



# a newssheet for journalists

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EUROFORUMS

INTERNAL MARKET: EC Council approves 22 directives of the 1992 programme

The Council ends 1988 on a high note.

European Community ministers responsible for the single market, who are meeting for the first time under the Spanish Presidency this week, are now roughly half way to the single internal market. The fact is that with the adoption by the EC Council of Ministers of no fewer than 22 directives during its meeting on December 21, some 47% of the 285 measures required under the 1992 programme have now been adopted.

The shortest day in the year was marked by the adoption of Community directives covering a wide range of economic sectors, from machinery and building materials to foodstuffs and medicines, as well as the mutual recognition of higher education diplomas. The Council, which had already reached agreement on this particular directive in June 1988, formally adopted it on December 21.

The directive covers all professions which require at least three years of training at university level and which have not yet been "Europeanized". Each of the Twelve will allow, under certain conditions, professionals from other EC countries to practice in their country, without waiting for their educational systems to be harmonized. The Member States have two years in which to adapt their national legislation to this Community directive.

As regards the safety of machinery, the Council of Ministers agreed on a Community directive covering a little over half the annual output of the EC's engineering industry, roughly ECU 110 to 120 billion\*. The directive, which should come into force on 1 January 1983, harmonizes national safety measures, in that it sets the essential requirements to be met by machinery manufacturers, while leaving it to the experts in the Member States to draw up the exact technical standards. The directive opens the way to a common market in machinery, even while reducing the danger of accidents.

In the field of tractors, of which the EC is the world's largest producer, the Twelve finalized the last of a series of 22 texts which provide for the Community-wide certification of all new models, which can now be sold throughout the EC. The Community's 10 manufacturers produce some 300,000 tractors between them each year, roughly a third of which are exported outside the EC.

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In the foodstuffs sector, the EC ministers responsible for the internal market formally adopted three Community directives on the approximation of national laws. One of them covers quick-frozen foodstuffs, from manufacture to the supermarket shelf; the two others provide a framework of future Community directives on food additives and materials that come into contact with foodstuffs. The Twelve also agreed on another five food regulations. One of them sets out the general principles regarding official health checks on foodstuffs, additives and packaging; the others cover chocolate products, baby food and marks identifying the lot to which a foodstuff belongs.

The EC's agricultural ministers also contributed to the year-end efforts to ready foodstuffs for the 1992 single market. They adopted a health regulation setting out the conditions for the preparation, packing, storage and transport of minced meat; meat in small pieces and meat preparations as well as a directive on products made from meat, covering in particular health rules and inspection procedures.

The Community's internal market ministers also harmonized national safety and health protection requirements governing the buildings in which construction products are to be used. The industry manufacturing such products has an annual turnover of roughly ECU 300 billion\* in the 12-nation Community. The text sets out the key requirements that must be met. It provides a link between the standards which apply to the buildings themselves and those which apply to the products used in their construction. In line with the Community's "new approach" in the matter of technical standards, experts will deal with the technical details and their harmonization, without further intervention by ministers.

The Council of Ministers also reached agreement on two directives on medicaments, a sector of vital importance for public health. The first lists the controls to be carried out on medicinal products derived from human blood, in order to prevent the spread of diseases such as AIDS and hepatitis. The second directive seeks to guarantee the quality, safety and effectiveness of radiopharmaceuticals throughout the Community. Its provisions cover the packaging and labelling of these products and the instruction leaflet which accompanies them.

\* 1 ECU = UK£0.65 or IR£0.78

**EDUCATION: Cultivating the gift of tongues**

The European Commission proposes a programme aimed at improving knowledge of foreign languages in the EC.

The European Community can try as hard as it likes to create a frontier-free Europe, but language barriers remain an important obstacle to the free movement and the right of establishment of its citizens. To allow them to exercise these rights effectively, and to enable European companies to benefit fully from the single market, the European Commission finds it indispensable to promote the teaching of foreign languages throughout the Community.

The LINGUA programme now proposed by the Commission can be seen, therefore, as an answer to the preoccupations expressed at the European summits in Stuttgart (1983) and Milan (1985). One of the questions the Commission had to answer was whether to give priority to one or two Community languages, or offer a much wider choice, given the richness and diversity of the linguistic and cultural traditions within the Community.

