

EURO INFO CENTRES

ANNUAL REPORT

1992-93



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DIRECTORATE-GENERAL XXIII

European Commission

EURO INFO CENTRES

ANNUAL REPORT 1992-93

Directorate-General for Enterprise Policy, Distributive Trades,
Tourism and Cooperatives

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1. The Commission Member responsible for enterprise policy, Mr Raniero Vanni d'Archirafi.

Introduction

This is the third edition of the annual report on the Euro Info Centre network. It presents the main developments that have taken place in the period of 18 months from 1 July 1992 to 31 December 1993.

The period covered by this report was marked by the inauguration of the single market, which gave enterprises, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the opportunity to add a European dimension to their strategies and day-to-day practice. With the constantly increasing pressure to be competitive, the Union has strengthened the position of SMEs as the driving force behind European integration.

In their conclusions, the European Council meetings in Edinburgh on 11 and 12 December 1992 and in Copenhagen on 21 and 22 June 1993 endorsed the role of SMEs as vehicles of growth for the European economy:

- the Edinburgh Council in particular laid down the principles for an 'action programme for Member States and the Community to encourage growth and fight unemployment', stressing in this context the importance of small and medium-sized enterprises for creating jobs and stimulating growth;
- the Copenhagen Council developed the principles laid down in Edinburgh and proposed short-term measures to assist SMEs.

Council Decision 93/379/EEC of 14 June 1993¹ on the multiannual programme of Community actions to support enterprises confirmed the Commission's response to the Council's previous resolution of

¹ OJ L 161, 2.7.1993, p. 68.

17 June 1992,² inviting it to present, by the end of 1992, a new general programme for the years 1993-97.

Finally, after the ratification of the Treaty of Maastricht by the Twelve, the Internal Market Council held in Brussels on 11 November 1993 adopted a resolution to increase the competitiveness of enterprises, especially SMEs and craft enterprises, and to increase employment in the Community.

This gave the Euro Info Centre network a particularly favourable context in which to develop its role fully, in particular:

- (i) by increasing the extent of their cooperation with enterprises themselves and with the whole range of local economic agencies and consequently confirming their position as relay stations for the Commission's services to enterprises;
- (ii) by developing and intensifying the cooperation between specialized EIC working groups and the corresponding specialist services of the Commission, providing the latter with feedback and the EICs with an ability to anticipate developments — a source of added value in an increasingly competitive Community information market;
- (iii) lastly, by means of exchanges of information, within specialized training workshops, between EICs and persons responsible for Community programmes, thus making a significant contribution to the development of the network effect.

We are witnessing a refining of the services provided to enterprises and a growing professionalism in the machinery for transferring and disseminating information.

At the same time, the role of correspondence centres was confirmed by the Council Decision of 14 June 1993, thereby giving the network an international dimension and extending it not just to the European Economic Area, but also to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean countries.

² OJ C 178, 15.7.1992, p. 8.

I — The EIC network in 1992-93

1. CONFIGURATION OF THE NETWORK

In the last 18 months, the network — consolidated since the end of 1991 — has experienced a variety of adjustments and changes.

It continued to open itself up to non-member countries, taking the number of officially recognized correspondence centres to 15.

Changes

On 31 December 1993, the network comprised 206 Euro Info Centres, 13 of which were given satellite status, distributed as follows:

Belgium	14	and 1 for 'cooperatives'
Denmark	8	
Germany	32	
Greece	13	
Spain	26	
France	32	
Ireland	6	
Italy	29	
Luxembourg	2	
Netherlands	8	
Portugal	12	
United Kingdom	23	

The changes to the network are the result of a number of factors, in particular changes to host structures, withdrawals from the network — some without replacement — and changes in EIC/satellite status. One specific EIC comprising the main organizations specializing in the co-operatives sector also joined the network.

Six EICs have experienced a change in host structure:

- Cáceres (ES-210) has moved from Sodiex (Sociedad para el Desarrollo industrial de Extremadura) to Ayuntamiento de Cáceres (town hall);
- the Istituto nazionale per il commercio estero (ICE) in Milan took the EIC over from the LEGA (IT-373 Roma) during the second half of 1992;
- Mondimpresa, with the support of the Banca Popolare Sant'Angelo and the Region of Calabria, now runs the former Palermo EIC (IT-366) previously run by Meridionale Sviluppo SpA;
- Diemen (NL-454), run by the Instituut Midden- en Kleinbedrijf Nederland, was transferred to the Amsterdam Chamber of Commerce and Industry at the beginning of September 1993;
- in November 1992 Munich (DE-115), Industrie- und Handelskammer für München und Oberbayern, replaced Frankfurt (DE-115), which left the network in 1991. The Frankfurt satellite, Omnibera in Bonn (DE-130), retained its status;
- Paris (FR-271), ANVAR, left the network in July 1992 and was replaced by Versailles (FR-271), Île de France Regional Chamber of Commerce and Industry, previously joint host structure of the Paris EIC (FR-274).

During the same period there were also four changes in EIC/satellite status:

- Osnabrück (DE-128), a satellite of Bielefeld (DE-110), acquired the status of Euro Info Centre when the latter left the network in June 1993;
- Pointe-à-Pitre (FR-284) did likewise at the end of 1993, when Basse Terre (FR-257) left the network;

- Bradford (UK-571) — a satellite of Leeds — and Leeds (UK-560)(YHDA) — Bradford's parent EIC — have exchanged their statuses: Bradford (WYEBIC) has become a Euro Info Centre, Leeds a member of the Bradford subnetwork;
- Hull (UK-560)(HEBIC) — formerly a joint structure host of the Leeds EIC — now has satellite status.

Special case: a Euro Info Centre for the cooperatives sector

ARIES, Association réseau d'information de l'économie sociale, obtained EIC status and joined the network in September 1992. Based in Brussels, this EIC brings together eight European partners or organizations representing associations/foundations, cooperatives and mutual insurance associations. ARIES offers a telematic link connecting such bodies with each other at European, national, regional and local levels, thus improving and promoting the transparency of information; ARIES contributes to the completion of Europe by highlighting in particular the role of operators within the cooperatives sector and promoting the search for and combination of partners.

Development of correspondence centres

Consolidation of the existing network and extension into non-member countries over the last two years was confirmed by the Council Decision of 14 June 1993 on the multiannual programme of Community actions to support enterprises. This decision envisages in particular an intensification and expansion of Community information to enterprises for the purpose of completing the single market. With this in mind, Annex I provides for 'the extension of the network of correspondence centres to the European Economic Area (EEA), to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CCEE) and to the Mediterranean countries, in particular the Maghreb countries, within the framework of specific actions to assist those countries'.

Since mid-1992 the network has welcomed nine new correspondence centres (EICCs). After Warsaw, Prague, Vienna, Helsinki, Oslo and

Zurich, the network now has official partners in Sofia, Nicosia, Budapest, Tel Aviv, Reykjavik, Stockholm, Ljubljana, Bratislava and Ankara. The principle of reciprocity governing the extension of the network has been followed. Generally speaking, we find a very high level of integration of the EICCs, with the network effect being confirmed beyond the frontiers of the Union.

It is planned to set up centres in Romania, Morocco and Malta in the near future. In 1994 expansion of the network is also planned in the Baltic republics and in Tunisia.

In addition, the recent events in the Middle East will very probably cause the Commission to propose centres in countries such as Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Syria as well as in the Occupied Territories, in accordance with the Commission communication on the future of relations and cooperation between the Community and the Middle East.³

Even if, after an initial phase of 'going European', the network is now 'going international', there are no plans just for the sake of it of 'going worldwide'.

Indeed, while participation in the network is very much sought by countries in geographically remote areas such as the Far East or Latin America, for these regions DG XXIII recommends that relay stations be set up on the initiative of EICs with an international orientation.

This approach is based on the experience already gained by some EICs such as Liège (BE-010) in Moscow, Tournai (BE-014) in Tallinn (priority area), Rostock (DE-134) in Riga (priority area), Nijmegen (NL-457) in Indonesia and Lisbon (PT-502) in Macao.

Finally, an 'external relations' specialized group was set up within the network in October 1993, bringing together EICs specializing in the field. DG XXIII has suggested that with their host structures they examine the possibility of creating new relay stations in the remoter regions of the Union where there are no plans to open EICCs at present.

³ COM(93) 375 final, 8.9.1993.



2. Tel-Aviv (IL-695), opening ceremony of the EICC, 4 November 1993; from left to right: D. Litvak, Israel Export Institute; R. Glick, Israel Export Institute; M. Harish, Israeli Minister for Industry and Trade; R. Vanni d'Archirafi, Member of the Commission; J.-P. Haber, Head of the EIC network.



3. Tel-Aviv (IL-695), opening ceremony of the EICC, 4 November 1993; view of persons in attendance, in the centre: N. C. Nielsen, Danish Technological Institute, speaker at the fourth annual EIC conference in Elsinore, who gave a talk on 'Network cooperation — ensuring SMEs remain competitive in a global economy'.

2. THE DEVELOPING ROLE OF THE EURO INFO CENTRES

The conclusions of the European Councils of Edinburgh (11 and 12 December 1992) and Copenhagen (21 and 22 June 1993) vindicated the role that the Euro Info Centres have adopted in that the Heads of State or Government of the Twelve reaffirmed the importance of SMEs for job creation and the stimulation of growth and proposed a series of measures concerning them. These were specified in the Council Decision of 14 June 1993⁴ which laid down the framework for a 'multi-annual programme of Community actions to strengthen the priorities and ensure the continuity and consolidation of Community enterprise policy, in particular for SMEs'. With this in mind, the Council allocated an indicative sum of ECU 112.2 million for the period 1993-96 (with more than one quarter of this amount being earmarked for enterprises' access to Community information).

For the first time on 11 November 1993, SMEs were the subject of a specific Council of Ministers. This meeting adopted a resolution on the strengthening of small and medium-sized enterprises and craft enterprises and the development of employment,⁵ based on a memorandum prepared by the Belgian Presidency of the Council of Ministers. In particular, the resolution calls on the Commission to examine as quickly as possible specific proposals for an integrated programme for SMEs and craft enterprises in the form of a CIP (Community initiative programme); a proposal will be submitted in early 1994.

Finally, SMEs have a central place in the White Paper entitled 'Growth, competitiveness, employment — The challenges and ways forward into the 21st century',⁶ which was submitted to and approved by

⁴ OJ L 161, 2.7.1993, p. 68.

⁵ OJ C 326, 3.12.1993, Council Resolution of 22 November 1993 on the strengthening of the competitiveness of enterprises, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises and craft enterprises, and the development of employment, pp. 1-4.

⁶ COM(93) 700 final.

the Council of the European Union on 11 and 12 December 1993 in Brussels.

In the light of these developments, it is clear that the very role of the EICs has changed over the period under review. Their role can now be described under three main headings:

- (a) a *general information role* for enterprises on Community policies and programmes directly affecting enterprises: this is the 'generalist' dimension or function performed by the EIC. We also find that a growing number of EICs have developed a much expanded information service in specific fields reflecting either a response to the economic and social circumstances of their region or particular expertise in one or more areas: this is the 'specialist' function offered by the EICs. Several EICs have developed original alerting systems (advance information or information watch), providing targeted and swift transmission of complete information on a routine basis (see, for example, the initiatives by the Glasgow, Bilbao and Nijmegen EICs in the field of public procurement). Thus, the EIC is increasingly offering a value-added service to help enterprises to cope with a glut of information;
- (b) a *feedback role* — to the Commission — on regional conditions and the local economic circumstances. This is the result of the contacts between the EICs and other agencies in the local economy. These contacts also give the EIC the ability to identify SMEs likely to participate successfully in Community programmes;
- (c) an *assistance and advice role* to enterprises, to promote greater SME involvement in Community programmes. The aim is to compile dossiers, to make use of the network effect to get to know other countries' legislation or to draft dossiers in other Community languages in order to help them to overcome the discouragement that entrepreneurs sometimes feel when faced with the practical difficulties encountered in taking an effective part in Community programmes. With this in mind, the EIC encourages partnerships with enterprises in other countries in order to promote a Europeanization of the full range of their business functions (production,

management, finance, marketing, etc.). As such, the EICs are prompting SMEs to develop a strategic vision in their approach to the single market.

Together, these tasks encourage European enterprises to 'go' European or international and especially in developing new forms of partnership involving the Commission, enterprises and their representative organizations at regional and local levels.

The year 1993 was a time for expanding and enhancing the quality and performance of the services provided to enterprises by the EICs.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE EIC-COMMISSION DIALOGUE

A — Monitoring

The monitoring group — composed of two or three EIC representatives per Member State — was relaunched in September 1992, meeting three or four times a year. Chaired by Mr Ranieri Bombassei, Director at DG XXIII responsible for Community action to support enterprises, the monitoring group has a key role in the communication between DG XXIII and the EICs in relation to the definition of the needs of the network and of the incentives required to ensure the effective fulfilment of its tasks.

The EICs taking part in these meetings have a number of functions:

- (i) they ascertain from their colleagues the priorities for the meeting's agenda: notification and catalyst role;
- (ii) They take an active part in the meetings organized by DG XXIII in Brussels, where the points of view of all representatives are heard and discussed;

- (iii) They have a reporting responsibility in that they are required to inform DG XXIII of the reactions of the EICs in their Member State;
- (iv) They act as relays on urgent matters between the EICs in their Member State and DG XXIII;
- (v) Lastly, they attend other meetings to which DG XXIII invites them as observers.

Five working groups have been set up within the monitoring group (finance, information products, promotion, balance and perspectives, training) and these discuss the main events governing the life of the project (selection and distribution of information products; in-service training; promotional activities; European Week for Business; synergy between Community networks, etc.).

B — Towards quality management

On 1 August 1992 the former evaluation service was replaced by a new audit service which became responsible for analysing activities of the whole network and, consequently, for making specific proposals to help it to improve its services. The audit is based chiefly on the information contained in the quarterly management reports sent by the EICs to the central administration and on visits made to members of the network. This allows a regular dialogue to take place between the network and the Commission.

The EICs' activities are shown in a balance and perspectives grid included in the half-yearly audit report. Adopting the principles contained in the standard ISO 9004.2 on service quality, this report analyses the activities of a six-month period and suggests ways of improving the EICs' services. For the study to be complete, the audit is based on a defined set of criteria as follows:

Information and use of information

The EICs provide enterprises with information by responding to their questions or by undertaking a variety of other activities such as the

creation and management of databases or specialized information products, writing and distributing newsletters or organizing seminars. All EIC activities to facilitate and accelerate the dissemination of Community information to enterprises come within this remit.

Promotion

Promotion is an essential evaluation criterion for increasing the impact of the EIC network in the market-place and increasing awareness of it among enterprises. It includes all individual contributions (promotional tools, use of the mass media, direct marketing, direct contacts with enterprises and business organizations, participation in or organization of fairs, etc.) likely to increase enterprises' involvement in Community programmes.

Promotional activity is influenced by the particular features of each country and access to the media differs from one country to another.

The EICs' relay stations also play a not insignificant role in the process of disseminating information.

Relations with other EICs and contribution to the network effect

The network has more than 200 centres across Europe. It is therefore important to make maximum use of the potential of the network effect, enabling each EIC to benefit from the experience of all the other centres.

The network and its potential will therefore be enhanced by close co-operation among EICs. The EICs' specializations are a very clear example of the transfer of experience within the network.

Links between the EICs are evident from the exchange of questions concerning different national and local laws, although interest in co-operation between enterprises is growing steadily.

Contacts between EICs have in particular developed during the seminars, training sessions and meetings of working groups organized by the

central administration. Some EICs have begun to cooperate with neighbouring colleagues.

We are thus speaking about all actions that give the network life and dynamism; from the establishment of relations with correspondence centres and external relay stations to feeder activities within the geographical territory covered by a Euro Info Centre's activity.

Relations with the central administration

The central administration has always tried to meet the EICs' needs and to satisfy their individual expectations, despite the variety and relative heterogeneity of the network.

The decision to give the EICs a new electronic mail system — VANS — offering users a wide range of applications, demonstrates the desire to improve the quality of the services offered by the whole network. Dialogue between the EICs and the central administration mainly takes the form of monitoring-group meetings, specialized working groups, targeted questionnaires sent by the central administration, the provision of feedback on regional aspects, etc.

