



The key role of industry in waste management

by Ritt Bjerregaard, Member of the European Commission

The principle of producer responsibility is recognized as a key element for a precautionary waste management strategy in the review of the EU waste management strategy, recently adopted by the Commission. The reason is that the waste management potential of a given product is largely determined by decisions taken by the manufacturer concerning the composition and design of the product. The principle of producer responsibility will be integrated in future measures of the European Union aiming at prevention, increased recovery and minimization of final waste disposal, reflecting the hierarchy of priorities for the EU waste management policy. The instruments to be used at different levels to achieve the objectives are: regulatory and economic instruments, improved statistics, waste management plans, life-cycle analysis and eco-balances.

A very serious problem

Today more than 1 600 million tonnes of waste are produced every year in the European Union, of which some 22 million tonnes are hazardous waste. And these amounts are still growing. There is therefore a clear need to strengthen the implementation of the principles governing the EU waste management policy.

The review of the existing waste strategy from 1989 emphasizes the paramount importance of:

- (i) a comprehensive and integrated legal framework at EU level on different, but interrelated, aspects of waste management;
- (ii) appropriate definitions of waste related concepts;
- (iii) suitable rules and principles: the principle of proximity and self-sufficiency in respect to availability of waste handling facilities;
- (iv) reliable and comparable data on waste and waste management.

Considering the life cycle of a product from the cradle to the grave, not only manufacturers, but also material suppliers, distributors and retailers, consumers and public authorities all have a role to play in ensuring an environmentally sound management of the product as waste.

A challenge to manufacturers

However, it is the product manufacturer who has the dominant role since he takes key decisions concerning the design and composition of the product, which largely determine its waste management potential. Waste management concerns have to be fully taken into account from the product's design. This is the background for introducing the new principle of producer responsibility in the EU waste management strategy. This principle, which will serve as a guideline for future EU action in the waste area, is a practical application of the principles of precautionary and preventive action, as well as of the polluter-pays principle, established in Article 130r of the EC Treaty.

In order to support the application of the principle of producer responsibility, the Commission will take action:

- (i) to promote clean technologies and products as well as a higher degree of dematerialization (i.e. the use of less raw materials) in processes and products;
- (ii) to improve the environmental dimension of technical standards in the framework of the European Standardization Committee, CEN;
- (iii) to reduce the generation of hazardous waste by limiting or banning certain heavy metals or dangerous substances in products and processes;
- (iv) to promote the use of economic instruments which are able to influence waste prevention without distorting competition;
- (v) to develop further the eco-audit and eco-label schemes.

We cannot come to terms with the ever growing amounts of waste in a rational way, unless the concerns for waste minimization and recovery are so to speak built into the product from the start. This is a challenge to industry which has to be taken seriously.

■ Encouragement to denounce cartels

In order to uncover business cartels — banned under the European treaties — more easily, the European Commission decided on 10 July 1996 to encourage businesses belonging to such cartels to denounce them. Those that do so before the Commission has begun to carry out checks, will have their fines reduced by at least 75%, and up to 100% if they (1) have not played a decisive role in the cartel, nor coerced another business to join it; (2) withdrew from the cartel, just prior to denouncing it at the latest; (3) were the first to provide information decisively proving the existence of the cartel and (4) provided the Commission with all the information at their disposal and fully cooperated with it during the enquiry. Businesses which meet these conditions, but denounce the cartel only after it has been examined by the Commission, are entitled to a reduction of between 50 and 75%. Finally, businesses which cooperate, but without meeting all four conditions, will have their fine reduced by 50%. The Commission's decision applies only to steps taken by a business as such, and not to the initiative taken by an individual worker or employee.

■ Repackaging — yes, but how?

A firm imports from country A, a member of the European Union, a product marketed in that country by either the owner of the trade mark or under licence. The importer repackages the product, replacing the brand name, without authorization, for sale in country B, which is also a member of the EU. In a ruling which it handed down on 11 July, the European Court of Justice held that the owner of a trade mark cannot, as a general rule, prevent this. In the specific case of a pharmaceutical product the Court held, in the same ruling and in another ruling on the same day, that the owner of a trade mark can take steps to block the operation described above, unless five conditions are met: (1) the repackaging has no effect on the state of the product, including the instructions for use, and on any accessory for measuring the dosage; (2) the packaging contains the names of the manufacturer and the importer responsible for the repackaging; (3) the packaging is of good quality; (4) a ban on the operation in question would contribute to the compartmentalization of the intra-EU market and (5) the importer has notified the owner of the trade mark, before the repackaged product is put on sale, and provided a sample, if requested to do so. The Court handed down these rulings in four cases, involving manufacturers of pharmaceutical products, on the one hand, and German and Danish importers on the other.

