

European Community

News Release

Background Note

ON THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY'S 30TH ANNIVERSARY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION OUTLINES WORK PROGRAMME FOR 1987

Thirty years after the signature, on 25 March 1957, of the Treaty of Rome, the twelve-nation European Community faces another challenging year, which EC Commission President Jacques Delors has described as the year of The Great Debate. One year after the third enlargement, with the entry of Spain and Portugal, the Community is being called upon to begin implementing the Single European Act, its first «constitutional» reform, amending the 1957 Treaty.

Implementation of the Single Act will effect basic changes to several aspects of Community life. These changes will form the European Commission's major preoccupation this year and they are duly set out in its Work Programme for 1987.

Much of the Programme is devoted to the realization of a genuine common market. Just as Europe's leaders in 1957 sought to achieve integration through the creation of a common market, some 30 years later the EC Commission has declared «the achievement of a single Internal Market is essential if there is to be progress in other fields and if Europe is to realize itself economically.» The Commission went on to note that the final outcome will depend on the speed of Europe's further economic integration. Therefore, 1987 must be seen as a year in which the willingness of the 12 Member States to uphold the objective of the creation of one single Internal Market by 1992, as laid out in the Single European Act, will be tested.

The Great Debate

The Commission wants to continue with the reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy, to embark on reforms to the Community's structural funds, and to its financing. These are the three key elements of the Great Debate which Commission President Jacques Delors dwelt on in his address to the European Parliament on February 18.

The Commission has underlined in its Work Programme «the very great political sensitivity» of all three elements. It has stressed that implicit in its proposals is the need for fresh efforts on the part of the Member States, and of stricter financial discipline by the Community institutions.

The Single Internal Market: A European Community Without Internal Frontiers

The Commission's activities will obviously be dominated by the will to keep to the timetable for completing the single Internal Market by December 31, 1992. With the entry into force of the Single European Act, this objective becomes enshrined in the Community's «constitution». But from the Commission's point of view, completing the Internal Market also implies implementing policies which ensure its proper functioning, particularly in the field of competition policy, scientific research and new technologies, transport policy and measures relating to traditional industries.

Concerning the Internal Market itself, the Commission wants to step up the momentum generated in 1986, in order to ensure the credibility of the Community's activities in the creation of a truly frontier-free Europe. To this end, the Commission considers as key areas: public contracts, indirect taxation, capital movements, banking and insurance and the free movement of the Community's citizens.

To ensure that public procurement becomes truly European, the Commission will make the application of existing rules, which has been disappointing so far, more effective. The Commission will also press for the inclusion of sectors at present outside the scope of Community procurement directives, such as water, transport, energy and telecommunications.

With a view to the elimination of tax frontiers, the Commission would like to begin on the harmonization and approximation of Value Added Tax rates and excise duties in the Twelve, even though the Council of Ministers has not yet examined the 1985 proposals. To encourage the elimination of technical barriers to trade, the Commission plans to secure the adoption of a series of standards, ranging from measuring instruments to fertilizers, and including foodstuffs and clothing. It also intends to see that the existing directives in the field of motor vehicles and pharmaceutical products are completed.

In regard to the liberalization of capital movements, the Commission will press ahead with the steps begun last year. It will also work for the coordination and/or harmonization, as the case may be, of national legislation dealing with banks, insurance companies and other financial services.

Finally, the Commission wants the man in the street to have concrete proof that a frontier-free Europe is taking shape. This implies greater flexibility, as from this year, in frontier controls, an extension of the right of residence in other Member States and the mutual recognition of national diplomas.

1987 will also see two initiatives aimed at doing away with internal barriers encountered by companies. The first is the preparation of the Single Administrative Document and the Harmonized System of Classification of Goods, both of which should come into force in 1988. The second involves a series of proposals which will give business a harmonized legal framework, covering everything from company law to taxation.

In the field of competition law the Commission will not only continue to apply existing rules, but it will also propose new ones dealing with technical know-how and franchises. It plans to take a stricter approach to government aid, especially in the case of the steel industry and shipyards.

The Commission's activities with regard to R & D and new technologies will consist mainly of securing the adoption and implementation of its 1987-1991 Framework Programme. It covers virtually all the Community's scientific activities, including such on-going ones as ESPRIT, RACE and JET, as well as the projected coordination of work on cancer and AIDS. The new areas of activity contained in the Framework Programme relate in large part to information technology and industrial development.

As for the traditional sectors of industry, the Commission will pay special attention to the coming together of markets which as yet are segregated. This implies the introduction of a common policy for motor vehicles and the continued restructuring of shipyards and the steel industry.