This section shows how assiduous EICs are in performing commonly identified tasks — participation in the types of dialogue, as described above.

Contractual relations and internal organization of the EIC

This evaluation criterion concerns the EIC's internal composition and the financial resources it has available.

It has been found that changes in EIC personnel, in particular, can sometimes disrupt the smooth running of activities.

This final criterion enables verification as to whether the EIC — with the help of its host structure — is meeting the contractual obligations agreed with DG XXIII, in particular as regards the availability of personnel and working tools; use of the logo; existence of a documentation centre, etc.

Apart from evaluating the services provided by the EICs by introducing the standard ISO 9004.2 on the quality of services, the audit service seeks to steer the network towards more efficient management. The standard consists of a series of recommendations for setting up a quality system.

A management policy based on quality aims to define the major objectives of EICs, and any preparation of the balance must necessarily consider the network's future direction. In order to do this, each EIC must take into consideration a series of factors that are essential for management by objectives, such as:

- (i) establishing a marketing plan;
- (ii) jointly setting objectives on the basis of the resources available to the EIC;
- (iii) conducting surveys to measure customer satisfaction.

Integrating these factors into the EIC's daily management will help to improve the network's results.

II — The Commission at the service of the EICs

1. THE INFORMATION SERVICE

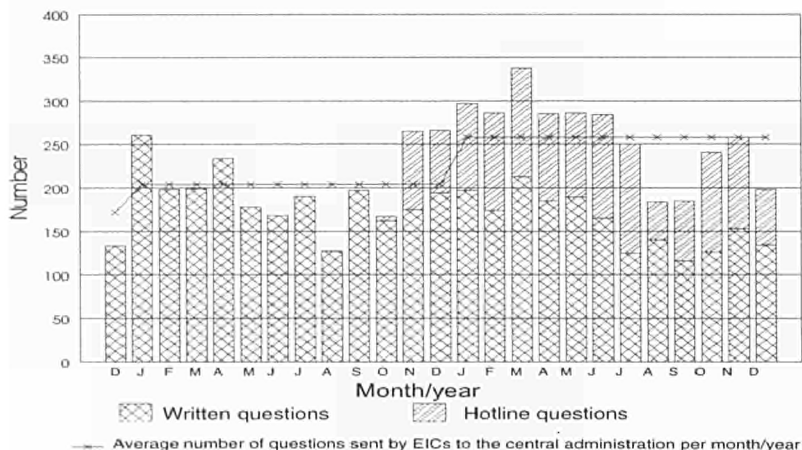
A — Questions/answers

Six information officers answer the questions submitted daily by the Euro Info Centres. During 1992 and 1993, 2 450 and 3 092 files respectively were processed, in comparison to 2 070 in 1991.

Graph 1

EIC central administration — December 1991 to December 1993

Number of questions sent per month by the EICs to the central administration



Base: (1992) 2 450 written and hotline questions
(1993) 3 092 written and hotline questions

The questions recorded in 1992 came from 191 EICs and 1 EICC; in 1993 the figure given relates to 184 EICs and 11 EICCs.

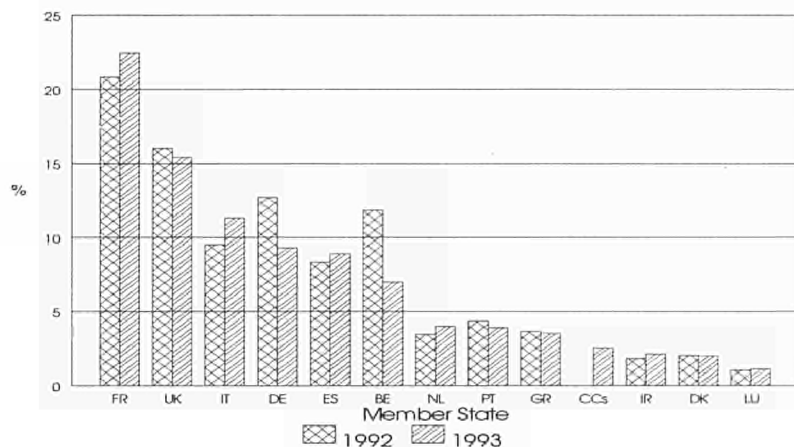
Breakdown by country

The total number of questions submitted to the central administration by the EICs in each country breaks down as follows:

Graph 2

EIC central administration — January to December 1992 and 1993

Percentage by country of the number of questions sent to the central administration



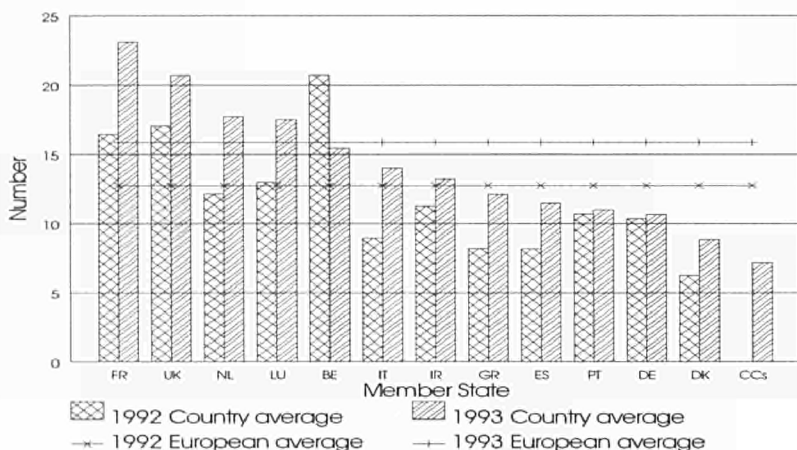
Comparing the number of questions recorded per country with the respective number of EICs, it appears that in 1992, as in 1991, Belgium, France and the United Kingdom were the biggest users of the central administration's information service. In 1993 we find a very large in-

crease in the number of questions sent by Dutch and Luxembourg EICs. Apart from Belgium, which has the reverse trend, there has been an increase in the demands on the central administration for information in the case of every country.

Graph 3

EIC central administration — January to December 1992 and 1993

Weighted average number of questions sent to the central administration, by country



Analysis by subject

Analysis of the 2 450 questions to the central administration recorded in 1992 and the 3 092 questions recorded in 1993 shows a great similarity with 1991.

The classification of these questions by subject (CELEX code) gives the comparative table below:

Table 1

Questions from EICs to the central administration from January to December 1991, 1992 and 1993

Classification by subject (CELEX code)

CELEX code	Sector	1993 %	1992 %	1991 %
1	General, financial and institutional matters	2.1	2.5	3.2
2	Customs union and free movement of goods	1.2	1.8	1.3
3	Agriculture	4.2	4.0	4.8
4	Fisheries	0.5	0.6	0.3
5	Freedom of movement for workers and social policy	5.7	5.3	4.4
6	Right of establishment and freedom to provide services	3.2	3.5	3.4
7	Transport policy	2.8	1.9	2.5
8	Competition policy	2.5	2.3	2.2
9	Taxation	5.0	2.9	2.1
10	Economic and monetary policy and free movement of capital	0.3	0.5	0.2
11	External relations (including development policy)	11.6	11.4	10.7
12	Energy	1.1	1.6	0.7
13	Industrial policy and internal market	15.6	16.0	19.3
14	Regional policy and coordination of structural instruments	6.8	7.7	8.4
15	Environment, consumers and health protection	9.4	8.3	8.4
16	Research, information, education and statistics	9.6	10.2	11.3
17	Law relating to enterprises	4.6	2.0	2.4
	Unidentified	13.8	17.4	14.4
Total number of questions submitted to the central administration		3 092	2 450	2 070

As in 1991, the questions on industrial policy and the internal market reflect the interest shown by enterprises on the eve of the completion of the single market, a trend which has continued since it came into force in 1993. In 1993 there are more questions on external relations than on research, which are down (in percentage terms) on the previous year.

On the other hand, there is an increase in questions on freedom of movement for workers, taxation, energy, the environment and law relating to enterprises.

To provide an idea of the questions handled by the information officers, the following gives examples for 1992 and 1993 in the main areas of interest for enterprises:

Customs union and free movement of goods

Will the Commission ensure that the differences between cross-border cash-on-delivery systems do not interfere with the free movement of goods and services?

What origin is ascribed to clothing — stockings and anoraks in this case — made in China from materials originating in the Community?

Social policy

Are there any systems of EC aid for refugees setting up in the Community, in particular for refugees from Central and Eastern Europe?

Are there any regulations harmonizing companies' obligations as regards professional training?

Right of establishment and freedom to provide services

Is a Hungarian surgeon resident in the United Kingdom entitled to recognition of his general and specialist medicine qualifications, which were obtained in Hungary?

Taxation

Does the new VAT system require a French businessman to have a tax representative in Belgium if he provides services in that country?

Offsetting part of the employer's social contributions against VAT in the various EC countries would allow the cost of extra-EC imports to be increased and the cost of extra-EC exports to be reduced, and would have no effect on the cost of internal EC products. Can such an idea be put into effect quickly?

External relations

Can a company in Martinique obtain Community financial aid to set up a joint venture in Brazil?

Are the EC-USA reciprocity agreements respected as regards access to public contracts?

Does the Commission have the will and the means to restore international fair play in textiles, especially in relation to social dumping?

Internal market

Is it possible for a Greek entrepreneur to build an olive processing and packaging plant near a cement works?

Can a French enterprise today directly approach a German finance company for cover for its export risk?

Regional policy and coordination of structural instruments

Who can benefit from the SAPIC exchange of experience programme?

Environment, consumers

Can a German retail chain distributing Danish products in Germany display a German description of the contents of the goods on a sign instead of making a full translation of the Danish label?

Is there any Community legislation on the fuels used in speed-boats with four-stroke engines in areas where the fauna and flora are protected?

Research, information, education and statistics

What links are there between the Community and Argentina in relation to international scientific cooperation?

Are there any Community programmes which promote the biological destruction of waste and/or of toxic substances from industry?

Is there in Europe any kind of store of technological monitoring questions, in particular concerning synthetic materials?

What type of funding is provided for in the Community budget for projects in the field of the architectural heritage?

B — Information products

The Community documentary sources essential for the daily work of the Euro Info Centres are complemented by products targeted to their specific needs and prepared by the central administration on the basis of current legislation. They aim to provide directly operational information for the whole of the network.

(a) Info Flash

The *Info Flash* bulletin — a selection of information on Community current events — has changed from daily to three times a week. The

network's information service now produces this compilation of decisions, proposals, initiatives and/or orientations issued by the European institutions from press agency material, the EFTA Bulletin and communiques from such bodies as UNICE, ETUC, BEUC, etc. This in-house production enables the information to be better targeted to the Euro Info Centres' real needs and expectations.

In all, 220 *Info Flash* bulletins were distributed in 1992 and 106 in 1993.

(b) 'Euro Info Centre News' (monthly newsletter)

As described in the last annual report, this monthly publication continues to feed the network with selective information on EIC activities, Community news, initiatives for Central and Eastern Europe and EFTA. It also gives a sample of the questions/answers dealt with by the central administration and lists EIC or other publications likely to be useful to the network. A list of calls for tender/deadlines in the Official Journal and of seminars, conferences and workshops is also provided.

In addition to the four issues produced in the first half of the year, six issues were distributed in the second half of 1992 and 11 in 1993.

(c) 'Info Business'

The last two issues of the network's contact magazine were devoted respectively to:

- the third EIC annual conference in Funchal (July 1992), and
- Maastricht and the role of the EICs (December 1992).

This publication was not repeated in 1993.

(d) 'Fact sheets'

Sixteen additional sheets were added to the 26 in existence in mid-1992⁷ and were distributed to the network from mid-1992 to the end

⁷ See 1991-92 report.

of 1993. The subjects dealt with are:

- value-added tax (VAT);
- the specific consequences of the Maastricht agreements;
- the European Economic Area;
- the enlargement of the European Community;
- reform of the common agricultural policy;
- the internal market;
- Community aids to SMEs;
- intellectual property: copyright and related rights;
- the Community system for awarding the eco-label;
- the Community and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe;
- revision of the Community's trade protection instruments;
- the GATT trade talks: tariff and non-tariff agreements;
- public service contracts;
- the social charter;
- Thermie;
- the Centre for Industrial Development (CID) — an aspect of Community development policy.

These mini-dossiers are produced in the nine official languages and are available upon request from the network's central administration in Brussels.

(e) 'Info Markets'

This weekly newsletter distributed by VANS contains a selection of the invitations to tender — relevant to the EICs — held in the TED database. The issuing departments are contacted in advance to clarify any ambiguities in the text. This service has been bilingual in French and English since the start of 1993.

C — Capitalization

A new service made available to the whole of the network in the second half of 1992 by means of a database (DOSS) accessible through a workstation (ERIC 4.0), 'capitalization' aims, on the one hand, to provide information on companies' queries that may help to develop enterprise policy and, on the other, to answer questions more quickly by avoiding research that may already have been done by other users.

The principle rests on a classification of all the questions and answers submitted by firms to the EICs being included in a database which is then also accessible to them. Furthermore, it allows DG XXIII to identify and meet in advance a firm's potential needs and problems, alerting relevant Directorates-General as necessary. Indeed, DG XXIII is particularly aware of the rapid growth in the information market, where the danger lies not so much in a shortage of information as in a saturation of it. The sources of information set to grow will be those which enable the entrepreneur to take a decision based on quick, reliable and operational information.

Some 5 000 dossiers have been included in the database to date. Among the network's members, 73% find the instrument effective and make use of it, considering that it offers real added value when compared to other databases.

A capitalization working group has also met on several occasions over the last 18 months in order to adapt the workstation to the EICs' information requirements. This working group has made a number of suggestions, for example, the creation of 'simple' files — capable of being completed quickly requiring the minimum input and capable of quickly generating accessible statistics, the creation of a function allowing statistical data to be exported to a spreadsheet for analysis geared to the EICs and the addition of text processing at the workstation to allow EICs to produce files using their host structure's computer system and consequently avoiding duplication of work.

Mention must also be made of the instrument's capability for producing statistics: the changeover to the ERIC 5 workstation, which will

make questions easier to encode, will allow statistics which are more representative of European companies' real concerns to be calculated on a European scale.

D — The documentation service

The documentation service, which assists the EICs in their search for information to help companies, answered 684 questions from the network in 1992 and no less than 1 686 questions in 1993. This increase reflects a growing need for selective information which is directly geared to the real needs of companies. The documentation centre also responded to 3 524 individual requests from the network for publications in 1992 and 2 059 in 1993. In addition, 8 042 mailshots were sent on its own initiative and during the period in question some 23 532 were sent by other Commission departments at its request. This is a result of the direct contacts maintained with the Community institutions (Commission, Council, EP, ESC, EIB) responsible for publications and also with other international bodies such as the Council of Europe, ILO, Unesco, or specific Brussels-based departments (Schengen Office, BEUC, Erasmus Office, Lingua Office, etc.).

It goes without saying that the documentation service maintains particularly close links with the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, which regularly distributes written information to the network (over 700 000 monographs and periodicals were dispatched in 1992 and 1993). This is evidence that the documentation sections in the various Community institutions are identifying the information that the Euro Info Centres require.

The documentation service also makes its own documentation centre (bibliographical collection, databases, subject files) available to the network's central administration in Brussels. Between January 1992 and November 1993, it handled some 11 004 publications relating to these activities.

Major activities during the period 1992-93

The documentation service closely monitored the meetings of Codifin — the committee for information strategy and dissemination — which have discussed the Commission's policy as regards the future provision of information to Community networks. It has prepared for Codifin a document listing the publications sent to the EICs and the networks of DGX which identified the costs of making these documents available.

The opening of the new correspondence centres (EICCs) required approaches to issuing departments to get the EICCs on their mailing lists and the distribution of a document listing the basic publications which are essential for starting up a centre, together with a list of the distributors' addresses. The EICCs also received *ad hoc* information on the documentation policy of the Community institutions in general in relation to the EICs and EICCs in particular.

