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THE COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAMME
ON THE ENVIRONMENT

The Community's primary aim is not only to unify the economies and raise the general standard of living of its Member States, but also to improve the conditions and quality of life of their peoples. This was recalled by the Heads of State and of Government at the Conference at Paris on 19-20 October 1972, when they emphasized the importance of a Community environmental policy, and invited the Community institutions to draw up an

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Commission of the European Communities
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Division for industrial and scientific information
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1040 Brussels - Tel. 3500 40

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The information and articles published in this Bulletin concern European scientific cooperation and industrial development in Europe. Hence they are not simply confined to reports on the decisions or views of the Commission of the European Communities, but cover the whole field of questions discussed in the different circles concerned.

PRESS AND INFORMATION OFFICES OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

1 BERLIN 31
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tel. 35 00 40

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PARIS 16e
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action programme with a detailed timetable by 31 July 1973.

Responding to this invitation, the Commission held comprehensive discussions with the Member States, obtained the views of all the interested circles on its two previous notes on the Community environmental policy (see IRT Nos. 109 and 138), and prepared a Community action programme on the environment.

Aims and principles of a Community environmental policy

The purpose of the Community environmental policy is to improve the quality, the background and conditions of life of its peoples. Its aims must include the following:

1. To prevent, reduce and as far as possible suppress the ill effects of pollution and nuisances on the environment.
2. To ensure the husbanding of natural resources, the balance of ecological systems and the protection of the biosphere.
3. To guide development along the lines dictated by considerations of quality of life and the improvement of working conditions.

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4. To plan the geographic distribution of activities and population, together with transport facilities, so as to combat the ill effects of developments such as the proliferation of cities.
5. To cooperate with non-Community states in seeking joint solutions to the environmental problems raised by economic and industrial development.

The coordination and harmonization of Member State environmental policies will increase the efficiency of Community environmental action by permitting a better concentration of effort and allocation of financial resources. It will ensure that the functioning of the common market is not upset by the adoption by the various Member States of disparate or divergent national policies.

Lastly, Community action, or where appropriate joint action by Member States in the international bodies concerned with environmental questions, must strengthen the movement towards an international and world environmental policy.

Action under the Community environmental programme

In order to protect the natural background and improve living conditions it will be necessary to initiate various projects.

I. Combating pollution and nuisances

The Community programme includes a series of projects designed firstly to create a common basis for evaluating the facts, and secondly to fix Community limits for pollution in order to ensure the protection of human health and the natural background, while avoiding distortions of competition.

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It will be necessary to do the following things:

1. To establish scientific criteria for the main air and water pollutants and for noise pollution, and to standardize or harmonize sampling, analysis and measurement techniques.

Priority will be given to the establishment of criteria for lead and its compounds, organo-halogen and sulphur compounds and particles in suspension, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, mercury, phenols and hydrocarbons, and also to the standardization of methods of measuring carcinogenic hydrocarbons, photochemical oxidizing agents, asbestos and vanadium.

2. To fix common upper sanitary limits for the level of lead, mercury, cadmium, and halogen compounds in the environment or in products, and also for the content of chemical substances and germs dangerous to health in sources of drinking water.

3. To establish common methods for the definition, at the appropriate levels, of environmental quality aims for the various geographic, economic and demographic regions of the Community, and for laying down the measures required in order to ensure respect for these aims.

Priority will be given to the establishment of methods of defining aims in regard to water quality.

4. To organize and develop technical exchanges between regional and national networks for the monitoring and control of pollution, in order later to introduce a Community system of information on data gathered by these networks, and to facilitate the integration of these networks into the world monitoring system proposed by UNO.

5. To harmonize the specifications of pollutant products, and thus remove obstacles to trade. Work on this task has already begun, and must be completed by studies on ways of reducing the noxiousness of these products, and by harmonization of the regulations concerning their homologation and utilization.

Priority will be given to motor exhaust gases, noisy plant and equipment, fuels and motor fuels, and cleaning and washing products.

6. To analyse by a common method the most serious problems raised by industrial pollution and their possible solutions. Sectoral studies of the main pollutant industrial activities must be made in cooperation with the professional circles and administrations concerned. These studies will enable the most appropriate technical and economic solutions to be found to pollution problems, and "agreements" to be envisaged with certain sectors on the harmonization of the action to be taken both by industrialists and public authorities.

Initially the Commission will pursue its studies on the paper and paper-pulp industry and also on the steel industry.

7. To draw up a joint technical and economic balance-sheet of the various possible forms of action to eliminate toxic or persistent waste, and to decide what action is to be initiated at Community level (harmonization of regulations relating to the collection, transport, storage and processing of such waste, and encouragement of new processing techniques).

Priority will be given in particular to the dangerous substances listed in the Oslo Convention, and to residual oils and red muds.

