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We have requested the various organizations in the Community which are concerned with consumer protection to provide a periodic SUMMARY OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS in each of the nine member countries in MATTERS OF DIRECT INTEREST TO CONSUMERS. The opinions expressed will of course be the responsibility of the authors alone.

ANNEX 1 contains the first of these texts, which has been written by the Institut national francais de la consommation.

- ** Under the Treaty of Rome, the principle of "equal pay for equal work" should have been applied from the outset in all six Member States of the European Economic Community. However, despite undeniable progress, there are still considerable gaps and inadequacies. It is first and foremost the Member States themselves who are responsible for ensuring that this principle

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The information published in this bulletin covers the European Communities' activities in the fields of industrial development, protection of the environment and consumer welfare. It is therefore not limited to recording Commission decisions or opinions.

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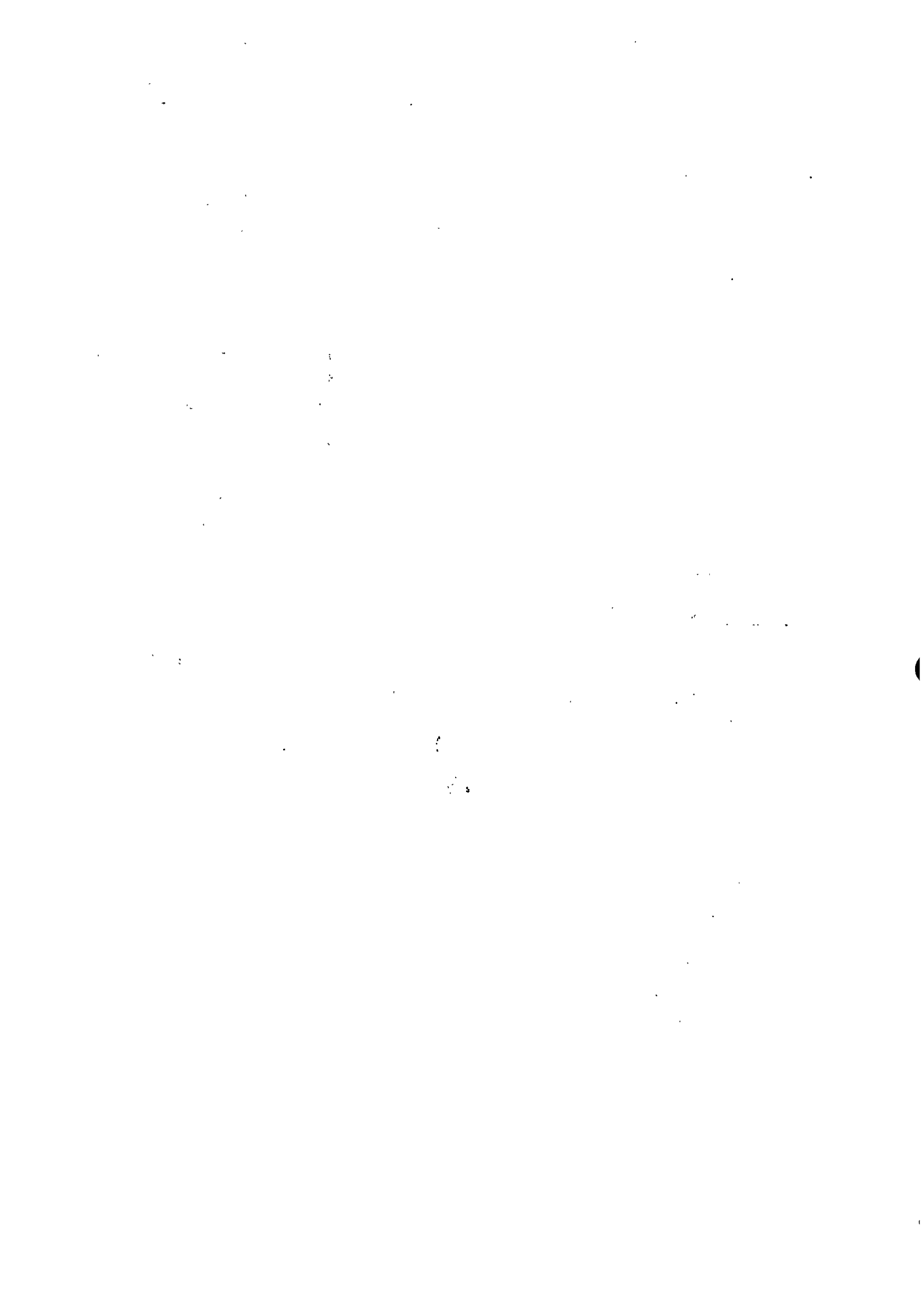
is applied by means of laws and regulations. That is why the Commission recently transmitted to the Council of Ministers a proposal for a directive designed to implement the principle of EQUAL PAY FOR MEN AND WOMEN in all Member States. ANNEX 2 gives a brief summary of this proposal.

