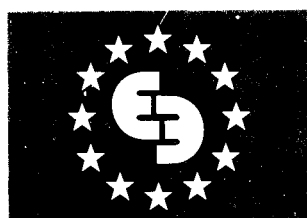


EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

BULLETIN

3

ECONOMIC AND
S O C I A L
C O M M I T T E E



CES: 1

EN

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President: Tom JENKINS
(United Kingdom - Workers)

Vice-presidents: Giacomo REGALDO
(Italy - Employers)
Johannes JASCHICK
(Germany - Various Interests)

Secretary-general: Adriano GRAZIOSI

Origins

The ESC was set up by the 1957 Rome Treaties in order to involve economic and social interest groups in the establishment of the common market and to provide institutional machinery for briefing the European Commission and the Council of Ministers on European Union issues.

The Single European Act (1986) and the Maastricht Treaty (1992) reinforced the ESC's role.

Membership

The 222 members (193 men, 29 women) of the ESC are drawn from economic and social interest groups in Europe. Members are nominated by national governments and appointed by the Council of the European Union for a renewable 4-year term of office. They belong to one of three Groups: Employers (Group I - President: Manuel Eugénio Cavaleiro Brandão - Portugal), Workers (Group II - President: Roger Briesch - France), Various Interests (Group III - President: Beatrice Rangoni Machiavelli - Italy). Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom have 24 members each, Spain has 21, Belgium, Greece, the Netherlands, Portugal, Austria and Sweden 12, Denmark, Ireland and Finland 9 and Luxembourg 6.

The members' mandate

The main task of members is to issue opinions on matters referred to the ESC by the Commission and the Council.

It should be noted that the ESC is the only body of its type which advises the EU Council of Ministers directly.

Advisory role

Consultation of the ESC by the Commission or the Council is mandatory in certain cases; in others it is optional. The ESC may, however, also adopt opinions on its own initiative. The Single European Act (17.2.86) and the Maastricht Treaty (7.2.92) have extended the range of issues which must be referred to the Committee, in particular the new policies (regional and environment policy). On average the ESC delivers 145 advisory documents a year (of which 15% are issued on its own-initiative). All opinions are forwarded to the Community's decision-making bodies and then published in the EU's Official Journal.

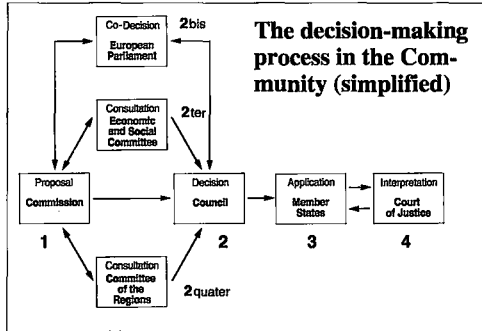
Information and integration role

Over the last few years the ESC has stepped up its role in the European Union and has transcended the straight forward duties flowing from the Treaties. It acts as a forum for the single market and has hosted, with the support of other EU bodies, a series of events aimed at bringing the EU closer to the people.

Internal organization

1. Presidency and bureau

Every two years the ESC elects a bureau made up of 36 members (12 per group), and a president and two vice-presidents chosen from each of the three groups in rotation.



The president is responsible for the orderly conduct of the Committee's business. He is assisted by the vice-presidents, who deputize for him in the event of his absence.

The president represents the ESC in relations with outside bodies.

Joint briefs: relations with EFTA, CEEC, AMU, ACP countries, Latin American and other third countries, and the Citizens' Europe fall within the remit of the ESC bureau and the president.

The bureau's main task is to organize and coordinate the work of the ESC's various bodies and to lay down policy guidelines for this work.

2. Sections

The Committee has nine sections:

- Economic, Financial and Monetary Questions - secretariat tel. 546.92.27
(President: Göke Frerichs - Group I - Germany)
- External Relations, Trade and Development Policy - secretariat tel. 546.93.16
(President: John F. Carroll - Group II - Ireland)
- Social, Family, Educational and Cultural Affairs - secretariat tel. 546.93.02
(President: Mrs H.C.H. van den Burg - Group II - Netherlands)
- Protection of the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Affairs secretariat tel. 546.96.57
(President: Manuel Ataíde Ferreira - Group III - Portugal)
- Agriculture and Fisheries - secretariat tel. 546.93.96
(President: Pere Margalef Masià - Group III - Spain)
- Regional Development and Town and Country Planning secretariat tel. 546.92.57
(President: Robert Moreland - Group III United Kingdom)
- Industry, Commerce, Crafts and Services - secretariat tel. 546.93.85
(President: John Little - Group I - United Kingdom)
- Transport and Communications secretariat tel. 546.93.53
(President: Eike Eulen - Group II - Germany)
- Energy, Nuclear Questions and Research - secretariat tel. 546.97.94
(President: José Ignacio Gafo Fernández - Group I - Spain)

3. Study groups

Section opinions are drafted by study groups. These usually have 12 members, including a rapporteur who may be assisted by experts (usually four with a maximum of six).

4. Sub-committees

The ESC has the right to set up temporary sub-committees, for specific issues. These sub-committees operate on the same lines as the sections.

5. Plenary session

As a rule, the full Committee meets in plenary session ten times a year. At the plenary sessions, opinions are adopted on the basis of section opinions by a simple majority. They are forwarded to the institutions and published in the Official Journal of the European Communities.

6. Relations with economic and social councils

The ESC maintains regular links with regional and national economic and social councils throughout the European Union. These links mainly involve exchanges of information and joint discussions every year on specific issues.

The ESC also liaises world-wide with other economic and social councils at the "International Meetings" held every two years.

7. Relations with economic and social interest groups in third countries

The ESC has links with economic and social interest groups in a number of non-member countries and groups of countries, including Mediterranean countries, the ACP countries, Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America and EFTA. For this purpose the ESC sets up 15-30 man delegations headed by the president. Some meetings involving the countries of central and eastern Europe, will be institutionalized under the Europe Agreements.

Publications

The ESC regularly distributes a number of publications free of charge (order in writing by mail or fax - 546.98.22), including its main opinions in brochure format and a monthly newsletter. Secretariat-General

The Committee is serviced by a secretariat-general, headed by a secretary-general who reports to the president, representing the bureau.

Since 1 January 1995, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions have shared a common core of departments, mainly staffed by members of the ESC secretariat.

1997 Budget

The 1997 ESC budget totals ECU 27,865,858. The budget for the departments servicing both the ESC and the Committee of the Regions stands at ECU 53,775,429.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

BULLETIN

97

3

ECONOMIC AND
S O C I A L
C O M M I T T E E



This Bulletin reports on the activities of the Economic and Social Committee, a consultative body of the European Communities. It is published by the ESC's General Secretariat (2, rue Ravenstein, B-1000 Brussels) in the official Community languages (10 editions per annum)

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The complete texts of the Opinions summarized in this brochure can be obtained either in the Official Journal of the European Communities, Office for Official Publications, 2, rue Mercier, L-2985 Luxembourg, or directly from the ESC Directorate for Communications - Specialized Department for Information and Visits (Fax: + 32.2.546.98.22)

On-line Database of Economic and Social Committee Opinions

The Economic and Social Committee (ESC) has recently launched a database containing the full text of the Committee's opinions and bulletins. The database contains opinions, in all working languages, since January 1995. The ESC bulletin is available in English and French. The database may be searched using the CCL, a menu system and "Watch ECHO". It is planned to diffuse key documents on the World Wide Web :

<http://www.echo.lu/ces/ceshome.html>

The ESC database will be available free of charge.

