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1981 saw a decrease in strikes in Europe. Figures suggest that workers' demands for salary increases are gradually being replaced by worries about the future of their jobs.

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European countries are producing increasingly few short films, forcing a number of artists and technicians out of jobs. The European Parliament has called for a series of measures designed to prevent the total disappearance of the medium.

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American produced cereal substitutes are a major threat to European farmers. As Washington does not appear ready to negotiate the issue with the EEC authorities, a major trade war could be on the horizon.

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The European Commission has just launched a wide-ranging programme to combat hunger and malnutrition in the Third World. It includes a series of long-term campaigns costing about £105 million.

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European scientific research budget stepped up

There has been an increase of 5.8% in funds earmarked by EEC Member States for scientific research. West Germany has the largest budget for research, followed by France and the United Kingdom.

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BUSINESS: Fewer strikes in Europe

The recognition of the right to strike has historically been regarded as a milestone in the labour movement. But although this right to strike is widely recognized, it is still disputed by many employers and public authorities. While they don't question its principle, they do sometimes have doubts about its application.

New legislation proposed in the United Kingdom, for example, is aimed at curbing the power of trade unions in the industrial sector. The new law would ban sympathy strikes, political strikes and acts of international solidarity and authorize employers to take legal action against strikers.

In West Germany, employers have tried to convince labour courts that court injunctions applying to strikes of unlimited duration should be extended to shorter strikes, lasting a day or part of a day.

According to a report published by the European Trade Union Institute (a body which deals with information in the European Trade Union Confederation) the number of times industrial action occurred in the European Community actually decreased in 1981, compared with 1980. In Italy, the number of working hours lost because of strikes totalled 47 million during the first half of 1981, compared to 68 million during the same period in 1980.

In West Germany, the number of working hours lost because of industrial action totalled 53,398 days in 1981, down from 128,286 days in 1980. In France, the number of working days lost because of strikes plummeted by 52,4% for specific conflicts and by 64,9% for generalised conflicts.

Serious strikes did, however, break out in some EEC countries during the last 18 months. Nation-wide strikes were declared in Greece in the following sectors: food, electricity, banks, civil aviation and hospitals.

Strikes against the government's social and economic programmes broke out at the beginning of 1982 in Belgium, affecting sectors including steel industry where workers are fighting to maintain employment and ensure the future of their jobs. Generally speaking, there is a current trend towards strikes aimed at ensuring the survival of jobs rather than higher wages. This is clearly linked to the fact that the EEC currently has more than 10.5 million unemployed.

CULTURE: The disappearance of the short films

The number of short films produced in the European Community is decreasing. These films - never longer than fifty minutes - are increasingly rarely recognized as individual works and are normally used to complement longer films.

Their decline has come about for a number of reasons. Firstly, because a number of film makers themselves tend to look down on short films, once they have attained fame and fortune. Secondly, the growing popularity of television and the subsequent decline in the number of people going to the cinema appears to have had a negative impact on short films as more and more cinema owners decide to economise by doing away with the "shorts" that used to always be shown at the beginning of the regular feature.

The short film market in Europe is facing particularly bleak times. In West Germany, for instance, the number of German and foreign short films shown in cinemas has decreased by 80% over the past 10 years. The situation in other EEC countries is almost as bad.

The European Parliament has just drawn up proposals calling for public aids that national governments could give to the cinema industry to prevent the total disappearance of short films. According to the proposals, the emphasis should be on encouraging production. If the state takes on a part of the financial burden of making the films, producers of short films could easily keep going. Tax incentives could also be given to cinemas and film distributors as is already the case in some EEC countries.

In a study drawn up on behalf of the Parliamentary committee on culture, French Liberal Parliamentarian Marie-Jane Pruvot stresses that, given the reluctance shown by private investors, the State must be asked to intervene. She believes that the rapid growth of video cassettes could offer a new breath of life to the short film industry. The disappearance of this medium would not only be regrettable from the artistic point of view, but would also lead to further unemployment.

The Parliament also called on all member countries of the EEC to take measures to ensure that all film makers include high quality short films in their repertoires.

AGRICULTURE: US-European "trade war" threat

The European Community's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is not very popular on the other side of the Atlantic. It has become a convenient scapegoat for most of the problems facing American farmers, and a major factor in the "trade war" between the European Community and the United States (see Eurofocus 7/82). Attempts to reach a truce are being made constantly but to no avail. A number of leading EEC officials have visited the US in recent months in an attempt to refute American criticism of European agriculture. While they were there, EEC delegations also expressed their own concern at certain American trade practices. Not only do the Americans use the same measures that they criticise the EEC for, say the Europeans, but they also conduct a particularly "aggressive" trade policy. The case of animal feedstuff illustrates this point perfectly.

The artificially high Community price for cereals has, in recent years, encouraged the use of cereal substitutes such as soya, manioc or bran as animal feed. Corn gluten feed, for instance, has literally flooded the European market in the past ten years. EEC imports of this American-produced feed have increased from 700,000 tonnes in 1974 to 2.6 million tonnes in 1980. According to statistics, the American industry is planning to increase its production of corn gluten and exports to the EEC could reach 4.5 million tonnes by 1985.

For several years now, the European Community has been trying to convince the Americans of the need to review trade in cereal substitutes which currently pose a threat to European producers. But US producers are unenthusiastic about renegotiating the issue. US Agriculture Secretary John Block said recently that if GATT (the international body regulating world trade) were to condemn the EEC, Europe would have to change its policy. But, he continued, if the American interpretation was not upheld, the GATT codes would have to be modified. In other words, heads I win, tails you lose ...