Some specific works were also designed and/or updated, in particular the *Glossary of acronyms and abbreviations*, fourth edition (over 2 000 copies printed), the *Bibliography — DG XXIII publications*, fifth edition, the *Bibliography of EIC host structures*, which came out in April 1993, and *Community documentation — Documentation guide*, No 1/1993.

2. SPECIALIZED WORKING GROUPS

The results of a questionnaire on information services sent to the network in October 1992 clearly revealed the possibility of developing network information products that would be of benefit to the whole network and also the need to adapt DG XXIII's services as a result of the trend towards specialization which was apparent within the network. This trend also went hand in hand with recent developments in Community policy itself, most especially the growth initiative and the imple-

mentation of the internal market, which influenced the role of the EICs by favouring the development of specialization in their activities.

DG XXIII therefore suggested the formation of thematic working groups that would meet during training sessions, these giving the best opportunity for contacts and dialogue between the Euro Info Centres and the representatives of various Directorates-General involved. Fruitful contacts have developed as a result with Directorates-General XI (Environment), XV (Internal Market), XVI (Regional Policy) and XXI (Customs Union) in addition to the links already existing with DG XII (Science, Research and Development) and DG XIII (Telecommunications).

The working groups were formed around three major themes:

- (i) exploitation of the single market;
- (ii) Community programmes;
- (iii) research and development.

This specialization allows the EICs concerned more effectively to meet the challenges that arise in their task of assisting SMEs to exploit the single market or in their involvement in Community programmes.

A working group on external relations also met informally for the first time in October 1993 to decide on its priorities for action once it is set up in the first half of 1994.

Research and development

The R&D group, the oldest one, has no less than 42 members, some particularly chosen for the subject and some of them members of other Community networks such as VALUE, Sprint, Comett, OPET or the EDI awareness centres (electronic data transfer centres). The group's main activity is to organize events for the promotion of technology and R&D programmes. In 1993 some 40 initiatives were begun, covering such programmes as 'environmental research', 'industrial and materials technology' and 'technology transfer'.

The main purpose of these meetings is to give participants direct and, if possible, advance information on EC programmes' criteria and procedures. In several Member States, workshops have also dealt with the search for partners, giving an occasion for direct contacts between SMEs with a common interest in a particular programme (CRAFT, for example) or a particular sector. The experience of these EICs in advising SMEs enables them to give the Commission particularly interesting feedback (a meeting of this kind was, for instance, devoted to the CRAFT programme in July 1993).

Among the R&D group's other activities during the second half of 1993, one might mention:

- (i) a restricted meeting with DG XII on improving the management of R&D programmes in the context of the fourth framework programme;
- (ii) the first revision of an R&D group promotional document;
- (iii) future developments of the programme of events for promoting EIC R&D programmes.

Internal market

Launched at the April 1993 training session, the 'internal market' group has the following specific subgroups:

- (i) market information;
- (ii) VAT;
- (iii) public procurement.

Each subgroup has drafted a work programme and has decided upon the priorities among its projects.

Achievements include the single market questionnaire — produced with the assistance of DG XV — which was distributed in June 1993 and to which 156 EICs replied. This questionnaire, designed to collect information on the operation of the internal market (copies of the analysis are available from the central administration in Brussels), asked

EICs to answer a number of questions — from their own experience on a series of internal market issues — border checks, tests and certification, VAT, transport and distribution, public contracts, access to Community information and, finally, legal remedies. Following this, DG XV invited a panel of EICs to conduct a series of interviews with enterprises, enabling it to obtain practical information (a series of success stories) on the actual operation of the internal market. A report containing the results of these investigations was published in early 1994.

The 'public procurement' subgroup has contributed to the development of software, known as Tennis, which enables EICs to improve management of the files of those clients who are interested in public contracts (project selection, presentation of the information in an understandable form, speed of consultation); similarly, TEDautomata (software developed by the Nijmegen EIC (NL-457)) has facilitated the on-line use of the TED database and has been made accessible to the whole network.

Community programmes

The same working structure applies in relations between EICs in the Community programmes specialized group set up in July 1993, which is also divided into three subgroups:

Structural Funds

Five EICs in this subgroup (mainly from Objective 1 regions) sent DG XVI a response (opinion) on the Green Paper on Community initiatives in connection with Structural Funds for the period 1994-99.⁸ All the views of the parties involved in the consultation procedure formed the subject of a document⁹ setting out the findings on this matter as also the draft communications to the Member States on the various initiatives envisaged.

⁸ COM(93) 282, 16.6.1993.

⁹ COM(94) 46 final, 16.3.1994.

Environment

After a series of preparatory meetings and informal contacts encouraged by DG XXIII, several EICs took the initiative of jointly responding to invitations to tender published by DG XI. These included a call for proposals for information provision and awareness-raising in relation to environmental problems. DG XI selected a pilot scheme submitted by the Utrecht EIC (NL-458) in collaboration with six other EICs for the development of SAPs (self-appraisal tools) for SMEs in various key sectors of industry (textiles, car repair shops, printing, dyeing, metal industry). This project seeks to heighten awareness of environmental issues among very small firms and encourage them to apply the techniques of eco-management and move towards an eco-audit.

This exercise forms the basis of the programme for a training session intended to benefit a larger number of EICs around the end of 1994 or early 1995. In fact, it appears that the number of EICs specializing or wishing to specialize in this field has increased greatly in recent months in the light of the increasing demand from SMEs (see Table 3: increase in number of questions on environmental matters).

Training

Sixteen EICs specializing in training got together to respond — in October 1993 — to a call for proposals from the Task Force for Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth for a training programme for Community developers.¹⁰

Each EIC is free to decide whether or not to take part in one or more of these specialized groups. The aim is to reach an optimum degree of specialization and division of labour among EICs so that targeted information tools can be produced, so that specific actions based on particular interests can be pursued and finally so that feedback to and an effective dialogue with the Directorates-General can be provided.

¹⁰ OJ S 195, 6.10.1993, p. 141.

With this in mind, most EICs are advised to confine themselves to one specialist group so as not to hamper their general information activities.

Craft enterprises and small enterprises

Finally, it should be mentioned that in November 1993 a crafts/skilled trades group for very small or micro-enterprises was set up on the initiative of nine Euro Info Centres which had identified the particular needs of this sector. These included the need to define specific marketing channels and training for entrepreneurs and the need to re-examine the institutional arrangements for financing and access to technology resources.

Access to information via qualified intermediaries is vital for craft enterprises, and the creation of a subnetwork of EICs specializing in this field will give them easier access to Community programmes. It will also allow panels of enterprises to be set up (sectors concerned: building, textiles, timber, top-of-the-range food products, repairs, plastics, personal services, art trades) at regional and local level and *ad hoc* information products to be developed in the area of business cooperation and access to public contracts. Finally, a crafts/skilled trades conference will be set up on VANS (see the chapter on this subject), allowing a quick and targeted information exchange on existing national and Community programmes.

At the November 1993 meeting it was decided that the group will be closely involved in preparing for the second European Conference on Crafts, to be held in Berlin in October 1994, and in the preparatory meetings held in autumn 1993 (Brussels, 24 November 1993; Rome 9 and 10 December 1993) and in 1994 in various Member States (Düsseldorf, 2 and 3 February 1994; Lisbon, 3 and 4 March 1994; Thessaloniki, 9 to 11 March 1994; Copenhagen, 28 and 29 March 1994; Mons, 18 to 20 April 1994; Amsterdam, 9 to 11 May 1994; Barcelona, 16 to 18 May 1994; London 25 to 27 May 1994).

3. TRAINING

The demand for value-added services from the EICs and growing specialization in the network mean that every Euro Info Centre must be able to provide high-quality services. In addition to specific knowledge of Community affairs, they must demonstrate to economic operators that they have management skills and a good appreciation of the business environment. Cooperation between centres is extremely important here. Every year, in the light of all these requirements and the wishes expressed by the Euro Info Centres themselves, the training service puts together a training programme approved by DG XXIII.

At the end of 1992, the monitoring group also agreed to set up a specific working party to analyse EICs' training needs, obtain reactions to strategic proposals and on that basis to draw up the training programme for the whole of the year ahead.

The following courses were held between 1 July 1992 and 31 December 1993:

(a) 1992 sessions

- workshops on Community affairs (one session, 54 workshops, November and December);
- EIC management course (four sessions, September and November);

(b) 1993 sessions

- EIC marketing course (four sessions, February and March);
- basic course for correspondence centres (one session, February);
- specialized workshops on 'Taking advantage of the single market' (three sessions, April, July and October);
- consultancy techniques course (four sessions, September and November).

A — ‘Community affairs’ workshops

A programme of 54 different workshops was devised to allow the 100 or so EICs taking part to construct their own training modules to suit their own interests. Half of the workshops dealt with the technical aspects of subjects such as the environment, R&D, calls for tender, VAT, etc., while the other half tackled such current topics as the Treaty of Maastricht, the Delors II package, enlargement of the Community or the Schengen agreements. Many specialists, Commission officials and outside experts, made their expertise available on these occasions.

The idea of a monitoring brief involving various Directorates-General, special interest groups, representatives of industry and specialized EICs, was behind this initiative, which enabled EICs to increase their understanding of the Community decision-making process and the Commission to obtain specific information from the grass roots on the concerns and expectations of local enterprises. Both EICs and the Commission benefited from the input of sectoral organizations.

B — EIC management, marketing and consultancy courses

This course was provided in four sessions held on two occasions. On each occasion there was one course in English and one in French.

Sixty EICs underwent management training. Entitled ‘From reactive management to proactive management’, this course covered a broad range of general principles as well as specific management techniques that could be applied in the Euro Info Centres: time management, managing a team, relations with the client and other EICs, and the management of information. The aim was to improve the services provided to clients.

Some 60 other participants followed a programme entitled ‘Marketing techniques’, covering not only the theoretical aspects of marketing strategy and research, but also public relations and promotional tools. The aim was to teach EICs, which are important agencies at the regional level, to design and implement their own marketing plan.

Finally, the 'Consultancy techniques' course met a concern of EICs that they should not only be able to provide a top-quality service as far as their knowledge of Community affairs was concerned, but also from the point of view of their overall management and consultancy skills; it covered the EIC's role as a consultant, the skills required, self-appraisal models and included practical exercises.

All courses also gave participants an opportunity to develop the network effect by exchanging experience and jointly solving common problems.

C — Courses for EICCs

A programme of workshops for Euro-Info correspondence centres held from 15 to 17 February 1993 was also an occasion for a number of EICs to develop relations with the correspondence centres. This was in fact the first exercise dedicated to integrating these EICCs into the existing network. Participants included representatives of EICCs in Zurich, Vienna, Prague, Budapest, Warsaw, Helsinki, Stockholm, Oslo and Reykjavik, and of EICs in Brussels, Ghent, Bonn, Cologne, Copenhagen, Pesaro, Rome, Newcastle and Exeter.

The subjects covered included DG XXIII and the EIC project and the European Community and its policy towards EFTA and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CCEE). The course provided an opportunity for discussion with EFTA and Commission representatives.

D — Specialized workshops on 'Taking advantage of the single market'

Drawing on the experience of previous workshops and in the light of the EICs' needs for more targeted information resulting from the network's tendency to specialize, three workshop sessions were planned in 1993, each tackling a wide range of themes.

The session from 21 to 24 April 1993 on business opportunities in the single market brought together internal market experts on the first day, whereas those following were devoted to in-depth workshops on VAT, finance for SMEs, quality management, the agri-foodstuffs industry, waste management, the eco-audit and the eco-label.

The session from 14 to 16 July 1993 concerned SME involvement in Community programmes and that from 20 to 22 October 1993 external relations.

The aim was, on the one hand, to create a forum for the exchange of experience between EICs, allowing them to identify possible areas of cooperation in their field of specialization, and, on the other hand, to promote the EIC's expertise within the Commission, giving them an opportunity to make close contacts with officials and to explain the usefulness of feedback about the perception and application of Community policy by enterprises.

4. PROMOTION

The second half of 1992 saw an in-depth review of the communication strategy for the EIC network, both taken as a whole and in its application in the case of individual members of the network.

Responding to a desire for better targeting of promotional activities, the promotion team conducted a market survey and opinion poll of Euro Info Centres. The aim was to achieve a better picture as to the way in which EICs create awareness of themselves (both their strategy and specific activities) and how enterprises learned of DG XXIII initiatives in this field (European Week for Business, communication campaign handled by an advertising agency, promotional publications and tools).

After five years of the network's existence we find that the EICs' contractual obligation to promote their activities among the target public is

fulfilled differently from one country, or even one region or EIC, to another. The influence of the host structure is the determining factor, and often very much so, in the Euro Info Centre's promotional dynamism and visibility. Among the actions most frequently offered to enterprises, one might mention the production of promotional tools, the arrangement of seminars or information symposia, the distribution of information documents about Community initiatives, or attendance at fairs, generally along with the host structure.

The measures vary according to whether the EIC is part of a host structure where clients are 'given' (compulsory membership) or where customer enterprises have to be canvassed (this point will be developed in the following chapter on the services which EICs offer to enterprises).

The key factor nevertheless remains membership of a network covering the entire Community territory, which is fixed in economic operators' minds and which offers both a general information/assistance/consultancy service and specializations in all sectors of activity. These two functions are essential if enterprises are to respond.

On the basis of these observations a number of recommendations were formulated, which were discussed within the monitoring committee's working group.

In short, the marketing objective adopted by the network is one of the Europeanization and internationalization of enterprises. By constantly listening to SMEs and increasing their efforts to communicate with them, the EICs are following the line mapped out by the Edinburgh Council of 11 and 12 December 1992, which encourages actions to sustain and stimulate growth in the Community by building on the strengths of SMEs in the European economy. At the same time, the Commission undertakes to support the EICs' promotional activities.

The promotional priorities for 1993 were thus:

- (i) to redefine the EICs' tasks and to promote awareness of them by sending out targeted messages and making better use of the Euro Info Centre logo to identify the EIC service;
- (ii) to continue the publicity campaign begun at the end of 1991;

- (iii) the second European Week for Business;
- (iv) to encourage the mounting of national promotion plans;
- (v) to update appropriate promotional tools.

(a) Awareness of EICs

As the effects of the internal market have been increasingly felt, the EICs' credibility has become directly related to their ability to give specific and fast answers to increasingly complex questions. These questions are discussed further in the chapter on EIC actions to assist enterprises.

By the end of 1994 the network's promotional activities should have increased the number of enterprises reached by the EICs throughout the Community territory.

In addition, in order to give the EIC logo a higher profile and to help it to achieve greater recognition, at the end of 1993 DG XXIII engaged a design agency to review the use of the logo and to promote a more uniform application of it. The idea was to design a new graphics manual that could be used not only by the central administration for all publications about EICs but also by EICs themselves for their own publications to attract existing or potential clients better and to bolster and bring greater coherence to the network's image.

(b) Publicity campaign

DG XXIII decided to continue its communication campaign addressing target groups with all its instruments. A new message was designed to this end: 'The single market creates lots of opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises. How can we discover and exploit them?'. This message was supported by a specific success story from the users of the three information (EIC) and cooperation (BC-Net, BRE) networks. There were two waves of advertisements in the European press, in June and September 1993. They also announced the European Week for Business. The extent of the total print runs can be estimated at some 4 500 000 copies.

The publications used were:

- for Belgium: Trends/Tendances
- for Denmark: Jyllands-Posten
- for Germany: Wirtschaftswoche, Capital, Impulse
- for Greece: To Vima, Oikonomikos Tachidromos
- for Spain: Actualidad Económica, Expansión, Cinco Días, El País
- for France: L'Entreprise, L'Expansion
- for Ireland: Management, Business & Finance
- for Italy: Il Sole 24 Ore, l'Espresso
- for Luxembourg: Écho de l'industrie, Luxemburger Wort
- for the Netherlands: Bedrijfsdocumentaire, Management Team, Ondernemersvisie, De Ondernemer, De Onderneming
- for Portugal: Publico, Vida Económica, Expansão, Semanário Económico
- for the United Kingdom: Sunday Times Magazine, Financial Times

A single fax number for DG XXIII's services allowed SMEs to contact them directly with general requests for information (64% of faxes received) and requests for cooperation (36% of faxes received). Requests came from enterprises (81%), consultants (6%) and individuals, including students (13%).