I. 344th PLENARY SESSION HELD ON 19 and 20 MARCH 1997

The 344th plenary session of the Economic and Social Committee of the European Communities was held in Brussels on 19/20 March. Tom Jenkins presided.

Hans Borstlap, chairman of the Netherlands Employment and Labour Market Committee, attended the session.

The Committee adopted the following opinions at this session.

1. TECHNICAL STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council and the Economic and Social Committee concerning regulatory transparency in the internal market for information society services; and the Proposal for a European Parliament and Council Directive amending for the third time Directive 83/189/EEC laying down a procedure for the provision of information in the field of technical standards and regulations*

(COM(96) 392 final - 96/0220 COD)

(CES 320/97 - 96/0220 COD)

Rapporteur: Mr Kommer de KNEGT (Netherlands - Workers)

Gist of the Commission document

The purpose of this communication and of the accompanying proposal for a Council Directive is to establish at Community level a procedure for the provision of information and the holding of consultations on possible future draft rules and regulations on information society services.

These services will be (or already are) highly diverse and include electronic newspapers, distance education or healthcare services, distance tourism services, the distance selling of goods and services by electronic means, distance betting services, interactive games and leisure activities etc.

At present these services are not developing in a legal vacuum, as the body of law governing the internal market, in particular Articles 52 (freedom of establishment) and 59 (freedom to provide services) of the treaty and the existing secondary legislation, already constitute a basic legal framework. However, those involved in the considerable amount of analysis which has been undertaken at both national and Community level agree that the current national rules and regulations applicable to existing services need to be adapted to take account of the peculiarities of the new information society services, and predict a surge of regulatory activity in this area.

There is, therefore, a clear need for coordination at Community level of this future regulatory activity in order to forestall any such refragmentation of the internal market and to pursue more incisively general interest objectives that are worthy of protection. The Commission proposes to coordinate these future rules and regulations by means of an information, consultation and administrative cooperation procedure.

The procedure laid down in respect of draft rules on goods by Directive 83/189/EEC of 28 March 1983 already pursues precisely the objective of establishing a coordination procedure. The fact that more than ten years' experience has been gained in applying this Directive demonstrates its effectiveness, since it is the most extensively used regulatory transparency mechanism to date. The Commission accordingly proposes to widen the Directive's scope so as to include draft rules and regulations on information society services.

The proposal for an extended Directive pursues several objectives:

- permitting the smooth functioning of the internal market particularly by preventing the creation of new obstacles via the exchange of information between Member States and between Member States and the Commission;
- ensuring more effective safeguarding of general interest objectives by anticipating the need for Community intervention aimed at ensuring an adequate, equivalent level of protection between Member States;
- establishing more clearly and reducing the need for new Community rules and regulations by permitting a more effective application of the Treaty, in particular Articles 52 and 59 thereof, and of Community law, together with closer cooperation between the Member States;
- facilitating administrative cooperation at the stage of the drafting of rules and regulations;
- contributing to the stability of the regulatory framework.

The transparency mechanism would cover draft national rules, except those aimed at implementing any Community Directive, whether present or future, on the taking-up and pursuit of service activities where the services are provided by electronic means at a distance and on the individual request of a service receiver (element of "interactivity").

The proposed transparency mechanism reproduces the procedural measures laid down in Directive 83/189/EEC:

- a procedure for the provision of information on draft rules and regulations on the services defined above;
- a consultation procedure;
- a committee: the committee of Member States' representatives already provided for in Directive 83/189/EEC.

Gist of opinion

The Committee can agree with:

- the Commission's policy of developing appropriate legislation for information society services;
- the proposed information, consultation and administrative co-operation procedure; and the proposed third amendment to Directive 83/189/EEC.

The Committee thinks that:

- the Commission must encourage national and regional authorities to be involved in the development of the information society;
- interim reports should be issued, providing information on the development of information society services and of laws and regulations;
- the development of user-friendly programmes must be encouraged in order to allow access to information society services;
- a platform entitled "the development of information society services" should be set up for the benefit of employees' and consumers' organizations, small and medium-sized firms and very small firms;

- the machinery and criteria that can be handled under the urgency procedure should be defined more closely;
- it should be clearly stated in some sort of publication who within the Commission is responsible for the development of information society services and which departments are involved;
- an information centre entitled "the development of information society services" should be set up for the benefit of ordinary people; and
- the newly amended version of Directive 83/189/EEC, together with a good explanation, should be published in full as soon as possible after its adoption by the Council.

2. DEFENCE-RELATED INDUSTRIES

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the *challenges facing the European defence-related industry - a contribution for action at European level*
(COM(96) 10 final)

(CES 326/97)

Rapporteur: Mr Mario SEPI (Italy - Workers)

Gist of the Commission document

The defence-related industries are facing an economic and political situation which is changing completely and calls for responses going beyond the national level.

The end of the Cold War has made it possible to cut military budgets and step up moves to convert the industries concerned. The need for the defence-related industries to scale down their activities substantially has had a significant direct impact on jobs, which fell from 1.6 million to 1 million between 1984 and 1992 (-37%), particularly hitting certain regions, and also affecting the manufacturing base and innovation capacity of European industry as a whole. The economic difficulties are also linked to fiercer international competition and to the anachronistic fragmentation of defence markets in Europe.

Although a global approach to this subject is clearly important, the establishment of a European security and defence identity is nevertheless a long-term process. On the other hand, the state of health of the defence-related industries is such that, unless action is taken in time, there is a danger that whole sectors of the economy involved in defence-related activities could disappear, with further massive job losses, particularly considering the fiercer international competition.

Moreover, the introduction of mechanisms based on economic efficiency, particularly in procurement policies, will allow more rational use of budgetary resources, yielding very substantial savings, particularly for the taxpayer. According to a study these savings could vary between ECU 5 and 11 billion per year.

Starting from this need for action, the Communication focuses on action based on existing Community instruments, and hence concerning fields in which the European Community has powers and experience of its own. These means of action could possibly be used in combination with the CFSP. They could thus be implemented in the short term as an initial response to the problems facing the defence-related industries and as a first contribution towards the framing of a European security and defence identity.

The approach followed by the Commission is based on the principles set out in its communication on an industrial competitiveness policy for the European Union (COM(94) 319 final of 14 September 1994).

The action proposed could usefully be complemented by measures in the framework of the Western European Union, in particular the establishment of the European Armaments Agency referred to in the WEU Declaration of 10 December 1991.

The Commission asks the Council to comment on its analysis and on its suggestions concerning the contribution by the Community instruments.

In the light of the Council's work, the Commission plans to take the appropriate action in the form of specific proposals or other suitable measures.

