

48354

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES  
Directorate-General Audiovisual Media, Information,  
Communication, Culture



## a newssheet for journalists

Weekly N° 33/93

11 - 18 October 1993

### S U M M A R Y

- 2     FOOD TRADE: "Traditional" and "European" can go together  
Conditional free movement for artificial sweeteners and colourings.
- 3     SOCIETY: Putting technology at the service of the handi-  
capped and elderly  
The Twelve adopt a European programme for two years.
- 4     SUMMER TIME: From March to October for all 12 EC  
countries from 1997?  
Governments want Community-wide harmonization.
- 5     MONEY: How to protect small savings  
European Commission proposes a minimum guarantee system.  
  
SMEs: A European Week of Business once a year ...  
... and a range of services throughout the year.
- 7     EDUCATION: A European dimension for nursery schools?  
European Commission adopts a Green Paper in the light of "Maastricht".
- 8     SOCIETY: Immigrant women also work  
They make up 4% of the total EC female population.

Mailed from Brussels X

The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the official views of the institutions of the Community.  
Reproduction authorized.  
200 rue de la Loi • T-120 7/56 • 1049 Brussels • Belgium • Tel.: 299.90.52 • Fax: 299.92.08

europa for journalists

FOOD TRADE: "Traditional" and "European" can go together  
Conditional free movement for artificial sweeteners and colourings.

The Twelve will still be able to ban the use of chemical additives in the production of foodstuffs they regard as "traditional", even when "European laws" in principle authorize the use of such additives. An agreement reached by EC ministers responsible for the single market at the end of September reconciles traditional, regional or national recipes with the requirements for the free movement of goods throughout the Community. They decided that each EC country can maintain the ban on additives which existed on 1 January 1992, but under certain conditions: food products which are protected because of their "traditional" character must be made in their country of origin; the products of other Member States containing additives whose use is authorized at the Community level have the right to be marketed and even manufactured in these countries without hindrance.

Each of the Twelve will provide the European Commission, by 1 July 1994, a list of the foodstuffs it regards as "traditional". EC ministers will then have to adopt, before 1 April 1996, the criteria needed to determine whether or not a product qualifies as "traditional". The process clearly is far from over! It began in fact in May 1992, when the European Parliament rejected a "European law" on sweeteners in the single market, precisely because it did not take traditional foodstuffs sufficiently into account.

Having filled this gap, EC ministers reached agreement at the same time on a "law" authorizing a number of sweeteners. Only these sweeteners can be sold in the EC, either to be consumed in the form of sweets, or to be used in the manufacture of foodstuffs, but in limited amounts, in order to protect the health of consumers.

The Twelve also reached agreement on another "law", authorizing the use, within certain limits, of 43 colourings in more than 100 categories of foodstuffs. This "European law" bans the colouring of soft white cheese, and in principle allows only natural colouring to be used in meat-based products. The only exceptions are certain specific items, such as Strasbourg and Spanish sausages; they will continue to be marketed in their present attractive colours, even if their origin is questionable.

The European Parliament must look at these "European laws" before the Twelve can adopt them definitively.

SOCIETY: Putting technology at the service of the handicapped and elderly

The Twelve adopt a European programme for two years.

In order to make life easier for the 60 to 80 million Europeans who are elderly or handicapped - or both - the European Community is subsidizing research aimed at adapting new technologies to their needs. EC ministers adopted at the end of September a programme covering 1993 and 1994, entitled Technology Initiative for Disabled and Elderly People (TIDE).

With a budget of ECU 30 million\*, TIDE will allow manufacturers, research centres and universities from several EC countries to develop appliances and systems designed to compensate for the handicaps due to age and physical infirmities. The research will cover not only procedures used to re-educate the handicapped but also wheel chairs and "intelligent" houses. The programme will draw heavily on computers and robots.

The aim will be to innovate as well as to make appliances and other equipment both cheaper and compatible with the demands of the European single market. The stakes are considerable, given the ageing of the European population and the critical situation most national social security systems find themselves in.

\* 1 ECU = UK£0.78 or IR£0.82

SUMMER TIME: From March to October for all 12 EC countries from 1997?