■ A transport network for 2010

The trans-European transport network planned for the period up to 2010 will have to cover all forms of transport — road, rail, inland waterway, sea and air — as well as combined transport and information and management systems, under the terms of the guidelines adopted by the EU Council of Ministers and the European Parliament on 15 July 1996. These guidelines replace the three sectoral decisions adopted in 1993 covering road, inland waterway and combined transport networks. They identify projects of common interest, likely to be financially supported by the EU. However, the exact details of the projects, their outline, their financing and progress in implementing them are to be defined by the Member States, in keeping with the subsidiarity principle.

■ European dimensions for heavy lorries

As from August 1997, all lorries, buses and coaches weighing more than 3.5 tonnes will have to conform to the same maximum dimensions throughout the European Union, regardless of whether they are used for the purposes of domestic or cross-border transport. According to a directive adopted by the EU Council of Ministers of 25 July, the maximum authorized length of road

trains will be 18.75 metres, instead of 18.35 metres, the loading length remaining unchanged at 15.65 metres. The maximum authorized width of vehicles will increase from 2.50 metres to 2.55 metres. However, EU Member States will be able to prohibit, for a transitional period ending on 31 December 1999, buses wider than 2.50 metres from using their territory. The maximum authorized height — unchanged at 4 metres — will apply only to international transport. Member States will be able to allow vehicles exceeding the maximum length and width to circulate in their territory within the framework of national goods transport until 31 December 2006. The Directive also contains derogations applying to Finland and Sweden.

■ Improving the eco-label

The European Commission adopted on 19 July the criteria for awarding the ecological or eco-label to copying paper for use in fax machines and office printers. It revised at the same time the criteria for washing machines, which had expired on 30 June. The Commission took the opportunity to announce improvements to the system, designed to speed up the adoption of criteria and to encourage a larger number of businesses to take advantage of it. A company awarded the eco-label can display the logo on its products. The logo, which is in the form of a flower, indicates that the product in question is environment-friendly.

□ IN BRIEF

The prospects for the establishment of the **European Police Office (Europol)** are improving. Following the agreement reached by the European Council in Florence on 22 June, on the role of the European Court of Justice in the interpretation of the Europol Convention, the ambassadors to the European Union of its 15 member countries signed the corresponding protocol on 24 July. The Fifteen must now ratify the Convention and its protocol.

The **financial products received by a building management company**, as return on investment made for its account, from funds paid by owners or tenants, are to be included in the denominator of the fraction used to calculate the proportion to be deducted from VAT. This emerges from a ruling which the European Court of Justice handed down on 11 July, in a case involving a French management company and the French finance ministry.

By the end of August 1999, **household refrigerators, freezers and combinations of the two** will have to meet the maximum electricity consumption standards laid down in a directive adopted by the EU Council of Ministers¹ on 25 July. Only appliances which meet these standards will be allowed to be marketed in the European Union, bearing the 'CE' marking. The Directive is expected to increase by 15% the energy efficiency of the appliances in question.

Thanks to modification to Directive 89/686/EEC, adopted by the EU Council of Ministers¹ on 25 July, manufacturers of **personal protective equipment** will no longer have to indicate on each piece of equipment the year in which the 'CE' marking was affixed. The modification also simplifies other administrative requirements.

Ensuring **free access to EU rivers and canals** for companies which transport goods or passengers from one EU country to another, or transit through several member countries, is the aim of a regulation adopted by the EU Council of Ministers¹ on 8 July. The Regulation contains common rules applicable to this type of transport.

A Directive adopted by the EU Council of Ministers¹ on 8 July brings the **pollution standards for vans**, both small and large, into line with those which were adopted in 1994 for private cars. The new standards will reduce the level of pollutants contained in the gases emitted by the vans in question.

Under the terms of a regulation adopted by the EU Council of Ministers on 8 July, the Fifteen will have to keep the European Commission better informed as regards **the recovery of sums which fund the EU budget**. A primary aim is to improve information on fraud and irregularities.

Airlines will have to put an end, before 30 June 1997, to **consultations on freight rates**. The European Commission decided on 10 July to withdraw the exemption enjoyed by them since 1991. The rates which result from such consultations are 50 to 70% above market rates.

¹ In agreement with the European Parliament.

