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The Ten are hoping to bolster relations with the Mediterranean countries, ten years after the initial cooperation moves.

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PARLIAMENT: Tower of Babel?

A test of strength has been shaping up for several weeks in the European Parliament over the problem of languages in the European Community. At the moment seven official languages are being used: German, English, Danish, French, Greek, Italian and Dutch. Spanish and Portuguese may join the list in the near future.

This multiplying of the number of working languages creates administrative and budgetary problems for the different institutions of the Community. Each official document has to be translated into every language, amounting to more than a million pages a year for each language. In addition, simultaneous interpretation from one language into all the others is needed for working sessions. On top of the difficulty in finding interpreters capable of translating from Danish into Italian or vice versa, the number of possible combinations of languages increases dramatically with the addition of new languages. Currently, the seven official languages represent 42 possible combinations and this number would go up to 72 for 9 official languages. Translating and interpretation account for 60 percent of the administrative spending of the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers and for about 33 percent of European Commission spending. By itself the Commission employs nearly 1500 interpreters and translators. For 1982, it is estimated that about £248 million will be spent on the linguistic costs of running the Community institutions, or about 2 percent of the total Community budget, now running at £12.1 billion.

There seem to be two ways of reducing the costs and the administrative delays connected with this "Tower of Babel" situation. The first consists of limiting the number of working languages used in the Community, following the same practical example set by the United Nations and the Council of Europe. This solution has been suggested by the Political Committee of the European Parliament, which has called for the use of English and French, and later Spanish, as official languages, in a process that would be phased in over a period of 15 years.

The second solution would involve maintaining all the official languages while resorting to new techniques of interpretation and translation, using computers. That's the position taken by the Internal Regulations Committee of Parliament and the Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sports. Both feel that a limit on the number of languages would strike at the democratic character of the Community. A large number of Europeans

might feel lowered to the ranks of "second class citizens". The use of all languages is justified, according to the Committees because it allows each European to become personally aware of Community decisions. They also cite the examples of the Yugoslav Parliament, which uses four working languages, and the Supreme Soviet of the USSR which has members of 61 different nationalities, each of whom is allowed to express himself in his own language.

The linguistic battle in the Community is certainly far from over, but until new legislation is agreed on, the seven official languages will continue to be treated equally.

TRANSPORT: New projects call

About five and a half million pounds have been earmarked in the European Community's 1982 budget for the financing of transport projects. Many of them concern routes of international interest and especially railway links through the Alps, including the Domodossola railway station in Italy, which is one of the bottlenecks for European rail traffic and is to be modernized. Other projects are still in the preparatory stage and include the construction of fixed links (bridges or tunnels) running across the English Channel, the Straits of Messina and the improvement of road networks between Belfast and Dublin and between Greece and the rest of the Community.

A list has been drawn up by the European Commission but the final choice has not yet been made. The Commission is hoping that the Ministers of the Ten will give it the final choice, but in any case the Community contribution is not expected to be higher than 20 percent of the total cost of any of the projects selected. Regional and national authorities are expected to finance most of the construction costs. Public bodies may well be torn between their desire to limit public spending and the fact that large public works projects are known to be one way of reducing unemployment.

AGRICULTURE: Europe "vets" food

Legends of by-gone "pig wars" and "poultry wars" and public outrage about the use of hormones to fatten cattle are the only veterinary aspects of the EEC's Common Agricultural Policy that ever hit the headlines. What few people realize is that practically every piece of meat or poultry they buy in the shops is subject in some way to EEC "vetting".

European legislation aimed at protecting meat consumers was first introduced in 1964 with a Directive on intra-Community trade which laid down standards for slaughterhouses, cutting plants and meat inspection procedures. In 1981 proposals were submitted to update the system to take into account technological advances in cold storage and microbiological control methods.

Intra-Community trade in poultry came under a similar Directive in 1971, and in 1977 another Directive expanded health protection and veterinary inspection procedures to include all meat products in any form traded between member states.

Against the background of legislation a variety of exotic exceptions has emerged, ranging from special conditions for the production of "pâté de foie gras" to the "turkey war" which followed Britain's decision to ban all imports of poultry, eggs and egg products under the pretext that they failed to comply with its new health regulations for the control of fowlpest. A Directive prohibiting the use of hormones in fattening cattle also marked a major victory for the consumer in 1981.

In addition to directly protecting consumers by raising public health standards, EEC legislation has also involved efforts to protect animal health and stamp out diseases such as tuberculosis, brucellosis, foot-and-mouth disease and swine fever.

Since 1964 EEC states exporting cattle and pigs to other Community countries have been obliged to provide accompanying certification that they are free of disease. Gradually disease-free regions have emerged with some one and a half million infected animals slaughtered since 1973, under a Community plan to eradicate brucellosis, tuberculosis and leucosis.

EEC funds have also been available to fight against swine fever and in 1981 the European Commission proposed a system of compulsory notification of the disease. Despite the gradual introduction of a single system of imports from non-member countries the disease often reaches Europe from adjacent regions, which has led to EEC part-funding of eradication programmes in Spain, Portugal and Malta. The Community, in conjunction with the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has also part-financed a "buffer zone" in Northern Greece (Thrace) where pigs are regularly vaccinated to stop the disease from spreading.