Governments want Community-wide harmonization.

It looks as if summer time, when watches are moved ahead by an hour, will last for seven months throughout the 12-nation European Community.

At present summer time begins on the last week-end in March in all EC countries. It ends at the end of September in 10 of them but continues until the end of October in the U.K. and Ireland. At the request of the EC Council of Ministers, the European Commission proposed, at the end of September, a "European law" harmonizing the duration of summer time throughout the Community. If adopted, the continental members of the EC would follow British and Irish practice, experiencing summer time for seven rather than six months of the year.

Summer time was introduced in the mid-1970s, following the first oil crisis: governments saw in it a convenient method of saving energy. But proof that summer time actually saves energy is still awaited. Public opinion today is divided between those who favour "longer" days in spring and summer and those who cannot bear this difference between natural and summer time and the twice-yearly disruptions it involves.

The European Commission, for its part, has stressed that the principle of summer time remains within the competence of the Member States, who want to keep the present formula, which is in force until the end of next year. As requested by the Twelve, the "law" now proposed by the Commission provides for the present system to be extended unchanged through 1996.

MONEY: How to protect small savings

European Commission proposes a minimum guarantee system.

What happens if the bank or broker to whom you entrusted your savings, to be invested in securities - shares and bonds, for example - goes bankrupt? Compensation systems exist in most EC countries; but in general they do not cover all possible situations, all the more so that in the single market there is a growing number of investment schemes. As from 1 January 1996 banks, investment funds and other institutions will be able to propose Community-wide investment opportunities, without having to seek authorization in each country. Hence the European Commission's proposal to the Twelve, at the end of September, to introduce a Community minimum guarantee system on the same date.

The Commission is proposing a "European law" comparable to the directive on guarantees for bank deposits, which the Twelve adopted in mid-September (see Eurofocus N° 31/93). Under the terms of the Commission's proposal all institutions which offer securities within the EC should belong to a compensation system in their country of origin. This would entitle their customers, throughout the EC, the right to a minimum of ECU 20,000\*, in the event that the institution in question was unable to make restitution of either funds or securities because of bankruptcy. Such a system would protect small savers, by creating confidence in the single market.

SMEs: A European Week for Business once a year ...

... and a range of services throughout the year.

The second European Business Week was held from October 4 to 8; the first was in March 1992. Organized by the European Commission, in cooperation with the European networks which offer services to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and numerous regional and local bodies, the Week was marked by nearly 2,500 activities - lectures, open days, training sessions and competitions - in more than 600 cities throughout the EC. It was a very worthwhile venture, given that SMEs provide 70% of all jobs in the private sector, generate more than 60% of the wealth and account for more than 50% of investments.

The Business Week gave bodies which have the task of informing and helping SMEs an opportunity to describe the European services on offer. They include:

- information on EC legislation, aid and programmes, available from more than 200 Euro-Info-Centres, located in the offices of chambers of commerce, regional development associations and professional federations;
- the 600 or so consultants in the public and private sectors who provide help to SMEs, on a confidential basis, in finding partners in commercial, technical or financial cooperation, based in other European countries, thanks to the computerized network BC-Net;
- correspondents in more than 50 countries - including the 12 EC member states - who encourage cooperation on a non-confidential basis between SMEs through the Business Cooperation Centres;
- the Europartenariat programme, which stimulates the growth of SMEs in regions facing problems by calling on SMEs in other European countries; and
- the Interprise programme, which promotes cooperation between SMEs located in three or more regions.

EC policy in favour of SMEs does not stop there: it also seeks to reduce the handicaps facing small businesses, especially in the context of the single market. For several years now the European Commission has been systematically studying the impact on SMEs of its legislative proposals. It is currently looking at the problems facing SMEs because of delays in payment and at the difficulties that can arise when the owner of a small business retires. The European Commission is also trying to promote a system of mutual guarantees, aimed at making it easier for SMEs to obtain funds. These are only some examples of how the EC is helping small and medium-sized businesses.

\* 1 ECU = UK£0.78 or IR£0.82

EDUCATION: A European dimension for nursery schools?

European Commission adopts a Green Paper in the light of "Maastricht".