THE INFORMATION SOCIETY (II) *

The basis for Community involvement in building the information society is to be found in the EC Treaty provisions on the upholding of the four internal market freedoms (i.e. the free movement of people, goods, capital and services), competition policy, the common commercial policy and the construction of trans-European networks.

Timetable for the opening-up of the telecommunications market

January 1996

It will be possible to use available TV cable networks, energy supply networks and railway power cables for telecommunications services. Companies providing mobile communications services will be able to build up their own networks or choose from available existing ones.

January 1997

The Member States will inform the Commission of their licensing conditions for new network operators and service providers.

January 1998

Telecommunications markets should be completely open in most Member States.

Major EU-initiatives are also needed in the field of vocational training, to familiarize the workforce with the new job possibilities created by the information society. A start has already been made with the Adapt programme, aimed at supporting vocational training in industries where fundamental change and job losses are expected.

In many areas, the new information technologies are still at the experimental stage. They will not become widespread without public support and coordination. For the sake of the single market, it is imperative that the EU Member States set about this task together and, in particular, put the European Commission in charge of coordination.

Information society task force

The Commission's White Paper on growth, competitiveness and employment, published in December 1993, gave an initial indication of what measures were to be taken to create a European information society.

In the same month, the European Commission set up a group of experts, composed of eminent persons from the European industries concerned and chaired by Martin Bangemann, a Member of the Commission. Both information users and producers were represented. In May 1994, the 'Bangemann group' published its report entitled 'Europe and the global information society'. In addition to the main points it made, the report also suggested 10 priority applications.

Then, in July 1994, the Commission presented 'Europe's way to the information society: an action plan', focusing on four areas: the regulatory framework; information networks, services, applications and content; social and cultural aspects; and promotion of the information society.

At about the same time, the Commission adopted a Green Paper on audiovisual policy, in which it put forward proposals aimed at strengthening the European programme industry, without which the European information society will be unable to realize its full potential for development.

Need for action across the board

The European Union is creating the right environment with its policies: it is promoting the development of new communication technologies and regulating the setting up of new telecommunications networks. As competition between service providers increases, charges are expected to come down.

Another important aspect on which some form of agreement has to be found, not only amongst the Member States but also between them and other countries that supply information, is the protection of copyright and personal data. Since information can now be stored and sent anywhere, there is a risk that sensitive information may be sent to countries where there are practically no data-protection laws.

The EU is also running pilot projects concerned with exploring possible applications of the new information technologies.

Whether new structures for the information society do actually emerge from these pilot projects will depend to a large extent on the national governments and, in particular, the social partners. Ultimately, though, it is the people who will have to decide whether they are prepared to learn new skills and accept teleworking or, indeed, whether they want to use the information services available.

Consequently, one of the most important tasks of the European Union is to find a social consensus on this matter.

* The first part of this article was published in issue No 7/8-1996.

TEN 'TEST DRIVES' ON THE INFORMATION SUPER-HIGHWAY

The Bangemann Report proposes 10 initiatives concerning experimental applications of the new information technologies. The purpose is to promote more widespread use by demonstration. Suppliers can also use them as a way of fine-tuning their applications to suit user demands.

1. Teleworking

A PC and a telephone link at home or in a local sub-office can save workers from having to commute long distances without losing their 'link' to the production process. Pilot teleworking centres are being set up in 20 cities involving at least 20 000 workers. By 2000, 10 million teleworking jobs should have been created.

2. Distance learning

The workforce's willingness to participate in lifelong learning is very important for Europe's competitiveness. Distance learning is a way of making training and further education more accessible and attractive. There are pilot projects in at least five countries involving businesses (of which at least 10% are small businesses), public authorities, trade organizations and schools.

3. Network for universities and research centres

Industry has benefited for some time from EU-promoted cooperation between universities and research centres. Thanks to the new communication networks, cooperation is possible on an unprecedented scale: by 1997, 30% of European universities and research centres should be exchanging data via high-speed links and accessing each other's libraries on-line.

4. Remote processing services for small businesses

Big companies have been using remote processing facilities for some time now (in some cases, facilities they provide themselves). But small businesses could also benefit from the new technology. By 1996, 40% of small businesses with more than 50 employees should be hooked up to networks. Links will be established with authorities, associations, customers and suppliers.

5. Road traffic management

Driver information, route guidance, fleet management, road pricing — these are just a few of the key words connected with this project. By the end of 1996,

road management data systems should have been installed along 2 000 km of motorway and in 10 cities (30 by 2000).

