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Mailed from Brussels X

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**EUROBAROMETER POLL: Public perceptions of poverty and social exclusion**

For a majority of Europeans, the number of poor people and drop-outs has risen, while poverty as a phenomenon is seen as recent, structural and long-lasting.

More than 17 million jobless, 53 million living below the poverty line, and some 3 million to 5 million poorly housed ... . The people in question are not the inhabitants of some Third World country, nor of a country painfully recovering from 50 years of Communist rule. These figures relate to one of the most advanced and richest regions of the planet, one that is highly industrialized and has an abundance of goods and services. The region is the 12-nation European Union in 1993, when the EUROBAROMETER poll, which has just been published under the title "Perception of poverty and social exclusion in Europe" was carried out. As in the case of similar surveys conducted in 1976 and 1989, the 1993 survey also tries to find out just how Europeans view poverty and social exclusion and assesses the levels of responsibility, the roles and the kinds of action capable of fighting this scourge.

Poverty and exclusion are not new phenomena; but they are now on view, having materialized in the shape of the numerous beggars and drop-outs to be found in the corridors of underground stations and trains, at street corners, and at the entrances to churches. It is no good looking away or walking more briskly; they refuse to disappear for all that. And they force us to look reality in the face, in our own interest, given that this waste of human resources is threatening social cohesion.

Thus 29.1% of Europeans in 1993 felt that the number of poor people in their village or neighbourhood had increased, as compared to 11% in 1989 and just 9% in 1976. At the same time only 15.7% thought their numbers had fallen, as compared to 32% in 1989 and 51% in 1976.

But the feeling that poverty is on the rise was even stronger when the question was asked in terms of the country as a whole, rather than in terms of one's village or neighbourhood. Only 10% of Europeans thought there was less poverty

than 10 years ago; nearly two-thirds - 63.5% - thought the situation had worsened. And many of them also felt that income differences were growing, and that the gap between rich and poor was widening daily. 40% even blamed it on the building of a united Europe, finding in it a convenient scapegoat.

The veritable reasons are well known, however. They include urban crises, the continued rise in long-term unemployment, the marginalization and feeling of helplessness of young people with few qualifications, inter-ethnic tensions, a rise in the number of homeless people, new barriers to the integration of immigrants and other minorities, the slide into poverty of heavily indebted families ... . Situations such as these are not solely, nor even primarily, the result of handicaps or weaknesses at the individual level; they are also the effect of economic, social, technological and demographic changes which European societies are undergoing, and which are structural, therefore, in nature.

The survey makes clear that this aspect of the situation had not escaped most of those polled. Poverty is increasingly viewed as a structural phenomenon, whose causes are to be found at the level of society as a whole (unemployment, the break-up of families, inadequate social protection and education) than at the level of individuals (laziness, ill will, absence of opportunities). This certainly was the view taken by 65% of those polled in 1993, as compared to 50.2% in 1989 and 40% in 1976. A clear majority of them (56.5% as against 25.8%) held that poverty is a recent phenomenon, rather than something passed on from generation to generation; in 1976, however, the reverse was true: 30% held poverty to be a recent phenomenon, as against the 52% who did not. And in 1993 46.1% were rather pessimistic as to whether the poor would be able to break out of the poverty trap unaided, although 46% were more hopeful; but here, too, the optimists were more numerous in 1989 - 54% of the total, while the pessimists managed just 32%.

58% of those polled thought that global action was needed to fight against poverty and social exclusion. However, 80% gave priority to job creation, 50% to housing and 30% to education and social protection. As for identifying individual respon-

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sibilities and roles, 80% thought that the public authorities should be the first to intervene, followed by ordinary citizens (44.5%), voluntary organizations (32.5%), the poor themselves (30%), the Church and trade unions and employers' organizations (20%). Finally, a very large majority of those polled (it ranged between 75% and 90%), held that in order to live with dignity it is necessary to guarantee people a certain number of economic, social and political rights.

INFORMATION POLICY: "European Dialogue" is launched

The European Commission launches a new magazine, aimed at readers in Eastern Europe.