** There is no such thing as a non-polluting petrol, but air pollution by motor vehicles can be kept at the lowest possible level. The European Commission is, therefore, following technical developments closely and proposes, whenever this is advisable, the reinforcement of current measures to diminish pollution caused by exhaust gases from motor vehicles. This was stated by the Commission in its answer to a written question from a member of the European Parliament on the PRODUCTION OF ENVIRONMENTALLY HARMLESS PETROL.

ANNEX 3 gives the European Commission's detailed reply.

** According to the Statistical Office of the European Communities, the degree of ENERGY DEPENDENCE OF THE COMMUNITY COUNTRIES in 1972 (i.e. the relationship between net imports, not including bunker fuel, and primary energy consumption) was as follows:

Denmark	99.6%
Luxembourg	99.5%
Belgium	82.8%
Ireland	81.0%
Italy	81.0%
France	75.0%
Community of the Six	60.8%
FR Germany	53.1%
United Kingdom	49.7%
Netherlands	15.6%



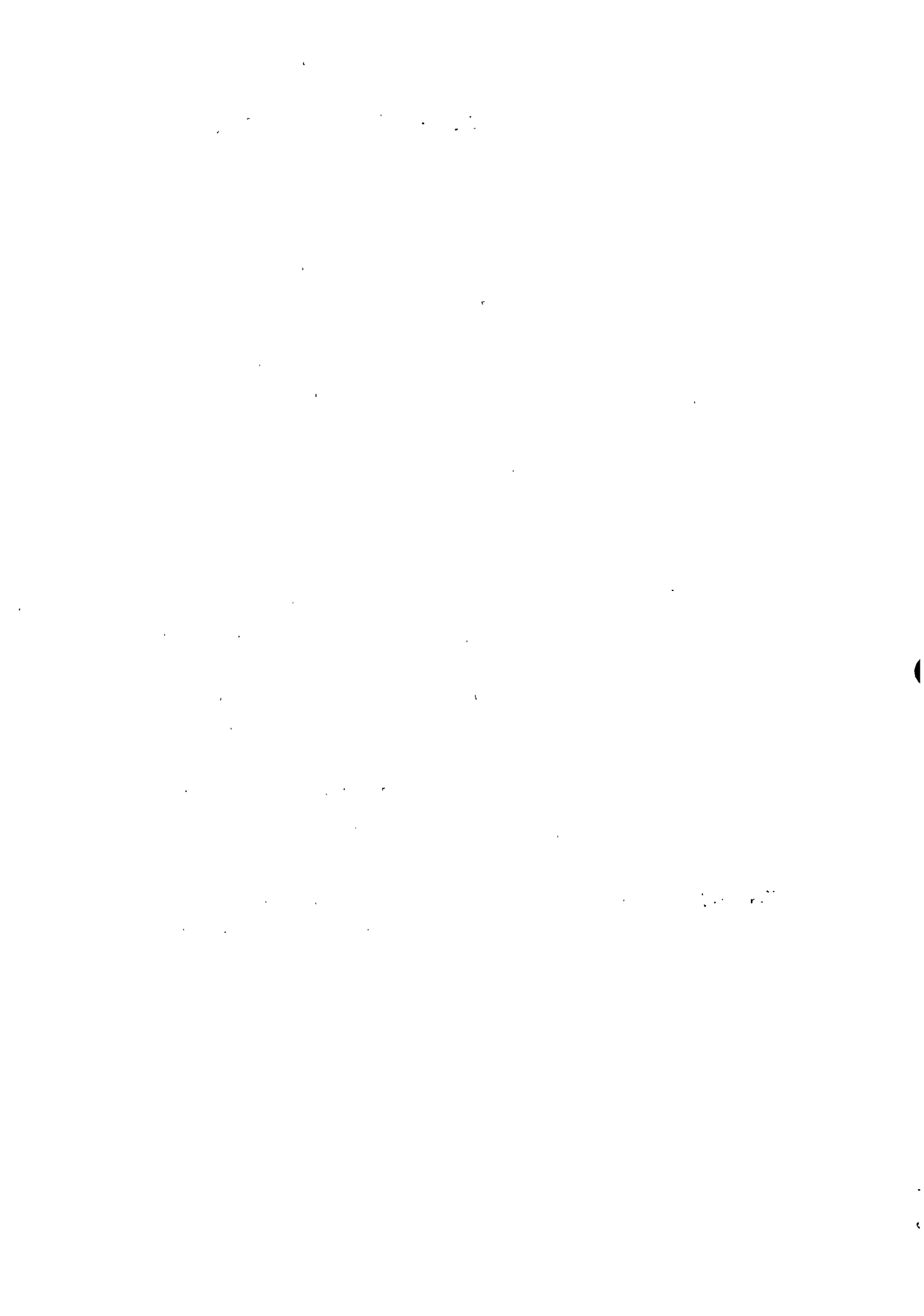
** In spite of the free-movement-of-goods arrangements within the Community, considerable differences can be noted in THE PRICE OF MEAT in the various Member States. In an answer to a written question from a Member of the European Parliament on this point, the European Commission set out the chief reasons for these differences. Firstly, a number of factors affect cattle-on-the-hoof prices:

- qualitative differences due to livestock composition;
- monetary events (in certain Member States);
- supply and demand: owing to the size of the Community, prices are not necessarily affected by price changes on other Community markets.

The following two factors may explain differences in retail prices:

- as a result of differences in eating habits, cuts other than prime cuts may be upvalued, thus keeping the price bracket within limits, or alternatively, such cuts may be only slightly upvalued, especially during the warm season, thus causing a relatively sharp increase in the price of prime cuts;
- differences in taxation systems which still exist in the Member States, and also labour costs, may well affect retail prices.

** The Bureau of the Community CONSUMERS' CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (see IRT No. 212) will hold its first meeting on 22 January 1974 in order to formulate the working procedures to be submitted to the Committee at its next meeting.



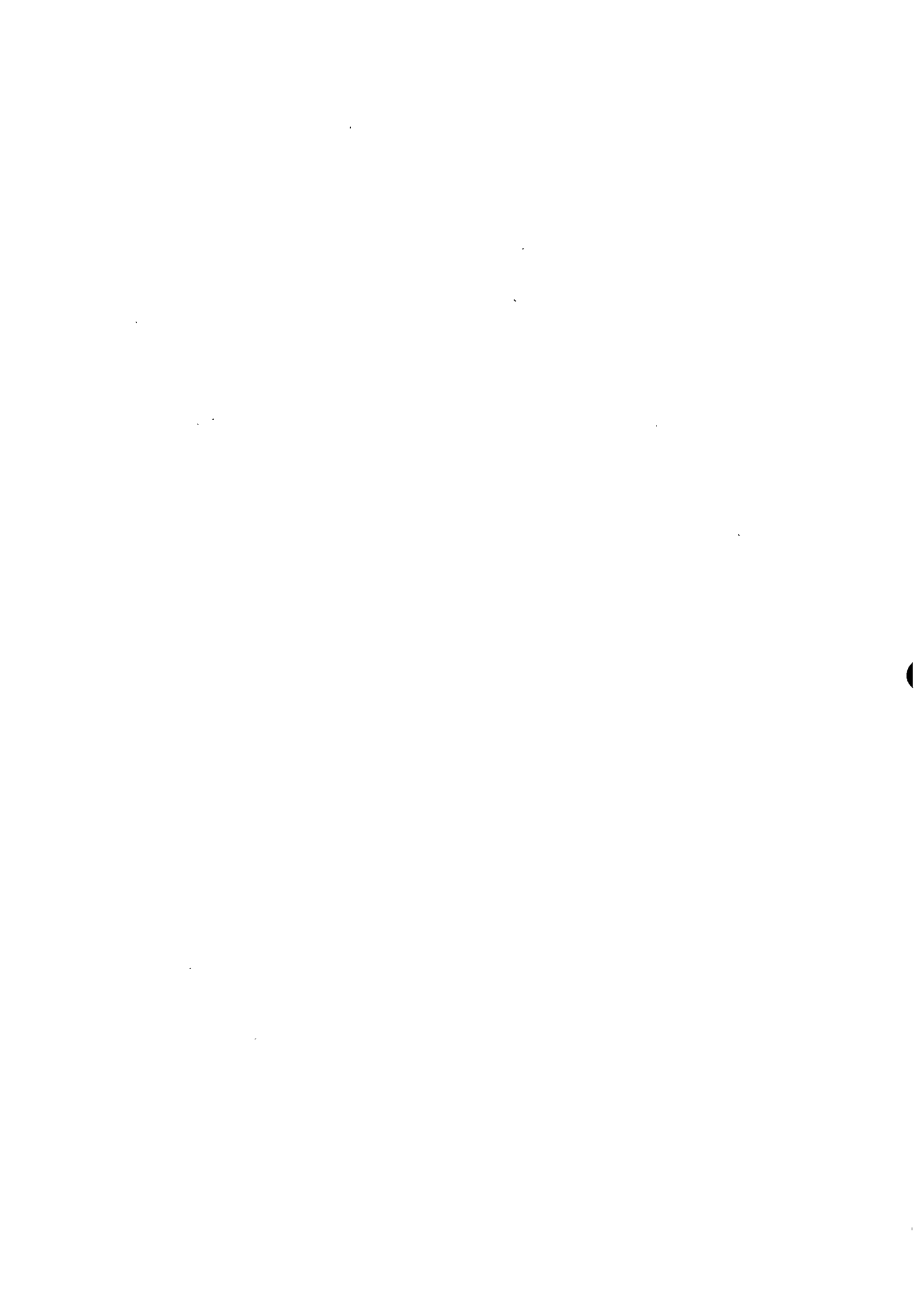
** Under the social research programmes, the Commission has in the last few years promoted research projects aimed at perfecting protective clothing that would satisfy requirements in the steel and mining industries, especially flame-resistance. This information was contained in a European Commission answer to a written question from a Member of the European Parliament on measures taken in the Community in connection with inflammable clothing. The European Commission also pointed out that three Directives have already been adopted by the Council, dealing respectively with the following matters:

- the naming and labelling of fibres (see IRT No. 110);
- methods for the analysis of binary textile fibre mixtures;
- methods for the analysis of ternary fibre mixtures.

The Commission is continuing its work in this field, and studies are in progress on various draft directives relating particularly to sampling, elimination of additional materials, instructions for care, inflammability, etc.