Finally, over 600 000 inserts were distributed direct by members of the networks taking part in the European Week for Business and of many trade federations and European associations, either in their publications or by mailshot to their clients or members.

(c) European Week for Business

With the support of Commission President Jacques Delors, the second European Week for Business (EWB) — identified as a Commission priority action — was launched by Mr Vanni d'Archirafi, Member of the Commission, at a press conference in Brussels at the end of September 1993.

From 4 to 8 October 1993 over 400 participants — members of the EIC, BC-Net and BRE networks — put on a total of 2 500 events in some 600 towns. The programmes were aimed at SME directors and broadly illustrated the theme: 'Your SME, the dynamic driving force of the internal market'. The aim was to motivate enterprises, especially small and medium-sized ones, to face the challenges of competitiveness and growth.

As evidenced by the press review at the end of the EWB, the quality of the topics dealt with reflected the diversity of the information, assistance and advisory roles undertaken by the EICs. Over 700 press articles reported the addresses by Mr Vanni d'Archirafi, Mr Bangemann, Mr Matutes, Mr Millan and Mrs Scrivener, Members of the Commission, and by the 200 Commission officials and experts who travelled all over Europe bringing the Commission's contribution to the discussions organized for entrepreneurs. No less than 60 000 enterprises responded to the organizers' invitations.

As in the previous year, the programmes were coordinated by DG XXIII, which also made available to participants a set of promotional tools specially produced for the occasion, such as posters (there were special poster displays at Brussels National Airport, Paris Orly and Paris Charles de Gaulle airports), brochures, videos, directories of the three networks, and programme catalogues (the multilingual programme was widely distributed to the other Directorates-General, Members of the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee, Offices in the Community, Permanent Representatives, etc.).

An initiative of this kind provides the Commission with important feedback. For example, many organizers decided to publish the questions and answers discussed during the European Week for Business.

(d) National promotion plans

The Danish, British and Dutch EICs have worked together closely at national level and put on joint promotional activities.

For example, as a prelude to the fourth annual EIC conference in Elsinore, which coincided with the end of the Danish Presidency of the

Council, the Danish EICs mounted a vast public relations campaign in the national press, distributing background articles and an exhaustive file of success stories. DG XXIII wishes to support this kind of action and make it the rule in the future, since the most effective marketing takes different forms in the different member countries of the Community. The idea is to give priority to the most effective means of communication and promotion in each country. Various national actions are possible, such as producing promotional videos, publishing publicity booklets and general interest information files, organizing conferences, symposia or seminars and mounting public relations campaigns with national or regional media.

(e) Updating promotional tools

During the period under review the central administration produced the Euro Info Centres annual report 1991-92, a file of EIC success stories, the 1993 catalogue of Euro Info Centres, and a Who's Who of the network (for internal use), as well as specific tools for the European Week for Business.

5. COORDINATION

To create the necessary conditions for a qualitative leap at both network and central administration level, DG XXIII has set up a network coordination service whose aims are:

- (i) to improve cooperation between EICs and the central administration by listening to the expectations and suggestions of EICs, both individually and as a network, and by providing EICs with rapid feedback on decisions taken by DG XXIII which affect them;
- (ii) to strengthen the network effect with well-structured communication products;
- (iii) to contribute to the consolidation of EIC-SME relations.

To achieve these ends, the network coordination service uses essentially the following sources:

- mailshots from the EICs;
- periodic reports;
- telephone calls;
- minutes of, or participation at, national or regional meetings;
- discussions in the monitoring group.

(a) Improving cooperation between EICs and the central administration

Tele-EIC

Set up in October 1992, the aim of Tele-EIC is to use regular telephone contact between the central administration and the EICs to pass EICs' expectations and concerns on to DG XXIII quickly and directly.

Each EIC has its own Tele-EIC contact in the central administration with whom it can talk in its own language.

Suggestions are examined regularly by DG XXIII. In order to reply to their correspondents quickly, the 21 Tele-EIC contact persons use update sheets showing the recent decisions and changes affecting all the services of the network's central administration.

The network barometer (Baréseaumètre)

The network barometer is a strategic communication tool. The findings of thematic surveys of national representatives of the network (members of the monitoring group) carried out since September 1992 have enabled DG XXIII to keep up with the management priorities and to help it in its decision-making. The first network barometer questionnaire (September 1992) was about the EIC network itself as it related to DG XXIII. The findings being typical of network opinion, DG XXIII was able to take decisions quickly and a follow-up was sent to all EICs. The second network barometer (February 1993) concerned EIC- SME

relations, dealing in particular with the major challenges facing EICs on the threshold of the internal market. A third network barometer will probably deal with the EIC-host structure relationship; it is planned for spring 1994.

(b) Using well-structured communication products to strengthen the network effect

The 'network effect' conference on VANS

A new conference will be opened on VANS in the spring of 1994 to encourage EICs to make full use of VANS for the rapid transmission of brief information between EICs. It will enable offers/requests (for example, search for partners for a promotional activity like the European Week for Business) and announcements of projects and results of activities that an EIC might want the network to know about to be structured.

Information will be input by the EICs themselves, which will also be responsible for ensuring that the information is up to date and still valid.

The network coordination service will maintain the conference, carrying out a monthly 'cleaning' and adapting the grid to the needs expressed by EICs.

A series of lists of specific competences has been produced concerning in particular:

EIC expertise

The particular skills developed by EICs in certain fields were recorded by means of a questionnaire sent to the network. The compilation of findings enables each member to benefit from targeted expertise and increases the potential for mutual cooperation. The particular expertise of the Euro Info correspondence centres will be added to the existing list.

'Enterprises' and EICs

Interprise (initiative to encourage partnerships among industries and services in Europe) meetings are regularly arranged by one or more EICs as a source of transnational cooperation between enterprises. These initiatives are all listed in a document entitled 'The Interprise projects within the framework of the Euro Info Centre network'. Its distribution in the network will encourage the exchange of experience among EICs that have organized an Interprise or are going to organize one.

Transfrontier and/or transnational inter-EIC cooperation networks

In order to increase the transparency of cooperation activities among EICs, the last monitoring meeting of 1993 approved the creation of a list of all transfrontier and/or transnational inter-EIC cooperation networks set up either on the EICs' own initiative (there are 21 at present) or on that of DG XXIII (specialized groups). This compilation will also include national inter-EIC cooperation networks open to EICs in other Member States, provided that they consist of at least three EICs and have a common purpose and their own identity.

(c) Help to consolidate EIC-SME relations

Subnetworks

More than 110 EICs currently run subnetworks, that is decentralized Community information centres which they are completely responsible for running. Subnetworks allow EICs to reach a larger number of enterprises, generally in their own region, but also in more remote regions or countries. With this in mind it was decided to set up a subnetworks working group that will report regularly to all EICs and will be coordinated by the coordination team.

The working group's main objectives are to define adequate quality criteria for subnetwork management, identify those EICs that have created a subnetwork, the advantages and disadvantages to EICs of

creating such a subnetwork, their motives for doing so, the needs of and the costs involved in starting a subnetwork, in providing for its needs and in monitoring its operation.

A final report after a full year of the group's activities will be available in 1994.

6. THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN ELSINORE

The fourth annual conference of Euro Info Centres for persons responsible for the network, held in Elsinore, Denmark, from 3 to 5 June 1993, coincided with the end of the Danish Presidency of the Council. After Sophia Antipolis (1990), Berlin (1991) and Funchal (1992), this meeting was attended by the new Commissioner responsible for enterprise policy, Mr Raniero Vanni d'Archirafi. The theme this year was the role of EICs in the new dimension of European growth.



4. Fourth annual Euro Info Centre conference, Elsinore, 3 to 5 June 1993; the EICs in plenary session.



5. Fourth annual Euro Info Centre conference, Elsinore, 3 to 5 June 1993; from left to right: R. Bombassei, Director, DG XXIII, R. Vanni d'Archirafi, Member of the Commission; H. von Moltke, Director-General of DG XXIII; C. Bo Bramsen, Danish Minister for Industry.



6. Fourth annual Euro Info Centre conference, Elsinore, 3 to 5 June 1993; N. C. Nielsen, Danish Technological Institute, giving his talk on 'The Danish network programme' and from left to right: W. Hélin, Head of Unit, DG XXIII; H. von Moltke, Director-General, DG XXIII; R. Bombassei, Director, DG XXIII; J.-P. Haber, Head of the EIC network.



7. Fourth annual Euro Info Centre conference, Elsinore, 3 to 5 June 1993; J. Stiiskjaer and K. Kaas-Hansen (Taastrup, DK-055), coordinators of the conference for Denmark.



8. Fourth annual Euro Info Centre conference, Elsinore, 3 to 5 June 1993; Press conference given by Mr R. Vanni d'Archirafi, Member of the Commission.

In his opening address, which concerned the role of SMEs in the single market, the Commissioner sought to clarify the messages carried by the EICs so that 'the actions we take help small and medium-sized enterprises to mobilize for growth and employment'. It should be stressed in this connection that the Industry Council of 4 May 1993 had endorsed the 1993-96 multiannual programme, including the section referring to the EICs.

The work proper — discussions and working groups — centred around three themes:

- (i) the role of EICs in the completion of the single market;
- (ii) services to SMEs;
- (iii) developments in the information market, the network effect and cooperation with the other Community information services.

In addition, there were many meetings between EICs that were members of specialized groups. Strategies were defined and future courses of action decided upon and advantage was taken of the presence of several specialists from other Commission services.

Overall, EICs stressed the importance of communication of their activities as a whole; it was specifically agreed that by the end of 1995 the network should greatly increase the level of awareness achieved among enterprises with more than 10 employees.

At the same time, thorough consideration will be given to the aims and ambitions of the EIC network in the light of the multiannual programme of Community actions to assist SMEs in the period 1993-96.

Participants also agreed that the EIC-host structures-Member States triangle will form the framework for the future development of the network.

The new tasks falling to the Euro Info Centres in the context of the single market and the importance of the local and regional economic situation mean that their host structures will perceive the EICs as instruments of interaction with economic agents at a local level. In view of this, and more than in the past, host structures will be invited to guarantee the

operation and viability of the EICs. National governments will for their part be made more aware of the activity of EICs in the field.

In turn, the Euro Info Centres will have to improve their feedback on local and regional conditions, especially as regards the implementation of the internal market; this development will have to serve all relevant services of the Commission.

As to their role as catalysts for Community information to enterprises, it was decided that specialized EICs would form groups of speakers on Community policy and programmes in order to make enterprises more aware. This panel of speakers should complement the activities already undertaken by DG X's Team 92.

At the end of the session, Mr Niels Christian Nielsen of the Danish Technological Institute in Copenhagen outlined in a speech that attracted much attention the results of the Danish experience of networking. Networks of SMEs had been able to define and successfully implement offensive strategies in export markets while ensuring they remained competitive with larger enterprises.

Given certain organizational prerequisites (appointment of a network delegate, choice of a network contact point), the recipe for successful cooperation may be summed up under four main headings:

- (i) getting together to solve common problems;
- (ii) developing and exploiting areas of complementarity;
- (iii) developing the advantages of subcontracting;
- (iv) preserving individual access to final markets.

The quantitative and qualitative results of this Danish experience both show the potential for cooperation between SMEs in flexible structures.

The 300 participants — representing EICs, the central administration, other Commission Directorates-General, the Council, the EIB and Danish officials — parted on this dynamic note, resolved to implement the new strategies that will benefit the network in the present economic circumstances. The next annual meeting is planned for Italy in October 1994.

7. DEVELOPMENTS IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

A — VANS

VANS ('value-added network and services') — a computer system now used by the Euro Info Centre network — allows the EIC network to be brought together through a number of remote data-communications services: electronic mail and conferences. VANS also contributes elements of synergy with DG XXIII's other cooperation networks (BC-Net and BRE).

Services

The tools and services available through VANS are:

(a) Electronic mail

Every user has on his PC 'baskets' for his incoming and outgoing electronic mail. This enables him to exchange messages with all members of DG XXIII networks very quickly.

(b) Conferences

The conference noticeboard system enables information to be made available to VANS users. 'Announcements' may be posted there, removed or modified.

(c) Access to databases

VANS network X.25 allows priority access to Community databases (CELEX, INFO 92, TED, etc.).

(d) File transfer

Electronic transfer of data files is possible between EICs themselves and between EICs and the central administration.

(e) Services

The operator of VANS network X.25 has offices in various countries. The technicians at these help desks are able to help on the spot, in the EIC's language, in the event of major technical difficulties in using VANS services.

Almost all EICs were connected to VANS during 1993. Installation was carried out by central administration technicians and by the VANS network operator's national technical help desks.

VANS training

The central administration organized several training sessions enabling EICs to acquire the necessary basic level of knowledge for using the VANS tools.

In 1992-93 courses of this kind were held in Athens, Nice, Limoges, Paris, Lyons and Munich. More specialized courses are planned for 1994.

Following the extension of the network to third countries, technical support and access to VANS were provided for EICCs. A number of EICCs were already operational on VANS at the end of 1993.

B — Databases

Decentralized training

Several decentralized sessions of basic or specialized training on database interrogation techniques were held in 1992-93 in virtually all member countries. These sessions covered both Community hosts (Eurobases, ECHO) and some commercial hosts.

Second half of 1992

Newcastle and Telford (July), two mini-sessions;

Bordeaux (November), basic session;

Erfurt and Frankfurt-on-Oder (November), two mini-sessions for the new *Länder*;

Nantes (November), advanced session;

Cologne (November), advanced session;

Stuttgart (December), basic session;

Santiago de Compostela (December), advanced session.

1993

Glasgow (July), advanced session;

Dublin and Sligo (August), two mini-sessions;

Toledo (October), advanced session;

Florence (November), advanced session;

Faro (November), advanced session;

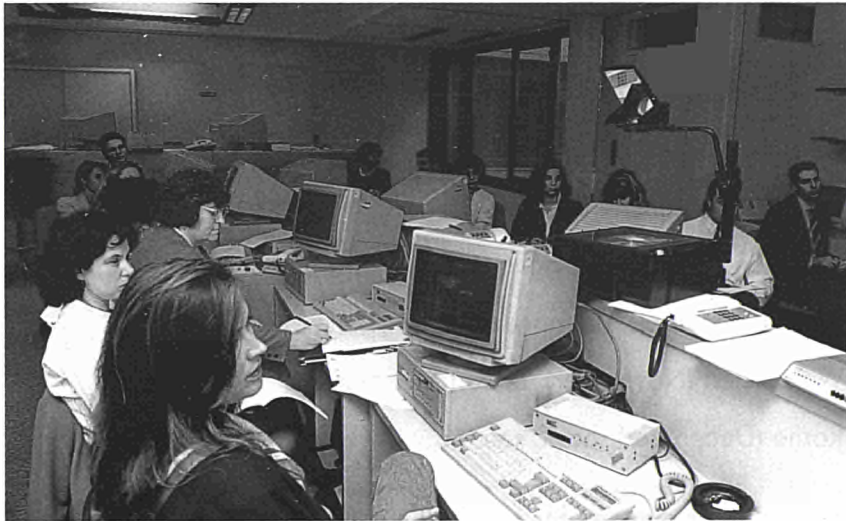
Wiesbaden (November), advanced session;

Rome (December), basic session.

Two sessions planned for 1993, one in Bordeaux (basic session) and the other in Copenhagen (specialized R&D session) were postponed until 1994.



9. Florence (IT-361), 2 to 4 November 1993, advanced training session for the ECHO and Eurobases databases.



10. Florence (IT-361), 2 to 4 November 1993, advanced training session for the ECHO and Eurobases databases.

C — ERIC workstation

The ERIC workstation, version 4.0, is a management tool for questions received and answers given by EICs. These are periodically transferred electronically to the central administration for processing. Then, questions of interest to the whole network are made available on the ECHO database host (capitalization) in Luxembourg. At the end of 1993, EICs had asked to transfer 5 169 questions to the DOSS capitalization base on ECHO.

During the period 1992-93 more EICs used the ERIC workstation as a result of the technical improvements made in version 4.0.11: bilingual station, local network support, etc.

This station also allows EIC activity reports to be written and sent to the central administration via VANS (file transfer).