6. Air traffic control

Better communication between planes and air traffic control centres makes flying safer. A European system of standards for communication procedures and the exchange of data and voice messages should be in place by 2000. The aim is to create a single, trans-European air traffic control system.

7. Health-care networks

Better diagnoses thanks to on-line connections with specialists throughout Europe, on-line access to analysis and hospital services for practitioners, transplant-matching on a wider scale — these are all examples of applications of the planned Community-wide network of existing national networks, which will enable doctors, hospitals, rehabilitation centres and health insurance organizations to exchange information.

8. Electronic tendering

The process of tendering for public contracts on a Community-wide scale will be made easier and thus more attractive by the use of communication networks. The Member States need to agree on common standards and must require that awarding authorities use computers to process the information they receive. Ten per cent of awarding authorities could be using electronic procedures for their procurement needs in a few years' time.

9. Trans-European public administration network

The volume of correspondence between the authorities of the EU Member States has increased in recent years, not least because of the single market. Exchanging data via communication networks is simpler and more efficient. A network for the exchange of tax and customs information, statistics, social security data, etc. should have been set up by the end of 1996.

10. City information highways

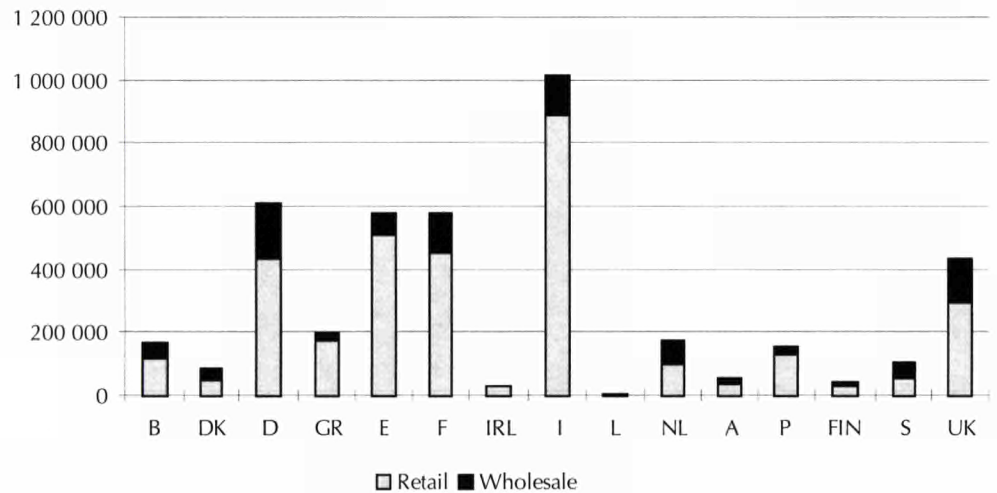
Ordering goods for home delivery, studying a language from home, home-banking, calling up a favourite video — it can all be done through a TV set at home, linked up to the network. Five cities will have the chance to find out what it might be like to live in an information society.

Retail trade in the European Union

The number of retail firms is very high in the European Union of Fifteen, as is the percentage out of total companies

Three quarters of distribution firms are in retailing and one quarter in wholesaling, but the ratio between the two sectors varies in every Member State. In the countries characterised by a greater density of firms and sales points (like Italy, Greece, Spain and Portugal), the number of retail firms is proportionally higher.

Number of enterprises (unit)



Number of enterprises (unit)

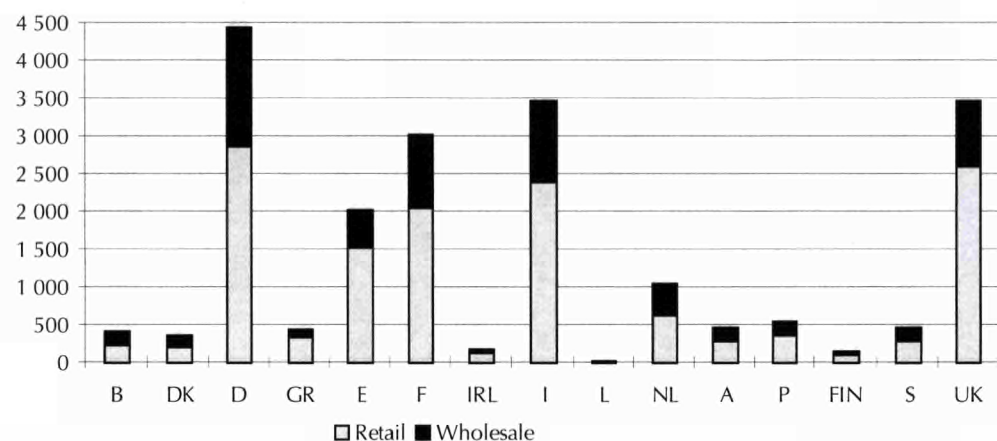
	EUR 15	B	DK	D	GR	E	F	IRL	I	L	NL	A	P	FIN	S	UK
Retail	3 324 833	120 175	47 597	435 471	175 000	511 427	451 800	29 337	888 330	3 587	102 900	39 853	132 094	33 054	54 459	299 749
Total	4 280 554	170 218	85 430	613 775	203 000	581 010	584 200	32 708	1 017 855	5 512	178 700	57 865	160 541	46 569	108 959	434 212
Year	1988-1994	1994	1992	1993	1988	1992	1991	1988	1991	1993	1994	1988	1993	1993	1994	1994