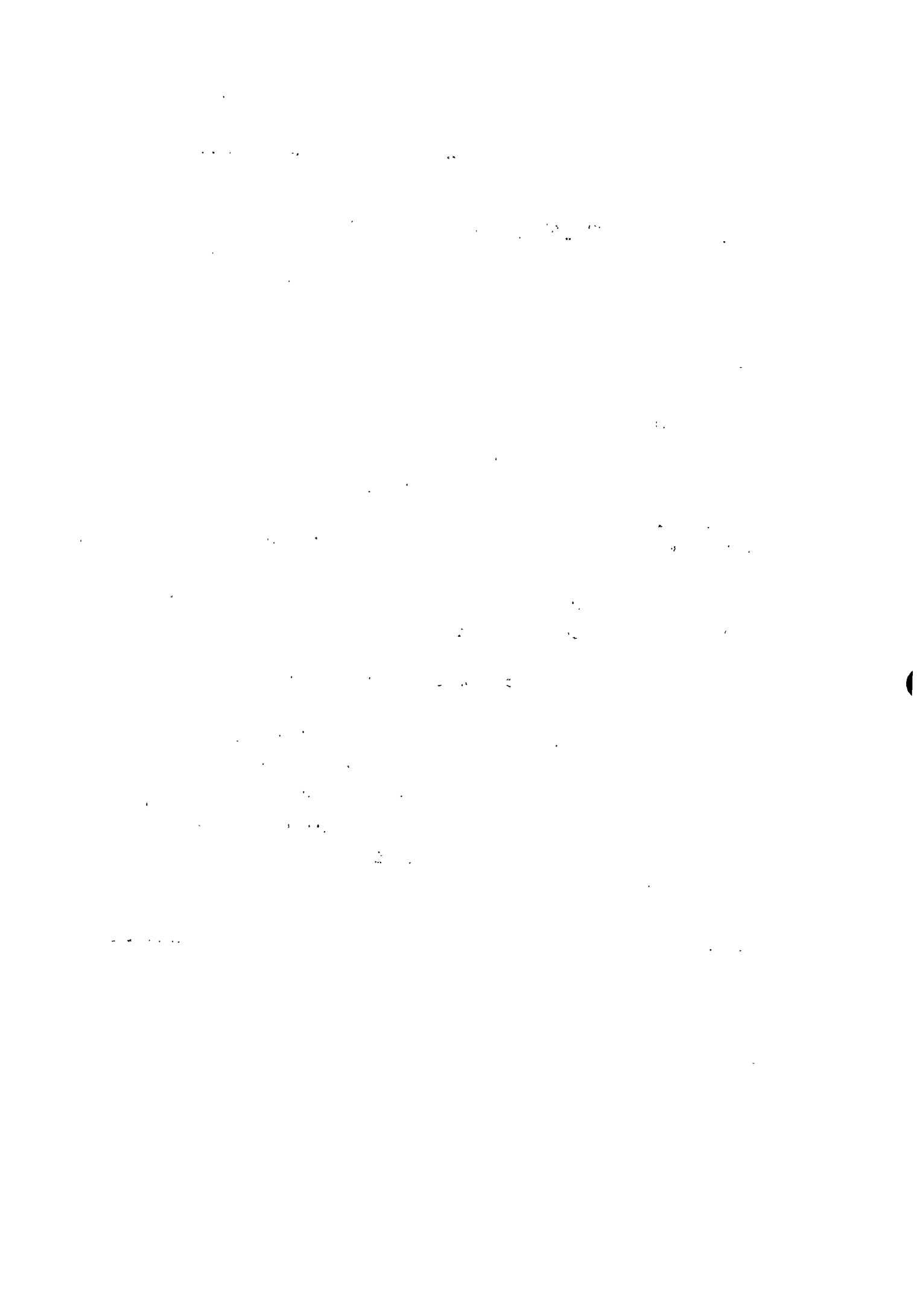
** With a view to eliminating present differences between the Member States in customs clearance procedures for goods, the European Commission has just put forward proposals for the HARMONIZATION AND SIMPLIFICATION OF CUSTOMS PROCEDURES. The Commission proposes a dual procedure comprising:

- (a) a "normal" procedure which in the majority of Member States will mean a considerable easing of the often excessively rigid formalities to which importers are now subjected, and which will also have the considerable advantage of being uniform throughout the Community;