If tensions continue to grow, an EEC-US trade war could become a reality. While Europe believes in a dialogue, it has no intention of being bullied. European leaders have reaffirmed their determination to preserve their independence in food products and it seems unlikely that the CAP will be sacrificed in the name of EEC-US friendship.

DEVELOPMENT: Europe defines Third World hunger programme

The food situation in Africa and other parts of the Third World appears to be deteriorating as more and more nations face food shortages, famine and malnutrition.

Famine is sometimes the result of natural disasters and climatic changes such as drought. More often than not, however, hunger in the Third World is the direct outcome of chronic poverty, particularly in the rural areas. As such, food aid from Western nations is not enough to fight food problems in the developing countries. While essential in times of emergencies, food aid does not lead to the economic development of Third World nations.

What is required is more sustained and long-term action designed to help developing countries draw up integrated and coherent food strategies. Action is also needed to help the increasing number of refugees in the Third World, especially in Southern Africa, Central America, Pakistan and South-East Asia.

Fighting hunger in the developing countries through the development of rural areas is one of the priorities drawn up by Edgard Pisani, the European Community Commissioner for development policy. Pisani's call for Community action to help Third World countries in their efforts to combat famine and malnutrition have been backed whole-heartedly by the European Parliament and by the European Council of Ministers.

Until now, however, the plan has focused on a series of principles. For the first time, the European Commission has now put figures to its long-term action programme. In a recent communication sent to ministers, the Commission says that some 104 million pounds (184 million ECU) from the 1982 budget should be used to launch three specific types of operations in the developing countries.

The first part of the campaign will focus on improving the situation of refugees and displaced persons in the Third World. £19.8 million should be provided for food, medicine, clothing, etc. says the Commission.

The second series of actions concentrates on technical assistance and advice for countries wishing to fight hunger through the development of food strategies. Approximately £56 million have been earmarked for this part of the plan which will emphasise rural development.

The last part of the plan will focus on the launching of a series of campaigns costing £27 million, designed to protect the rural environment in the Third World. The emphasis will be on promoting the rational use of firewood, protecting animals from disease and improving village water supplies.

European scientific research budget stepped up.
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Government spending on research and development in the European Community countries excluding Greece is believed to have increased in real terms last year by as much as 5.8% to about £12,951 million. But despite rising trends in recent years, Europe's research and development effort still remains below that of her major industrial competitors, the United States and Japan, according to a report released by the EC's statistical office.

Research and development, which is often regarded as a measure of future economic competitiveness, accounted for 1.8% of gross domestic product in the Community in 1977, compared to 2.4% in the United States and 2% in Japan. In absolute terms, excluding defence spending, Japanese expenditure was about half that of all Community countries put together, while US expenditure was about 1.2 times as much.

In the European Community, the Federal Republic of Germany, France and the United Kingdom currently account for more than 80% of spending. But according to EC figures real growth in percentage terms over the past six years has occurred in Italy, Ireland and the Netherlands, whilst spending in Britain, Belgium and Denmark has fallen slightly. France and Germany have shown increases close to the Community average of 0.6% a year for the period 1975-80 and 5.8% for 1981. The Community's spending from its own joint research budget has increased at a rate of about 6% a year since 1975, but still only represents 1.9% of the total spent by member state governments on civil research.

Total government spending on research in Europe since 1975 reflects a decline in the share of budget appropriations for civil research and a relative increase in the funds set aside for defence projects. In 1975 defence accounted for 22.2% of the total and in 1981 it accounted for about 26.2%.

Spending on defence is concentrated in the United Kingdom, France and the Federal Republic of Germany. In Britain it represents more than half the total research effort, which is proportionally higher than in the United States. French military expenditure has also increased sharply since 1977, rising from 29.8% of France's total spending in 1975 to 35.6% in 1981. In Germany, which spends more on research than any other country in Europe, it only represents 8.8% of total spending.

The decline in civil research expenditure as a proportion of the total is most clearly reflected in the fall in spending aimed at the general promotion of knowledge, for example in universities, and funding for social and sociological research. But expenditure on energy, health, industry, agriculture and the exploration and exploitation of the earth and space have all increased as a proportion of the total over the period. The general promotion of knowledge still accounts for about 44.3% of civil spending, followed by energy accounting for 15% and technology accounting for about 13.3%.

Community member states have concentrated their research efforts in a variety of different areas, including defence, energy conservation, industry and space technology.

Germany leads the field in research spending in Europe, with a 1980 budget of about £4004 million. General research funding currently accounts for about 43.6% of that figure, followed by technological research, which represents about 32.3%. Recent increases in technological spending can be partly attributed to the growth of German polar research and exploration, including the founding of the Alfred Wegener Institute in Bremerhaven. Industrial research aimed at improving efficiency and promoting small and medium-sized enterprises has also been a major target for funding.

France, on the other hand, which has the second-largest research budget at about £2833 million in 1980, shows a very different pattern of spending. 36.2% goes to defence, 22.2% goes to the general promotion of knowledge, 9.3% goes to industry and 6.2%, a relatively huge sum, goes towards the French space programme and in particular the Ariane European launcher project. The United Kingdom, whose budget for 1980 stood at about £2504 million, shows a different pattern again, with defence spending accounting for 54.2%, the general promotion of knowledge falling to about 20.5% and industry only claiming about 6.2%.

In 1980 Italy and the Netherlands were both spending about £656 million a year on research, Belgium was spending about £264 million and Denmark was spending about £118 million. Ireland spent about £34 million and Greece is believed to have spent roughly the same amount. In addition to national spending on research in Europe, multilateral funding in 1980, through the European Community and other institutions, amounted to more than £955 million.