



## a newssheet for journalists

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Mailed from Brussels X

**ENVIRONMENT: How both to protect the environment and create jobs**  
The European Commission's latest thoughts on the subject.

Environmental protection heads the list of issues currently preoccupying Europeans in the 12-nation Community. Some 85% of those polled last year saw it as an urgent problem, whereas unemployment had long been in the forefront of their preoccupations. But it could return to the top of the list, should the number of jobless continue to rise. Why not try, therefore, to resolve both problems at one and the same time, by creating jobs even while protecting the environment? This, in fact, is the path the European Commission invited EC environment ministers to follow in mid-May, in a document which they took as offering a sound basis for their work.

The Commission envisages three main kinds of action to be undertaken by the Twelve and the EC, according to their respective competences: adapt income and other taxes, encourage "clean" technologies and redirect certain areas of public spending.

The Commission is of the view, to begin with, that in the 12-nation Community jobs are more heavily taxed - accounting for roughly 50% of the total tax burden - than is the exploitation of natural resources - which accounts for only 10% of the tax burden. By and large, therefore, taxation discourages hiring and encourages pollution or waste. It is in the interest of the Twelve to lighten the tax burden on job creation and investment and to tax more heavily activities which pollute or use up non-renewable resources.

The Commission points out that the world market for the products of "clean" industries is becoming very large. The OECD\* put it at \$200 billion in 1990, and forecast that it would increase by some 50% up to the year 2000. The Japanese government has already set up a research institute specializing in "ecological" technologies, while President Clinton has announced a support programme for "green" technologies. In setting themselves ambitious goals and standards, European public authorities can also stimulate such technologies, according to the Commission.

Finally, the Commission believes that a rapid redirection of public investment, towards environmental goals, would have a favourable effect on employment as well. Might as well kill two birds with one stone ...

\* The Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development brings together the world's leading industrial nations.

**HEALTH: Heart diseases are the leading cause of death in the 12-nation EC**  
Cancer is in second place - but is moving upwards.

While all the talk is about cancer and AIDS, 42% of the deaths recorded in the European Community in 1990 were from diseases of the circulatory system - the heart and blood vessels. Cancer was in second place, with 24% of all deaths, ahead of the category "Other causes" which, with just over 20% of the total, includes notably AIDS and Parkinson's disease. Then come lung diseases - just over 5% - and, finally, accidents and their consequences - around 5%. Such are the broad outlines of the picture which emerges from the statistics published in mid-May by Eurostat, the EC's statistical office.

During the 1980s heart diseases accounted for a declining proportion of all deaths, after having risen in previous years. The percentage of deaths from cancer continued to show a rising trend, however, which can be traced back to the 1960s. The proportion of lung diseases has fallen meanwhile, while that of accidents remains at roughly the same level. As for "Other causes", after declining during the 1960s and 70s, they have begun to rise since 1980, because of the appearance of AIDS in particular.

Clearly the causes of death are not the same in the young as in the old. Infants under one year die mainly at birth - in 41% of cases - and from congenital abnormalities - 24% of deaths. Accidents are the main cause of death in the case of children who die between the ages of one and four. In the case of children between the ages of 5 and 14, half the deaths are due to (1) accidents, particularly road accidents and (2) cancer, especially leucemia.

Accidents are by far the main cause of death in the case of young people in the 15- to 24-year age group. This is particularly true of males. The causes of death vary greatly according to sex in the case of adults between the ages of 25 and 44 years. One-third of the males who die between the ages of 25 and 34 die in an accident; 15% commit suicide while 10% are cancer victims. This disease is the main cause of death in the case of women in the same age group - 26%; it is ahead of accidents - 17% - suicides and circulatory diseases - 11% in each case. Cancer is the main cause of death in the case of women between the ages of 35 and 44; in the case of men in the same group, cancer, accidents and circulatory diseases are equally important.

For those over 45 years of age, circulatory diseases, especially heart diseases, and cancer are the main cause of death. Women in this age group die mainly of breast cancer, while lung cancer is the main killer in the case of men.

The main causes of death vary greatly from one region of the Community to another. Thus killings are at record levels in Northern Ireland and Sicily, but are close to zero in the rural areas of north-west Germany or in the middle of Spain. Deaths from cirrhosis are more frequent in Luxembourg and Portugal than in Greece or Britain. Food habits, the level of pollution, political and social conditions ... they all influence the way we die. Only the end result is the same ... .

UNEMPLOYMENT: A further rise in March ...

... to 10.2% of the EC's working population.

Unemployment has continued its remorseless rise in the European Community: it stood at 10.2% in March, according to the estimates published by Eurostat, the EC's statistical office, on May 11. The rise may not seem especially large in relation to the 10.1% recorded the previous month; but it is much more significant in light of the 9.2% recorded in March last year.