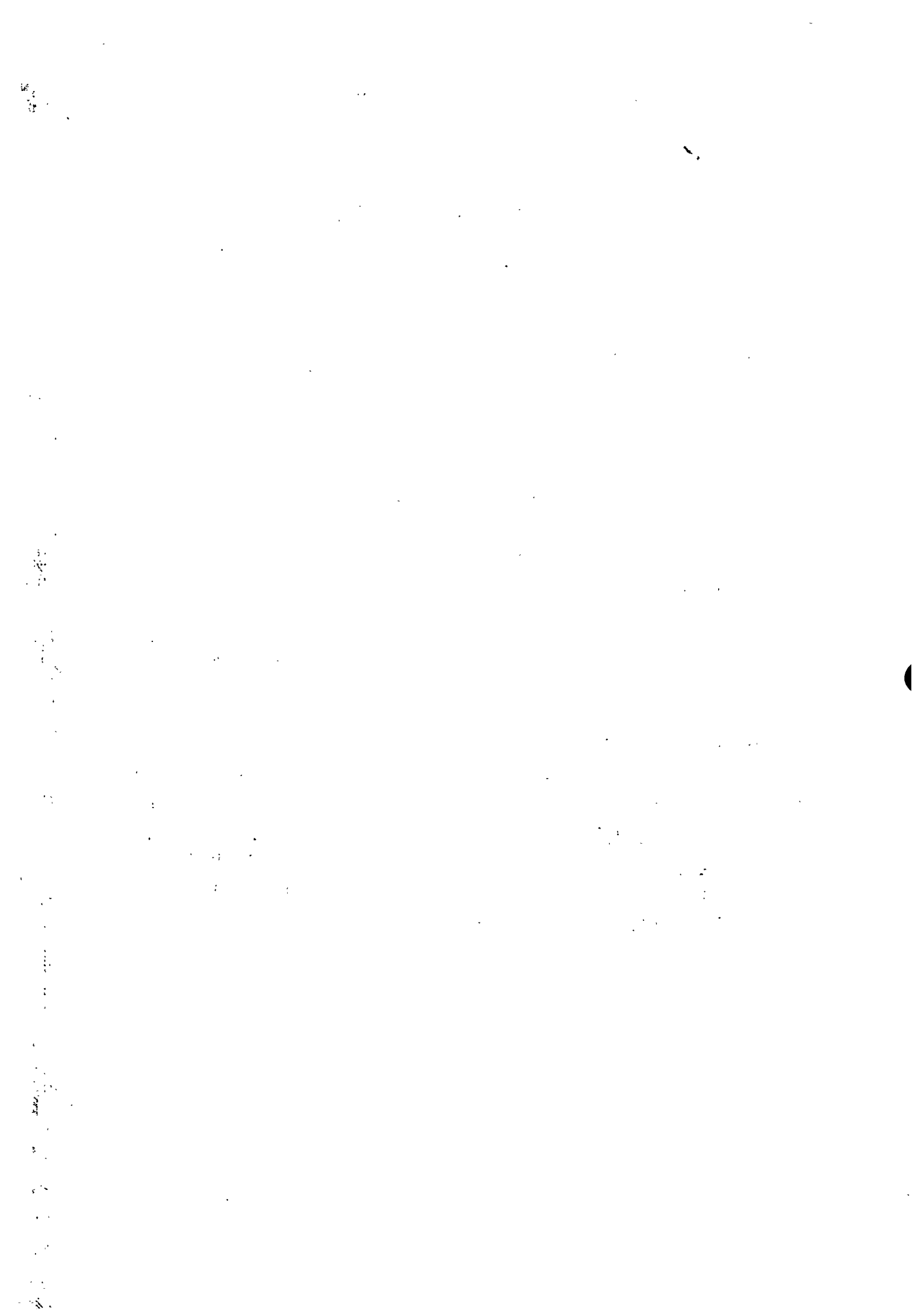


(b) a simplified procedure based on cooperation between the importing companies and the customs authorities and adapted to new management and administrative methods particularly date-processing.