Gist of the Opinion

The EU Member States are moving towards the framing of a new architecture for European security. This architecture must take account of existing international organizations such as the WEU, NATO and the OSCE, and of the needs of EU Member States which have a tradition of military neutrality or non-alignment.

The Commission's involvement in the defence industry must, at all events, take account of its special nature, namely the links with security and defence policies, the way in which R&D and production are organized, and the reliance on defence ministries for its market.

Such involvement should focus on safeguarding employment levels and technological expertise in the EU defence industry.

In this context, and given the present imbalance in the international arms trade, preference should be given to European production.

In order to maintain jobs and technology levels in the EU defence industry at a time when military demand is falling, reconversion and diversification must be speeded up. The focus should be on technological reskilling, exploiting the opportunities offered by dual-use technologies.

The complexity and timeframe of military programmes and the development of intergovernmental cooperation based on the *juste-retour* principle have hitherto placed technical and political limits on the development of a European armaments market.

The (albeit incomplete) application of single market principles to the defence sector, in tandem with the creation of new instruments such as the European Armaments Agency, must aim to improve the efficiency and productivity and hence the international competitiveness of the EU military industry.

Community competence for foreign trade should gradually be extended to the armaments trade, inter alia with a view to preventing distortions being generated by differing national rules on arms exports. Future Community rules should be based on the principles already decided by the European Council in 1991 and 1992, and on broad criteria regarding transparency.

In particular, the Committee calls for a European and international ban on the production, sale and use of anti-personnel land mines.

3. CRAFT INDUSTRIES & SMES (Additional Opinion)

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on craft industries and small- and medium-sized enterprises

(CES 328/97)

Rapporteur: Mr Antonello PEZZINI (Italy - Various Interests)

Background

On 22 October 1992 the ESC adopted an opinion on SMEs and craft industries; the rapporteur was Mr Schleyer. The interest groups concerned were unanimous in recognizing the quality and importance of the opinion.

The Committee should undertake a careful appraisal of the conclusions of the European Conference on Craft Industries held in Berlin on 26 and 27 September 1994, and the fora on SMEs held in Paris on 19 and 20 June 1995 and in Madrid on 16 and 17 November 1995. Furthermore, the EC Commission is drawing up a new action programme to assist SMEs, which it submitted to the European Council in Madrid in December 1995. The Council asked the Commission to continue its work in this area.

The Commission has recently published a number of documents, inter alia, the Communication on the craft industry and small enterprises, keys to growth and employment in Europe (COM(95) 502 final) and the Report on the future operation of the information and cooperation networks in the framework of enterprise policy (COM(95) 435 final) on which subjects the Committee cannot fail to comment.

Gist of the opinion

Bearing in mind the special nature of crafts issues - dealt with in various ESC opinions and Commission and EP documents - and emphasizing the importance of the crafts sector to the European economy in terms of the number of firms, employment and contribution to GDP, the Committee feels that the sector should be backed up by appropriate EU policy action; this should complement rather than contrast with existing policies for SMEs, and aim to raise the economic and social profile of the craft industry, and especially to support it as a breeding ground for new enterprises and new jobs.

Action to promote the growth of the craft industry should take heed of the following four priorities:

- emphasize the special nature of the craft industry compared to other SMEs, both in EU consultations and negotiations and in implementing Community economic and social policies;
- promote the creation and development of a European cultural identity for the craft industry;
- support the economic development of craft industries, by improving their competitiveness and providing easier access to the single market;
- encourage craft industries and their representatives to take part in exchange and cooperation programmes, both within the Community and in the framework of EU relations with third countries.

The following ten action lines are suggested:

Social consultation

Provision should be made for representation of craft industry and SME interests in the negotiations referred to in Article 4 of the agreement on social policy in the Treaty on European Union, in so far as the relevant organizations are represented at European level.

Boost business competitiveness

The entrepreneur must have access to a team of advisors who follow the progress of the firm and its employees from start to finish ("life-long advising"), even when the firm changes hands.

Establishment of the European Academy for Craft Industries and SMEs

Support for the development of a "European identity" for the craft industry and small business culture throughout Europe

Enhanced role for apprenticeships and promotion of combined work/training schemes

Improve information for micro-businesses

Simplify bureaucracy

Incentives for cooperation and exchanges between micro-businesses

Promote a culture of innovation for craftsmen and small businesses

Promote the improvement and development of transport and communication networks

4. EUROPEAN MONITORING CENTRE FOR RACISM

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the Proposal for a Council Regulation (EC) setting up a European Monitoring Centre for Racism and Xenophobia (COM(96) 615 final - 96/0298 CNS)

(CES 322/97 - 96/0298 CNS)

Rapporteur: Mrs Soscha zu EULENBURG (Germany - Various Interests)

Gist of the Commission proposal

The Commission has adopted a proposal for a Regulation setting up a European Monitoring Centre for Racism and Xenophobia. The Centre will have a mandate to supply the European Community and its Member States with objective, reliable and compatible data on racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism and, by so doing, to enhance the exchange of information and experience in this field.

The aim is to maximize awareness of racist phenomena, to disseminate such information and to draw up recommendations for the institutions of the European Union and Member States.

The tasks are to collect, record and analyse information and data from the Member States, the Community institutions (e.g. under the 4th framework programme in the field of targeted socio-economic research), non-governmental organizations and international organizations, and to set up a European Racism and Xenophobia Information network (Raxen).

The Centre's work will focus on the following areas:

- free movement of people within the EU,
- employment,
- education, vocational training and youth,
- information, television broadcasting and other media and means of communication,
- social exclusion,
- free movement of goods,
- culture.

The Centre will work in close conjunction with other international organizations and will conclude a cooperation agreement with the Council of Europe.

The proposal for a Regulation is based on Article 235, which served as the legal basis for a wide range of European bodies such as the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction and the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work. The choice of Article 235 as the legal basis reflects the Centre's objectives. The point is not to take specific measures to combat racism and xenophobia, nor to assign the Centre any political responsibility in the field; nor is it to modify the system for protecting human rights in the Community or to make any major change to the institutional system in the Community or any of its Member States.

Background:

In June 1994, the European Council set up a consultative commission on racism and xenophobia. Its mandate was to formulate recommendations on cooperation between governments and the various social institutions active in fostering tolerance and mutual understanding.

In June 1995, the European Council called on the consultative commission to study the feasibility of a European Monitoring Centre for Racism and Xenophobia.

In December 1995, the European Commission presented a communication on racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism, accompanied by a proposal for a Council decision proclaiming 1997 the European Year against Racism.

The consultative commission presented a report on its feasibility study to the European Council in Florence in June 1996. The European Council thereupon approved the principle underlying the creation of a European Monitoring Centre, and mandated the consultative commission to continue its work until the Centre was up and running.

Gist of the opinion

The Commission's proposal for a regulation has in essence already been approved at a number of meetings of the European Council.