Some EICs also use other functions: EIC document management capacities (with indexing by Thesaurus, key words, etc.) and management of EIC clients and contacts. As a contribution to developing the network's functionality it was decided to implement a new workstation, the ERIC 5, of which the major improvements may be summarized as:

- (i) integration of VANS;
- (ii) simplified capture of question/answer files;
- (iii) better presentation and ease of manipulation of the SME letter;
- (iv) more user-friendly.

D — The help desk of the central administration

This service's task is to help EICs in matters of telecommunications, VANS and the use of all the forms of information technology made available to them by the central administration.

The team uses an information technology application on its local network to manage EIC calls and problems. This application allows instant display of a user's call history.

E — Geseic

This is an EIC identity card database for internal use, constantly updated from information supplied by the EICs themselves. It contains the practical details of each Euro Info Centre, such as address, telephone number and relevant contractual information. It also states the EIC's specializations, the courses and events it organizes, whether it belongs to a subnetwork, its host structure profile, etc.

III — The EICs at the service of enterprises

The years 1992 and 1993 saw a strengthening of the specific services provided for enterprises and an increased specialization on the part of a large number of EICs. They also witnessed a change in the type of questions asked by enterprises, reflecting a change in the economic context in which they operate.

The analysis of the quantitative data refers to 1992; the data for 1993 will be analysed in the 1994 report.

1. THE PROCESSING OF INFORMATION

(a) The questions and answers of EICs

According to the activity reports analysed by the central administration's audit service, the number of files processed by the network in 1992 increased by 25% compared to the previous year, totalling 181 190 questions. This confirms the growth recorded since 1989.

These figures have to be broken down according to the number of reports received by the central administration and the type and complexity of the files processed by the EICs. Generally speaking, and taking into account the emphasis placed by DG XXIII on the audit function, the number of reports received has increased since 1991.

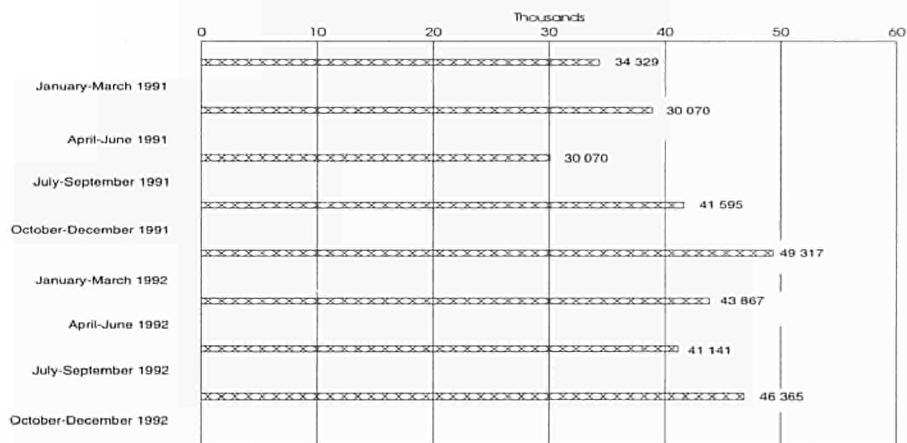
Thus, for the first quarter of 1992, 49 317 questions were recorded (as compared to 34 329 in 1991); in the second quarter 43 867 questions (38 913 in 1991); in the third quarter 41 141 questions (30 070 in 1991); and finally 46 865 questions (41 595 in 1991) in the fourth quarter of 1992.

In view of the fact that the central administration receives 70% of activity reports on average, the figure of 250 000 may reasonably be extrapolated for the files processed by the EICs. If we add the general information questions not listed by the EICs, we get a total of 300 000 files for the whole of 1992.

Graph 4

Euro Info Centres — January to December 1992 and 1991

Total number of questions recorded by EICs
(1 000)

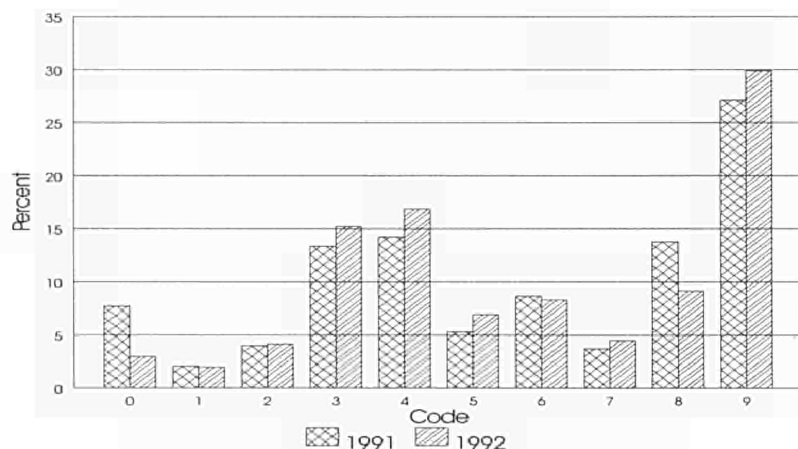


The following graphs (Graphs 5, 6 and 7) present these 181 190 questions categorized by sectors of activity (NACE), by Community sectors (CELEX) and by size of enterprises for 1992, wherever there is an identifiable sector, subject or size.

Graph 5

Euro Info Centres — January to December 1991 and 1992

Questions by industrial sector (NACE)



Base: 64 824 questions with identified sector (1991)
72 899 questions with identified sector (1992)

NACE
code

Sector

- 0 Agriculture, hunting, forestry, fisheries
- 1 Energy, water
- 2 Extraction, processing of non-energy-producing minerals and derived products; chemical industry
- 3 Metal manufacture; mechanical, electrical, instrument engineering
- 4 Other manufacturing industries
- 5 Building, civil engineering
- 6 Distributive trades, hotels, catering, repairs
- 7 Transport, communication
- 8 Banking, finance, insurance, business services, renting
- 9 Other services

Table 2
NACE sectors

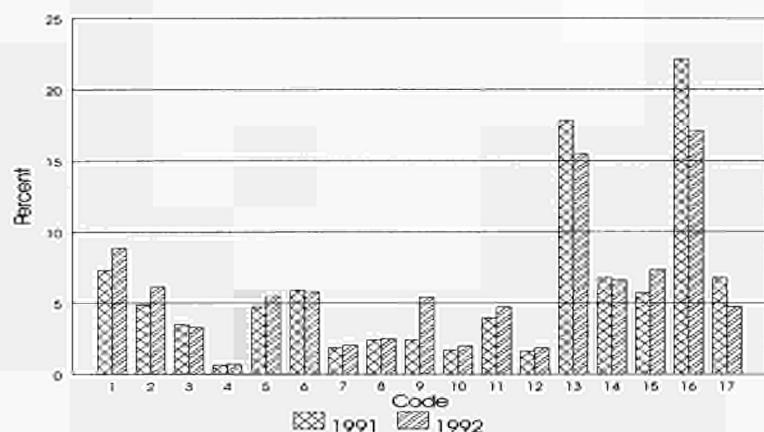
		(%)	
NACE code	Sector	1992	1991
0	Agriculture, hunting, forestry, fisheries	3.0	7.7
1	Energy, water	2.0	2.1
2	Extraction, processing of non-energy-producing minerals and derived products; chemical industry	4.1	4.0
3	Metal manufacture, mechanical, electrical, instrument engineering	15.2	13.4
4	Other manufacturing industries	16.9	14.2
5	Building, civil engineering	6.9	5.3
6	Distributive trades, hotels, catering, repairs	8.3	8.7
7	Transport, communication	4.5	3.7
8	Banking, finance, insurance, business services, renting services	9.1	13.8
9	Other services	29.9	27.2
Number of files recorded		72 899	64 824

We find a net decline in questions on the primary sector — agriculture, hunting, forestry, fisheries — and on the banking, finance, insurance, business services and renting service sector. On the other hand, the number of questions on the secondary sector — metal manufacture, mechanical, electrical and instrument engineering; other manufacturing industries; building, civil engineering — and other services shows an average increase of 2%.

Graph 6

Euro Info Centres — January to December 1991 and 1992

Questions by Community sector (CELEX)



Base: 74 545 questions with identified sector (1991)
76 636 questions with identified sector (1992)

 CELEX
code

Sector

- | | |
|----|--|
| 1 | General, financial and institutional matters |
| 2 | Customs union and free movement of goods |
| 3 | Agriculture |
| 4 | Fisheries |
| 5 | Freedom of movement for workers and social policy |
| 6 | Right of establishment and freedom to provide services |
| 7 | Transport policy |
| 8 | Competition policy |
| 9 | Taxation |
| 10 | Economic and monetary policy and free movement of capital |
| 11 | External relations (including development policy) |
| 12 | Energy |
| 13 | Industrial policy and internal market |
| 14 | Regional policy and coordination of structural instruments |
| 15 | Environment, consumers and health protection |
| 16 | Research, information, education and statistics |
| 17 | Law relating to undertakings |

Table 3
CELEX Sectors

		(%)	
CELEX code	Subject	1992	1991
1	General, financial and institutional matters	8.9	7.3
2	Customs union and free movement of goods	6.2	4.9
3	Agriculture	3.3	3.5
4	Fisheries	0.7	0.6
5	Freedom of movement for workers and social policy	5.5	4.7
6	Right of establishment and freedom to provide services	5.8	5.9
7	Transport policy	2.0	1.8
8	Competition policy	2.5	2.4
9	Taxation	5.4	2.4
10	Economic and monetary policy and free movement of capital	2.0	1.7
11	External relations (including development policy)	4.7	3.9
12	Energy	1.9	1.6
13	Industrial policy and internal market	15.5	17.8
14	Regional policy and coordination of structural instruments	6.6	6.8
15	Environment, consumers and health protection	7.3	5.7
16	Research, information, education and statistics	17.1	22.1
17	Law relating to undertakings	4.8	6.8
Total number of recorded files		76 636	74 545

As in previous years, questions relating to R&D and industrial policy remain in the majority, even though their percentage has declined (doubtless as a result of an adjustment to SME priorities in a period of economic recession) in favour of other sectors, such as taxation (125% increase over the previous year, reflecting the need to adapt to the new VAT rules); environment, consumer/health protection; customs union-free movement of goods; and, to a lesser extent, freedom of movement for workers-social policy. These reveal the approach of 1 January 1993 and suggest a pre-emptive search for information by SMEs.

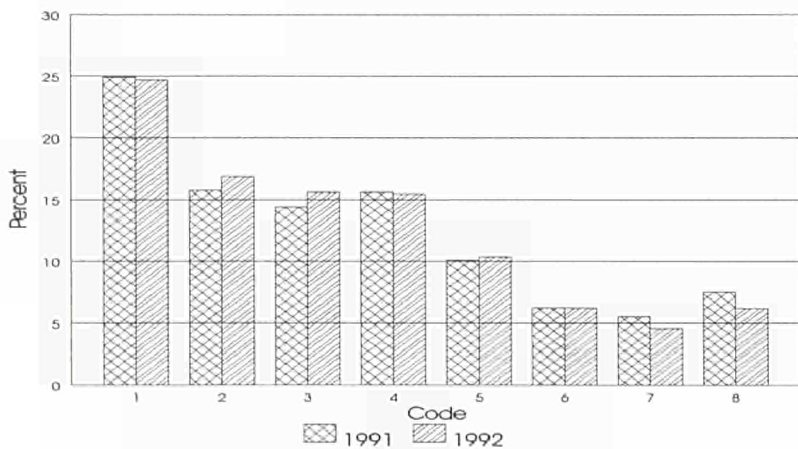
Finally, with respect to the size of enterprises, the distribution of the 54 111 questions for 1992 from companies of an identified size confirms the upward trend, shown in Graph 7 and Table 4 below, in questions from SMEs with fewer than 100 employees (72.7% of all questions asked, as compared to 70.6% in 1991).

Micro-enterprises remain the Euro Info Centres' main customers, whereas medium-sized enterprises (200 to 499 employees) and large enterprises (over 500 employees) continue in a downward trend.

Graph 7

Euro Info Centres — January to December 1991 and 1992

Questions by size of enterprise



Base: 54 111 questions with identified size (1992)
42 939 questions with identified size (1991)

Code	Size	Code	Size
1	1-4 employees	5	50-99
2	5-9	6	100-199
3	10-19	7	200-499
4	20-49	8	500+

Table 4
Size of enterprise

		(%)
Number of employees	1992	1991
1-4	24.7	24.9
5-9	16.9	15.7
10-19	15.6	14.4
20-49	15.5	15.6
50-99	10.4	10.1
100-199	6.2	6.2
200-499	4.6	5.5
500+	6.2	7.5
Number of files recorded	54 111	42 939

(b) Information products developed by the EICs

To fulfil their contractual mission to distribute information and to meet the expectations of local socioeconomic agents, the EICs have developed and refined their own instruments, printed or electronic information and databases.

The list below shows the principal productions in 1992/93:

- Over 100 EICs publish their own **bulletin** or contribute closely to that of their host structure. These bulletins enable the information provided by the central administration to be adapted at regional or local level. We can cite in particular:

PME 93, Namur (BE-001); *EF-Orientering*, Viborg (DK-057); *Euro-Info Special*, a general Community bulletin distributed five times a month by Kiel (DE-118) to 350 SMEs; *Enimerossi*, Athens (GR-152); *Boletín de la Euroventanilla*, Zaragoza (ES-225); *Euro Flash 93*, Amiens (FR-256); *Euronews*, Limerick (IR-302); *Agenda Euro-sportello*, Milan (IT-351); *Partner in Europa*, 's Hertogenbosch (NL-452) and all Dutch EICs; *Info Europa*, Faro (PT-506); *Leicester EIC News*, Leicester (UK-561), etc.

- A number of EICs publish **guides** or **brochures** on **specific subjects**. Among the publications during the second half of 1992 and 1993, the following can be cited by way of example:

Brussels (BE-004) produced a guide to legislation entitled *La pratique commerciale en Europe* (business practice in Europe);

Viborg (DK-057) published a work entitled *Byggeeksport* (exporting in construction);

Cologne (DE-120) produced several publications with its host structure and its subnetwork, in particular: *Das Abkommen über dem Europäischen Wirtschaftsraum und seine Auswirkungen für den deutschen Arbeitgeber* (the EEA Agreement and its consequences for German employers) and *BDI-Memorandum zur Europäischen Wettbewerbspolitik* (memorandum on European competition policy);

Erfurt (DE-131) published a brochure on transnational cooperation and the TED-Ausschreibungsservice;

Barcelona (ES-201) sent the region's enterprises *Las 300 del 92*, a guide to the 300 single market directives and their transposition into Spanish law, and a large number of guides in the *Alerta 92* series aimed at familiarizing Spanish entrepreneurs with the use of Community instruments;

Toledo (ES-222) and Bilbao (ES-202) published *Quejas y Recursos ante la CE en poder de las Empresas*, a practical guide to SMEs' appeals, complaints and rights of access to the Commission and the Court of Justice;

Fort-de-France (FR-265) published *La politique des transports de la Communauté européenne* (EC transport policy);

Paris (FR-272) distributes files entitled *Les cahiers juridiques et fiscaux de l'exportation* (exporting: legal and taxation notes);

Rouen (FR-277) published *L'ordonnance Töffer — la nouvelle réglementation allemande relative aux déchets d'emballages*, an information file on the new packaging rules imposed in Germany, including the bodies set up under this new legislation;

Rome (IT-372) published a number of volumes of *L'Europa a portata di mano — La normativa comunitaria nel settore alimentare* (Community standards in the food sector), in particular: 'additivi autorizzati, involucri, etichette' and 'prodotti biologici, denominazione d'origine';

The Hague (NL-453) designed and marketed the *Gids voor de onderzoek- en technologiefondsen van de EG — 1993-1994*, an annual guide to Community R&D funds for enterprises, universities and research institutes; this work contains the 14 000 questions sent to the EC liaison office on this subject;

Utrecht (NL-458) published SMEs and EC environmental legislation;

Evora (PT-505) produced *Igualdade de Oportunidades*, a guide to Community and national programmes concerning equal opportunities, and *Alentejo, Portugal — Un investissement d'avenir* (Alentejo, Portugal — an investment for the future);

Belfast (UK-555) prepared sectoral information sheets on information technology, the machinery directives and legislation affecting enterprises;

- Several EICs devote specific bulletins to commercial cooperation, for example:

Europartners, Charleroi (BE-006); *Flash opportunités*, Mons (BE-011); *Cooperación*, Bilbao (ES-202); *Oportunidades de Cooperaçãõ*, Aveiro (PT-503); *Europartners*, Leeds (UK-560);

- As regards information processing, it will also be noted that many EICs make **targeted mailshots** to enterprises on specific topics.

2. ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE TO ENTERPRISES

(a) Market research

Piraeus (GR-161) sent a questionnaire to companies that had been looking for partners in order to gauge the success rate, but met with some reticence on their part;

Palma de Mallorca (ES-219) sent a questionnaire to 500 enterprises to determine how interested they were in Community questions and to what extent the EIC was known as a supplier of information on the EC; in Strasbourg (FR-255) the information officer conducted a customer satisfaction survey by telephone, 'soft marketing' enabling the EIC both to position itself and to check that its services are efficient;

Groningen (NL-456) surveyed its subnetwork on the quality of its services;

lastly, in the second half of 1992, Manchester (UK-564) conducted a survey of 1 200 enterprises on their attitude to Europe — in cooperation with BBC television and Trafford Park Development Centre. The findings showed that the single market would increase trade and would therefore have a positive effect on their activities.

(b) Information monitoring

This is an efficient service transmitting advanced information. This information, on Community regulations, programmes and initiatives, is sent by mailshot or information retrieval system:

Arlon (BE-003) offers an information monitoring service in the sectors of agricultural produce, timber, training and employment, transport, etc., for local organizations and authorities;

Ghent (BE-007) regularly informs selected SMEs on European matters and calls for tender in which they may be interested;

Rouen (FR-277) offers an information monitoring service in the field of textiles. This service is governed by a cooperation contract;

Marseille (FR-268) offers an information monitoring service by Minitel;

Groningen (NL-456), Nijmegen (NL-457) and Utrecht (NL-458) organize an information monitoring service in which they select calls for tender for subscribing clients.

(c) Assistance in drafting international calls for tender and helping SMEs to participate in Community programmes

As part of their calls for tender-monitoring activities, some EICs have developed special databases containing information on calls for tender and the opportunities offered by Community programmes. For example:

Odense (DK-052) has helped SMEs to obtain Eureka financing;

Bonn (DE-112) has developed *EuroExpert*, a database or information and advice system on the Community, available to all German savings banks through the country's Savings Banks Federation;

Trier (DE-126) has developed *Regio*, a German-language database containing information on opportunities in the field of public contracts;

Madrid (ES-214), Murcia (ES-217) and Toledo (ES-222) distribute calls for tender via Videotex;

Châlons-sur-Marne (FR-262) has obtained European Social Fund (ESF) approval for a client enterprise for a programme for 'the retraining and adaptation of customs agents and customhouse brokers to the internal market';

The Hague (NL-453) has started a fax/computer mailshot service for R&D programmes, calls for tender and EC publications and events for the Dutch research institute (TNO);

The Hague (NL-454), Nijmegen (NL-457) and Utrecht (NL-458), specializing in public procurement, give advice on terms of reference and

the formulation of proposals; The Hague is also part of a ministerial working group writing guides on the subject;

Coimbra (PT-504) has sent out over 40 mailshots containing 22 application forms for EC programmes;

Lisbon (PT-508) is cooperating in the distribution of the Thermie programme and regularly supplies TED information to companies belonging to its host structure, the AIP;

finally, most UK EICs offer TED Alert services to SMEs wishing to take part in public procurement.

(d) Organization of training sessions

Thessaloniki (GR-153) is helping to organize an assistance centre for working women — called ERGANI — as part of the NOW programme, and organizes a 300-hour seminar on 'Women and employment';

Patras (GR-160) is taking part in the Euromanagement standards and certification programme;

Châlons-sur-Marne (FR-262), after canvassing, runs courses in partnership with training bodies;

since the beginning of 1992, Rouen (FR-277) has offered courses (databases, Community law) to students (business schools, senior technicians, etc.), teachers and administrative staff;

The Hague (NL-454) has planned a programme of courses for the Ministry of Economic Affairs on the CE mark; with The Hague (NL-453) and Utrecht (NL-458) and three innovation centres it has also taken part in the Euromanagement project;

(e) Legal or administrative assistance

Arlon (BE-003) offers assistance to newly created and expanding enterprises through the 'Transboundary funds' project;

Cologne (DE-119) offers a legal service, analyses the official journals of all Member States and publishes the weekly references of conversions of EC directives into national law;

Thessaloniki (GR-153) offers legal advice and administrative assistance in the interpretation of legislation;

San Sebastian (ES-220) provides a legal advice service for drawing up joint public/private enterprise contracts;

Bristol (UK-557) offers free legal advice on all Community matters, provided by its sponsors (a legal practice and an auditors' practice).

(f) Highly specialized services

The nature of some host structures and their EICs has allowed the development of highly targeted value-added services:

Nürnberg (DE-123), host of the Landesgewerbeamt Bayern, specializing in R&D, technical standards and standardization, has provided environmental management and eco-audit services; in this connection it was involved in organizing 'Eco-business' in Venice in June 1993 in collaboration with the Toledo EIC (ES-222);

Exeter (UK-558) provides a subsidies and loans service through the AIMS database; it also provides access to Brokersguide, Dundis, Eur-eka, Jusletter, etc.

3. COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIP

(a) Cooperation between companies

EICs are becoming increasingly involved in the Europartenariat, Interprise and Interreg projects.

Europartenariat

In June 1993, Europartenariat Lille mobilized not only French EICs but also:

Namur (BE-001), which organized information meetings, forwarded the cooperation profiles and accompanied 12 Namur enterprises to Europartenariat;

Brussels (BE-005), which collaborated on this occasion with Mons (BE-011), Lille (FR-266) and Maidstone (UK-563);

Kortrijk (BE-009), Mons (BE-011), Tournai (BE-014) and Lille (FR-266), which together gave a press conference;

Luxembourg (LU-401), which assisted Luxembourg SMEs in their participation in Europartenariat Lille;

Lisbon (PT-502), which contacted 7 500 enterprises and sent information to 2 000 enterprises on Europartenariat Lille.

Overall, this event, which had the aim of promoting cooperation agreements, enabled 1 757 enterprises from 42 countries to meet the French enterprises which had been selected for the occasion (the selection comprised 414 enterprises from France, 63 from the French overseas departments and 18 from Corsica). There were some 10 650 meetings.

At Europartenariat Glasgow in December 1993, 1 278 visiting enterprises from 55 countries met 335 Scottish enterprises.



11. Seville (ES-203), 7 May 1993, information day and presentation of *Europarliament France Nord-Est*, Lille, 17 and 18 June 1993.

Interprise

Euro Info Centres have been involved in a large number of Interprise (Initiative to encourage partnerships among industries and services in Europe) initiatives in the last 18 months:¹¹:

Brussels (BE-004) set up an 'Environment' Interprise in Paris in cooperation with IFA Andalusia;

Charleroi (BE-006) prepared two Interprises, one in Magdeburg in September 1993 and the other in Groningen in November 1993;

Viborg (DK-057), Dresden (DE-132), Athens (GR-152) and Inverness (UK-559) put on the *Serenissima* meeting, which was held in Venice in April 1993, under the auspices of Interprise;

Vordingborg (DK-058), Kiel (DE-118), Rostock (DE-134) and Newcastle (UK-553) were involved in organizing *Agrinord 93* in Rostock in January 1993;

¹¹ A catalogue describing all the Interprise events organized by at least one EIC in 1992 and 1993 is available from the central administration.

Wiesbaden (DE-127) took part as a partner in the Packinnove 92 Interprise, an industrial business convention in Troyes (Champagne) attended by about 100 producers and users of packaging from the Community and the CCEE;

Santiago de Compostela (ES-221) together with its host structure put on Interprise Galicia 93 in October;

Murcia (ES-217) was the Spanish coordinator for the first European Green Tourism Forum, an Interprise held in Vichy in October 1992, bringing together enterprises and institutions from all over the Community active in rural tourism;

Bordeaux (FR-252) — in association with Aarhus (DK-051), Bilbao (ES-202) and other European partners — hosted the Codemac Interprise in September 1993, attended by 44 enterprises in the composite materials sector;

Poitiers (FR-275) put on the Futuralia 93 Interprise with the collaboration of Mons (BE-011) and the Vienna CCI; 400 enterprises, including 150 SMEs, from all over the Community and also the CCEE were present at the Poitiers Futuroscope in November 1993. Mrs Scrivener, Member of the Commission, attended this event;

Groningen (NL-456) and Enschede (NL-455) co-organized with Charleroi (BE-006), Vordingborg (DK-058), Bremen (DE-113) and Osnabrück (DE-128) the Europartners 93 Interprise in Groningen;

Orléans (FR-270) was project manager for the Decide Interprise (European civilian diversification of defence industries) project in Bourges in October 1993, with Utrecht (NL-458), Bremen (DE-113), Dresden (DE-132), Genoa (IT-363) and Liverpool (UK-562) as partners;

Utrecht (NL-458) took part with Manchester (UK-564) in a Med-Interprise project;

Brighton (UK-566) prepared Interprise Coop Central in Halle with Magdeburg (DE-135) in October 1993;

Inverness (UK-559) prepared a 'crafts' Interprise for the Highlands Trade Fair (October 1993) with a very tight time schedule.



12. Futurallia 93, Interprise show in Poitiers (FR-275), 18 and 19 November 1993, information stand of the Mons EIC (BE-011); from left to right: D. Simon, Regional Information Centre; T. Maton (BE-011), C. Provost (BE-011), J. Delaunois and D. Chasse, Advanced Technology Centre.



13. Agri Network 93, Interprise show in Toulouse-Blagnac (FR-259), 7 and 8 October 1993; J. L. Falcou (FR-259).

Interreg

Interreg (a Community initiative to assist border areas) is a Commission (DG XVI) initiative seeking to get Structural Fund aid to internal, external and some maritime border areas, bearing in mind their particular difficulties and characteristics:

Mons (BE-011) prepared training sessions for an Interreg project entitled 'Promoting the Franco-Belgian SMEs in Hainaut';

Aabenraa (DK-053) took part in Interreg cooperation for the environment and energy technology and was sponsored by the Sprint programme;

Ioannina (GR-163) took part in a 'Gre-Den-Sco' Interreg project to promote transnational cooperation between Epirus and other regions in Denmark and Scotland;

Cordovilla (ES-211) organized several meetings to prepare Interreg 5 projects operating in the regions of Aquitaine, the Basque Country and Navarre;

Faro (PT-506) organized jointly with Seville (ES-203) and Malaga (ES-216) working sessions and meetings of enterprises for the 'third Algarve/Andalusia meeting' transnational cooperation project which took place in Loule under the auspices of the Interreg programme; an interregional cooperation database was prepared for the occasion.

Search for partners

For the search for partners proper, some EICs have developed information retrieval services accessible to enterprises or to their networks:

Athens (GR-151) translates BRE messages and puts them on the Kapa-Tel database where they are accessible to enterprises;

Patras (GR-160) has created its own database, accessible to Greek EICs, containing information on regional SMEs;

Rome (IT-354) has developed 'Giano', a system linking all the Confindustria subnetwork;

the Italian EICs based in Chambers of Commerce make the Cerved databases available to their clients;

Aveiro (PT-503) provides access to Dialog, Tradstat and Questel, and to the Dun & Bradstreet services.

(b) Cross-border cooperation

An economic necessity after the opening of intra-Community frontiers and the completion of the single market, this type of cooperation is encouraged by EICs located in border areas. A few of these initiatives may be mentioned:

Hasselt (BE-008) and Aachen (DE-107) together staged the Euregio Rhine-Meuse Interprise;

as part of the European Week for Business, the EICs of the Saar-Lor-Lux-Rhineland-Palatinate region got together to organize a series of conferences on actions to assist SMEs and provide them with information;

Oporto (PT-501) and Santiago de Compostela (ES-221) cooperated in a seminar on Spanish/Portuguese customs procedures;

lastly, Aveiro (PT-503) was co-organizer of an exchange of experience project in aquaculture with regional enterprises in Spain (Cadiz and Huelva) and France (Arcachon basin).

(c) Inter-EIC cooperation and development of relay stations

Since the network has been fully operational there has been much more cooperation between EICs and they have created their own networks.

Joint cooperation initiatives

Arlon (BE-003) together with Maidstone (UK-563) prepared a Lingua project within the framework of the Language programme;

Kortrijk (BE-009) collaborated with Viborg (DK-057), Leipzig (DE-133) and Craca (IT) on a draft project concerning the Bulgarian trade information centre for SMEs in Europe;

Bremen (DE-113) set up a Eurokontakte service for commercial cooperation with the EICs in Kiel (DE-118), Osnabrück (DE-128), Vordingborg (DK-058) and Mons (BE-011);

Besançon (FR-258) and Florence (IT-361) exchanged personnel as part of the Mercure programme; Galway (IR-304) took part in a similar programme with Leipzig (DE-133), as did Waterford (IR-306) with Rennes (FR-276);

Lille (FR-266) joined up with Mons (BE-011) and Tournai (BE-014) to organize a cross-border conference/discussion on the subject of 'Environmental Europe: a daily quality for the enterprise'. The discussion centred on the problems of waste, its management and transnational circulation;

Vicenza (IT-379) is cooperating with Mülheim (DE-101) and Thessaloniki (GR-153) to organize Sprint TT days;

Coimbra (PT-504) collaborated with Charleroi (BE-006) and Telford (UK-569) to prepare the second assembly of the medium-sized towns network in Coimbra.

Subnetworks and relay stations

The existing transnational or cross-border subnetworks continued their information exchange and cooperation activities and held several sessions in 1992-93. On 31 December 1993 there were 21 inter-EIC cooperation networks: Atlantic Arc; Decide (an initiative encouraging partnership in armaments, defence and aeronautics); eco-audit SAP (self-analysis package); EHLAN (Europe, Hesse, Lombardy, Aragon, Normandy); Euro-cross-border database; North German EICs; Euregio Meuse-Rhine EIC; EICs of the Standing Conference of Italian and Spanish Chambers of Commerce; ERIC North (first transnational subnetwork, founded in 1987, linking EICs of Northern Europe, the principal objective being information exchange); ERVT (European regional vocational training network); Eurométropoles; Euro-

partners; Euroregion European Information Centres; Industrie (a network of Italian industrial EICs and their subnetworks seeking to develop synergies for better information and assistance to industrial enterprises); IPI (interregional partnership initiatives); MEIC (Middle European EICs); Pépinière Tecno; cooperation network between the regions of Algarve and Andalusia; network of supranational EICs; Saar-Lor-Lux-Trier/Westfalz (medium-sized towns).

In addition,

Liège (BE-010) is awaiting recognition of its Moscow relay station; Copenhagen (DK-055) has developed a TIC offices subnetwork, for which training sessions have been organized, and a satellite has been created in Norway;

Regensburg (DE-104) heads a subnetwork of 83 chambers of commerce in Germany and a few foreign chambers; it has a relay station in Pilsen in the Czech Republic;

Bonn (DE-105) has a subnetwork of 20 craft industry chambers;

Frankfurt-on-Oder (DE-136) has set up a *Mittlere Oder* subnetwork;

Heraklion (GR-156) has set up a relay station at the Bank of Cyprus in Nicosia;

Ioannina (GR-163) has begun negotiations for the creation of a relay station at the Corfu CCI; it is also continuing to develop its Albanian relay station in Gjirokastër;

Palma de Mallorca (ES-219) signed an agreement with the Confederation of Enterprise Associations in June 1993 and is opening a relay station in Ibiza;

Metz (FR-253) is developing its subnetwork through the Meurthe-et-Moselle and Meuse Chambers of Commerce and Industry;

Limerick (IR-302) officially opened a fifth information office during the European Week for Business;

The Hague (NL-454) has five liaison offices in regional chambers of commerce and has developed a network of submembers of BC-Net with The Hague Innovation Centre and private consultants;

Utrecht (NL-458) has negotiated with three chambers of commerce in the north of the Netherlands for the distribution of information;

Coimbra (PT-504) distributes daily information to 78 municipalities in the Central region;

Lisbon (PT-509) opened a fifth relay station in September 1993 and has three contact points;

Glasgow (UK-551) has a growing subnetwork of 23 units; the other Scottish EIC, in Inverness (UK-559), has 20, 10 of which are in local enterprise councils in the Highlands and Islands.