For a growing proportion of the roughly nine million students and 500,000 teachers engaged in higher education in the European Community, Europe no longer is a vague and abstract notion. Cross-border exchanges between universities, on the one hand, and universities and businesses on the other, are multiplying. So far schools, including secondary schools, have remained on the margins of this movement, even if national or local initiatives allow contacts and exchanges with other European countries. In order to help the 67 million students and 3.7 million teachers in nursery, primary and secondary schools profit more from Europe, the European Commission has suggested to the Twelve certain guidelines in a Green Paper that it adopted at the end of September.

This initiative was not entirely unexpected. The Maastricht Treaty should come into force shortly, provided its ratification by Germany is not held up. The fact is the Treaty gives the European Community competence, for the first time, in the field of general education: "The Community shall contribute to the development of the quality of education ... while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organization of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity. Community action shall be aimed at developing the European dimension in education". This makes a substantial change in relation to the present EEC Treaty, which gives the Community a role only in the fields of vocational training and studies designed to lead directly to a job.

According to the Commission's Green Paper, action by the Community should favour exchanges between schools and cooperation between establishments for training teachers; develop the teaching of European languages and encourage distance education and information exchanges between countries. Community action would also put to use the experience gained by the European schools which cater to the children of those employed by EC institutions.

SOCIETY: Immigrant women also work

They make up 4% of the total EC female population.

Some 14.1 million non-nationals live in the 12 EC countries, and 6.4 million of them are women. They make up 4% of the total EC female population. 35% of them are citizens of another EC country, while 65% come from other European countries (mainly Turkey and the former Yugoslavia). But they also come from Africa (17%), Asia (10%), America (6%) and Oceania (1%). In terms of nationalities, Turkish women are in the lead, with one million immigrants; they are followed by women from the Maghreb countries (800,000 - among them are Algerians, Moroccans and Tunisians). Italian women are the most numerous when it comes to women from EC countries (450,000). They are followed by the Portuguese (roughly 400,000), the Irish (250,000) and Spaniards (220,000).

It is important to dispel the lingering prejudice that non-national women are less active in the labour market than female nationals. Their activity rate in fact is 43.5%, close to that of female nationals (44.2%); it is even slightly higher as regards women in the 45-64 age group. As many as 73% of them are employed in the services sector (retail trade, hotels and restaurants, domestic work), as is also the case as regards female nationals. A smaller number (roughly 26%) work in industry, as compared to 19% of female nationals, and a bare 1% are in agriculture.

Non-national women are younger than women in the host country. But this is to be expected, given that immigrants generally are younger. There are substantial differences, however, from one EC country to another. These differences occasionally reflect the fact that some migratory waves took place some time ago; they also reflect differences in legislation from one EC country to another. There are even countries, such as Britain, Ireland and France, in which residents of other EC countries are older than the locals.



Women who are non-national residents in EC countries have more babies than the female population as a whole. Thus in Denmark and France they have 2.8 children per woman, as compared to 1.6 and 1.7 respectively for the female population as a whole. The corresponding figures for Britain are 2.3 and 1.8 children, and 2.1 and 1.5 respectively for women in the Netherlands. However, it has been noticed that in time the fertility rate of non-nationals tends to fall to that of nationals.

Immigrant women tend to be fewer in number than men: 80 women to 100 men on average among third country nationals and 91 women to 100 men among EC citizens, where there has been a greater tendency for family regroupings to take place. There nevertheless are exceptions - among, for example, the Americans, Swiss and nationals of Central and East European countries. The largest numerical disparity is to be found among the Filipinos: here the ratio is 46,000 women to 17,000 men.

These statistics, provided by Eurostat, the EC's statistical office, obviously do not include illegal immigrants. The statistics are also affected by differences in national legislation. In Britain, for example, Irish children born on British soil are not classed as foreigners, while in France children from 0 to 18 years, who are born on French soil and one or both of whose parents are foreigners, are treated sometimes as foreigners and sometimes as nationals, depending on the replies given by their parents during the census.

These statistics must be treated, therefore, with prudence; but they nevertheless help us perceive an important aspect of our society.