During the first three months of the year unemployment rose by 0.3 percentage points in the EC as a whole; the situation was much the same in most EC countries taken individually. There were exceptions, however. The level of unemployment fell slightly in the U.K.; it was unchanged in Ireland, while it rose much more in Spain than elsewhere - from 19.5% last December to 20.9% - which was more than twice the Community average - in March.

Ireland, too, was well above the average with 18.4%. Unemployment in Britain stood at 11.3% and in France at 10.5%. Denmark's unemployment rate was equal to the EC average of 10.2%, while below it were Italy (10.1%), Belgium (9.1%), Germany (West: 5.2%) and Luxembourg (2.4%).

SOCIETY: Technology comes to the help of the disabled and elderly  
European Commission asks the Twelve for ECU 35 million.

Just how far can the new technologies make life easier for the elderly and the disabled? The answer is, to the extent that they will be able to take advantage of the technologies specially developed to meet their needs. Between 60 and 80 million European citizens are either elderly or disabled - or both. They account for 20 to 25% of the population of the EC at present; but their percentage is bound to rise, given the graying of the Old World. Often the elderly or disabled can no longer live on their own, although they remain strongly attached to their houses or flats. The result is a problem which is as much human and social as it is financial.

For European problems the European Commission, not surprisingly, favours European solutions. In mid-May it proposed to the Twelve a special research programme baptized TIDE, or Technology Initiative for Disabled and Elderly People.

Some 10 years ago the European Community had already helped finance 20 studies and pilot projects in this field. The European Parliament had called for major actions to be launched at the Community level. Under the Commission's proposal, TIDE would receive ECU 35 million\* from the EC budget, with which to back research projects in 1993 and 1994.

The research in question would enable industrialists, research institutes and universities to develop various apparatus and systems designed to help the elderly and infirm cope with their problems. Research would be undertaken to improve hearing aids as well as to design "intelligent homes", in which information technology and robots would play a large part. The goal would be new systems of high technical quality and low cost, given that the main beneficiaries would be people on below-average incomes ... and that the social security and social help systems have their own financial problems ... .

In addition to TIDE, the European Commission is hoping the Twelve will adopt a similar research programme in the context of the Community's next technological framework programme.

\* 1 ECU = UK£0.79 or IR£0.80

**TEXTILES: EC action plan to fight against fraud**

European Commission launches a new action programme to strengthen the fight against textile fraud.

The fight against fraudulent imports may be the responsibility of Member States in the first place, but the European Commission has no intention of standing idly by. On the contrary: it announced on May 12 that it had just set up a new action programme - the Textile Antifraud Initiative (TAFI) - aimed at strengthening the fight against textile fraud in the European Community.

In presenting the new programme to the Commission, Mrs. Christiane Scrivener, the European Commissioner for customs union, pointed out that substantial resources, in both budgetary and technical terms, had been mobilized by the Commission since one year, especially in the field of information technology, to fight against fraud. A new customs information system (CIS) had been set up to complement the System Customs Enforcement Network (SCENT). At present 135 computer terminals link most of the sensitive points on the EC's external borders on a round the clock basis. As a result, the Commission has been able to dismantle nearly 40 important networks engaged in fraudulent textile imports since the beginning of last year. The number of computer terminals is to be doubled this year, according to Mrs. Scrivener.

But the fight against fraud is not limited to the carrying out of enquiries, the Commissioner stressed. TAFI is a broader action programme, which will make it possible to take action at an earlier stage in any fraudulent operation. TAFI will make it a point, for example, to look into the possibility of improving legislation relating to textile fraud. Formal consultations will take place with the third countries concerned, with a view to adjusting their import quotas on the European market in light of the real origin of goods. The Commission in fact has just proposed a regulation along these lines to the Twelve. It also plans to improve its statistics, in cooperation with manufacturers, so as to be in a better position to follow market trends and to propose action which is more effectively targeted.

TAFI's aim is also to strengthen the dissuasive effect of the enquiries carried out by the Community by enlarging the area of intervention. The Commission will also strengthen cooperation with third countries, such as the United States, which face problems of fraud comparable to those facing the EC.

.../...

In order to implement this action plan the Commission has set up a special group of EC officials, entrusted with the task of coordinating the activities of the departments concerned.

TAFI was launched even while the famous French fashion designer, Yves Saint-Laurent, was launching, under the aegis of the French textile union, an aggressive publicity campaign. He accused the Commission in Brussels of "doing nothing in the face of this gangrene (textile fraud); it shuts its eyes to it and tolerates it", he claimed. The head of the European Commission's Paris office, Jean-Michel Baer, protested to the fashion designer over his attitude, for it consisted of making the Commission "the scapegoat of all economic and political ills."