The Economic and Social Committee has also issued an opinion on the *Communication from the Commission on racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism* and the *Proposal for a Council Decision designating 1997 as European year against racism*, in which the Commission had already called for the establishment of a monitoring centre. Point 5.2 of this opinion states: "*The ESC supports the immediate establishment of the European monitoring centre on racism and xenophobia*".

The Committee expressly welcomes all the tasks assigned to the monitoring centre under Article 2 of the proposal.

The ESC stresses that this proposal has nothing to do with the question of whether any extension of the Community's powers is not in fact desirable in this particular case. The ESC broadly backed such a move in its opinion on the communication on racism mentioned above, in which it called for the inclusion of a non-discrimination clause in the Treaties; point 5.1 of the opinion expressly states that "*the ESC... associates itself with all anti-racist positions adopted by the Community bodies*". For legal reasons, however, the ESC feels bound to make it clear that Article 235 should not be used to expand Community powers by the back door.

However, in line with this procedure and the respective remits of the Community institutions and the Member States, the reports, deliberations and conclusions of the monitoring centre will be able to contribute to the formulation of proposals and the adoption of measures at both Community and national level.

The Committee would highlight the fact that racism and xenophobia can often be encouraged, or even provoked, by measures taken in the public arena. The cause and effect of racism and xenophobia may arise in private relationships and in the public arena. This being so, the monitoring centre's remit must also be expanded to reflect this.

The ESC is pleased that cooperation with non-governmental organizations is given adequate attention in the regulation (cf. point 21 of the explanatory memorandum and Article 7(1) of the proposal), except that the monitoring centre only "may" cooperate with such organizations. The word "may" must be changed to "shall".

The economic and social interest groups represented at the ESC, which differ so greatly from one country to another, are particularly well placed to contribute to the permanent mobilization of society against racism and xenophobia.

5. COLLECTIVE REDUNDANCIES

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the proposal for a Council Directive on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to collective redundancies
(COM(96) 620 final - 96/0290 CNS)

(CES 323/97 - 96/0290 CNS)

Rapporteur working without a study group: Mr Werner LÖW (Germany - Employers)

Gist of the Commission proposal

In the context of a people's Europe, the Commission attaches great importance to simplifying and clarifying Community law so as to make it clearer and more accessible to the ordinary citizen, thus giving him new opportunities and the chance to make use of the specific rights it gives him.

This aim cannot be achieved so long as numerous provisions that have been amended several times, often quite substantially, remain scattered, so that they must be sought partly in the original instrument and partly in later amending ones. Considerable research work, comparing many different instruments, is thus needed to identify the current rules.

For this reason a consolidation of rules that have frequently been amended is also essential if Community law is to be clear and transparent.

On 1 April 1987 the Commission therefore decided to instruct its staff that all legislative measures should be consolidated after **no more** than ten amendments, stressing that this was a minimum requirement and that departments should endeavour to consolidate at even shorter intervals the texts for which they were responsible, to ensure that the Community rules were clear and readily understandable.

The Conclusions of the Presidency of the Edinburgh European Council (December 1992) confirmed this, stressing the importance of legislative consolidation as it offers certainty as to the law applicable to a given matter at a given time.

It must be undertaken in full compliance with the normal Community legislative procedure. Given that no changes of substances may be made to the instruments affected by legislative consolidation, Parliament, the

Council and the Commission have agreed, by an interinstitutional agreement dated 20 December 1994, that an accelerated procedure may be used for the fast-track adoption of codification instruments.

The purpose of this proposal for consolidation of Council Directive 75/129/EEC of 17 February 1975 on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to collective redundancies is to undertake official codification of this type. The new directive will supersede the various directives incorporated in it; their content is fully preserved, and they are brought together with only such formal amendments as are required by the codification exercise itself.

This **consolidation** proposal was drawn up on the basis of a **preliminary consolidation**, in all the official languages, of Directive 75/129/EEC and the instruments amending it, carried out by the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, by means of a **data-processing system** referred to in the conclusions of the European Council meeting in Edinburgh. Although the articles have been given new numbers, the former number is printed alongside in each case for the reader's convenience; the correlation between the old and new numbers is shown in a table contained in Annex II to the consolidated Directive.

Summary of the opinion

The Committee approves the Commission proposal.

6. EUROPEAN VOLUNTARY SERVICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and the Council establishing a Community action programme entitled "European voluntary service for young people"
(COM(96) 610 final - 96/0318 COD)

(CES 324/97 - 96/0318 COD)

Rapporteur: Mr Giorgio LIVERANI (Italy - Workers)

Gist of the Commission document

The European Commission proposes that a voluntary service programme be launched to allow young Europeans to show solidarity by taking part in activities in other countries in specific fields, such as the fight against social exclusion, humanitarian aid, protection of the environment, and cultural activities. Drawing on the experience gained through its 1996 pilot project, which will have enabled some 2,500 young people to participate in such activities, the Commission has presented a "European voluntary service for young people" programme, covering the period 1998-2002. For the initial stage (1998-1999) it will have a budget of ECU 60 million.

All young people aged between 18 and 25 resident in a Member State of the European Union may take part in the programme which also makes provision for cooperation with third countries which are associated with the European Union or have entered into cooperation agreements with it. Generally speaking, young volunteers will participate in activities responding to the needs of society in a very wide range of fields (social, environmental, cultural, etc.) and capable of having a direct impact on the quality of life of the people in the communities concerned. The range of activities is therefore very broad: projects to help children, services for young people, help for the elderly, disabled, refugees, homeless or sick, environmental protection, regeneration of run-down areas, humanitarian operations, educational projects, cultural activities, measures to combat discrimination, etc.

The duration of voluntary service performed by young people will vary depending on the project: from six months to one year for long-term projects, and from three weeks to three months for shorter projects. The bodies to which young volunteers will be attached (associations, local authorities, etc.) must provide board and lodging (in a residence, youth hostel or with a family). In addition, young people will receive a monthly allowance of around ECU 200. They will play an active part in the host project and may not be regarded as cheap labour and given only menial tasks to perform. The Commission is also making arrangements for insurance contracts providing social cover for all young volunteers taking part in the programme, thus avoiding any potential problems in this field.

Finally, host projects will be required to supply the necessary guarantees as regards the supervision of young volunteers throughout their period of service. A tutor will be responsible for providing educational and personal support for young people during their stay, while in each Member State a team of liaison officers, independent of host projects, will provide a confidential service to deal with the various difficulties encountered by volunteers, tutors and project managers.

Gist of the opinion

The Committee welcomes the Commission proposal and draws attention to the suggestions and recommendations it made on the "voluntary community service schemes" in its own-initiative opinion on youth unemployment.

Voluntary service, by providing young people with special opportunities for integration into active life and the acquisition of specific vocational and workplace experience could contribute to action designed to combat exclusion and unemployment among the young, while generating Community added value and the desired multiplier effects for the Member States' youth policies.

The Committee also feels that it should be able to participate in monitoring the programme's progress and assessing the results.

With the aim of strengthening partnership schemes, the Committee requests the Commission to ensure that cooperation with NGOs encompasses charitable associations as well as involving regional and local authorities.

