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Mailed from Brussels X

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EUROPA: Ein Weißbuch für 15 Millionen Arbeitsplätze

Orientierung für die Europäische Union an der Schwelle zum 21. Jahrhundert.

"Um von unseren arbeitslosigkeitsgeplagten Gesellschaften weiteres Unheil abzuwenden, sollte angestrebt werden, daß die Europäische Union bis zum Ende des Jahrhunderts 15 Millionen Arbeitsplätze schaffen kann." Diese große Herausforderung ist der Seite 9 eines Dokuments zu entnehmen, das fast 200 Seiten zählt: dem Weißbuch, das die Europäische Kommission den Zwölf Ende vergangenen Jahres vorgelegt hat, und aus dem die Staats- und Regierungschefs die meisten Vorschläge in ihren Aktionsplan gegen Arbeitslosigkeit übernommen haben, auf den sie sich im Rahmen des Europäischen Rats in Brüssel geeinigt hatten*.

Noch ist das Weißbuch von 1985 nicht vergessen, das von der ersten "Kommission Delors" vorgelegt worden war. Darin hatte sie sich zum Ziel gesetzt, den grenzenlosen Binnenmarkt bis 1992 zu verwirklichen. Doch dieses Mal geht es nicht darum, ein Programm für "europäische Gesetze" vorzuschlagen. Vielmehr versteht sich das Weißbuch als Reflexionsgrundlage für Entscheidungen auf lokaler, regionaler, nationaler oder europäischer Ebene. Dabei wird das Ziel verfolgt, die Wirtschaft für den internationalen Wettbewerb zu rüsten und so Millionen von notwendigen Arbeitsplätzen zu schaffen. Das Weißbuch trägt den Titel "Wachstum, Wettbewerbsfähigkeit, Beschäftigung - Herausforderungen der Gegenwart und Wege ins 21. Jahrhundert."

Angesichts des unaufhaltbaren Anstiegs der Arbeitslosigkeit hatte der Präsident der Europäischen Kommission, Jacques Delors, dem Europäischen Rat von Kopenhagen im Juni des vergangenen Jahres Leitlinien für die wirtschaftliche Erneuerung Europas** unterbreitet, in denen bereits grundlegende Ideen des jetzigen Weißbuchs enthalten waren. Auf dieser Basis hatten die Staats- und Regierungschefs die Kommission aufgefordert, ihnen bis zum Dezember eine mittelfristige Strategie für die Förderung des Wachstums, der Wettbewerbsfähigkeit und der Beschäftigung in Form eines Weißbuchs zu erarbeiten. Das unter großem Aufwand erarbeitete Ergebnis liegt nun vor.

Das Weißbuch geht von zwei wesentlichen Faktoren aus: der Arbeitslosigkeit und der schwindenden Wettbewerbsfähigkeit der europäischen Wirtschaft. Zunächst wird die Arbeitslosigkeit analysiert und in drei Kategorien eingeteilt: die

routine market decisions, automation, unimaginative employment policies and, more especially, competition from the newly industrialized countries, and, finally, technological unemployment, which arises because the speed of technical progress is greater than the capacity of Europeans to anticipate needs. Some 17 million people are already out of work in the 12-nation European Union. What is more, it will be necessary to create at least 5 million new jobs by the year 2000, simply in order to prevent unemployment from rising.

Meanwhile Europe's competitiveness is falling in relation to the rest of the world. At present the Community just about manages to balance its foreign trade, where during the early 1980s it was running a comfortable surplus. As for industrial labour productivity, it is some 10% higher in the United States and 40% higher in Japan. European companies simply are not investing enough, particularly in research.

But the European economy has a number of trump cards and it can play them, according to the White Paper. But if it is to do so the economy must be healthy - it must be inflation-free, without excessive budget deficits and have monetary stability. At the same time the European economy must remain open - in other words, it must reject protectionism. It must continue to decentralize, by giving every opportunity to SMEs and new technologies. It must become more competitive by taking maximum advantage of the single market and, finally, it must show solidarity, particularly with regard to the jobless, even while emphasizing responsibility. Here, in Mr. Delors' view, is an idea that has been somewhat forgotten. As he told the press, when presenting the White Paper: "The European model is based on freedom, solidarity and responsibility," and Europe must hold on to these principles, even while adapting itself to present-day realities.