The Commission opted for the second course, on the ground that all Community languages must be more widely taught. However, the action to be taken by the EC itself is conceived as reinforcing the activities of the Member States themselves, and as fostering an indispensable trans-frontier cooperation. The programme should involve nearly 20% of the schools, 10% of the teachers and a high proportion of foreign language students in institutions of higher education.

The total budget for the first, 5-year phase of the programme (1990-1994) is estimated at ECU 250mn.\*. Community activities will cover four major areas: (1) promoting language training for the young; (2) strengthening the European university network and developing training programmes; (3) encouraging the teaching of languages for business purposes and (4) a series of complementary measures to promote innovation in the teaching of foreign languages.

As regards the first area, LINGUA will provide scholarships for the ongoing training of teachers and for student exchanges; it will also provide funds for the development of teaching materials and the other needs of schools. As regards the second area, the programme will be managed within the framework of the management of the ERASMUS programme. Financial help will be provided for the cooperative network of European universities, together with scholarships to encourage the mobility of students and teachers.

The Commission's proposal also provides financial aid to promote the study of foreign languages for business purposes. The effort in favour of innovation is aimed mainly at helping institutions either designated or created by the Member States for teaching foreign languages, and developing teaching methods and materials.

\* 1 ECU = UK£0.65 or IR£0.78.

**SOCIETY: The fight against poverty**

ECU 70mn. for the European Commission's third 5-year programme.

The number of persons who depend on social security has continued to rise since the 1970s, to the point where it has even doubled in some European Community countries. The European Commission, which has been engaged in the fight against poverty for years, adopted in 1975 a specific programme as well as various measures aimed at dealing with specific problems, such as long-term unemployment and illiteracy, and undertook to provide food aid.

The first programme was extended until 1985, together with a second programme, which is now coming to an end and will be followed by a further specific programme. It will run for five years (1990-1994) and have a budget of ECU 70mn.\*. The two major aspects of the new programme are remedial action to deal with the needs of the poorest and preventive strategies for groups at risk.

The programme will implement a limited number of tested solutions, that are firmly rooted in the local context and combine action at both the governmental and local levels.

The Commission will discuss the choice of projects (limited to around 30) with the national authorities. Once the selection has been made, it will enter into contact with the authorities and organizations (local, public and private), in order to set up the necessary management structures.

A committee, made up of the representatives of all the bodies involved in the execution of the project, will manage each project.

\* 1 ECU = UK£0.65 or IR£0.78

**HEALTH: Tobacco is bad for you**

The European Commission wants all EC countries to ban smoking in public places.

Some 77% of Europeans want a ban on smoking in public places. What is more, non-smokers are not alone in seeking such a ban. While as many as 84% of them are in favour, they have been joined by 65% of smokers, according to a poll of 12,000 persons conducted in all 12 European Community countries just over a year ago.

It provides clear proof that the majority of Europeans are fully aware of the seriousness of the risks and of the need for a restriction of this kind. Hence the European Commission's decision to ask the Member States to extend the ban on smoking to all public places within the Community.

There are several good reasons for such a proposal. Safety is one of them: it is absurd to die in a fire caused by a still smouldering cigarette stub. The 31 who died in the fire at the King's Cross underground station were the victims of a blaze started in just such a way.

Health is another very good reason. Active smoking is now recognized as the major cause of death and disease in Europe, and tobacco smoke as the most widespread carcinogenic agent in our environment. Nor is passive smoking without its dangers. It increases the risk of lung, and probably other, cancers and causes headache, cough, respiratory problems, bronchitis and emphysema.

Passive smoking by pregnant women can put the development of the foetus at risk, and it is especially harmful to children. Each year some 250,000 people die of cancers linked to smoking and an equal number of cardiovascular, lung and other diseases related to smoking in the 12-nation Community.

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Clearly, one cannot stand idly by; and there is no doubt that a ban on smoking in all public places would be an important step forward. At present national legislation varies a good deal from country to country and is very unevenly applied. In Belgium, France and Spain the ban on smoking applies to most places open to the public, and more especially to establishments for young people and hospitals. However, where the ban applies an area may be set aside for smokers.

In Germany, where questions of public health are with the competence of the Länder also, restrictions on smoking in public places are not uniform. However, smoking is generally banned in schools and other educational establishments as well as in certain forms of transport. Elsewhere in the Community, the ban on smoking applies to some forms of transport, places of entertainment and, occasionally, hospitals.

This is not enough in the European Commission's view. It is therefore proposing a ban on smoking in all establishments which provide services to the public; receive or treat the sick and elderly; give health care for prevention or cure; receive, house or treat children or young people; give educational and vocational training; organize shows and exhibitions.

