



COMMISSION
OF THE EUROPEAN
COMMUNITIES

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THE WEEK IN EUROPE

Debate on Europe hots up. A draft treaty on political union, put before European Community Foreign Ministers in Luxembourg on Monday, described the EC aim for the first time as "a union with a federal goal": the word "federal" has never appeared before in any EC treaty or political declaration. The draft received the backing of all EC governments with the exception of the UK, Portugal and Denmark. UK Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd commented that, while it might have looser connotations in other languages, "federal has come to mean something tight and integrated in English". He commented that the Founding Fathers put it more wisely in drawing up the Treaty of Rome when they referred only to "an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe". But Commission President Jacques Delors and a majority of the Ministers said a reference to the Community's federal aspirations was vital. Referring to "transient political difficulties in one Member State," Delors said the EC needed a vision. With "noises off" from his two predecessors Margaret Thatcher and Edward Heath, Prime Minister John Major insisted in the House of Commons again this week that the UK would not be sidelined in the Intergovernmental Conferences and that the creation of a Super-State in Europe would not be acceptable to the UK. EC Foreign Ministers will meet again on Sunday before the Heads of State and Government gather in Luxembourg for the European Council Summit on 28 and 29 June. At their Monday meeting EC Foreign Ministers also discussed proposals to pare the present number of Commissioners down from 17 to 12; give the European Parliament the right of co-decision with the Council of Ministers, but without squeezing the Commission out; and to give the European Court of Justice the power to fine States for not complying with EC law.

Sweden decides. Sweden will apply on 1 July to join the European Community in the hope that full membership will be agreed by 1995. Swedish Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson hopes negotiations with the EC can start early in 1993 and be completed successfully by the end of that year. A national referendum to ratify entry terms would then be held in September 1994, to coincide with the next but one general election. Full membership could thus take place on 1 January 1995. Unlike neighbouring Norway, where public opinion is sharply divided about joining the EC, Stockholm's bid is backed by more than 80% of Swedes, opinion polls show. As with the other applications (Austria, Turkey, Cyprus and Malta), the incoming Dutch Presidency will refer the request to the Commission for detailed investigation. Sweden's application is strongly backed by the opposition Conservative Party and by Swedish industry. They have become increasingly convinced that the planned European Economic Area - the single market being negotiated by the EC and EFTA countries - does not offer Sweden a sufficient voice in decision-making in Brussels.

Andriessen on the EEA. In a statement to the European parliament last week on the negotiations between the EC and EFTA to create a European Economic Area, Commission Vice-President Frans Andriessen characterised the institutional framework of the EEA as a light-weight set-up in which the European Court of Justice will not be impeded in its Community functions and in which a Parliamentary supervision body would play its full part. He added that the Commission is not prepared to conclude any agreement to the detriment of the democratic evolution of the Community.

Tougher car exhaust limits. Car manufacturers in the EC are likely to face tougher than expected limits on exhaust emissions from 1996, after EC Environment Ministers, meeting in Luxembourg last week, agreed on a three-part, rather than two-part, programme for tighter emission controls. But instead of roughly a four and a half year lead-time ahead of the 1996 standards, manufacturers may now have to wait to the end of 1993 to know exactly about norms they will be bound to two years later. The agreement follows a decision by Ministers to impose obligatory norms on new models from July 1992 and on all new cars from January 1993.

Immigration controls. The UK is reported to have won exemption from rules that would eliminate internal immigration controls on non-EC citizens after 1992. The development came at a meeting in Luxembourg over the weekend of EC Ministers in charge of immigration, attended by Home Secretary Kenneth Baker. The Ministers were seeking agreement on the External Frontiers Convention. This would oblige countries to drop

border checks at airports and ports on all people coming from other EC countries, whether or not they were EC citizens. In addition the Ministers agreed on the need for EC-wide policies for the treatment of those seeking political asylum. The matter is gaining urgency because of the expected influx of East Europeans and growing numbers of applicants from war-torn regions. The Netherlands, which takes over the EC Presidency on 1 July, said it plans to give priority to establishing common criteria and procedures for granting asylum.