But what is to be done to stimulate employment? At the European level there is a need to set up modern transport, energy and communication networks. Their construction will stimulate the economy and, once they are operational, improve its efficiency. But substantial investments are needed. The White Paper has put them at nearly ECU 320 billion*** between now and the end of the century. The private and public bodies which will order and execute these projects will have to provide most of the funds, although the European Community will contribute

through its budget for regional aid, support for Community research and special network funds and through loans extended by the European Investment Bank. This will come to some ECU 72 billion between 1994 and 1999. The White Paper suggests that another ECU 8 billion be raised annually through the issue of "European Union bonds", as this would allow the EU to borrow and guarantee the borrowings of project promoters. The Twelve accepted in principle an additional sum of ECU 8 billion a year, but left it to their finance ministers to decide how it would be raised.

However, each of the Twelve as well as each region, local authority and enterprise can help create jobs; the steps to this end outlined in the White Paper are aimed initially at them. What is needed, for example, is to improve education and vocational training, reduce social security contributions for semi-skilled workers, organize work and working hours more effectively at company level and make rigid regulations more flexible. It is equally necessary to refurbish policies which favour job-creation and jobless by making it easier to integrate or re-integrate them in the labour market. Finally, the White Paper is of the view that up to three million jobs could be created in the European Union by the end of the century, if an attempt were made to meet new social and ecological needs, such as the provision of services to the elderly and the "clean-up" of the environment.

The White Paper offers no miracle cures - and it says as much. But it does provide leaders in the European Union - at every level - a reference point for the coming years.

* See Eurofocus N° 42/93

** See Eurofocus N° 24/93

*** 1 ECU = UK£0.76 or IR£0.79

A PEOPLE'S EUROPE: Giving citizens of the European Union the right to vote ...
... in the European elections in June in one's country of residence.

Within a few months of the entry into force of the Treaty of Maastricht, European Union (EU) citizenship will become a tangible reality for some five million Europeans living in another Member State than their own. Should they so desire, they will be able, hereafter, to vote or stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament, in their country of residence, and on the same terms as its nationals. This possibility, which is provided for in the Maastricht Treaty on European Union, has been given concrete form in a directive ("European law") which EU ministers adopted in December. The law will be implemented for the first time during the June elections to the European Parliament.

The directive does not seek to harmonize the very diverse electoral laws currently in force in the 12 EU countries. All it does is to ensure that nationality is no longer an obstacle during European elections. In order to prevent citizens voting, or standing for election, in two different EU countries at the same time, the directive stipulates that all Europeans concerned by the directive will make an official declaration to the authorities of their country of residence. Anyone making a false declaration will be punished. Meanwhile each Member State will decide for itself the form such a declaration will take.

Europeans living in a country other than their own will not have the right to vote in their country of residence if they fall within one or the other of the categories of persons excluded by law in this country - prisoners and those suffering from mental disorders in particular. What is more, those who have been deprived of their right to stand for election in their country of origin - because of a police record or a mental disorder, for example - will not be able to stand as a candidate in elections in their country of residence.

The June elections will be something of a milestone on the road to European citizenship. The next such milestone will be the right to vote in local elections. This, too, is envisaged under the Maastricht Treaty, and will require the Twelve to adopt the necessary European legislation.

VAT: A common system for works of art and second-hand goods

The Twelve adopted the "7th directive" on December 13; it had been blocked for more than 15 years.

As from this July 1 European citizens will be able to buy works of art and second-hand goods, such as cars, in all 12 Member States, without having to pay VAT twice over. The fact is that the famous 7th directive, which establishes a common system of taxation for sales of second-hand items and works of art, and for the import of the latter into the European Union, was adopted by the Twelve, after it had been blocked for more than 15 years in the Council.

VAT has already been collected on most second-hand goods sold in the Community, having been paid by the original purchaser of the item when it was still new. To tax such items once again at the full price, as is the case in some Member States, amounts to double taxation. As for works of art, which change hands often, this double taxation can become taxation for the third or fourth time. Under the 7th directive second-hand goods and works of art will be taxed throughout the European Union on the seller's profit margin, and not on the full price. The directive also stipulates that sales of second-hand goods and works of art between private individuals are not subject to VAT, and can thus be moved freely throughout the single market.

The directive also stipulates that Member States can apply VAT at reduced rates when works of art are imported into the European Union. When such works are imported for a temporary period - for an exhibition, for example - they can be moved freely throughout the territory of the EU for a period of two years (instead of six months, as at present), without payment of either customs duties or taxes.

A car will be treated as second-hand if it is over six months old and has covered more than 6,000 km. Member States which currently do not apply the method of marginal taxation to such cars will be able to keep their present system, within their territory and under certain conditions.

EDUCATION: ECU 157m. for "Youth for Europe III"

European Commission's new educational and training programme will prepare 400,000 young people for adult life.