The Committee reiterates the need to avoid any distortion of the labour market. Here it reminds the Commission:

- to involve workers' and employers' organizations to prevent the replacement of "normal" employment by voluntary work. It must be clear that the Committee's endorsement of the Commission proposal is conditional on a guarantee that proper employment is not replaced by voluntary activity;
- to instigate a dialogue with the social partners and NGOs which operate humanitarian projects that could draw on voluntary helpers.

The Committee also confirms the need to provide the requisite social cover (health and accident insurance, civil liability) for the young volunteers' stay as well as supervision during their service. Unemployment and family benefit entitlements must also be preserved in the case of young people carrying out their service in another Member State.

The Committee hopes that it will be financially possible in future to extend the programme further to non-EU countries.

7. SOCRATES - YOUTH FOR EUROPE - LEONARDO (TURKEY)

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the

Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council amending the basic Decision relating to the Socrates programme to include Turkey among the beneficiary countries

Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council amending the basic Decision relating to the third phase of the Youth for European programme to include Turkey among the beneficiary countries

Proposal for a Decision of the Council amending the basic Decision relating to the Leonardo programme to include Turkey among the beneficiary countries
(doc.COM(96) 199 final - COD 96/0130 - COD 96/0131 - SYN 96/0132)

(CES 329/97 - COD 96/0130 - COD 96/0131 - SYN 96/0132)

Rapporteur-General: Mrs Giacomina CASSINA (Italy - Workers)

Gist of the Commission document

The Council Decision of 6 December 1994 establishing the Leonardo programme and the Parliament and Council Decisions of 14 March 1995 setting up the Socrates and Youth for Europe III programmes pave the way for opening up these programmes to the associated countries but make no mention of the Republic of Turkey.

At the Association Council meeting held in Luxembourg on 30 October 1995, Turkey asked to be allowed to participate in European programmes open to other associated countries, notably the Leonardo, Socrates and Youth for Europe programmes in the field of education, training and youth.

In response, the Council said it would continue looking at Turkey's requests in a constructive spirit and would let it know the outcome of its examination as soon as possible.

The Commission considers that against the background of the final phase of the EC-Turkey customs union which entered into force on 31 December 1995, Turkey's participation in these programmes is in the Community's interest.

Accordingly, the Commission recommends to the Council that it amend the basic decisions relating to these programmes so that the Republic of Turkey can be included among the beneficiary states.

Gist of the opinion

The ESC, on the basis of its Information Report on EU-Turkey relations (1992), and in keeping with the spirit of the ensuing own-initiative opinion (1993), and the work carried out by the EU-Turkey Joint Consultative Committee (established 1995), believes that education and training are areas in which the benefits to be derived from exchanges with third-country cultures and peoples clearly outweigh any economic or political considerations. In numerous opinions on EU external relations, the ESC has stated that EU socio-occupational organizations consider third country cooperation on culture and training as a priority.

Accordingly, the ESC endorses the proposal.

8. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COHESION FUND 1995

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the *Annual Report of the Cohesion Fund 1995*
(COM(96) 388 final)

(CES 321/97)

Rapporteur: Mr Paulo BARROS VALE (Portugal - Employers)

Gist of the Commission document

The report is presented pursuant to Article 14 of Regulation (EC) 1164/94 establishing a Cohesion Fund. Although it concerns the third year of Fund activity, it is the first report to cover a whole calendar year.

The report considers Fund activities in 1995. It stresses the improved balance between the two areas of assistance - transport infrastructure coming under the Trans-European Networks, and the environment (drinking water supply, waste water treatment and sewage and urban waste, reforestation and nature conservation). The aim has been to achieve a fair distribution of appropriations, as the Committee had called for in its last opinion.

The report notes that budget implementation for 1995 reached 100% for commitment appropriations (as in the two previous years) and almost 100% for payment appropriations (for the first time). The report also describes the procedures for selection, monitoring and inspection of projects, and the steps taken to gain a better picture of the employment impact of Cohesion Fund projects in an economic climate which is not very conducive to greater economic and social cohesion. A separate chapter is devoted to the conditionality principle and the convergence programmes of the four beneficiary countries. Lastly, the report outlines the information and publicity measures taken by the Commission, and considers the inter-institutional dialogue; extensive reference is made here to the Committee opinion on the last reports on Fund activity. The annexes give a summary of the projects approved in 1995, and provide graphs and maps of the relevant rail and road networks.

Gist of the opinion

Although the Committee welcomes the fact that several of the recommendations which it made in its previous opinion were taken into consideration, it draws the Commission's attention to a number of specific points. In particular, it regrets the late submission of the report and the omission, in certain cases, of adequate, comparable project data.

9. EMPLOYMENT, COMPETITIVENESS AND ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION

(Own-initiative opinion)

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on *Employment, Competitiveness and Economic Globalization*

(CES 325/97)

Rapporteur: Mrs Ursula KONITZER (Germany - Workers)

Gist of the opinion

Globalization means the in-depth, internationally organized interlinking of the production of goods and services, making use of technological innovations and progress in the field of transport and communications, supported by an international financial market in which financial transactions, the volume of which far exceeds real economic flows, can be carried out in seconds, complemented by the worldwide dismantling of trade barriers and by international organisations (WTO) and regional mergers.

This trend of course has a cultural significance, but its main effect is the international diversification of the production of goods and services. The permanent search for opportunities for short-term profit in the globalized currency and bond markets gives rise to a danger of turbulence, threatening national payment systems and the stability of the real economy.

Globalization has fundamentally changed competition between firms in the economy: it is not so much firms which have to compete with each other in a given location; rather, the focus of competition has shifted to the business locations themselves which have to compete for internationally mobile capital. The key to employment is thus to concentrate on making the region healthy, attracting investment and creating jobs by raising capacity.

But what does all this mean for Europe? Globalization is a challenge to be welcomed. But it creates a need for an international strategy to which all concerned contribute at European Union and Member State level. It is not impossible that the effects of globalization will be asymmetric. On the one hand there are the political institutions at local, regional and national level and they lack a worldwide communications structure. On the other hand there are the multinational corporations operating worldwide with ever lower transaction costs. Worse still, the supply-side operators remain within their isolated fields of activity (regional or local wage negotiations), whilst those providing the demand for labour make their decisions at world level. The danger to be avoided is thus that of competition between business locations going so far that lower wages and excessive cuts in public spending lead to loss of purchasing power, falling demand, stagnation, recession and thus to higher unemployment. In order to prevent a new wave of protectionism, a trans-nationally orientated competition policy is needed offering international versions of the cartels ban, consumer and environmental protection arrangements and social obligations in regard to assets. The Committee also calls for basic minimum global standards in respect of human, workers' and environmental rights, international organizations with legitimate economic-policy powers and internationally effective collective bargaining procedures and forms of social dialogue. As Europe has most to lose from a downward socio-economic spiral, it should take the initiative towards international cooperation. Some firms have already shown the way. The multilateral investment agreement currently being negotiated at the OECD can act as a spur to further initiatives by the European Commission.