Two thirds of commercial employment in the European Union of Fifteen is found in retailing compared to one third in wholesaling

This ratio is different from the one concerning the number of firms, because the average size of firms is smaller in the first sector than in the second one. In general, employment in retailing is lower than the European average in countries where commerce is more modern. We notice the preeminence of Germany, as well as the importance of France, the United-Kingdom and Italy.

Employment (1 000)



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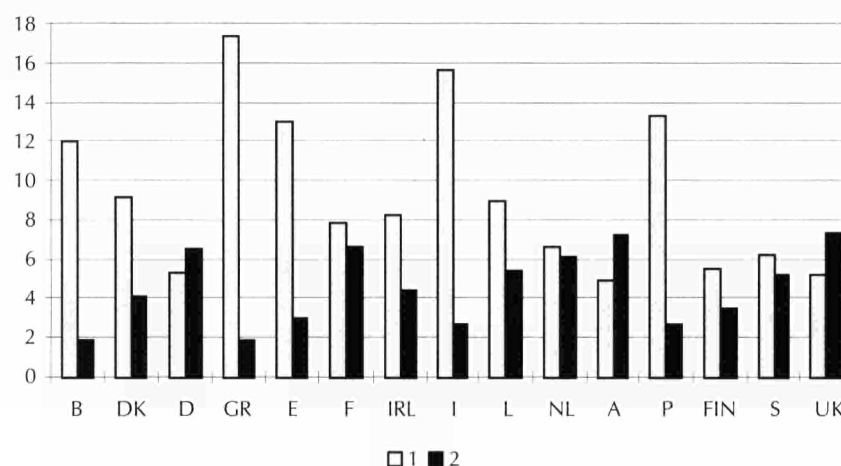
	EUR 15	B	DK	D	GR	E	F	IRL	I	L	NL	A	P	FIN	S	UK
Retail	14 039	236	199	2 866	338	1 537	2 040	131	2 389	20	637	290	364	101	288	2 604
Total	20 618	411	365	4 459	454	2 022	3 015	174	3 467	32	1 040	486	561	169	479	3 486
Year	1988-1994	1993	1992	1993	1988	1992	1994	1992	1990	1993	1994	1994	1993	1993	1994	1992



Greece, Portugal, Italy and Spain are characterized by a high density of firms, and by a limited number of employees per firm

Denmark, Luxembourg, Sweden and Ireland are distinguished by a lower level of commercial density and by a greater concentration of employees. Instead, France and the Netherlands have a very similar density of firms but their number of employees per firm is rather high. Germany, Austria and the United-Kingdom all enjoy a particularly high concentration of retail firms and a greater number of employees per firm.

Characteristic of retailing enterprises



1 = Enterprises per 1 000 inhabitants
2 = Number of employees per enterprise

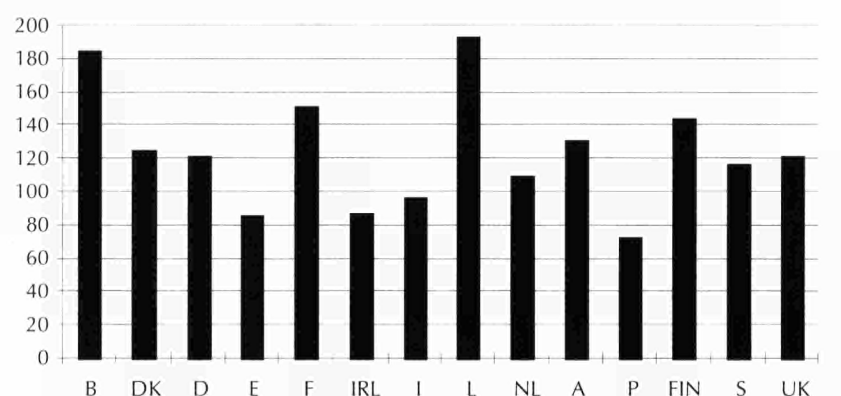
Number of enterprises (unit)

