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THE WEEK IN EUROPE

Danes say No. Danish voters threw the ratification process of the Maastricht Treaty on European Political and Economic and Monetary Union into jeopardy on Tuesday by narrowly rejecting the Treaty in a referendum. Voting figures were 50.7% against, 49.3% for, a difference of some 48,000 ballots. The Portuguese Presidency immediately announced the holding of an emergency session of EC Foreign Ministers in Oslo today (Thursday) to discuss the consequences. The Treaty, negotiated over many months in Intergovernmental Conferences, needed to be ratified by all twelve Member States before it could come into operation as part of the Treaty of Rome. The Irish Government, who are also due to hold a referendum on the Treaty on 18 June, announced in Dublin that they would be fully represented at the Oslo meeting which is taking place in the margins of a NATO gathering. Later the French Government announced that France too would hold a referendum at a date to be fixed. In a first reaction yesterday, Commission President Jacques Delors said he hoped the other Member States would continue with the ratification process despite the Danish vote. Delors, who was speaking after the weekly meeting of the Commission, said the Danish vote was bound to have consequences, not only for the Community itself, but also for Denmark and the Danish people as well as for the prospects of enlargement. The British Government announced postponement of the House of Commons committee stage of the bill to ratify the Treaty, planned to start yesterday. However, Prime Minister John Major, who takes up the Presidency of the Council on 1 July, announced to the House that the Government intended to proceed with ratification because the Government believed the deal secured at Maastricht was in the best interests of the United Kingdom. He said the Maastricht Treaty provided mechanisms for more broadly based development of the Community and introduced procedures to reverse the trend towards centralism. He shared the belief among the UK's Community partners that Denmark would be able to join in the process. At their session in Strasbourg next week, the European Parliament is expected to call for statements on the Danish vote from the Presidency and from the Commission.

Delors in Russia. Jacques Delors paid an official visit to Russia at the weekend to start negotiations on a new EC-Russian agreement to replace the one established with the old Soviet Union. The new "grand accord", which will encompass economic, political and cultural ties, will go further than a simple trade cooperation agreement. After his meeting with Russian President Boris Yeltsin and other senior ministers, Delors said the new accord would strengthen understanding between the blocks who will emerge as the "two pillars of Europe". He stressed the EC's already substantial role in providing humanitarian aid and technical assistance to the former Soviet states. The EC contributes 90% of the international community's aid package. The Russian Secretary of State, Igor Gaidar, pressed for a moratorium on Russia's debt and interest repayments and said Russia wanted to join COCOM, the Committee for Coordination and Control of Multilateral exports controlling transfer of technology.

VAT rates. Taxation Commissioner Christiane Scrivener held talks in London on Monday with the Chancellor of the Exchequer Norman Lamont about prospects for a new VAT Directive in advance of next week's meeting of the Economic and Finance Ministers in Luxembourg. She is reported to have urged the Chancellor to accept the need for a legally binding minimum standard rate of VAT of 15%. This was needed, she said, by those other Member States which had to raise VAT rates to comply with the proposed Directive. Speaking to journalists afterwards, the Commissioner pointed out that the UK's own zero rating for essentials like food and children's clothing was also enshrined in the new Directive.

Fishing moratorium. Fisheries Commissioner Manuel Marín declared on Monday that EC fishing will be suspended in the Grand Banks region of the north-west Atlantic as the EC 1992 quotas levels, designed to conserve stocks of cod and plaice, have already been reached. The moratorium may be rescinded later this year if scientific reports show that fish stocks have recovered sufficiently. The Commission rejects earlier Canadian reports that the depletion of fish stocks within Canada's 200-mile zone is due to EC overfishing. The EC's share of catches amounts to only 3-5% of total international fishing in north Atlantic waters lying outside the zone. The EC awaits an independent opinion from the North Atlantic Fishing Organisation which met on Tuesday to investigate Canadian allegations.

Commissioner at Rio. Abel Matutes, Commissioner for North-South relations, is representing the EC at the Rio Earth Summit, replacing Environment Commissioner Carlo Ripa di Meana who pulled out

at the last minute a week ago. Commissioner Matutes will be presenting to the international community the Commission's proposals for an energy tax designed to limit carbon dioxide emissions.