The attempt is being made to quantify globalization. There is talk of globalization in relation to most sectors, but the phenomenon is more pronounced in some sectors than in others. Although over the last few years cross-border investment has risen faster than capital-formation overall, it is not true to say that there has been unhealthy exporting of jobs from industrialized to developing countries.

Globalization is thus not responsible for Europe's present problems. A more productive approach is to ask: Which comparative advantages can Europe use to sell which products and services in the world market? And here the Committee would cite the European social model as a comparative advantage. The system of social protection should for example not just be seen as a cost factor. The social model creates social consensus, a high degree of social cohesion, social peace and thus stability, which is a significant advantage for Europe as a business location. Growth strategies should take this into account.

The Committee's answer to competition from low-wage countries is clear. These countries buy more from us than we from them. Intra-European structural change must be brought about via an active employment and labour-market policy. Workers laid off as a result of shifting production processes in Europe must be trained and made available for jobs in areas where Europe has comparative advantages to offer.

The Committee therefore feels that assigning too much weight to wages policy, i.e. imposing lower wages in order to create jobs, is not effective. Nor should one expect anything positive from the dismantling of social services. Rather, one should fear the resulting tensions and recognize that in some Member States the systematic cutting back of workers' rights and the weakening of trade unions only leads to greater tensions. Thus short-term competitive advantages sometimes have a detrimental effect on productivity. The social model is thus one of the endogenous growth forces which Europe must exploit more, at the same time as improving conditions for SMEs and developing infrastructure (trans-European networks). To these can be added the dismantling of obsolete bureaucratic hindrances and the more active provision of risk capital. Also needed is

better use of human capital, so that new goods and services can be encouraged and ultimately new markets opened up. A dynamic innovation strategy is thus advocated. Better management of firms and more worker participation in the innovation process are vital. Finally, the Committee emphasises that the completion of the internal market, the process of economic and monetary union already under way and the European social model are the basic conditions for Europe's entry to the next century.

10. EU/CHINA RELATIONS (*Own-initiative opinion*)

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on *relations between the EU and China*

(CES 327/97)

Rapporteur: Mr Göke FRERICHS (Germany - Employers)

Co-rapporteur: Mr Thomas ETTY (Netherlands - Workers)

Context

On his recent visits to China, Commissioner Sir Leon Brittan went to great lengths to highlight the potential strategic and economic importance of strengthening links between China and the EU. China is undergoing constant change, and development of EU-China relations must become an unswerving long-term objective. Accordingly, the Commission has issued a communication on the subject in which it argues that it is in the EU's interest to encourage and support the ongoing economic and social reforms in China. The two regions should establish a lasting bilateral relationship designed to secure their shared objectives, such as the integration of China into the world market economy and the WTO, the strengthening of civil society, environmental protection, human-resource development, trade and investment cooperation, and the transition process in Hong Kong and Macao.

The Commission asks the Council to push for China's full participation in the international community; to contribute to the reforms which have been initiated in the fields of human rights, the market economy and the environment; and to step up European trade and investment links with China. The Council has drawn up a strategy for future relations with China.

It should be noted that in 1995 China became the EU's fourth trade partner after the United States, Japan and Switzerland. Trade in 1994 stood at ECU 37,000 bn., and the Community's trade deficit is estimated at ECU 10,400 bn.

Gist of the opinion

The Economic and Social Committee warmly welcomes the Council's and Commission's policy of medium- and long-term support for reforms in the People's Republic of China and sees them as a great challenge and a growing opportunity for the EU and its Member States.

The ESC fully supports the "commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms" which is at the heart of EU policy worldwide. China has a considerable record of violations of political and civil as well as of economic, social and cultural rights. While it is obvious that the country is facing enormous problems of economic development, that cannot legitimize ongoing infringements of fundamental human rights.

While the Committee thinks that in discussions with China the EU should be receptive to the specific problems and conditions prevailing in China, including those in the cultural field, it is not acceptable that the Chinese authorities should use these as an argument to provide their own interpretation of universal human rights.

Consistent support for the difficult process of economic and social reform now underway thus lies wholly in Europe's interest so that, through cooperation and mutual trust, the many common medium and long-term tasks that lie ahead can all be accomplished

The ESC believes that, to achieve this, cooperation needs to be stepped up in practical ways whilst frank, open dialogue on all questions of common interest needs to be expanded, notably by involving existing social organizations, as well as organizations changing under the pressure of the reform process, even if these are based on differing political, economic and social principles.

On the Chinese side the obvious dialogue partner for this major task is the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC).

The improvement and furtherance of economic and social cooperation include:

- the harmonization of trade relations and the introduction of confidence-building measures between the two trading partners;
- China's gradual integration into the world economy and efforts to promote China's rapid entry into the WTO;
- the improvement of the climate for the rapid expansion of medium- and long-term investment in the People's Republic of China and the promotion of joint ventures;
- the intensification of scientific and technical cooperation;
- offering China help and encouragement to take urgently required action in the fields of environmental protection, the development of infrastructure and the improvement of energy supplies;
- priority support for measures to promote the interests of women, protect children and young people and combat poverty, within the context of economic and social reforms;
- a general, all-round expansion of two-way information.

A number of measures need to be taken before China can be admitted to the WTO. These include:

- greater and rapid liberalization on both sides, as well as a revision of dumping procedures;
- the improvement of information on trading conditions, to be achieved by setting up an up-to-date data bank;
- the negotiation of legislative provisions as part of the development of trading rights.

The EU Commission is asked to insist during negotiations that enterprises with foreign capital (joint ventures) be allowed to import goods and market them in the People's Republic of China to build up a full range of products.

The Economic and Social Committee hopes that China will be able to ratify the ILO Convention on the right to organize, on the right to bargain collectively, on forced labour, and on discrimination in labour and employment, and in particular that it will take urgent measures to overcome the major difficulties currently faced in implementing fundamental Trade Union rights.

Tax arrangements for foreign companies pose major problems and clarification is needed.

The ESC considers that the development of human resources is extremely important.

The Committee welcomes the conclusions of the European Council in Dublin on 13 and 14 December 1996, underlining the European Union's full support for the specific status of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) and its citizens in all respects, including their right to represent democratic institutions as already established and calling for the smooth transfer of government in Macao in December 1999.

The ESC would regard it as a sign of growing mutual openness and understanding if China were to adopt legislation on freedom of association to pave the way for the creation of genuinely independent NGOs and so facilitate their useful, charitable work.

The 1995-2000 programme, the first comprehensive programme relating to women's development, is designed to safeguard women's legal rights and address the problems women face in education and health.

The economic reform process has created, and still continues to create, enormous social, labour and industrial relations problems. Major examples are mass unemployment, labour mobility and lack of social security. There are no independent organizations of workers and employers to play a role in this respect and there is also a major problem with forced labour in China.

The Committee recommends the establishment of institutionalized cultural dialogue between the EU and China, claiming that this will become increasingly important with time.