	EUR 15	B	DK	D	GR	E	F	IRL	I	L	NL	A	P	FIN	S	UK
Enterprises/1 000 inhab.	9.02	12.07	9.19	5.37	17.40	13.08	7.84	8.29	15.65	8.95	6.69	4.99	13.36	5.57	6.23	5.22
No. of employees/enterprise	4.40	1.94	4.17	6.58	1.90	3.00	6.66	4.48	2.69	5.45	6.19	7.24	2.76	3.57	5.29	7.34
Year	1990-1994	1993	1992	1993	1990	1992	1993	1991	1991	1993	1994	1994	1993	1993	1994	1991

Sales per firm express its size. Consequently, they are higher in countries with a lower commercial density

We notice a growth trend which expresses the concentration process under way in many countries and which seems to be particularly advanced in the United-Kingdom, Austria and Germany. On the other hand, sales per employee express the level of commercial productivity. The particularly high level that this parameter reaches in a country like France (where it is greater than in Germany and the United-Kingdom) is a sign of a particularly competitive situation hinged on the price factor.

Turnover per person engaged (ECU 1 000)



Turnover in retailing enterprises

	EUR 15	B	DK	D	GR	E	F	IRL	I	L	NL	A	P	FIN	S	UK
Total turnover (ECU Mio)	1 486 139	43 803	24 846	347 038	:	119 792	239 448	12186	230 000	3 767	69 280	38 090	26 470	14 521	33 766	283 152
Per enterprise (ECU 1 000)	497	359	522	893	:	234	683	415	259	1 050	693	951	200	590	550	974
Year	1990-1994	1993	1992	1993	:	1992	1993	1991	1990	1993	1993	1994	1993	1993	1993	1992

INITIATIVES

● A programme for a new VAT

A European fiscal area for the start of the next century, with simpler rules and more effective implementation than the present system of VAT, is the ambitious goal which the European Commission proposed to the Fifteen in a programme it submitted to them on 10 July. The Commission would like to take advantage of the changeover, already envisaged in principle, from the present system of taxing transactions in the country of consumption to a system in which VAT is levied in the country of origin, thus removing the defects of the present system. At present the cost of complying with VAT formalities is five times as much on average for cross-border transactions as for purely national ones. This is a problem confronting many SMEs. The fact is that there exist as many as 25 rules for determining the place where an economic transaction is to be taxed. At the same time there is considerable risk of fraud, given that the value of the goods in circulation on which VAT is pending amounts to some ECU 700 billion a year (ECU 1 = UKL 0.82 or IRL 0.79). The European Commission has suggested, therefore, the introduction by stages of a system having five basic characteristics: (1) a single place of taxation for each business, valid for all transactions carried out within the EU; (2) a mechanism which assures the Fifteen the same level of receipts as at present; (3) a single standard rate and harmonized reduced rates; (4) added powers for the EU committee responsible for VAT and, at the level of implementation, for the European Commission and (5) an adjustment to take into account activities and products resulting from the new technologies.

● Information society — Act II

Two years after the adoption of the action plan 'Towards an information society in Europe,' the European Commission feels it is time to update it. It is a matter of seeing to it that the new technologies benefit the European Union as a whole, help European businesses become more competitive and create jobs. The European Commission adopted a number of documents to this end on 24 July. It is already proposing a Directive aimed at avoiding divergent national regulations as regards the new computerized services. But the Commission is also putting forward four priorities: (1) improving coordination among the Fifteen and building up user confidence; (2) stimulating research and training; (3) spreading the benefits of the information society across all regions and (4) drawing up global rules in cooperation with other countries. The Commission has also published a Green Paper entitled 'Living and working in the information society,' for which it awaits the comments of the Fifteen and employers' organizations and trade unions for 31 December at the latest. Finally, the Commission has adopted a document on standardization in the information society, in which it stresses the importance of competition rules and the global dimension of standards.

