

# European Community

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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BACKGROUND NOTE

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## FIRST EUROPEAN COMMUNITY-WIDE AIRCRAFT NOISE CONTROL STANDARDS PROPOSED

The first European Community-wide aircraft noise control standards, complete with airworthiness certification system, have been sent to the EC Council of Ministers for approval. These standards -- for subsonic aircraft -- would apply to US and other aircraft registered outside the Community as well as to those registered in a member country. If, however, the third country aircraft has a valid certificate of conformity from an agency with standards as high or higher than those set in Annex 16 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation (February 27, 1975, version), it would not need an EC certificate.

Everyone knows about the annoying noises around airports: the high pitched jet whine has grown louder with bigger planes, larger payloads, and added takeoff thrust. Air traffic has also increased, lengthening exposure time to jet noise. Complaints from people living near airports have proliferated.

Some Community members have ignored or paid token attention to these complaints, while others have responded with stringent laws. Because of the chance of disruption if a high standard country refused a low standard country's planes landing rights, the EC Commission's new proposal would write a uniform set of rules to limit subsonic jet noise.

This proposal is only the latest of many Community attempts to get rid of pollution.

### Clean Water

The Community is trying to protect its water at home and is working with international agencies, such as the Commission for the protection of the Rhine, to control pollution in waters used by more than one nation. So far, the Community has enacted directives setting quality control standards and testing procedures for drinking water (June 16, 1975), swimming water (December 8, 1975), and for stopping dumping of the most dangerous chemicals into water and making a "grey"

list of less noxious chemicals (May 4, 1976). Since November 22, 1973, the Community has had biodegradability standards for detergents.

The Council is still studying Commission proposals on other water consumed by people (water consumed in processed foods, for example), waste (red mud) from the titanium dioxide industry, waste from the paper pulp industry, and waste dumping at sea.

The Commission plans to propose ways of ensuring a minimum water supply in every season in dry parts of the Community, stopping heat pollution by power plants, and using waste heat economically.

In the international sphere, the Community and its members are taking part in international and bilateral negotiations for conventions to protect international rivers, lakes, and seas from pollution: the Paris Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution from Land-based Sources, the Draft Convention for the Protection of the Rhine Against Chemical Pollution, and the Strasbourg Draft Convention for the Protection of International Watercourses Against Pollution.

The Community is a contracting party to the October 16, 1975, Barcelona Convention to prevent further pollution of the Mediterranean Sea.

### Clean Air

Six out of 10 people in the Community live in towns where industrial waste, heating plants, and car fumes pollute the air. The Community's efforts to clean up the air stress harmonization of quality standards and measurement methods.

For industrial pollution, the Community endorses the "polluter pays" principle whereby the company causing pollution pays to do whatever is necessary to end it. In March 1975, the Commission sent a non-binding recommendation to the member states for harmonizing and limiting government subsidies to help companies comply with the new anti-pollution standards to 15 per cent of the company's investment cost by 1980.

To control air pollution by sulphur, the Community now has a law limiting the sulphur content of certain liquid fuels used by households and diesel engines (October 16, 1975). The Council is studying Commission proposals to limit the sulphur content of fuel oil sold on the market and to reduce sulphur dioxide in city air and to set sulphur dioxide standards. Also pending in Council are two draft directives to protect the public against lead in the air.

Since March 20, 1970, the Community has had a law to reduce pollution by car fumes, and exhaust fume standards were tightened after it became technically possible to do so.

### Wastes

Every year, the Community "produces" 1.5 thousand million tons of waste including 90 million tons of trash from homes, 115 million tons of industrial waste, 200 million tons of sewage sludge, and 950 million tons of agricultural wastes. And every year, the Community produces 5 per cent more waste than the year before. Here, Community policy focuses on the reduction of careless wastage of resources, on the improvement of recycling, and on finding new uses for waste products.

The Commission's efforts begin at its own headquarters in Brussels. Last year,

the Commission recycled 396,616 pounds of wastepaper and received \$2,316 for it!

On the legal side, a July 15, 1975 framework directive asks member countries to do whatever is necessary to encourage the prevention, recycling, and processing of waste and the possibilities for new uses of waste (turning garbage into energy, for instance). A 1974 Council directive on waste oils suggested their reuse instead of destruction.

Pending in Council is a draft directive that would omit the use of toxic and persistent polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB's) to enclosed areas where they can be monitored (transformers, condensers, hydraulic systems in mines).

The Community's current research program earmarks 19.6 million units of account (UA) (about \$22.54 million at current exchange rates) for research, over a five year period, into safe processing and storage of radioactive wastes. An additional UA 19.6 has been set aside for other environmentally oriented research. In one such project, for instance, an epidemiological survey involving 20,000 children is being made on the effects of air pollution on respiratory diseases.

#### Land Use and the Environment

The fast growth of industrial and agricultural production have aggravated imbalances between urban and farming communities and have increased the use of cities and countryside for economic purposes. Here, the Commission is working on a "mapping" method that would enable economic, social, and environmental needs to be balanced against environmental supply.

As examples, to preserve greenbelts and parkland, one Commission proposal to the Council would subsidize the planting of forests on excess farmland which might otherwise become urbanized. Also, a 1974 directive gives income subsidies to mountain and hill farmers, working barely arable lands, so that these areas will remain countryside and will not become depopulated.

#### Noise Abatement

The proposal to limit aircraft noise was the Commission's first in the area of noise abatement. Others are planned to regulate noise in designated areas such as rest, residential and leisure areas; industrial estates; roads; railroads, airports, and international waterways. Rules are also foreseen for labeling and putting stickers on noisy products and for setting soundproofing standards.

