



European Communities
Commission
Press Release

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A SINGLE SUMMER TIME PERIOD FOR MEMBER STATES APPLYING
SUMMER TIME

The Commission has presented a proposal to the Council for a directive designed to ensure that summer time will start and end on the same dates in Member States applying summer time in 1977, 1978 or 1979.

1. The Commission proposes that for the next three years a single summer time period ("summer time" being one hour in advance of "winter time") of six and a half months be adopted as follows:

1977 : 3 April to 16 October
1978 : 2 April to 15 October
1979 : 1 April to 14 October

The Commission is not suggesting "generalised" summer time in the Member States; the decision to apply summer time or not will be a matter for the Member States themselves. All the proposal seeks to ensure is that Member States applying summer time do so for the same period.

The Commission is also concerned that in 1976 Member States have chosen not only different dates but also different times for changing their clocks.

In Ireland and the United Kingdom the change will take place at 2.00 a.m. on Sunday, in France at 1.00 a.m. on Sunday and in Italy at 12.00 midnight on Saturday. For this reason the Commission proposes that, beginning in 1977, clocks should be changed at 1.00 a.m. GMT on Sunday. This would give the following local times:

Start of the period

- (a) Countries where winter time is GMT: at 1.00 a.m. clocks would be advanced to 2.00 a.m.
- (b) Countries where winter time is GMT + 1: at 2.00 a.m. clocks would be advanced to 3.00 a.m.

End of the period

- (a) Countries where summer time is GMT + 1: at 2.00 a.m. clocks would be put back to 1.00 a.m.
- (b) Countries where summer time is GMT + 2: at 3.00 a.m. clocks would be put back to 2.00 a.m.

2. Why a single summer time period

Four Member States (France, Ireland, Italy and the United Kingdom) will be applying summer time in 1976. In Ireland and the United Kingdom, where winter time is GMT, summer time will be GMT + 1. In France and Italy, where winter time is already GMT + 1, summer time will be GMT + 2.

These four countries will have three different summer time periods in 1976:

France:	28 March to 26 September	(six months)
Italy:	30 May to 25 September	(four months)
Ireland and the United Kingdom:	21 March to 24 October	(seven months)

These time differences present problems for transport, telecommunications, commerce and contacts in general between the countries concerned. To take just one example, the time relationship between Paris and London will change no less than four times in 1976: from 1 January to 20 March they will be on different times (Paris GMT +1, London GMT); from 21 to 27 March (i.e. one week) they will be on the same time (GMT + 1); from 28 March to 25 September they will part company (Paris GMT + 2, London GMT + 1) to return to the same time (GMT + 1) from 26 September to 23 October; but on 24 October they will go their separate ways again (Paris GMT + 1, London GMT) for the rest of the year.

International transport, especially passenger traffic, suffers most from this situation. Timetables become more complicated and the life of travellers and transport undertakings is made more difficult. International telecommunications (e.g. business calls) are also hindered by the confusion created by repeated changes in time relationships.

3. Why the period proposed?

The summer time period currently adopted in Italy has the advantage of coinciding with the operation of summer timetables on European railways. In other respects however it seems too short; it starts too late for full advantage to be taken of the extra hour of daylight for most of the spring. The Commission therefore proposes a longer period of about six and a half months, that is, intermediate in length between the period adopted by France and the period adopted by Ireland and the United Kingdom.

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