The European Union should take in one day the six countries of Central and Eastern Europe with which it has concluded association agreements: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. The European Commission has therefore undertaken to keep both public opinion and the economic leaders of these countries better informed of events in the 15-nation EU and of what they can expect from their future membership. The first issue of "European Dialogue" contains an exclusive interview with Hans van den Broek, the European Commissioner responsible for relations between the EU and these countries. In the interview the Commissioner has set out the priorities of the programme which should enable them to be ready for entry into the Union by the year 1999.

The first issue also contains articles on the effects of Austria's entry into the EU on Central Europe, information on the new Commission and its priorities for 1995 and an overview of the programme prepared by the EU Council's French presidency for the current semester. The issue also carries a detailed study on freedom of the press in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the results of the EUROBAROMETER poll on the attitude of the citizens of Central and Eastern Europe to the Union.

For more information on "European Dialogue" please contact the editor, Margie Lindsay (tel/fax (44181) 5146 9245) or Robert Jarrett at the European Commission (DG X) at the following numbers: Tel. (322) 299 9406, fax (322) 299 9288.

AUDIOVISUAL INDUSTRY: The Commission proposes a 10-year extension of the quota system

After that the future of the European film industry would be in the hands of its audiences.

Faced with fierce competition from Hollywood, which has some 80% of the European market for films and which is doing an increasingly roaring business selling films to European television networks, the European Commission is proposing that the quota system in favour of European networks be extended for a 10-year period. If nothing else, such a move could help reduce the EU's deficit with the U.S. in audiovisual products, currently running at over US\$ 3 billion a year.

The quota system, introduced under the 1989 "Television without Frontiers" directive, with the aim of making sure that the majority of films screened by European television networks are of European origin, has been clarified. This time round the quotas would be binding and the Member States would have to impose sanctions in the event they were not met. The Commission is proposing, at the same time, more flexible provisions in order to foster the development of teleshopping and the birth of new television channels. It also intends setting up, alongside the new regulatory framework, and in addition to the MEDIA programme of measures to encourage the development of the audiovisual industry, mechanisms for providing financial backing for the production and distribution of European films. Once both framework and support mechanisms are in place, it will be up to the European producers to demonstrate their ability to match their American counterparts in producing films which attract wide audiences.

The text now proposed by the Commission leaves no room for doubt as to the mandatory nature of the quotas. Member States would no longer have to see to it that television networks under their jurisdiction set aside, "where practicable", a major proportion of airtime for works of European origin. They would have to

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ensure, using all appropriate means, that this in fact was the case, with no ifs and buts. Similarly, it would be crystal clear hereafter just which Member State had jurisdiction over which television network. Networks under the jurisdiction of a given Member State would be those based on the territory of that State, using a frequency or satellite link granted by that State, or even those linked to a satellite stationed above that State. The words "where practicable" have been removed by the Commission as regards the 10% of the programming budget which is to be set aside for European works from independent producers. The Commission has, in addition, specified that the proportion of works by independent producers should include at least 50% of recent works - that is to say, works screened within the five years following their production.

The Commission's proposal also stipulates the time which must be allowed to elapse before a film made for the cinema screen can be shown on television screens. This would be six months, from the time of release for showing in cinemas, in the case of films shown on a "pay per view" basis, 12 months when shown on subscription channels and 18 months on regular channels - as against the flat 2-year period stipulated in the previous text. Finally, it must be noted that the Commission's new text clearly states that Member States must envisage sanctions in the event that the directive is flouted - and that these sanctions must be sufficiently strong to be dissuasive.

The quota requirements, although set out clearly in the text, are not immutable for all that. If, for example, a television network fails to meet the quota, one could take into account such elements as the progress it has made in relation to previous years; the percentage of works being broadcast for the first time; the specific situation of countries with limited audiovisual production capacity or a language not widely spoken, and the problem facing new channels. In any case, new channels would benefit from a 3-year period of grace, from the time they begin broadcasting, as regards the quota requirements. "Thematic" channels, such

as those which devote at least 80% of airtime to films, documentaries or cartoons, would be able to choose between reserving a major part of their airtime to European works, as in the case of channels aimed at the general public, or using 25% of their programming budget for this purpose. The Commission's text also takes into account the recent success of teleshopping; airtime for this purpose would be increased from one to three hours daily.