(d) Cooperation with third countries

In 1992 and 1993, EICs greatly increased their relations with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CCEE), the EFTA countries and the Mediterranean countries:

Mons (BE-011) led 16 enterprises from Hainaut and presented its information stand at CAT 93 (Carrefour d'affaires et de technologie — Business and technology crossroads) in Tunis, which has two specialized subcontracting and technology exhibitions and an enterprise partnership operation; the EIC was in this way contacted by more than 80 Tunisian and Maghrebi enterprises;

Aarhus (DK-051) received a delegation of Swedish businessmen from the Utvecklingsfond and introduced them to the network and the EIC's services;

Aabenraa (DK-053) organized a business trip to the three Baltic States to find partners interested in business cooperation with Danish SMEs in the region;

at the end of June 1993 Stuttgart (DE-106) signed an official cooperation agreement with the EICC of Eastern Switzerland: this provides for the joint organization of cross-border events, on-going exchanges of experience, and mutual assistance in answering requests for information;

Berlin (DE-108) visited the Warsaw EICC to exchange information;

in 1993 Trier (DE-126) cooperated with the municipality of Opole in Poland for the Interfair project as part of the Ouverture programme; this cooperation with the Polish Ministry of Economic Affairs and Mines also involved the Luxembourg Chamber of Trades and the Saarbrücken EIC in organizing seminars in Poland on participation in trade fairs, and the opportunities open to non-member countries in Europe; in addition, a group of Polish businessmen was able to take part in the Craft Trades Conference in Koblenz, and an exchange of administrative staff took place between the municipality of Opole and those of Rhineland-Palatinate;

Frankfurt-on-Oder (DE-136) and Potsdam (DE-137) developed bilateral relations with several chambers of commerce in Poland;

in March 1993 Kavala (GR-157) organized meetings between local companies and enterprises from Vilcea, Romania, to promote transnational cooperation, and accompanied SMEs to trade fairs in Plovdiv, Bulgaria;

Volos (GR-162) established contacts with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Estonia with a view to future trade missions;

Luxembourg (LU-402) took part in the Interfoire project of the Ouverture programme (DG XVI, Regional Policy) to assist Polish SMEs;

's Hertogenbosch (NL-452) is cooperating with the Austrian Industrial Association in Vienna;

finally, through its host structure Enschede (NL-455) has developed contacts with a development company in Norway; it received a delegation from it on two occasions, in August 1992 and May 1993, and introduced the services offered by the EIC on those occasions.

4. MARKETING AND PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

The network is marketed in various ways, for example by direct contact with entrepreneurs (organizing seminars, canvassing enterprises and

developing client loyalty), but also through the media, using radio, television and the press, and finally through using the logo, the common symbol of all members.

(a) Seminars

The organization of seminars, sometimes with firms of consultants and/or administrative agencies, is the EICs' main promotional activity and demonstrates most clearly their expertise in the fields targeted and the added value created by acting as a network:

Ghent (BE-007) together with Mülheim (DE-101) and Diemen (NL-451) prepared a seminar and a detailed project on assistance to SMEs trading with Central and Eastern Europe;

Copenhagen (DK-055) became involved in organizing seminars on technical standards and a seminar on 'How to make a proposal for the Esprit programme';

Athens (GR-155) repeated a four-day seminar on 'Business practice in the single market' in February 1993;

at the end of 1992 Barcelona (ES-208) organized a series of seminars on general Community topics entitled 'Empresa y Comunidad Europea';

Logroño (ES-213) collaborated with its host structure in organizing a series of seminars entitled 'Adaptacion de las PyMES Riojanas al mercado unico 1993' in February and March 1993;

Strasbourg (FR-255) organized a conference entitled 'Région Alsace, atouts et faiblesses d'une région transfrontalière au sein du marché unique' (Alsace, strengths and weaknesses of a cross-border region in the single market);

in February 1993 Cork (IR-303) organised a seminar for local enterprises to promote business with Scandinavia, entitled 'Focus on Scandinavia', which was attended by the Swedish, Norwegian and Danish ambassadors;



14. Coimbra, 18 June 1993, conference on VAT; from left to right: J. Morais, INE; Prof. Soares Albugaria, INE; A. Jacinto, Ernst & Young; Dr Marques Alneida, ROC.



15. Evora (PT-505), cycle of seminars on 'Quality in trade' in Braga, 15 July 1993; from left to right: M. Barbosa, entrepreneur; A. Vieira, Confederação do Comércio português; S. da Cunha, Associação Comercial de Braga; J. Esteves, lapmei; J. Calisto, (PT-505); F. Araujo, Inspeção Geral Actividades Economicas; B. Simoes, sociologist.

Waterford (IR-306) organized a series of six seminars on the ERDF and possibilities of finance;

Florence (IT-361) completed a series of seminars on general Community topics entitled 'EIC afternoons';

Luxembourg (LU-401) and Aveiro (PT-503) organized a seminar and workshops on Intrastat;

The Hague (NL-453) organized more than 20 info-meetings on Community programmes;

Faro (PT-506) organized two seminars on 'The deficit in the European Union Treaty' and 'SMEs and Europe';

Funchal (PT-507) held a meeting for economic operators on the subject 'The future of tourism on the islands'.

(b) *Canvassing*

This may involve visiting enterprises, receiving delegations of national or foreign businessmen, mailshots, or maintaining an active presence at trade fairs:

in Liège (BE-010) the host structure has regularly visited local enterprises in the metal-working, food and subcontracting sectors. Some 1 500 firms were approached, which had positive results in terms of creating client loyalty;

Bonn (DE-111) wrote to 3 000 mutual banks and savings banks to promote activities organized in cooperation with Bocconi University in Milan;

Limerick (IR-302) went to enterprises to encourage them to take part in Community partnership programmes and to introduce EIC services to them; it also continued its series of displays promoting Europe, 'Euro-cartoon', in the region's public libraries and schools;

Galway (IR-304) sent its updated promotional brochure to 1 300 enterprises in the region;

the association of Dutch EICs had stands at three big fairs: 'National Business Contact Days' in Utrecht, 'Time for a quality deadline' in Maastricht and 'Business Europe 93' in Eindhoven;

finally, Utrecht (NL-458) sent a mailshot to 420 Dutch enterprises in connection with the Decide Interprise.

(c) Business delegations and winning the loyalty of enterprises

Poitiers (FR-275) led a delegation of entrepreneurs to Brussels in September 1993. This enabled them to meet experts from different Directorates-General of the Commission and thus to gain some training on certain specific subjects (how the institutions work and European construction, single currency and the ecu, policy to assist SMEs);

Coimbra (PT-504) organized a business trip to Mozambique.

(d) Media

Liège (BE-010) published articles in the dailies *La Meuse*, *La Libre Belgique* and *La Wallonie* and introduced the EIC's services in a programme on RTBF Liège in the second half of 1992;

The Danish EICs together prepared a national marketing plan; in particular, they sent out a mailshot containing their success stories to the national and regional press to raise its awareness on the occasion of the annual conference in Elsinore;

Odense (DK-052) organized an 'EC game' with two regional newspapers to mark the EIC's fifth birthday; it also placed an advertisement in the magazine *Arbejdsgiveren* on behalf of the national network;

Frankfurt-on-Oder (DE-136) has an agreement with the regional radio station 'Antenne Brandenburg' and supplies it with information once a week for its 'Europe window' programme;

The director of the Heraklion EIC (GR-156), V. Georgantopoulos, appears regularly on regional television and gives information on topical European issues;

Kavala (GR-157) gave interviews to local TV stations; a document outlining the EIC's activities over the last three years, entitled 'The EIC network and its services', was passed to the 'Proini' television channel; like most Spanish EICs which regularly publish in the press, Palma de Mallorca (ES-219) has entered into an agreement with the regional press enabling it to publish inter-enterprise cooperation messages — in return the EIC reports on topical Community affairs;

Bordeaux (FR-252) appeared in 'Décideurs', a local radio programme on entrepreneurs;

During the first quarter of 1993, Cork (IR-303), Galway (IR-304), Sligo (IR-305) and Waterford (IR-306) launched a vast information campaign on the Structural Funds and specifically the ERDF with the support of DG XVI; on this occasion they gave several interviews on national radio and television;

the two Milan EICs (IT-351) and (IT-365), as well as the EIC at Mondimpresa (IT-374), make bi-monthly contributions to the national economic daily *Il Sole 24 Ore* and publish offers for commercial cooperation and calls for tender;

Naples (IT-352) appears in *Il Mattino*, which is the best-selling newspaper in the region with a print run of 300 000 copies;

Brescia (IT-353) appears regularly on two private television channels; the Luxembourg EICs have produced background articles on Community subjects for the European Week for Business;

Utrecht (NL-458) publishes monthly in the employers' national magazine *De Ondernemer* to which all EICs contribute; it takes part in a weekly programme on national radio dealing with specific EC subjects and uses the same occasion to promote Dutch EICs; it has also taken part in a weekly broadcast 'De Tweede Ronde', answering European questions by telephone;

Lisbon (PT-502) has since December 1992 published questions and answers on Community matters every Friday in the economic section of the daily *O Independente*;

Evora (PT-505) has since February 1993 supplied the national radio station Radio Renascença with a daily programme 'Europa das empresas';

Bristol (UK-557) regularly broadcasts TED information on a popular local radio station;

finally, Manchester (UK-564) has appeared on the national BBC television programme 'Reportage'.

5. EUROPEAN WEEK FOR BUSINESS

It is extremely difficult to report all the events that took place during the European Week for Business (EWB), when in fact nearly 70 000 entrepreneurs attended more than 2 500 events. A selection of them forms the subject of a report available in French, English and German from the network's central administration in Brussels.

The dynamism characterizing these five days devoted to enterprise in Europe is in part reflected in the examples mentioned below.

Belgium

In Belgium — which had the Council Presidency — all the Belgian EICs organized a press conference on 23 September 1993 to launch their EWB.

Kortrijk (BE-009) in collaboration with the Kredietbank organized two seminars dealing with assistance to SMEs in prospecting foreign markets and how to do business with the authorities in Belgium, in the North of France and in the rest of the Community.

Namur (BE-001), Liège (BE-010), Mons (BE-011) and Eupen (BE-013) announced the creation of an EEIG to defend the EICs' interests *vis-à-vis* the Community and to facilitate finance for joint events.



16. European Week for Business.

Press conference of Belgian EICs, 23 September 1993, launch of the European Week for Business; from left to right: L. Rifflet, Office of the Minister for External Trade and European Affairs; M. Rover (Liège, BE-010), A. Bourgeois, Federal Minister for SMEs and Agriculture; J. Declerck (Ghent, BE-007); R. Bombassei, Director, DG XXIII.



17. European Week for Business.

Press conference of Belgian EICs, 23 September 1993, launch of the European Week for Business; from left to right: M. Rover (Liège, BE-010), J. Declerck (Ghent, BE-007), coordinators of the press conference of Belgian EICs at the IPC (International Press Centre).



18. European Week for Business.

Kortrijk (BE-009), 5 October 1993, discussion on 'SMEs and the internationalization process in the context of European unification. What are SMEs' chances in Central and Eastern Europe?'; from left to right: Prof. Dr J. Degadt, rector, Katholieke Universiteit Brussel; M. Thyssen, MEP; A. Bourgeois, Federal Minister for SMEs and Agriculture; E. Vandenberg, BRT journalist; F. Deceuninck, Wever & Ducré; P. Bisshop, Fiduciaire Moores Rowland Kortrijk; P. Derck, YSCO; M. Bens, Aqualys.

Denmark

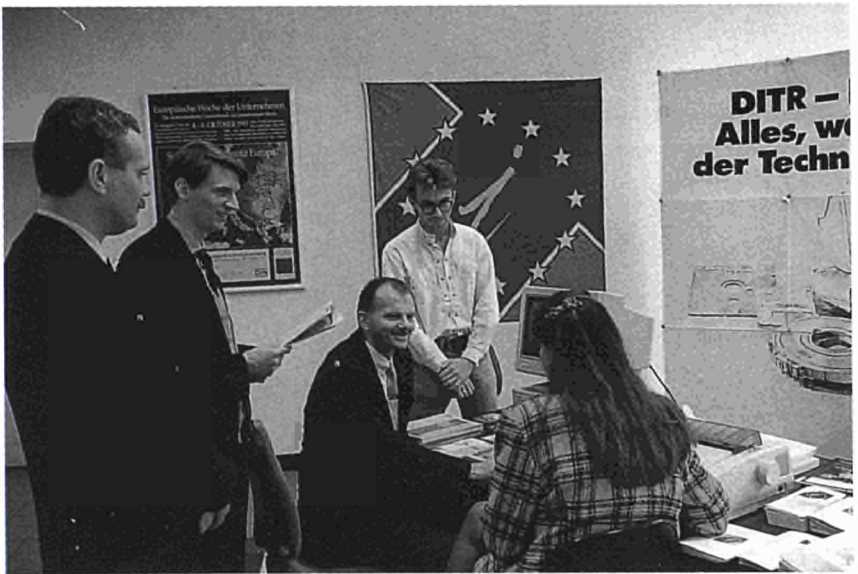
The Danish EICs made the national and regional press aware in advance of the Community instruments for assisting SMEs.

Taastrup (DK-055) directly mailed 2 500 enterprises, consultants, public authorities, etc., explaining the European Week for Business, the role of the EIC and the activities during the EWB; some 200 press contacts, 150 consultants and 500 contacts of their subnetwork received a paper on how enterprises should assert their rights in the single market.

Germany

In Germany the EWB opened on 1 October in Bonn with a meeting on the subject of the internal market with the representatives of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Members of the European Parliament, the Director-General of DG XXIII, Mr H. von Moltke, and many representatives of trade organizations.

Commissioner Member Mr Bangemann opened the EWB in Munich with a discussion on European industrial policy.



19. European Week for Business.

Berlin (DE-109), 4 to 8 October 1993, the EIC's information stand at the House of Standards on the subject of 'Technical standards and certification in Europe'; from left to right: a representative of the Vereinigung der Unternehmensverbände in Berlin und Brandenburg e.V.; a representative Handwerkskammer Berlin; H. J. Wiesner (DE-109); a representative of the Technologie-Vermittlungs-Agentur e.V.



20. European Week for Business.

Erfurt (DE-131), 7 October 1993, meeting for SMEs on the subject of 'Optimism for the future — Innovation in Thuringia'; view of those in attendance, in the front row, from left (from third person) to right: Dr Drünert, Carl Duisberg Gesellschaft e.V.; S. Jänichen (DE-131); Mr Ritter, Thüringer Bildungswerke e.V.; Mr Hempel, Rationalisierungskuratorium der Deutschen Wirtschaft e.V.; Mr Lessel, Thüringer Agentur für Technologietransfer und Innovationsförderung GmbH.



21. European Week for Business.

Erfurt (DE-131), 7 October 1993, meeting for SMEs on the subject of 'Optimism for the future — Innovation in Thuringia'; the speakers, from left to right: Mr Saupe, Kaiser Maschinenmesser GmbH Schmalkaden; Dr Bürger, Thüringer Institut für Textil- und Kunststoff-Forschung e.V.; Dr Krapp, Office of the Prime Minister of the Land of Hesse-Thuringia; Mr Roscher, MEONIC Entwicklung und Gerätebau GmbH Erfurt; Mr Deisenhöfer, Radio Thuringia; Dr Linss, Mechanical Engineering Faculty, Ilmenau Technical University.

Greece

In Thessaloniki (GR-153), a press conference served to begin a programme consisting of a seminar entitled 'The enterprise as a motive force in the single market', workshops ('Budgetary methods for Community research programme expenditure' and 'European Community finance programmes'), and a conference entitled 'The IDC — Industrial Development Centre'.

Gold- and silversmiths met in Ioannina, aquaculture specialists in Kalymnos, and in Crete medicinal plant producers joined the latter to devise an Interprise project.