To this list must be added covered areas in which sports are practiced; underground and railway stations; ports and airports, and public transport. In all these establishments clearly defined areas may be set aside for smokers. Restaurants and bars are not covered by the Commission's proposals, but Member States are free to add them to the list. Finally, the application of the Commission's proposals to the workplace (office, meeting rooms, etc.) will be subject to consultations between labour and management.

The ball is now firmly in the Member States' court. It is to be hoped they will not drag their feet, as they did recently in the fight against cancer, to the regret of Commission Vice-President Manuel Marín.

**SMEs: To learn about 1992**

The European Commission launches an experimental training programme.

To enable managers of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) get ready for 1992, the European Commission decided recently to launch a special training programme with a budget of ECU 2mn.\*. Managers will spend a total of 18 days, spread out over several months, learning how to meet the challenge of the 1992 single market.

They will learn what the single market involves in terms not only of competition but also trade, finance and technology. Other subjects include competitiveness, the technical stakes, human resources and, capping them all, the global strategy for 1992. The training will be given by bodies engaged in consultancy and training and accustomed to working with SMEs. They will be chosen by the European Commission, which will meet up to half the costs of the training sessions, thus reducing the cost to the SMEs.

The training programmes will include four other types of projects. To inform managers of SMEs of what the single market involves in regional and sectoral terms, the European Commission will meet up to 50% of the costs of 2-day seminars organized by professional bodies.

The Commission will also meet the operating costs of a European network of training institutes, to be set up for the purpose of encouraging cooperation between them. A training programme in alliance strategies, aimed at encouraging managers of SMEs to cooperate with firms in other Community countries, will be prepared on behalf of the European Commission. Finally, the Commission will contact large companies and banks throughout the 12-nation Community in order to develop their role in training managers of SMEs.

**TECHNOLOGY: Helping SMEs operate across their national frontiers**

A new project - Eurotech Capital - is launched.

Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) that want to develop or market new technologies by means of trans-border cooperation will be able to turn to a new source of finance, thanks to the Eurotech Capital project, approved by the European Commission at the end of last December. Financial institutes which have investment funds in excess of ECU 50mn.\*, of which more than 20% are earmarked for trans-border investments, will be entitled to the "Eurotech Capital" label. This will entitle them to financial and other forms of aid from the Commission.

\* 1 ECU = UK£0.65 or IR£0.78



**INFLATION: Still rising in November**

Prices rose by more than 4% last year.

Prices rose by 0.4% last November for the 12-nation European Community as a whole. The trend which began last summer was therefore still upwards. Prices in fact rose by 4.1% in the 12 months to November 1988, a level not reached since March 1986, according to Eurostat, the EC's statistical office.

Five of the 12 Community countries recorded substantial price rises in November: Britain (0.5%); Denmark and Greece (0.7%); Italy (0.8%) and Portugal (1.5%). Elsewhere rises remained moderate. Prices held steady in Spain and even fell slightly in Belgium.

Eurostat has put at 4.2% the estimated price rise for 1988 for the 12-nation Community as a whole. This is much higher than the 2.6% recorded in 1987, and somewhat above the 4% forecast for the United States. The Community is catching up with the U.S., after having enjoyed a much lower inflation rate for more than a year.

Prices in the individual Member States rose by the following amounts in 1988, according to Eurostat: the Netherlands 1%; Germany and Belgium 1.5%; Luxembourg 2%; Ireland 2.7%; France 3%; Denmark 4.5%; Spain and Italy 5.5%; Britain 6.5%; Portugal 12% and Greece 14%.

**SOCIETY: ECU 147mn. of foodstuffs for free distribution in 1989**

The free distribution of agricultural surpluses continues.

Foodstuffs from the European Community's warehouses will be distributed free this year to those in need for a total of ECU 147mn.\*. This is considerably more than the ECU 100mn. the Community spent in 1988, but below the ECU 160mn. spent in 1987 to help the victims of the cold wave that year.

The foodstuffs to be distributed will include wheat flour, olive oil, butter and meat, as last year. The main beneficiaries will be Spain (ECU 31.7mn.); France (ECU 25.5mn.) and Britain and Italy (more than ECU 22mn. each). Spain was the largest beneficiary last year also, with 22%, followed by France (18.5%) and Italy (nearly 18%).

\* 1 ECU = UK£0.65 or IR£0.78