Energy cooperation. The EC and Hungary have established a joint energy management centre in Budapest to strengthen energy cooperation, research into energy-conserving technologies and promote training. The centre, which will start operating in July, is a joint financial venture with EC funding coming from the PHARE programme and the Commission's Energy Directorate-General. The agreement signed last week to establish the centre stems from the recently-signed European Energy Charter and the EC-Hungarian association agreement.

EC enlargement. Commission Vice-President Sir Leon Brittan, speaking in Austria on Monday, said detailed discussion on the future make-up of the Commission's role and structure was premature. Sir Leon gave his personal view on EC enlargement as the Commission is still in the process of drawing up the paper to be submitted at the Lisbon summit at the end of June. He stressed that any new members must accept not only the Community as it is, (the full "acquis communautaire"), but also what it might become, by being forward-thinking enough to embrace the "finalité politique" of the Community. While he predicted no immediate problems for the present applicants, which include four neutral states, Sir Leon gave a reminder that the Maastricht agreement provided a basis for the development of a common defence and security policy.

Eastern Europe's trade future. Eastern and central European states will need a strong increase in their exports if they are to avoid becoming aid-dependent on the EC and the international community. A working paper published this week by the London-based National Economic Research Associates (NERA), extracted from their lengthier EC-commissioned report, argues that the newly-democratised states need to increase their exports by 10% a year over the next two decades to have any hope of implementing serious economic reform. The paper says EC Association Agreements will need liberal interpretation. NERA stresses that the studies are "scenarios", not forecasts, and offer judgements on what the success or failure of the reforms would spell. For copies, contact: Sue Caporn, NERA, 15 Stratford Place, London NW1 9AF. Tel: 071 629 6787.

Language exchange. The EC's LINGUA programme, funding training and exchanges for foreign language teachers and pupils, has seen a sharp rise in participants over the past three years. Social Affairs Commissioner Vasso Papandreou, commenting on the success of the programme at the Education Council on Monday, said that the number of those taking up EC-funded teacher training would double to 5,000 by the end of this year. Some 20,000 language students enjoyed EC-sponsored exchanges in 1991, a five-fold rise on the previous year, and numbers would double by the end of 1992.

European Curriculum Awards. Schools and colleges in the UK who can demonstrate outstanding development of a European dimension in their curricula, either by forging links with schools in other parts of Europe or working with a partner school, are invited to apply for the European Curriculum Awards by 21 October. The scheme, run jointly by the Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges and the European Arts Festival, a nationwide event to mark the six-month British EC Presidency starting in July, will offer 12 special awards of £1,000 each. The arts awards will be granted to collaborative ventures across all media from visual and performance arts to film and literature. For information call the Central Bureau on 071 486 5101 or the Arts Festival youth coordinator, Sally Lewis, on 071 383 5750.

Networking in Europe. This guidebook explains how to contact voluntary organisations in other parts of Europe and describes how they can influence EC social policy. Published by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, it costs £10.95. Details: 071 636 4066. Fax: 071 436 3188.

The Happy European. Described as a survival guide to the EC, this light-hearted guide cuts through Euro-speak to find out what is in "Europe" for the average citizen. Published by Charles Letts & Co. and written by Leatitia de Warren, it cost £8.95. Tel: 071 407 8891.

Conference & Diary Dates.

European Policy, post-Maastricht - A two-day residential conference on 25-26 June is being held as part of the Euro-Wirral programme of events with speakers from the EC and public and private sectors. Cost £249 + VAT. Details from Lisa Morris on 0532 355567 or fax 0532 446372.

European information training seminars - Training on EC databases Celex and SCAD organised by European Information Association in Portsmouth on July 2-3. Contact: Tony Inglis on 0203 838730.

Council Meetings:	Tourism	4 June	Luxembourg
	Ecofin	9 June	Luxembourg
	Fisheries	9 June	Luxembourg
	Immigration	11-12 June	Lisbon

Our next briefing will take place on Thursday 11 June at 11.30am.