○ IN BRIEF

In order to ensure that European businesses enjoy world-wide protection for their brands, by introducing just one demand, the European Commission proposed on 26 July that the **Community's own system for protecting brand names be tied to the international system**. This implies the European Community's adhesion to a protocol for the international registration of brands, on the one hand and, on the other, modifications to the European Regulation on Community trade mark.

Given the prospects for liberalized telephone services from 1998 onwards, the European Commission proposed on 11 September a directive defining the **universal service** which should be offered to all Europeans. In addition to a normal telephone line, directories and directory enquiry services at affordable prices, the Commission's definition includes tone dialling, itemized billing and data throughout rates of at least 14 400 bits/second, in order to permit access to such advanced new services as the Internet.

The **motor car industry** can no longer be considered a growth sector when it comes to jobs. This is the main conclusion of a report presented by the European Commission on 10 July. Even so, each job in the automobile indus-

try generates 10 others in the European Union. The tasks demanding the highest qualifications will remain in the EU, which accounted for 29% of the world production of light vehicles in 1995.

Are fresh European initiatives needed as regards **statutory auditors** and, if so, which ones? These questions are raised in the Green Paper which the European Commission adopted on 24 July. The European measures currently in force are unsatisfactory, in the Commission's view, when it comes to the role, status and responsibility of statutory auditors. There is a risk, therefore, that the Fifteen will choose divergent solutions. The Commission is calling a conference on this subject, to be held in Brussels on 5 and 6 December.

The European Commission proposed to the Fifteen on 10 July a lowering of turnover thresholds, above which **business mergers and acquisitions** must obtain its green light. The threshold would drop from ECU 250 million to ECU 150 million for turnover at the European level. The Commission has stated that its proposal would not affect SMEs.

In order to provide employers, employers' organizations and trade unions with practical advice on the **implementation of the principle of equal pay for men and women**, the European Commission adopted a code of practice on 18 July.

In a report which it adopted on 29 July, the European Commission takes the view that **intra-Community duty-free sales**, under suspended sentence until June 1999, distort competition between businesses and means of transport. The report implicates national control systems at the point-of-sale.

The European Commission let it be known on 10 September that it regards as adequate the European legislation on **exposure to asbestos during working hours**.

BUSINESS JUDGES THE SINGLE MARKET

What European industrial firms appreciate most about the single market is the elimination of customs formalities — regarded as positive by 60% of them — and the end to delays at borders — 56%. However, the great majority of firms in the services sectors excluding distributive trades — take the view that the measures adopted in the single market framework have had no effect. These are among the findings of a survey involving some 13 500 businesses, carried out during the first half of 1995 on behalf of Eurostat, the European statistical office. Only 32% of industrial firms feel that changes to VAT procedures have had a positive effect; and the proportion drops to 17% as regards the agreements designed to avoid double taxation — and to 9% when it comes to the opening of government contracts to competitive bidding. The impact on sales has been the most positive in the case of industrial firms with 50 to 500 workers, and those with more than 1 000 workers; in the case of service companies, excluding distributive trades, the impact has been greatest on firms with more than 1 000 workers. More than 40% of industrial firms have noticed an increase in price competition between European firms. Very few firms have considered the effect of the single market to be negative, except when it comes to VAT (15% in industry).

SEEN FROM ABROAD

► Hungary-Romania: a 'European' agreement

The Hungarian Prime Minister, Gyula Horn, and the Romanian President and Prime Minister, Ion Iliescu and Nicolae Vacaroiu, signed a treaty intended to put an end to the divisions between the two countries on 16 September, in the Romanian city of Timisoara. The treaty is to be seen in the context of membership of the European Union, for which both countries have applied, and of NATO. The treaty provides for the mutual recognition of borders and respect for the rights of ethnic minorities. Roughly 1.6 million people of Hungarian stock live in Romania.

◆ The integrated programme: an overview of aid for SMEs

The European Commission adopted in July 1996, an 'integrated programme' in favour of small and medium-sized enterprises. The programme offers a general framework which facilitates the coordination, coherence and visibility of all the efforts made in favour of SMEs and craft industry in Europe. Its aim, therefore, is to associate all those concerned with the development of SMEs at the European, national and regional levels, in order to promote the convergence and effectiveness of the measures taken. The programme is not intended to replace the various measures taken at the national and European levels, nor to intervene in the decision-making process with regard to these measures. The new programme updates and develops the 1994 integrated programme. It lists the numerous measures taken with the aid of the Community and which, when joined to the concerted actions undertaken by the Member States, will contribute to the development of SMEs, the main source of job creation.