22. European Week for Business.

Volos (GR-162), 4 October 1993, symposium on 'Business opportunities in the Balkans — the Community PHARE and JOPP programmes' attended by some 160 entrepreneurs; from left to right: A. Papadoulis, Association of Industries in Thessaly and in Central Greece; E. Pilarinou, ETBA; F. Legaki, AITCG; D. Moschopoulos, Greek Centre for European Studies — Balkan Unit; I. Tzen, Hellenic Export Promotion Organization.

Spain

In Spain, Palma de Mallorca (ES-219), Ibiza and the Consejo Insular de Menorca announced to the international press and the 300 or so enterprises present at the days devoted to the 'future of the SME in the single market' and 'the creation of green enterprises in a European context' that the next Europalliances meetings would be held in Majorca in May 1994. On 6 October, Commission Member Mr Matutes, in Brussels, took part in a video-conference linking Palma, Valencia and Toledo.

France

Bordeaux (FR-252) organized a conference-discussion on 5 October entitled '20 keys to the single market' on the subject 'moving, setting-up, living and working in Europe: the Franco-Spanish example', which was repeated in Bayonne on 6 October and in Bilbao, Spain, on 7 October.

In the region of Montpellier (FR-269) entrepreneurs met to discuss a variety of topics, for example 'packaging and the environment at a European level'; 'the future of packaging, adaptation and recycling', on 4 October in Nîmes; 'adapting SME sales forces to the European market' on 5 October in Béziers; 'the timber trade in the international environment, threats and opportunities' in Mende on 6 October; 'the EEC's monetary and budgetary prospects and their implications for the CAP' on 7 October in Sète; finally, 'quality marks in the food industry in the context of the single market' on 8 October in Carcassonne.

For its part, Poitiers (FR-275) organized meetings on the subject 'SME-SMI: water and waste management'.

Ireland

Irish EICs and the Irish Trade Board launched their EWB at the Commission's Dublin Office in the presence of the Irish Minister for European Affairs, Mr T. Kitt, representatives of DG XXIII, industrial associations and many national enterprises. Radio and television showed the full programme of 33 events in seven towns, in which no less than 977 Irish and British enterprises and even a delegation from Portugal took part.



23. European Week for Business.

Waterford (IR-306), 4 October 1993, launch of EWB by the Chamber of Commerce before the press and 80 entrepreneurs; from left to right: A. Wall (IR-306); B. Rodgers, President of the Chamber of Commerce; J. Cushmanan, MEP; P. Hughes, Chairman of the Rotary Club; A. Bradley (IR-306); copyright: Joe McGrath.

Italy

In Italy, Turin (IT-376) put on a seminar as part of the Intraprendere 93 event (a national show for creators of new enterprises) held in Biella on 7 October in cooperation with the national economic daily *Il Sole 24 Ore* and the Unione Industriale Biellese. The seminar concentrated on zones of activity or the axes for industrial development; these exchanges during the event resulted in the conclusion of many cooperation agreements. In Novara, which adopted the subject of environmental protection, 'Packaging in the single European market' was raised, reflecting one of the major concerns of enterprises because of its repercussions for the whole industrial system; also, the Unione Industriale Biellese young entrepreneurs group decided to launch an initiative to support and encourage the spirit of enterprise in young people — 'Spazio creazione d'impresa' and 'Progetto Europa'. This initiative took the form of an invitation to submit projects for a competition.

Florence (IT-362) held a convention with the European University Institute in Fiesole on the subject 'Why be European?' attended by the Italian Minister for relations with the Parliament, a Commission representative and the EUI President.



24. European Week for Business.

Turin (IT-376), 7 October 1993, the EIC's stand in Biella on the occasion of *Intraprendere* 93; E. Maritano (IT-376).



25. European Week for Business.

Turin (IT-376), 7 October 1993, Intraprendere 93 in Biella; from left to right: G. Barone Balmas (IT-375); L. Belforte (IT-375); P. Veneruso (IT-375); R. Ricotta (IT-375); R. Ricci, Associazione degli industriali del Canavese (relay station of IT-376); R. Bombassei, Director, DG XXIII; R. Beltramo (IT-376); G. Frumento (IT-376).



26. European Week for Business.

Turin (IT-376), 7 October 1993, Intraprendere 93 in Biella, colloquium on zones of industrial activity organised jointly by Il Sole 24 Ore and the Unione Industriale Biellese in collaboration with EIC IT-376; from left to right: L. Vercillo, Ministry of Industry; M. Deaglio, University of Turin; M. Sella, Sella Bank; F. Garibaldi, IRES-CCIL; R. Bombassei, Director, DG XXIII.

Luxembourg

In Luxembourg the two EICs conducted a big communication campaign, publishing background articles (the Community initiative for growth and employment, the SME observatory, the opening of public contracts, the distribution sector, quality assurance, prospects for European tourism) in four Luxembourg dailies, namely *Luxemburger Wort*, *Tageblatt*, *Journal* and *Républicain Lorrain*.

Luxembourg's other EIC (LU-402), based in the chamber of trades, organized among other things a day of contacts for entrepreneurs as part of Grand Duchy of Luxembourg Day at the Luxembourg Chamber of Trades' stand at the Metz International Fair.

Netherlands

In the Netherlands, the Groningen EIC (NL-456) held a seminar on 7 October in Drachten on 'The new VAT regime in practice and the new EC customs regulations'; whilst Utrecht (NL-458) organized three seminars on 5, 6 and 7 October, respectively — on the CRAFT programme, on public contracts in the Community (in Bodegraven), and on packaging in Europe (in Amersfoort).

Portugal

Faro (PT-506) organized, in particular on 7 October, the fourth 'days' of Community information for enterprises on the subject 'Enterprise, trade and the internationalization of the economy'; representatives of the Spanish EICs in Seville (ES-203) and Malaga (ES-216) were among the speakers invited; the day ended with the signing of a cooperation protocol with the Portuguese Foreign Trade Institute (ICEP) for the strengthening of mutual actions to assist the transnational development of SMEs.



27. *European Week for Business.*

Faro (PT-506), 7 October 1993, fourth 'days' of Community information for enterprises, attended by 130 entrepreneurs; from left to right: A. Monterde Moya, International Relations Director, CEA; J. J. Perez Taberero, Managing Director, Proyecto Europa SA, Banesto; F. Mendonça Pinto, (PT-506); L. Galante, Secretary-General of the Algarve Region Traders' Association; J. A. Cortez, Secretary-General of the Portuguese Trade Confederation.

In Madeira (PT-507) the days of information for enterprises were devoted in particular to the Community's Poseima programme (a programme of options specific to the remoteness and insularity of Madeira and the Azores), to the responsibility of enterprises providing services in the tourism sector, to franchising and to trade in the year 2000.

United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, Newcastle (UK-553) organized an international event, 'Great North meets the buyer' — a forum for enterprises — linking Newcastle to Bilbao by satellite, during which more than 1 000 enterprises visited the 80 information stands and there were 4 500 meetings between potential partners, some by video-link.

Bradford (UK-571), with its relay stations in Leeds and Sheffield, and Hull (UK-560) put on a large number of seminars (for example, 'Doing business in the Czech and Slovak Republics', 'Access to Europe: available sources of aid and finance', 'Ecolabelling', 'Quality for business in Europe'), workshops (CRAFT initiative) and open days.

Correspondence centres

In non-member countries, several EICCs (Helsinki, Stockholm, Zurich and Prague) joined in the EWB, organizing seminars for enterprises wishing to get up to date with the European Union.

General conclusion

In the light of this report, we note that the services provided by the Euro Info Centre network mirrored the growing complexity of the market during the period under review, namely 1 July 1992 to 31 December 1993. Records of the enquiries received by EICs show a considerable change in the range of interests of enterprises, as they come face to face with the reality of the single market. The network has also continued its process of internationalization, a process which was often anticipated by the initiatives of individual EICs in non-member countries.

Although the network was originally created to prepare small and medium-sized enterprises for 1 January 1993, the facts show that far from having become obsolete, its role as a relay for Commission services in the regions has been confirmed and has become increasingly recognized by other Directorates-General of the Commission. These services have, in turn, made a substantial contribution to a positive exchange with the EICs, by providing a response to the feedback which they supply and a better insight into the operation of Community programmes.

Glossary

Annual conference

Annual meeting of the EIC network.

BC-Net (Business Cooperation Network)

Network of intermediaries set up by DG XXIII, using information technology to process SMEs' offers of and requests for cooperation on a confidential basis.

BRE (Bureau de rapprochement des entreprises)

Network of intermediaries set up by DG XXIII to seek partnerships and cooperation on a non-confidential basis.

Capitalization

Central administration service based on the concept of making question and answer files available to the network, thus eliminating duplicated searches.

Central administration

The network's Brussels-based management and coordination unit.

Datatar

Database host offering many national and international databases.

Documentation centre

Central administration service which has available sources of Community legislation, EIC publications, specialist journals, etc. The centre is also linked to the main EC databases.

DOSS

Database on the ECHO host containing questions and answers from EICs and from information officers in DG XXIII.

ECHO

Database host located in Luxembourg. It contains TED, Cordis, INFO 92, DOSS, etc.

EICC (Euro Info correspondence centre)

Member of the network located in a non-Community country of Central or Eastern Europe, EFTA or the Mediterranean basin.

ERIC (workstation)

Software and management/working tool for EICs (question and answer files, reports, statistics, etc.).

Europartenariat

Events designed to stimulate and generate direct contacts and cooperation between entrepreneurs of less-developed regions or regions experiencing industrial decline and enterprises of other Member States and of countries that are not members of the Community.

European Week for Business

Event launched by DG XXIII and organized by the three information and co-operation networks to promote simultaneously throughout the Community the opportunities the Single Market offers SMEs. It takes place once a year for a whole week and consists of seminars, conferences, media events, etc.

Expertise

Field in which EICs consider they have extensive experience.

Fact sheet

Information sheet produced by the central administration on a specific subject of Community legislation or a Community programme affecting SMEs.

Geseic

Central administration database containing general information about each EIC (address, subnetwork, expertise).

Grid

The balance and perspectives grid is a tool for evaluating EICs' activities according to predetermined criteria that must be met during a given period.

Host structure

Body accommodating an EIC or EICC in a particular region.

Hotline

Telephone number enabling EICs to make rapid contact with information officers for urgent questions.

Information officer (IO)

Based in the central administration, the team of IOs answers specific questions from EICs which these latter cannot immediately resolve.

Interprise

Initiative to encourage partnership between industries and/or services in Europe. The programme is inspired by the Europartenariat programme. It supports local, regional and national actions aimed at stimulating contacts between entrepreneurs. Each project must involve at least three regions from three different Member States.

Monitoring group

Team consisting of 29 national representatives elected by the EICs, responsible for maintaining the link between the network and the central administration.

Network barometer (Baréseaumètre)

Communication tool for identifying EICs' needs by questioning national representatives in the monitoring group.

Network effect

Contacts, meetings and exchanges of experience between network members produce cross-fertilization (synergies) and constitute the network effect, encouraging each member to make use of his colleagues' skills and experience.

Notice

VANS electronic mail system.

OPOCE

Office for Official Publications of the European Communities. Founded in 1969 and based in Luxembourg, it is the official publisher of the European Communities. It handles the *EUR-OP* publications of the European institutions.

Question and answer files

Produced in the ERIC workstation, these files detail the client's problem and the solution found. The information can be made available to the other EICs on the DOSS database.

Relay station

Information, assistance and advice centre that an EIC may set up in its own region or elsewhere to assist SMEs. See also subnetwork.

Satellite

Member of the network not tied by contract to the central administration.

Specialized working groups

Group of EICs exchanging experience and in-depth knowledge among themselves in an area of specific interest to SMEs in order to improve cooperation with Commission officials.

Subcontracting

DG XXIII programme intended to encourage and promote transnational subcontracting in the countries of the Community and to promote European subcontractors to non-EC investors.

Subnetwork

All the relay stations of an EIC.

TED (tenders electronic daily)

Database on the ECHO host holding information on calls for tender contained in the S series of the *Official Journal of the European Communities*.

Tele-EIC

Communication tool whereby each EIC maintains regular telephone contact with a particular correspondent in the central administration.

Training session

Courses organized in Brussels by the central administration for EICs, relating to knowledge of Community affairs and the skills required for running an EIC.

Transnational/cross-border subnetworks

Elective group of EICs meeting regularly to promote the exchange of information in their sector of interest, complementing each other geopolitically, geophysically, regionally or economically.

VANS (value-added network and services)

Information retrieval system used by EICs, BC-Net and BRE offering a series of data telecommunication services: electronic mail, conferences, access to databases.

VANS conference

VANS service allowing EIC users to distribute general messages to the whole network. See also VANS.

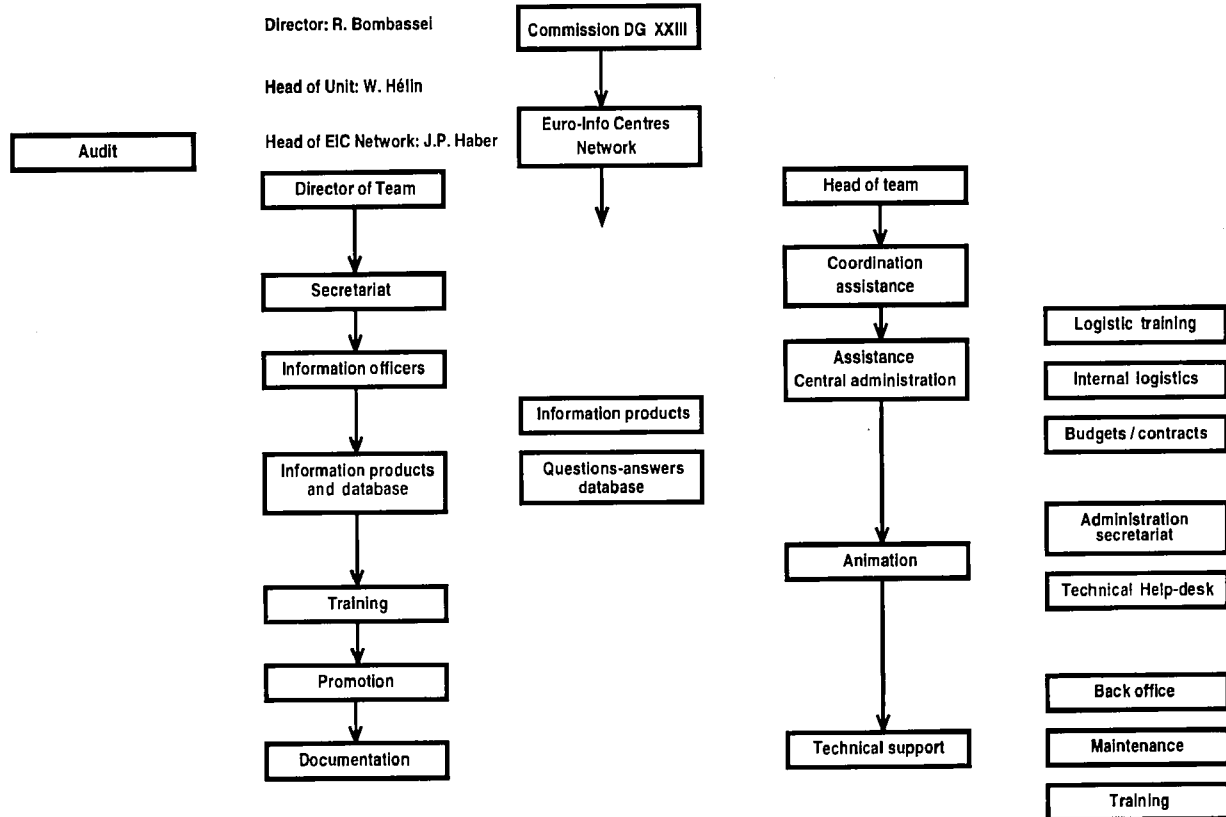
Who's Who

Document published by the central administration containing a full description of each EIC: host structure, address, names and photographs of the team.

Workshop

Interactive forum for discussion and training on specific aspects of Community legislation.

Organization chart of DG XXIII services



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