8. To establish a common method of evaluating the costs of anti-pollution measures, together with the social costs resulting from damage to the environment (which should be included in the national budgets). It will be necessary to define the modes of application of the polluter-pays principle adopted by all the Member States, and the permissible exceptions. It will also be necessary to harmonize the regulations governing the use of the various economic measures in the anti-pollution campaign.

9. In certain regions of common interest gravely affected by pollution (seas, Rhine basin, certain frontier areas), to initiate special measures and procedures in appropriate contexts, taking into account the geographic characteristics of these regions.

These measures will be backed by a joint research programme and the creation of a European documentation office to process and disseminate information on environmental protection, beginning with information on anti-pollution techniques and technologies and the effects of pollution on human health and the natural environment.

Lastly, joint action on the environment will be fully effective only if respect for Community or national regulations is efficiently monitored and infractions are punished severely enough. The Commission will therefore continue its work on the comparison of national laws in order to create the preliminary conditions for such harmonization as may prove necessary.

II. Improvement of the environment

From now on the qualitative improvement of living and working conditions will be a primary aspect of the Community's economic and social development. The Community environmental policy will assist the attainment of this aim, which must also be pursued by means of other common policies and is a central theme of the social action programme shortly to be presented by the Commission.

The Community environmental programme proposes a series of projects designed to improve the environment in its widest sense. These projects have the following aims:

1. To safeguard the natural background, particularly by a series of measures of aid to hill-farming and certain other less prosperous regions, by encouraging forestry projects for the improvement of agricultural structures, by studying the ecological consequences of modern farming techniques, by studying production techniques (integrated and biological methods in farming) and methods of marketing quality foodstuffs, by research on intensive-farming effluents, and lastly by the protection of migrant birds and disappearing species.
2. To study the problems raised by the dwindling of certain non-renewable natural resources (certain metals, petroleum and natural gas), and to study at Community level the medium-term and long-term availability of water resources as a function of the increase of consumption and the manner of utilization.

3. To create a common context for reflection on environmental problems connected with town planning and the optimum geographic distribution of human activities, in order to promote common agreement on the main lines of future action and thus provide guidance for the responsible authorities. Efforts will be centred on the following points:
 - a) The spread of towns, and in particular the current formation of a megalopolis in north-west Europe.
 - b) Town centres.
 - c) Open spaces and the countryside.
 - d) Coastal areas.

4. To improve the working environment. The improvement of the working conditions in undertakings is a prior aim, and efforts must be made to reduce the monotony and repetitiveness of work, to adopt a flexible timetable where feasible, and to promote satisfactory human relations at the place of work. The safety and hygiene of work must also be improved, and a real reform of the working environment made technically possible and obligatory for all undertakings.

5. To create a European Foundation for the improvement of working and living conditions, with the task of making medium-term and long-term studies of factors contributing to the improvement of living conditions. These studies must aim to determine the self-reforms which industrial society will have to undertake in order to offer acceptable conditions of existence to its members. From this forward-looking standpoint, any distinction between the environment and living and working conditions would be artificial. The Commission will therefore propose before 31 December 1973 the creation of a Foundation combining the project for a European Institute of the Environment previously put forward by the Commission and that for a Foundation for the Improvement of Working and Living Conditions put forward by France at the Paris Summit Conference.

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6. To sponsor an educational campaign at all levels with the aim of heightening the awareness and improving the knowledge of all social classes and elements, and thus inducing all citizens to shoulder their responsibilities for environmental protection.

This programme, embodied in a set of precise and detailed proposals, will be limited initially to priority projects. These must as far as possible be carried out within two years from the adoption of the programme, the last six months being devoted to assessing the results obtained and to preparing the programme of work to be carried out in the following years.

This programme may have to be revised and possibly supplemented by further projects in order to keep pace with progress and make use of experience gained.

At the same time as the Community environmental action programme, the Commission will submit the following documents to the Council:

- a) A draft Council Resolution concerning a Community environmental action programme.
- b) A proposal for a Council Decision instituting a procedure for providing information on the environment (see IRT No 177).

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A 10-minute cartoon FILM on INDUSTRY AND SOCIETY IN THE COMMUNITY ranging very widely over environmental problems has been produced by the Press and Information Services of the Commission of the European Communities. This film, which obtained the Grand Prix at the

International Festival of Films for Economic Information and Education at Biarritz, is available in five different languages - German, French, Italian, Dutch and English.

ORGANIZATIONS OR UNDERTAKINGS WISHING TO RECEIVE a copy of this film on loan should apply to the Directorate-General for Press and Information, 200, rue de la Loi, 1040 Brussels, Belgium (please state the language desired).

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles.

2. The second part of the document is a list of names and titles.

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