The integrated programme lists three types of actions. To begin with, there are the concerted actions with Member States, particularly exchanges of effective practices. Next is the aid provided by the European Union in the form of specific measures taken within the framework of policies favouring business — the proposal for a third multi-annual programme (1997-2000) for SMEs represents an essential element of the integrated programme. Finally, the measures adopted in the context of other Community policies — particularly regional and social aid, European Investment Bank loans, access for SMEs to European research and training programmes, and international development aid.

◆ Buyers' exhibitions: how to organize one

International Buyers' Exhibitions (IBEX) have two objectives. The first is to help large-scale businesses in their search, at the international level, for partner SMEs in order to meet specific cooperation needs. The second aim is to promote relations between large businesses and SMEs, by offering the latter opportunities for direct contacts with businesses which are interested in their products, services or know-how.

The European Commission has created these exhibitions in answer to a demand from the EU Council of Ministers.¹ At IBEX exhibitions meetings are organized, at the international level, in relation to the specific — and often confidential — needs of large businesses and the exact abilities of SMEs to meet them. Each exhibition covers a given strategic sector, such as motor cars, processed foodstuffs and textiles; needs which have been clearly identified or a specific range of companies, such as high technology SMEs, craft industry or newly-established firms. Thanks to a methodology they have developed themselves, these exhibitions ensure that the contact between SMEs and large-scale businesses are of a high quality and of maximum interest. At the same time, given their format the exhibitions enable the participants to save both time and money as compared with the traditional trade fairs devoted to sub-contracting.

¹ Resolution of 22 November 1993 — *Official Journal of the European Communities*, No C 326, 3 December 1993.

A buyers' exhibition which meets the criteria set by the European Commission for the award of the IBEX label can obtain both technical and financial assistance, subject to precise terms as regards form and substance. This support is provided by the Commission in the framework of business policy (DG XXIII), or in the context of regional policy (DG XVI), if the exhibitions are organized in areas likely to receive regional aid from the EU budget — Objectives 1, 2, 5b and 6. Organizers of buyers' exhibitions who would like to obtain the IBEX label and the European Commission's support should ask for the vade-mecum it has prepared for them. Please write to the European Commission, DG XXIII, Enterprise Policy, Distributive Trades, Tourism and Cooperatives — fax number +32 2 296 7558, or to DG XVI, Regional Policy and Cohesion — fax number +32 2 296 3273.

◆ Europartenariat Italia 1996: the catalogue is available

The 15th Europartenariat will be held in Genoa from 27 to 29 November 1996. It will bring together more than 400 SMEs from 11 regions in the centre and north of Italy. A catalogue, published in five languages and distributed through a network of specialized national consultants, gives the profiles and the demands and offers for cooperation of the Italian SMEs invited to Genoa. The SMEs come from a wide range of sectors, including electricity and electronics (21%), services (14%), equipment and machinery (13%), chemicals and plastics (12%), metallurgy (8%), textiles/clothing/leather goods (7%), trade (5%), food and drinks (5%), wood products (4%), glass, ceramics, non-metallic materials (4%), paper and printing (3%) and the construction industry (3%).

Thanks to Europartenariat Italia, these firms will have the possibility of meeting the representatives of some 2 500 SMEs from 60 countries, with a view to discussing cooperation projects and entering into technical, financial or commercial agreements. The main organizer of Europartenariat Italia is Mondimpresa, at Via di Porta Pinciana 36, I-00187 Rome. Telephone: +39 6 488 07 27. Fax: +39 6 488 20 34.

'Assistance in the field of transnational cooperation between firms in the craft industries and cottage industries'.

Call for proposals No 96/C142/14

The call for proposals in question (see 'Frontier-free Europe' No 7/8 — July/August 1996), published in the *Official Journal of the European Communities* of 14 May 1996, has been withdrawn (OJ C 230, 9.8.1996). In view of its importance for craft industries and micro-enterprises, the European Commission has decided to launch a similar call for proposals (OJ C 232, 10.8.1996).

There is only one deadline for this new call: 1 November 1996. Moreover, the ceiling on the Commission's support for projects which have been accepted has been abolished. However, this financial assistance will not exceed 50% of the total cost of each project. The tender forms for the new call for proposals may be obtained from the European Commission, DG XXIII/A/4, rue de la Loi 200 — AN80, B-1049 Brussels, Belgium. Fax: +32 2 295 4590.

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A great deal of additional information on the European Union is available on the Internet.
It can be accessed through the Europa server (<http://europa.eu.int>).

European Commission

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