- ** Eleven products (including arsenic, lead, fluorine and mercury) will no longer be permitted in animal feeding stuffs above a certain level. This was decided by the Council of Ministers, acting on a proposal from the European Commission, when it adopted a Directive fixing THE MAXIMUM PERMISSIBLE LEVELS OF UNDESIRABLE SUBSTANCES AND PRODUCTS IN ANIMAL FEEDING STUFFS on the grounds that they frequently contain other substances which could injure the animals' health and, indirectly, human health also. It seems impossible to eliminate these substances completely, but their level in animal feeding stuffs must be reduced sufficiently to prevent them having undesirable and harmful effects.
- ** Owing to the present situation on the petroleum products market, certain companies distributing such products and operating independently of the large combines which have their own refining facilities are experiencing serious supply difficulties. For this reason the European Commission has decided to carry out certain CHECKS IN THE OIL SECTOR so as to ensure that the present circumstances do not lead to the disappearance of independent trading or its absorption by the large companies.
- ** THE COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAMME FOR IMPROVING CONSUMER PROTECTION AND INFORMATION (see IRT No. 213), proposals on which have just been forwarded by the European Commission to the Council of Ministers, will be the subject of an initial examination by the specialized departments of the Economic and Social Committee and the European Parliament on 15 January 1974 and 21 January 1974 respectively.



- ** The European Commission has just issued an order prohibiting the two sole producers of potash in West Germany (Kali und Salz AG and Kali Chemie AG) from coordinating their sales of straight potash fertilizers, since such an agreement would virtually eliminate all COMPETITION ON THE WEST GERMAN POTASH MARKET.
- ** Sixty specialists from the Member States and a number of other countries attended a symposium entitled "PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION THROUGH CARBON DIOXIDE", which was organized in December by the European Commission. Above certain levels of impregnation carbon dioxide has been identified as an agent aggravating pre-existing diseases and a probable etiological agent in vascular sclerosis. The participants in the symposium expressed a wish that the European Commission should embark on a programme aimed at harmonizing methods of measuring carboxyhaemoglobin in the blood.
- ** The programme of action of the European Communities on ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (see IRT Nos. 185 and 199) is published in the Official Journal of the European Communities (No. C 112, 20 December 1973).
- ** The European Commission has just completed a study the aim of which was to determine which export industries might profitably be set up in the Associated African and Malagasy States (AAMS). A copy of the study, entitled PRESELECTED EXPORT INDUSTRIES WHICH COULD PROFITABLY BE SET UP IN THE AAMS, together with its three annexes, may be obtained free of charge from the Commission of the European Communities (DG VIII/B/1, 200 rue de la Loi, 1040 Brussels).



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Recent developments
in
consumer protection
IN FRANCE

The Royer law - named after the French Minister of Commerce and Crafts - was adopted by Parliament (Members of Parliament and Senators) after long and difficult discussions. Several of its articles directly concern consumers:

Henceforth producers will have to prove the veracity of claims made in advertisements; if there is a glaring error, corrections may be inserted in the press. The advertisement may be stopped as a routine measure before the courts have made a final ruling as to its truth or falsehood.

Consumer protection organizations recognized by the Administration will be able to institute legal proceedings to obtain compensation if they consider that the consumer has been injured.

The sale of items with free gifts, loss-makers, games and lotteries are

forbidden.

Direct sales from the producer to the consumer will be subject to strict rules.

Consumers' representatives will participate in regional committees for town and country planning. The latter have, amongst other things, the right to approve or reject the creation or extension of large-scale developments. But these committees will consist of nine representatives of the local council, nine of the trades people and only two of the consumers. The government proposal had originally reserved 25% of the seats for them, and the consumer organizations had asked for a third.

For them this is the most difficult part to accept of a law which otherwise satisfies several important demands and is a real step forward.

The AFNOR (French standardization association) had prepared an experimental standard which claimed to be "a true charter of good relations on this subject between the comparative testing organizations, the producers and the consumers". This standard, which is only a working tool and not an obligation, is to be modified to take into account international standardization measures under the ISO (International Standards Organization). However, French industrialists do not agree. The Paris Chamber of Commerce has just criticized its shortcomings and called for a law to supplement it and make it compulsory.

A court in Lyons condemned a manufacturer of meat pies to three months imprisonment with suspension of sentence, FF 20,000 fine and FF 24,000 damages for fraud relating to the quality of goods, untrue publicity and unintentional injuries.

This sentence is important because two associations (the Associations populaires familiales and the Union féminine civique et sociale) for the first time brought a civil action in the name of the victims. They obtained token damages of one franc. But the important fact was that the judges thereby acknowledged a new consumer right, which the Royer law will now merely make official.

