

European

Dialogue

THE MAGAZINE FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

MARCH-APRIL 1997/2

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ENGLISH EDITION : FOR COMMISSION INTERNAL USE ONLY



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(3.) (64.01)

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The magazine is a forum for discussion, and therefore its contents do not necessarily reflect the policies or views of the EU institutions or of the member states. Readers' reactions are welcome and wherever possible will be published.

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COVER PICTURE

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TYPESET / LAYOUT & DESIGN

TPP Brussels

PRINTED BY

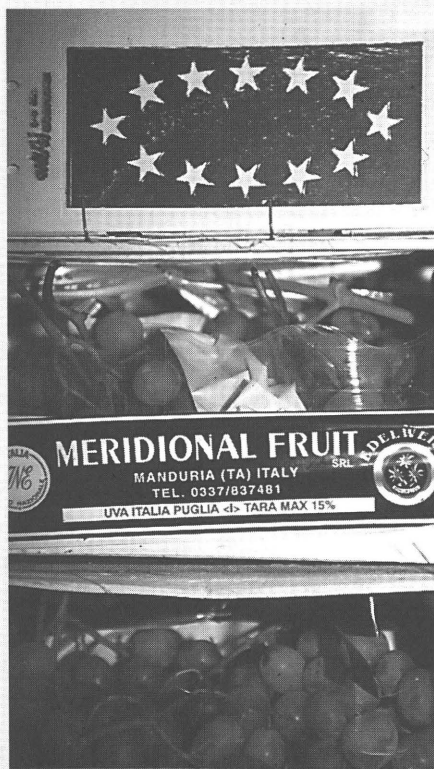
Formator

English edition
For Commission internal use only

This publication is available in Bulgarian, Czech, Estonian, Hungarian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Romanian, Slovak and Slovenian

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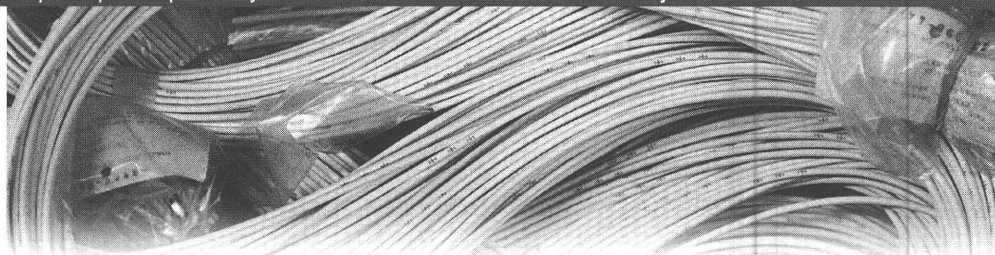
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Gearing Europe up to exploit the information age

The European Union, together with the 10 associated countries, is beginning to face the challenge of the information society. As the next century approaches, the EU together with its prospective member states, is looking at specific projects and programmes which will help keep Europe firmly at the head of the information society.



One of the greatest challenges facing Europe today is to adapt effectively and innovatively to the information society.

By this people mean a society in which the key products are information and the essential resource is knowledge, in contrast with industrial society in which the key resource is capital and the basic products are manufactured goods.

A company in the information society — so the theory goes — will succeed or fail depending on its ability to exploit innovation and knowledge rather than manufacture to its utmost capacity.

The computer age in many ways is just dawning, and our imaginations are only beginning to appreciate what can be done in this new environment.

What is patently clear already is that the information society will not be tied to national boundaries, political affiliations or social groups.

Equally clear is that the more people who connect to its services, and take part in the wealth of activities it offers, the more successful it will be. That is why the European Union (EU) is looking well beyond its boundaries as it attempts to build the foundations of a truly dynamic network.

The countries of central Europe and the Baltic states are part of that effort to unite Europe through the information society. In September 1996 over 200 representatives from business, government — including many ministers from the 10 associated countries — and academia met in Prague for the second EU-Central European

Liberalisation is central to creating the necessary conditions for essential investments in developing and modernising networks. "There is no shortage of finance, but a lack of opportunities to turn new ideas into practice," says Commissioner Bangemann.

forum on the information society. Industry Commissioner Martin Bangemann left those assembled in no doubt as to the absolute necessity for everyone to unite in the technology age.

This was not meant to be a forum for one half of Europe to hand out edicts to the other half. "Such co-operation is

not a one way street," stressed Mr Bangemann.