OPINION: Peace main goal for Europeans

"Give peace a chance" is no longer just the call of a lonely poet. An unprecedented number of Europeans - 67 percent to be exact - have rallied to the plea and in a survey conducted by the European Commission, stress that peace is the most important "cause" in the modern world.

Greece has the highest percentage of people (85 percent) who feel that peace is the most important goal in life. Only 45 percent of the Irish, on the other hand, agree with them. The "Eurobarometer" survey on public opinion in the European Community also indicates that the next most popular "causes" include the fight for respect of human rights, the struggle against poverty, and the preservation of individual rights.

When asked to indicate what they felt would bring about changes in the next ten or fifteen years in the way people live in Europe, 39 percent of those questioned answered "scientific and technological developments". 35 percent of those questioned hoped for better understanding and goodwill among nations, while a very practical 31 percent expected changes in living standards.

Rising crime and terrorism are issues of major concern to 71 percent of all Europeans, especially for the Irish (89 percent) and the Italians (83 percent). The Germans are least worried about the two issues and are most concerned (77 percent) about environmental problems.

The increase in unemployment is the second most frightening issue for 66 percent of Europeans questioned by the survey.

One of the key questions asked traditionally by "Eurobarometer" concerns "the mood of the Europeans". The survey shows that satisfaction with life is still the greatest in Denmark, the Netherlands, Ireland and Luxembourg. Greece, where the question was asked for the second time, is still the country where dissatisfaction is greatest. Overall, however, about 57 percent of those questioned said that they were "quite satisfied" with their lives. When it comes to an assessment of the way in which democracy works, 41 percent of all Europeans are "quite satisfied". The feeling of satisfaction has increased since the last survey in Greece and the United Kingdom, but fallen in France. In the UK, say "Eurobarometer" experts, the rise in the number of "satisfied" people is probably due to the Falklands crisis. The diverging trends in Greece and France, on the other hand, reflect changes in opinion which followed or preceded the recent general elections. In France, the "honeymoon" effect which generally follows a change of government - and was very apparent between April and October 1981 - has dispersed since. It is, however, still strong in Greece where elections took place five months later.

ENERGY: Supplies uncertain for next decade

The good news is that Europe's energy consumption and imports have been falling and that targets aimed at cutting dependence on foreign oil should be met. The bad news is that this "improvement" has been partly achieved at the cost of a serious economic recession which threatens new investment in energy and which makes future predictions about energy consumption very difficult.

This dilemma points to a need underlined recently by the European Commission in Brussels for better and continuous information and also for more long-term planning and efforts toward energy conservation and conversion.

Community officials maintain that the current relatively favourable supply of oil should not be seen as a pretext for a return to the careless and wasteful days of the 1960s. The economic and energy consumption situation in just about every European Community country is full of uncertainty and any smug satisfaction is premature, they say. A report by the Commission on national efforts by the ten Community member countries to meet energy consumption and import targets set in 1980, notes that four countries, Denmark, France, Italy and Germany, have recently adopted new energy programmes to improve their energy security and lessen their vulnerability. Other countries are also conducting evaluations of past performance and making longer-range plans for the future. The Commission report emphasises the need for planning effort beyond the original 1990 target date. Further reductions of imports of oil may be at least partially replaced by purchases of imported natural gas and coal, which would have consequences for the EEC members' balance of payments problems.

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DEVELOPMENT: The "other side" of the Mediterranean

If the colourful tourist brochures are to be believed, life in the Mediterranean revolves around its sunny beaches, calm blue seas and lush green olive groves.

The brochures tend to forget, rather conveniently, that the regions around the Mediterranean are often poor and dominated by agriculture. To alleviate this situation, countries in the region - namely Arab countries Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt, as well as Cyprus, Malta and Israel, are linked to the EEC through a series of "cooperation" or "association" agreements giving them special rights as regards their sales of agricultural and industrial products on the EEC market. The agreements are part of the EEC's "global Mediterranean policy" adopted in 1972.

In a recent report to the EEC Council of Ministers, the European Commission claims that the difficulties facing the "southern Mediterranean" countries should not be allowed to get worse because they could lead to political and social instability.

Commission experts point out that since 1972, the area has grown steadily more important to the Community in economic terms. It is a major route for fuel and raw material supplies and an important link with the Arab world.

The Mediterranean countries have also become major trading partners with the EEC, accounting for more than 10 percent of total Community exports. The Community is also far and away their largest market, stress Commission experts. "The Community should therefore show itself to be a reliable partner, whose trade and aid policies can be counted on in the long term", emphasises the Commission report.

In the agricultural sector, the study points out that the EEC should allow continued access to its markets for Mediterranean products. It should, however, encourage its partners to reduce their dependence on food imports rather than increase their exports.

In the industrial sector, the southern Mediterranean states tend to produce "sensitive" products, including textiles, footwear, and processed foodstuffs. All the Mediterranean countries have expressed fears that the EEC's enlargement to include Spain and Portugal could lead to restrictions on their exports to the Community. The Commission study proposes the introduction of "better mutual consultation machinery" designed to allow for early warnings of crisis and prevent restrictions.

The introduction of a policy vis-a-vis the southern Mediterranean must, however, go hand in hand, with a more determined effort to develop the Community's own Mediterranean regions, say EEC officials.