Nitrates in water to be cut. Meeting in Luxembourg last week, EC Environment Ministers agreed on measures to reduce water pollution by nitrates from natural and chemical fertilisers. The Directive aims to bring down the maximum permitted level of nitrates in drinking water to 50mg per litre. Carlo Ripa di Meana, the EC's Environment Commissioner, said the nitrate law marked an important step in EC environmental policy because it was the first "fully-fledged instrument" for influencing the Common Agricultural Policy.

Emergency aid for Africa. In addition to the emergency food aid sent to various parts of Africa recently by the EC, the Commission has been involved in a financial emergency aid programme to that continent. Since 1 November 1990 the following countries have received emergency aid to alleviate famine in Africa: Ethiopia (8.45m ecus), Sudan (5.65m ecus), Somalia (4.3m ecus), Liberia (5.93m ecus), Malawi (1.99m ecus), Angola (0.87m ecus), Mozambique (0.94m ecus), and Niger (0.1m ecus).

Scrivener on taxes. Speaking in London on Tuesday, Commissioner Christiane Scrivener, responsible for fiscal affairs, said she strongly believed the Community's role in the setting of tax rates should be a modest one. She said she had no ambition to dictate to finance ministers what levels of tax were appropriate in this or that national context. She added that for herself "harmonisation for harmonisation's sake" was completely unacceptable. The main need, she said, was for agreed minimum rates of VAT and Excise Duties so that governments were not dragged into a destructive downward spiral in which countries attract trade by aggressive undercutting of their neighbours tax rates. She hoped Ministers would reach a political agreement soon.

Christophersen in Poland. Commission Vice-President Henning Christophersen, responsible for economic and financial affairs, visited Poland from 13 to 15 June. He sought reassurances that Poland's tight monetary and fiscal policy was being maintained as agreed with the IMF and was briefed on the collapse of foreign trade, in particular with the Soviet Union, with the former COMECON countries and with the FRG after unification. The Commission and Poland are working towards establishing a "Europe Agreement" to help Poland gain access to Community markets and consolidate their growing market economy.

Relay Europe. Following on the success of the Europe Weeks which have been held in more than 25 localities in the UK over the past three years, the organisers have established a permanent organisation called Relay Europe. Its inaugural conference is to be held in York on 8/9 July. Those invited include Chief Executives of all local authorities in the UK, Chambers of Commerce, Higher Education, Institutions and MEPs. Further information: Secretary, Relay Europe, Mithras House, Lewes Road, Brighton BN2 4AT. Tel: 0273 600900.

Citizens' Europe. The Liberal Democrats have just published a consultative Green Paper on the political and institutional reform of the EC. Alone of Britain's political parties, they set out their proposals for European Union. The paper, "Citizens' Europe" is highly critical of the trend towards an intergovernmental EC and advocates future integration within a "Parliamentary Europe". Available from Liberal Democrat Publications Ltd, 8 Fordington Green, Dorchester DT1 1GB. Tel: 0305-264646. Price £4.80. 32 pages. ISBN 1-85187-150-0.

Europe Weeks. Leeds 22 June, 6-9 July (contact: Kathleen Roberts, 0532 462339, FAX 0532 421321)
Northamptonshire 23 June - 6 July (contact: Steve Heaver, Alison Parry, 0604 236759, FAX 0604 236644).

Conference and Diary Dates

An International Forum. Three one-day seminars on education and training provision in other Member States of the EC on 1 - 3 July. At the West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds. Price £125 + VAT per seminar. £300 + VAT (all 3). Details: Carolyn Booth/Lisa Morris, Park Lane College, Park Lane, Leeds LB3 1AA.

Housing the Community - 2000: a European Conference, 3-6 July, Dublin, looking at changes facing the design, financing, construction and provision of urban housing. Details: Margaret Sweeney 010-353-1-613831.

European Information Association. Seminar on database training for CELEX and SCAD, 4-5 July in Portsmouth plus a seminar on company, business and statistical information sources, "How to find out about the Single European Market" on 10 July in London. Details on both from Barbara Zolynski, Law Society Library, 113 Chancery Lane, London WC2A 1PL. Tel: 071-320 5947.

ECO/FIN Council	24 June	Luxembourg
Social Affairs Council	25-26 June	Luxembourg
Agriculture Council	26 June	Luxembourg
European Council	28-29 June	Luxembourg

Our next briefing will take place on Thursday, 27 June at 11.30am.