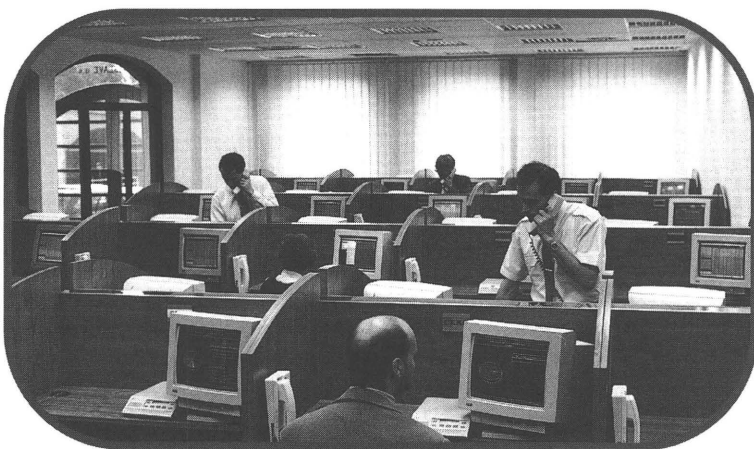
"It is in the common interest of all Europeans to co-operate closely in the implementation of the information society."

That meant real, practical measures to make it work. Over the coming years, administrators and policy-makers will need to introduce common technical standards, and a common legal framework in which new services can be provided. Mr Bangemann believes the key to true success in the information society will be the liberalisation of telecommunications markets.

"Only when private suppliers of telecommunications networks and services are admitted, will prices go down and new demand be stimulated," he says. Liberalisation is central to creating the necessary conditions for essential investments in developing and modernising

networks. "There is no shortage of finance, but a lack of opportunities to turn new ideas into practice," Mr Bangemann explains.

But he accepts that these are major challenges for countries whose new administrations are still young and only just learning to cope with market economics. As a result he promises to co-operate closely with the 10



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associated countries as they develop national strategies for accelerated implementation of the information society and promote projects at a European level.

To that end an action plan with 30 ideas for projects over a wide range of areas was adopted by the Prague participants (see separate article). The EU, Mr Bangemann says, will give its full support to participating

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countries as Europe as a whole moves into a global information society.

At the heart of the 30 point action plan agreed in Prague is the acceptance that, in these days of rapid change, nothing can be taken for granted. "Nobody can predict the exact future course of the information society. What appears a likely market winner today may fail totally tomorrow. What appears an unpromising new invention may turn out to be highly successful," says the introduction to the action plan.

It is for these reasons that pilot projects are important in the evolution of the information society. Only as ideas are tested on actual, concrete situations is it possible to assess with any accuracy what impact they will have.

Nevertheless, pilot projects are more than controlled experiments in information technology. They have important side-benefits, such as raising user awareness of new applications, accelerating economic development, stimulating the growth of new services and (hopefully) leading to a greater uptake of new research and development.

As well as providing immediate benefits for the trial user, pilot projects benefit the whole user community. Technology can be tested and improved in a real life environment. Legal and regulatory issues can be identified and addressed. Social and political obstacles can be overcome.

In the case of businesses pilot projects are a means of testing and enhancing productivity tools essential to maintaining the competitiveness of companies in the face of global competition.

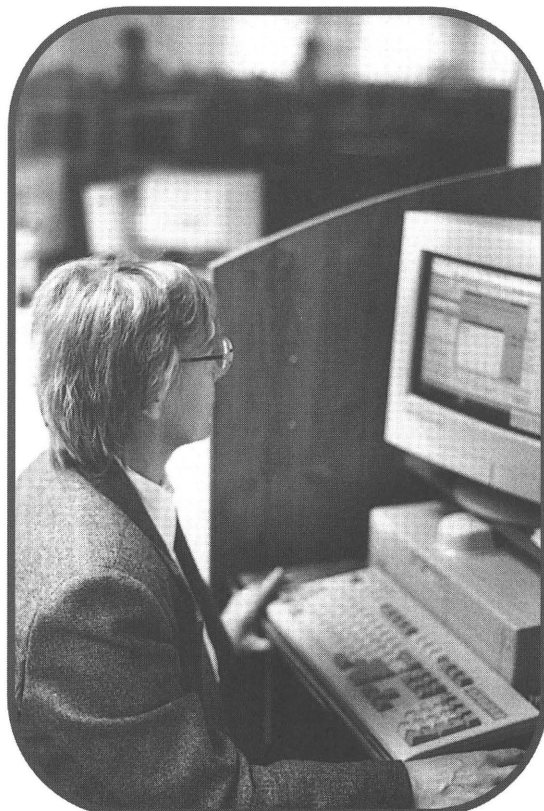
Since small- and medium-sized enterprises are important for the economies of the 10 associated countries — harnessing their entrepreneurial talent and acting as catalysts for growth — it is particularly important to help them gain access to new technological developments.