First issued in December 1970 with 40,000 copies "50 million consumers", the magazine of the National Consumer Institute had a circulation of 315,000 copies in December 1973. "Que choisir?" (What shall we buy?), the monthly magazine of the Federal Consumer Union, has 200,000 subscribers.

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles, including the names of the authors and the titles of their works.

2. The second part of the document is a list of references, including the names of the authors and the titles of their works, along with the names of the publishers and the years of publication.

3. The third part of the document is a list of references, including the names of the authors and the titles of their works, along with the names of the publishers and the years of publication.

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EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK

According to the Treaty of Rome the principle of "equal pay for equal work" should have been applied from the outset in each of the six Member States of the European Economic Community. However, despite undeniable progress, there are still considerable gaps and inadequacies. It is first and foremost the Member States themselves who are responsible for ensuring that this principle is applied by means of laws, regulations and administrative provisions. That is why the European Commission recently presented to the Council of Ministers a draft directive designed to implement the principle of equal pay for men and women in all the Member States.

Minimal standards of protection

This proposal aims at bringing into general use certain standards of protection. These include, for example, the institution of a legal procedure for enforcing the right to equal pay, for eliminating the discrimination which still exists in certain laws affecting pay, and for nullifying all agreements and contracts which are contrary to the principle of equal pay.

The fear of dismissal is one of the most powerful factors inhibiting attempts to enforce the right to equal pay. The Commission therefore plans to prevent all dismissals resulting from claims of this type. Employers who do not respect the principle of equal pay will be penalized. Finally, the Commission considers it very important that workers should be aware of their rights, and proposes that they should be provided with better information for this purpose.

The situation in the new Member States

Further information gathered by the European Commission in the new Member States also reveals the gaps in the application of the principle of equal pay, although these States have been bound since their accession by the undertaking appearing in the Treaty of Rome. A supplementary report is being prepared on this subject and should be ready for presentation to the Council of Ministers in the spring of 1974.

PRODUCTION OF ENVIRONMENTALLY HARMLESS PETROL

In its reply to a written question from a Member of the European Parliament on the production of petrol which would not be harmful to the environment the European Commission pointed out that a non-pollutant petrol does not exist but that air pollution by motor vehicles can be kept at the lowest possible level.

The Commission says that all petrol pollutes the atmosphere and that the degree of pollution depends not only on lead content but also on the content of other additives in the petrol and the conditions of combustion. The type and condition of the engine have a bearing on the amount of lead compounds, carbon monoxide and carbohydrates in the exhaust fumes. The aim is to keep the overall air pollution caused by motor vehicles at the lowest possible level. A petrol which is not harmful to the environment is not, as far as is known, produced on a commercial basis within the European Community.

Measures taken by the European Commission to reduce air pollution from motor vehicles

The Commission considers that the degree of pollution should be as low as possible and lower than it is at present. The Commission is therefore following technical developments closely and, as it is entitled to, will suggest, whenever appropriate, the reinforcement of existing measures or the introduction of new measures to reduce pollution caused by exhaust fumes from motor vehicles.

There is a close interdependence between pollutant compounds contained in petrol. The reduction of the content of one pollutant may result

in an increase in the content of another. The Commission will therefore limit itself to proposing stricter limits for pollutants when the general level of pollution can be lowered. It will also be advisable to consider whether a reduction of pollution justifies the increase in crude oil consumption which could result from changing the composition of petrol.

The Council of Ministers of the Community has already adopted a directive on the carbon monoxide and carbohydrate content of exhaust fumes. The European Commission recently transmitted to the Council a draft directive aimed at limiting the lead content of petrol. (See IRT No. 214.) Moreover, the Commission is now studying the question of the nitrogen content of exhaust fumes.

As hitherto, the Commission will continue to study the relevant provisions in force in the Member States and other countries, and will certainly take them into account when drawing up its own proposals. However, these proposals will not be an average of national rules or a simple reflection of the situation in third countries. The Commission thinks it has a duty to propose measures which, in its opinion, constitute an important step forward.