of obstacles to cross-frontier broadcasting, the promotion of the European television industry and the creation of new and close cultural ties between the people of Europe.

The Euro-MPs were especially preoccupied over freedom of opinion, on the one hand, and the danger of limiting European culture to the narrow framework of the Twelve, on the other. The question of copyright also attracted the attention of numerous Euro-MPs. Lord Cockfield stated he could accept the arbitration procedure set out in the Barzanti report. The only change proposed by Parliament which he could not agree to related to the time allocated to advertising. Lord Cockfield felt that it had to be at least 15% of total broadcasting time to ensure profitability.

The main changes approved by the European Parliament cover:

Advertising: No more than 15% a day, together with a ban on all advertising which contains discrimination based on race, sex or nationality.

Copyright: The interests of all concerned are best safeguarded by turning the matter over to an arbitration body, which offers an equitable remuneration, rather than by a compulsory licensing system.

Right of reply: Anyone who feels he has been injured by a programme should have an opportunity to exercise this right.

Monopolies: The European Commission must ensure that the Community's competition policy is respected, while the member states must prevent abuses.

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Definition of a Community programme: It must be enlarged to cover co-productions involving countries belonging to EFTA and the Council of Europe. Moreover, only programmes made by producers from the EC member states, with the collaboration of writers and workers residing in one or more of these states, can be described as Community programmes.

Sponsorship: Enterprises must not exercise undue influence on those parts of a programme which are free from advertising.

President Delors expressed the wish, once Euro-MPs had voted, that the proposal for a television without frontiers, which is part of the programme to complete the single market by 1992, be examined as quickly as possible by the Twelve.

INVESTMENTS: The Twelve reduce capital spending

Capital expenditure in the EC between 1971 and 1986.

In the member states of the European Community capital expenditure has been falling, on the whole, as a proportion of total government spending. This is clear from the Table published by the European Commission in its reply to a question from the British Euro-MP, Peter Price.

In the early 1970s most EC governments devoted 12 to 15% of their total spending on capital, as opposed to current, expenditure. However, this had fallen to below 10% in all but two countries, Spain and Luxembourg, in 1986; everywhere else it varied between 4 and 10%.

There has been a relative fall in capital spending over a 15-year period everywhere except in Italy and Luxembourg, where it has remained at more or less the same level. The fall was sharpest in Britain, Belgium, Denmark and Portugal. Capital expenditure was also the lowest, proportionally speaking, in all these countries in 1986, with one exception, Portugal.

HEALTH: From physical to language problems

A Euro-MP proposes a European catalogue of the principal medicines.

Publishing houses tempted by the tourist market could usefully have a word with the Spanish Euro-MP, José Alvarez de Eulate Peñaranda. He recently asked the European Commission to establish a multilingual guide to medicines most often prescribed within the 12-nation European Community, and aimed at the growing band of Euro-travellers.

The guide would enable a European, whatever his mother tongue, to make himself understood at chemists throughout the Community.

The European Commission found the idea an excellent one. But it had to tell Mr Alvarez that it had neither the money nor the competence needed to carry it out.

The Commission reminded him, however, that its programme for the completion of the single internal market by 1992 envisages a series of measures aimed at improving the information on medicines provided to medical staff, pharmacists and patients themselves.

HEALTH: Can travel be made easier for the sick?

Improving on Form E 111.

For Europeans travelling within the 12-nation European Community Form E 111 remains, until further notice, as important as the train ticket or credit card. It must be presented to the local health authorities in order to receive medical treatment on the same terms as local residents.

But the use of Form E 111 can inconvenience the unsuspecting tourist no end, according to the German Euro-MP, Karl von Wogau. He told the European Commission of tourists who had to travel 65 miles in order to exchange Form E 111 against its local equivalent.

The Commission claimed it had never heard of such cases. However, it has been trying vainly to persuade the governments of the EC countries to simplify matters - to accept an identity card or passport in lieu of Form E 111.