11. DANGEROUS PREPARATIONS

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the proposal for a European Parliament and Council Directive concerning the approximation of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the Member States relating to the classification, packaging and labelling of dangerous preparations

(COM(96) 347 final - 96/0200 COD)

(CES 330/97 - 96/0200 COD)

Rapporteur: Mr Kenneth J. GARDNER (United Kingdom - Employers)

Gist of the Commission proposal

Dangerous preparations are mixtures or solutions of two or more chemical substances, intended for both consumers and professional users where at least one of the substances is classified as dangerous under Directive 67/548/EEC or regarded as dangerous by applying certain criteria.

The existing preparations directive dates back to 1988 (88/379/EEC) and refers mostly to paints and solvents excluding other preparations such as medicines, cosmetics, wastes, pesticides, munitions and explosives. This directive classifies dangerous preparations according to the following categories: very toxic; toxic; harmful; corrosive, liable to cause serious eye damage; irritant to skin, eyes and the respiratory system; carcinogenic; mutagenic and teratogenic.

The present proposal for a new directive concerning the classification, packaging and labelling of dangerous preparations will replace Directive 88/379/EEC, adding to its provisions through the introduction of:

- The classification, packaging and labelling of plant protection products (PPPs) (pesticides). Directive 78/631/EEC on the classification, packaging and labelling of pesticides will therefore be repealed. The **classification of PPPs** will improve the level of protection against them by requiring evaluation of all properties dangerous to health, and not just acute toxicity as at present. The **labelling of PPPs**

will be based on a combination of their classification under the proposal and the result of risk assessments carried out in the context of their authorization (marketing Directive 91/414/EEC). Therefore, detailed labelling rules will not be drawn up until later.

- Classification criteria for preparations that are "dangerous for the environment", in line with the 1992 revision of Directive 67/548/EEC on dangerous substances. Suppliers of preparations (including pesticides) will have to evaluate the dangers they present to both the aquatic and non-aquatic environment by computer modelling or direct testing.
- Wider provision of safety data sheets (SDS) for all dangerous preparations, giving detailed information for professional users on the chemical composition of preparations, their hazardous properties and precautionary measures for use.

Other changes are:

- introduction of biocides (non agricultural pesticides) in the scope of the directive;
- introduction of provisions for packaging, labelling and submission of an SDS for explosives and some preparations that are not classified as dangerous under the terms of the Directive but can nevertheless present certain dangers for users;
- introduction of specific labelling and packaging requirements, mainly aimed at protecting children, for preparations that are not classified as dangerous themselves but contain one or more dangerous substances;
- setting of maximum concentrations;
- performance of physico-chemical tests under good laboratory practices (GLP) to avoid repeating tests for almost identical preparations;
- revision of the maximum tolerance for variations in the concentration of preparations' constituents in repeated toxicological trials (does not apply to PPPs);
- introduction of a confidentiality procedure for substances classified on the basis of their acute lethal effects;
- harmonization of definitions with Directive 92/32/EEC (7th amendment of Directive 67/548/EEC on dangerous substances);
- introduction of other categories of danger: toxic for reproduction, sensitizing, explosive, oxidizing, extremely flammable, highly flammable and flammable;
- provision for derogations for preparations dangerous to humans and the environment if they are placed on the market in a form which does not present a risk;
- procedure for adaptation of the annexes to the directive to technical progress (as laid down by Directive 67/548/EEC on dangerous substances).

The proposal is partially a result of commitments entered into vis-à-vis Sweden and Austria when joining the EU. It is based on Article 100a of the treaty and will be dealt with under the co-decision procedure which could make the timing of adoption uncertain, although it is not scheduled to enter into force until 2003.

Gist of the opinion

This proposal brings the current directive on classification, packaging and labelling of dangerous preparations up to date, while improving the presentation and introducing some new elements. Most of the proposed changes are timely and necessary, and the Committee approves the proposal subject to the comments below.

Introduction of plant-protection products (PPPs): the Committee proposes that an annex under this directive give clear, unambiguous rules for labelling these products and to amend Directive 91/414/EEC as necessary, all of which needs to be achieved at the latest when the proposal comes into force.

Extension of safety data sheets (SDS): full data sheets are justified in those cases where one substance has exposure limits at the workplace. In the case where one component substance poses health hazards (within the context of Article 16), there should be simplified information sheets giving only those details which are really needed for users or consumers.

Environmental dangers: the annexes should deal only with the technical parts of the assessments, this would allow more rapid adaptations of the technical part in line with progress.

Evaluation of health hazards: it needs to be made clear that the increase in the permitted variations only applies in the rare cases where properties of the preparation are first assessed by testing rather than by calculation from the constituents.

Risk and safety advice phrases: the information given on the label must be really necessary and intelligible. The Commission should carry out a study on the need for existing labelling and how this is understood by the general public and users.

Dates of application: application should start from the date of actual publication in the OJ with a five-year transition period.

II. FUTURE WORK

Environment Section

- Labelling and presentation of foodstuffs for the final consumer
COM(97) 20 final - 97/0027 COD
Deadline: July

Industry Section

- Minimum level of training for seafarers
COM(96) 470 final - 96/0240 SYN
Deadline: April
- Safety of aircraft from non-EU states using EU airports
COM(97) 55 final - 97/0039 SYN
Deadline: July

Economic Section

- VAT on telecommunications services
COM(97) 4 final - 97/0030 CNS
Deadline: May/July

IN ANTICIPATION

Environment Section

- Sulphur content of certain fuels and Community strategy to combat acidification
COM(97) 88 final
Deadline: July

Industry Section

- Motor vehicles and trailers designed to carry dangerous goods by road
COM(96) 555 final - 96/0267 COD
Deadline: July
- Media ownership in the internal market
COM(97) 86 final
Deadline: Not yet set
- Action plan for satellite communications - information society
COM(97) 91 final
Deadline: Not yet set

Regional Development Section

- Cohesion and the information society
COM(97) 7 final
Deadline: Not yet set

Transport Section

- Relations between Member States and non-EU states in the field of maritime transport
COM(96) 707 final - 97/0012 SYN
Deadline: September

Social Affairs Section

- Action programme in education - Socrates
COM(97) 99 final - 97/0103 COD
Deadline: May
- Modernization and improvement of social protection
COM(97) 102 final
Deadline: Not yet set

Agriculture Section

- Support system for certain arable crops
COM(97) 83 final - 97/0063 CNS
Deadline: May
- Common organization of the market - hops
COM(97) 98 final
Deadline: July

OWN-INITIATIVE OPINIONS

Environment Section

- Voluntary environmental agreements
Deadline: May

Industry Section

- Freedom to set up a business in the Single Market (Single Market Observatory)
Deadline: Second half of 1997
- Consumers in the insurance market (Single Market Observatory)
Deadline: Second half of 1997

Regional Development Section

- The role of the economic and social partners in the various frontier regions and in the INTERREG programmes
Deadline: July
- Sustainable development in building and housing in Europe
Deadline: September

Energy Section

- Impact on SMEs of the steady, widespread reduction in funds allocated to RTD in the EU (at Community and national level)
Deadline: July
- Improved nuclear safety in central and eastern Europe
Deadline: December

Social Section

- Cooperation with solidarity associations and the socio-economic players
Deadline: July

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Social Section

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Deadline: July

Agriculture Section

- Olive oil sector and options for the reform of this sector
Deadline: May
- Role of middlemen - from production to consumption - in the setting of food prices
Deadline: July
- Consequences of and outlook for seasonal work and migration in the countryside
Deadline: July

External Relations Section

- Enlargement of the European Union
Deadline: July
- Relations between the European Union and certain countries in south-eastern Europe
Deadline: July

Economic Section

- Arrangements for the third stage of Economic and Monetary Union: stability and growth pact to ensure budget discipline, tighter convergence procedures, new exchange-rate mechanisms
Deadline: May
- New systems and means of payment
Deadline: second half of 1997

Section to be decided

- Asbestos
Deadline: second half of 1997

Sub-committee

- Combating sex tourism involving children
Deadline: to be decided

III. PRESENCE AND INFLUENCE OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

The President's activities

On 6 March, in Brussels, Mr Jenkins met Mr Liam Berney, President of ECUP/Youth

On 13 March Mr Jenkins met Commissioner Mrs Wulf Mathies and Ambassador Kasel, Permanent Representative of Luxembourg.