The European Commission proposed on November 4 to launch, as from next year, a major youth programme, which will bring together all Community actions in favour of young people which are being implemented in an uncoordinated manner so far. Thanks to a budget of ECU 157m.*, over a 5-year period, "Youth for Europe III" should enable some 400,000 young people to prepare for their adult and working lives through a series of activities involving exchanges of young people and leaders, training programmes, colloquia and the development of training material.

The economic crisis is currently affecting between 20% and 40% of unemployed Europeans between the ages of 15 and 25. Under these difficult circumstances, which can engender bursts of racism and xenophobia, the actions envisaged under the "Youth for Europe III" programme gain added importance to the extent that they aim, above all, at encouraging young people to be active citizens and at promoting better understanding and greater solidarity across cultural borders. To this end the programme is designed to strengthen existing activities aimed at encouraging youth exchanges, both within the Community itself and with third countries. The Commission also intends to encourage the participation of disadvantaged young people in the programme (nearly one-third of the budget has been set aside for them) and to support projects proposed by young people themselves at the local, regional and national levels. In addition, activities are planned with a view to improving the training of youth leaders, cooperation between youth organizations and the provision of news for young people.

The Commission is of the view that "Youth for Europe III" will give a new dynamism and added coherence to Community action in favour of young people, by rationalizing, simplifying and integrating within a single programme the totality of actions undertaken by the EC to date in favour of young people. Because its management is largely in the hands of national bodies, and therefore decentralized, "Youth for Europe III" is as close to young European citizens as is possible.

* 1 ECU = UK£0.76 or IRE£0.79

AUDIOVISUAL SECTOR: A committee of five "wise men" is set up

European Commission has asked five industry leaders to reflect on Europe's audiovisual policy in the years ahead.

João de Deus Pinheiro, the European Commissioner with responsibility for audiovisual policy, has announced that he had set up a study group consisting of five industry leaders*. Their task will be to reflect on the European Union's audiovisual policy in the coming years. The aim is to have professionals contribute to the Green Paper on the audiovisual industry which the Commission has to draw up for early next year.

In this document the Commission is expected to examine how the legal framework for the EU's audiovisual policy can be made to evolve in the right direction and, if necessary, modified in the light of existing problems and new technological developments. The Green Paper should be based on the "Television without frontiers" directive which has been badly transposed and applied by the Member States, and therefore should be completed and made more precise if it is to be more effective. The Green Paper will also devote considerable space to the impact of new digital, interactive and multimedia technologies; the problems of media concentration and the related issue of competition.

* The five members of the study group are:

- António-Pedro Vasconcelos, film and television producer and former coordinator of the national audiovisual secretariat in Lisbon;
- David Puttnam, film producer, director of Anglia TV and manager of Enigma Productions;
- Michèle Cotta, journalist and television producer at France 2; former president of the audiovisual High Authority in France;
- Peter Fleischmann, film director and founder of the European federation of audiovisual directors; and
- Enrique Balmaseda Arias-Davila, lawyer, former legal advisor to Spanish television and former Director-General of the Institute of film and audiovisual arts in Madrid.

AGRICULTURE: European Commission proposes to ban BST until the year 2000
It would extend the current ban on the use of the "milk hormone" by 7 years.

On the initiative of the European agricultural commissioner, René Steichen, the European Commission submitted on December 1 a proposal which seeks to extend by seven years the ban on the use of bovine somatotrophin (BST) by European Union dairy farmers. This hormone, which makes it possible to increase milk yields, is likely to be authorized shortly in the United States. But the controversy surrounding it continues unabated in Europe, because its effects on the health of consumers are not known for certain. It is largely for this reason that Mr. Steichen has proposed extending the present ban until 31 March 2000.

EU agriculture ministers do not fully share this view. They agreed to extend the ban on BST by a year but ruled out a 7-year moratorium on its use. The ban may nevertheless last longer than 12 months, although this will depend on the results of additional analyses. For the present, the Committee on Veterinary Medicinal Products and the Group of Advisers on Ethical Aspects of Biotechnology have concluded that BST meets the traditional criteria of quality, safety and efficacy; but they have added that its successful use would require a significant number of safeguards. The proposal to extend the ban was welcomed by COPA and COGECA, the two main agricultural organizations in the EU.

For the present, none of the countries which authorizes the use of BST, such as India and South Africa, export dairy products to Europe. But if they were to do so, EU authorities would have to take measures as regards labelling and certification. Consumers wanting to buy the milk in question would thus know that BST had been used in its production.