In transport policy, the Commission aims at creating the conditions needed to ensure greater competition in air, road and sea transport. It will also be seeking recognition of a special role for the Community in the realization of major infrastructure projects; hence the importance the Commission attaches to the search for new financial instruments.

Relaunching the Economy: More Growth, Fewer Disparities, Greater Cohesion

A significant and durable reduction in the level of unemployment remains a priority for 1987. Given last year's disappointing results in economic growth and employment, the Commission favours a more determined and conscious implementation of the cooperative growth strategy, which was adopted by the Community's trade unions and employers' organizations in 1986. This year the Commission will urge employers, trade unions and the 12 Member State governments to conduct at the national level the dialogue which has proved so fruitful at the Community level. But it will also pursue Community-wide activities in the monetary, regional and social fields, in order to encourage economic growth and employment.

To strengthen the European Monetary System, the Commission will make proposals to the Twelve for the complete liberalization of capital movements. As for the objective of furthering regional and social cohesion, its future is linked to the proposals regarding the Community's structural funds. Even so, the measures and policies launched in 1986 will be continued, as will the effort to simplify, decentralize and concentrate Community aid. The integrated approach, which consists of tackling simultaneously the different problems facing regions in decline, will be followed in the various activities to be undertaken in the regional policy framework.

The fight against long-term unemployment ranks very high among the Commission's priorities. It intends to survey new fields of employment and new types of jobs, especially those generated by local initiatives and the cooperative sector. In addition, the Commission will implement schemes to promote training in new technologies, to regenerate regions lagging behind, to help the worst-off sections of the population and to get the long-term unemployed back to work.

Flanking Policies: From the Environment to Consumer Protection

As the European Year of the Environment, 1987 will be characterized by a programme of special events. But it should also witness the launching of the fourth Environmental Action Programme (1987-1992). The Council of Ministers is expected to set the programme's priorities towards mid-1987. The Commission, for its part, will try to contribute, through its activities both within and without the Community, to the prevention of disasters such as that which occurred at the Sandoz plant in Basle, Switzerland.

The Commission is also undertaking to integrate consumer policies into other Community policies. It will put the emphasis on product quality and safety, especially for products intended for children. A campaign for the prevention of accidents to children is envisaged.

In energy, the main objective remains a further reduction in the Community's dependence on others; hence the Commission's plans to foster a greater convergence in the policies of the Twelve. It will also work to promote the use of new and renewable sources of energy as well as of solid fuels.

A year after Chernobyl, the Commission is devoting a section of its 1987 Work Programme to nuclear safety. It will complete its proposals from last year, thanks to a conference on the radioactive contamination of food and water. In addition, it will propose a Community-wide system of information on levels of radioactivity following an accident and a system of mutual assistance.

The Common Fisheries Policy will enter a new stage this year, with the coming into force of the new 10-year structural plan adopted last December. Moreover, surveillance activities will be strengthened this year, on the basis of the new Community regulation adopted by the Council.

In the cultural field, the Commission is organizing a major symposium in Florence, Italy, this March on the relationship between culture, the economy and technological progress. Its results should influence future activity. The 30th anniversary of the signing of the Rome Treaties on March 25 will be marked by a series of events aimed at the general public.

The Commission also wants to step up its activities in favour of a People's Europe. Its initiative in the fight against cancer and AIDS must be viewed in this light; also on its agenda is the fight against drug addiction.

The Commission is planning to set up the machinery to coordinate the Member States' response to natural and technological disasters. Other activities aimed at generating public awareness of the Community's existence, but which await Council approval, are the ERASMUS and YES programmes for youth and student exchanges and mobility. Finally, as in previous years, the Commission will take part in activities of a more symbolic nature, such as the sponsorship of sports events.

External Relations: A Stronger Community Presence in the World

The Commission strongly believes that a consolidation of the Community's presence in the world must go hand-in-hand with European integration. The Community will have numerous opportunities in 1987 to make its presence felt. The most important of these, for the Commission, is the start-up of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations within the GATT. With regard to the United States, the Commission's aim is to fight U.S. protectionism with «dialogue» and «vigilance» as the passwords.

The Commission favours an intensification of relations with Japan, while pressing Tokyo to open further its domestic market, thus ensuring that European firms have the same level of access that Japanese exporters enjoy on the Community market.

Finally, the Commission intends to actively pursue the policy of normalization begun last year with individual East European countries and with Comecon. This should result in Comecon and the European Community establishing diplomatic relations.

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