The Commission takes the view that the provisions of its new text should not pose insurmountable problems for television companies, including newcomers. As regards existing networks, the checks carried out so far by the Commission have shown that the vast majority of them were meeting quota requirements. As regards new channels, the 3-year grace period is considered adequate. As for "thematic" channels, they should be able to meet the requirements of the new directive, given that they can invest in the production of European works rather than ensure that a majority of the works they broadcast are of European origin. According to recent data, the 10 most popular television series in Germany are all of German origin and are far ahead of their American counterparts.

If the Commission's proposal is adopted by the EU Council of Ministers, European networks will have to see to it that European films occupy a preponderant place in their programming during the course of the next 10 years. After that they will be free to show films of their own choosing - and they inevitably will choose those with the widest appeal. It is therefore up to European producers to seize the opportunity offered them, and show they are capable of making films which attract large audiences.

It should be pointed out that the Commission has retained all those provisions of the existing directive which are designed to protect minors (scenes of violence and sex cannot be shown before children's bedtime, for example). The Commission will also propose rules specifically aimed at protecting viewers and consumers in the context of such new services as interactive games, video on demand, and distance teaching and healthcare.

POLL: Americans continue to look favourably on Europe ...

... but are not particularly keen on its leaders.

Despite the end of the cold war and the rise to power - and economic importance - of other parts of the world, Western Europe continues to be very well thought of in the United States. This is clear from the latest poll conducted by Gallup for an independent American body, the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, with the help of the European Commission's delegation in Washington, among others.

Europe is important for 49% of the 1,492 American citizens and [ leaders polled last autumn, and chosen from the world of politics, the press and large corporations. In comparison, only 21% of the U.S. citizens and 38% of its leaders considered Asia to be important.

Europe's economic unification is welcomed by America's leaders: 85% of them regard it as good for the United States, as compared to the 12% who find it bad and the 3% who expressed no opinion. But the majority is much smaller when it comes to the American public in general: 49% view European economic unification favourably, 22% hold negative opinions while as many as 29% have no opinion in the matter.

As regards the popularity stakes, the four European Union countries included in the questionnaire are rated highly, along with the United States' immediate neighbours. Canada, which ranks first with 73°, is followed by Britain (69°), Italy (58°), Germany, which shares fourth place with Mexico (57°) and France (55°). The EU's "Big Four" thus arouse rather positive feelings, given that the pollsters had set the mark for "neutral" opinions at 50°. The four in fact were ahead of Israel, Japan and Poland among others.

None of which has prevented 31% of the American leaders and 18% of American citizens who were polled from finding it normal that their intelligence services

[ for 42% of the 383

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should spy on Britain. These figures gain in significance after the recent revelation on the activities of American spies in France, a country not mentioned in this part of the poll. Some will find consolation in the fact that 53% of American citizens and 52% of American leaders are of the view that their country must spy on Japan.

It must be admitted that the popularity of the three EU countries in question is falling. This is particularly true in the case of France: it has fallen in poll after poll, dropping from 62° in 1978 to 56° in 1990 and 55° in 1994. Britain and Germany rose in the eyes of the American people in 1986 and 1990, only to fall in 1994 to the 1978 level.

Europe's leaders have obtained very average scores. Helmut Kohl has managed 51° - as have the Israeli prime minister, Itzhak Rabin, and the U.S. Secretary of State, Warren Christopher. The two other Europeans mentioned in the poll - Jacques Delors, who was President of the European Commission at the time of the poll and François Mitterrand, the French President, have obtained just 48°. Leading this particular hit parade is the Pope, Jean-Paul II, with 65°, while President Clinton must make do with 54°.

Three EU countries are seen as "vital" for American interests: Germany, for 91% of leaders and 66% of citizens; Britain (82% and 69% respectively) and France (59% and 39%). These three countries come after Canada, Mexico, Japan, Russia and Saudi Arabia.

However, when it comes to sending American troops in the event of a serious crisis, it is Western Europe which obtains the highest percentage of favourable opinions. Were it to be invaded by Russia, 91% of American leaders and 54% of the country's citizens would approve U.S. intervention. Neither Israel, nor Saudi Arabia, nor Poland, nor South Korea arouse such a ready response. Besides, a clear majority of those polled, whether citizens or leaders, favours continued American support for NATO.