On 19 March Mr Jenkins met Mr Danny Meyer, President of the Federation of ACP National Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Other Economic Operators, and Mrs de Vos van Steenwijk, President of ATD - Fourth World.

During the Plenary Session, Mr Jenkins made a statement on 21 March, the International Day against Racism. He reiterated the support of the Committee for the European Year Against Racism, and associated it formally with the Joint Declaration of Intent of the Council, Parliament and Commission. He said that the Committee will be contributing to the year through specific activities here in Brussels. Members will also be acting at home through their organizations. At institutional level, the Committee approved the proposal to set up a European Monitoring Centre for Racism and Xenophobia. The Committee also called for a Treaty provision banning discrimination on grounds of sex, colour, opinions and beliefs.

Activities of sections and members

Mr Whitworth, of the Section for Transport and Communications, represented the Committee at the conference on "The pan-European dimension of rail transport - challenges, opportunities and responsibilities" in Warsaw on 6 March.

Mr Boisserée, member of the Section for Protection of the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Affairs and rapporteur for the European Commission's Green Paper on noise pollution, attended the Club de Bruxelles' conference on "The new European Policy on Noise Pollution" in Brussels on 7 March.

On 7 March 1997, the EU Commission organized a Conference on "Priorities for the Single Market". A number of economic and social organizations in the Member States were brought together and the aim was to get feedback on the Commission's report. "The impact and effectiveness of the Single Market" as well as proposals for actions that are needed to intensify the completion of the Single Market before 1.01.1999, when the Euro will be introduced.

The views received on this day thus served as input to the planned action programme that the Commission will present on the Amsterdam summit.

The four themes for the day were:

- Implementation and enforcement of single market legislation
- Reducing the burden of over-regulation
- Completing the single market regulatory framework
- The single market and other Community policies.

Participants from the ESC were: Mr Vever, chairman of the single market standing study group (SMSSG), Mr Aspinall, Mr Cal, Mr Gauder, Mr Jaschick, Mr Moreland, Mr Schmitz (all members of the SMSSG).

The industry, commerce, crafts and services section's study group on "Competition policy/Vertical restraints" organized a hearing in Brussels on 14 March.

Mr von der Decken, rapporteur for the opinion on the "White Paper: a strategy for revitalising the Community's railways" attended the "Railway frontiers in a frontier-free Europe" event organized jointly by the Deutsches Verkehrsforum, the Netherlands Railforum and the European Railways Community in Brussels on 21 March.

On the same day Mr Gafo-Fernandez, president of the section for energy, nuclear questions and research, attended

- the conference "Towards a Community action programme for renewable sources", and
- a round table conference on "The future role of renewables in EU energy policy"

organized by the Commission's DG XVII (energy).

Publication

"Towards the wider Europe"

This is a thought-provoking book by two confirmed Europeans who devote their working lives to building the Community. It makes a committed contribution to the debate on the future of the European Union.

After sustained dialogue over many years Mr Henri Malosse of the ESC and Mr Bernard Huchet, a senior civil servant, close to the Gaullist movement, have produced an analysis of the Community, which respects both national and federal traditions.

They reach the conclusion that Europe's dual role as a Community and intergovernmental structure is its greatest advantage.

Other activities

"Which single market for the single currency?" - Hearing held at the Economic and Social Committee, Brussels, 5 March 1997.

The hearing was chaired by Mr Bruno Vever, president of the ESC's permanent study group on the single market observatory, and was attended by Mr Harrison, European Parliament rapporteur, Mr Pasotti, ESC rapporteur, and Mr Mogg, director-general of Commission DG XV. Four sessions were held dealing with: freedom of movement of goods; freedom to provide services; fiscal harmonization; and free movement of persons. A committee information stand was available for visitors.

Mr Andrade, Mr Baeza and Mr Strauss attended the 24th session of the ACP/EU joint assembly in Brussels from 17/21 March: The next annual conference of representatives of the ACP/EU economic and social interest groups will be on 13, 14 and 15 October 1997, the subject being.

Conditions for successful integration of the ACP States into international trade:

- factors which could impede integration
- key factors for the future
- impact on North/South co-operation.

Relations with economic and social councils

Birth of a worldwide organization of economic and social councils - Representatives of economic and social councils and similar institutions from 35 countries (including Europe, Africa, Latin America, China, Russia and South Africa) met in Caracas on 7/8 March at the invitation of the Venezuelan national council to set up an international organization to promote democratic dialogue between the main economic and social players in

our societies. The organization would be a legal entity with headquarters and a permanent secretariat in a member state yet to be appointed.

IV. INFORMATION VISITS

During the period covered by this bulletin the ESC hosted the following information visits:

3 March 1997:	Magistrats français, France
4 March 1997	CECALE, Spain
5 March 1997	Bisowe des DBB (Bildungsdienst, Sozialwerk und Akademie of the Deutschen Beamtenbund) Bonn, Germany
5 March 1997	Istituto Tecnico Commerciale Walther, Italy
6 March 1997	HLK Tilburg, Netherlands
6 March 1997	HIEPSO, Belgium
10 March 1997	University of South Carolina, United States
10 March 1997	Building Professionals Association, United Kingdom
10 March 1997	University of Northumbria, United Kingdom
11 March 1997	EUROVIAS, Spain
11 March 1997	Missions d'appui aux programmes communautaires, France
13 March 1997	Instituto Politecnico de Castello Branco, Portugal
13 March 1997	FOGT, Denmark
14 March 1997	Universit� de Minho, Portugal
14 March 1997	University of Wales, United Kingdom
17 March 1997	Tameside College, United Kingdom
17 March 1997	Shrewsbury College, United Kingdom
18 March 1997	University of Kent, United Kingdom
19 March 1997	University of Luton, United Kingdom
19 March 1997	The London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom
20 March 1997	Sector Opleidingen Sociale Arbeid (SOSA), Netherlands
20 March 1997	Bisowe des DBB, Germany
20 March 1997	Conf�d�ration fran�aise pour l'habitation, l'urbanisme, l'am�nagement du territoire et l'environnement (Cofhuat), France