OIL: The EC imported more of it last year

Norway has replaced Libya as the second largest supplier.

Last year European Community oil imports from the rest of the world rose by 4.8%, while domestic production increased by just 2.2%. Even so, this was an improvement as compared to the decline in production in 1991. According to figures published in early May by Eurostat, the EC's statistical office, Saudi Arabia remains the Community's main overseas supplier of crude oil, accounting for 19% of imports (as against 20% in 1991). Norway is now the second largest supplier, with 14.1% in total imports, as compared to 12.4% in 1991.

Libya, which held this position in 1991, saw its share fall from 12.7% to 11.7% in 1992. It now ranks third, ahead of the former Soviet Union, whose share went up from 9.6% to 11.4%. Iran, the EC's fourth largest supplier in 1991 with 11.9%, was fifth in 1992 with 11.3%.

Generally speaking, the members of the OPEC (Organization of Petrol Exporting Countries), lost ground to the countries of Eastern Europe and Norway.

**BOOKS: A 3-volume "Portrait of the Regions"**  
200 regions of the EC in tables and pictures.

Some 200 regions of the European Community are presented and analyzed in three volumes, each containing roughly 300 pages. The series is published by Eurostat, the EC's statistical office, under the title "Portrait of the Regions". The work covers both standard regions and groups of counties. For each region the "Portrait" includes a map, a photo and a wealth of statistics, covering population, employment and unemployment and economic activities.

The "Portrait" also contains, for each region, comparisons with (1) the average for the European Community and (2) other regions with similar characteristics.

Volume I appeared in mid-May. It covers Germany, the Benelux countries and Denmark. Volume II, devoted to Britain, Ireland and France, will be published in mid-June. Volume III will deal with Greece, Spain, Italy and Portugal; it will be published in mid-August. "Portrait of the Regions" is available in English, French and German. The price has been set at ECU 250\*, exclusive of VAT, for the three volumes. Individual volumes can be bought separately, for ECU 100 each, exclusive of VAT. The publication is available from the EC's Office of Official Publications in L - 2985 - Luxembourg.

\* 1 ECU = UK£0.79 or IRE0.80.

**UNEMPLOYMENT: Three days for 14.5 million jobless**

A conference on employment in the EC, to be held in Brussels in October.

Some 14.5 million people were jobless in the 12-nation European Community, according to the latest statistics available in early May. Their numbers will probably have increased by the time the conference on "Employment in Europe - policies, practices, perspectives" opens in Brussels on October 19. The conference, the first of its kind and organized with the support of the European Commission, will bring together political, economic and social leaders as well as researchers, academics and financiers.

The conference will try to define more clearly the problem of unemployment and its causes; exchange information and views on the experiments conducted more or less throughout the EC and see how more jobs - and what kind of jobs - can be created. For further information please write to the European Commission - DG V - 200, rue de la Loi - B-1049 Brussels, Belgium, or telephone Andrew Chapman or Danny Brennan in Brussels. Their telephone numbers are (02) 295 17 56 and 296 14 22 for the former and 295 42 72 for the latter.



**THE MEDIA: Three options to maintain pluralism**

Is European legislation required? The professionals are divided.

At the end of last year the European Commission published a White Paper on pluralism and concentration in the media in the European Community. It sought to analyze the ground rules governing media ownership in the 12 EC countries. These regulations restrict, for example, the takeover of a television company by someone who already owns one. They also limit the participation of a newspaper owner in the share capital of a television company. Does the completion of the single market require action at the Community level in order to guarantee a plurality of media in the Community?

The Community White Paper envisages three options: (1) No action is taken at the Community level; (2) The Commission makes a recommendation aimed at ensuring transparency; (3) It proposes a directive ("European law") designed to harmonize the laws of the Member States against monopolies.

Last April 26 and 27 the Commission organized a major hearing on its White Paper, in collaboration with some 30 European professional bodies representing radio and television broadcasting, publishing, journalism and the audiovisual and advertising industries. At the end of the hearing the Commission concluded that a majority of them are opposed to the creation of an independent European organism, to be entrusted with the task of giving its opinion on questions relating to media concentration. The professional bodies had reservations as regards a recommendation on transparency that would not be accompanied by a harmonization limiting media concentration. If the second option would appear, therefore, to be ruled out, opinions were very divided as regards the first and third options: take no action at the Community level or harmonize national laws by means of a directive.

Given the complexity and sensitive nature of the matter under discussion, the Commission has decided to continue its consultations before making a final decision. It has also decided to launch another consultation, covering this time business communication in general and advertising in particular.