But not only businesses win from these developments. Public bodies can also use them to help boost productivity and quality, much needed

in the administrations of the associated countries. It will also be vital for the central European and Baltic states to develop the capability for data exchange with each other's administrations. Such systems will form the backbone of much of the EU's day-to-day activities in future.

Pilot projects in the public sectors of the associated countries will be an important element in their pre-accession strategies. In general it is hoped they will pursue the development of the infrastructure needed to ensure economic convergence between western and central Europe.

The EU is confident they will, through the provision of new



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products and services, improve quality and lower costs of existing ones. They can have the additional benefit of bringing government nearer the citizen and decreasing the cost and burden of public administration.

Some important decisions still need to be taken. Although available financial resources are limited, it is still crucial to send positive signals about the information society in order to increase public awareness.

The proposals, which highlight areas where pilot projects



could be particularly effective, are not a prescription, but a guide to the shape projects should take. Flexibility is the watch word. As technology advances public bodies will need to adapt and react to altering conditions. How these projects will be funded is unclear. The projects are seen to be more of a "wish list" than definite programmes.

It is also crucial for each country to tailor its response to the particular circumstances it finds itself in, and to tackle its own particular priorities.

The only factor which must apply across all projects is that the initiatives are launched straight away and demonstrate the practical use of the information society. Despite the need to adapt to local circumstances, the Prague action plan is aimed at European-level co-operation. It is designed to complement national information society programmes, but not to replace them. That means that no participant should be discouraged from pursuing its own national strategy and policy objectives.

But, at the same time, it means each country will need to find creative approaches to finance the pilot projects, as the action plan represents an organisational structure to facilitate work, not a new source of funding. Commissioner Bangemann is insistent, however, that none of the 30 projects (three were added to the list of 27 in November 1996), should pose an additional drain on Commission finances.

As a result they will be paid for by reallocating resources from existing information technology programmes, such as Esprit and Telematics.

The degree to which the 10 associated states are responding to the challenges of the information society was brought home by a large Esprit conference held in Brussels at the end of November 1996. Esprit is the Commission programme to promote innovative uses of information technology in the business world. Nearly 100 participants attended from the 10 associated countries, including five companies short listed for the Information Technology Europe Award.

Since the projects will require a large amount of work, there are plans to set up a joint EU-associated country secretariat responsible for co-ordinating them. A decision was expected at the end of 1996 over where the joint secretariat will be located. Slovenia is most likely to host the secretariat.

The Commission expects to contribute some money for personnel, but the host country will cover most costs. The Commission sees the initiative as a joint effort between itself and the associated countries. The secretariat will probably consist

of one full-time administrator and a panel to assist the implementation of the Prague action plan.

If everything goes according to plan, the projects will serve as trailblazers, demonstrating the capability of new information and communication technologies across the whole range of human activities. To that end they must

Pilot projects are important in the evolution of the information society. Only as ideas are tested on actual, concrete situations is it possible to assess with any accuracy what impact they will have.

not fall prey to the affliction which so often drags the most enthusiastic projects to a halt — all theory and no practice. There are three essential ingredients which all projects must contain:

- involvement by the actual users of the projects right from the beginning
- commercial viability: projects must be self-sustaining and able to continue running after funding has ceased
- wide dissemination: people must be allowed to see what is successful and what does not work in practice.

There should be a review of all projects after the first year of operations. In this way administrators can gain valuable experience not only from their work but that of others. A third EU-associated country forum on the information society will be held this autumn to assess how things are going. As Mr Bangemann said in Prague, "Now is the time to go for practical results." ■

James Gwynn, Brussels



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Information society

INFORMATION SOCIETY PROJECT OFFICE

The information society project office, known as ISPO, was recently set up under the European Commission's action plan on Europe's way to the information society.

ISPO has been created specifically to guide the European public through the tools and choices available to them from the rapidly emerging information society. The main services offered by the office are ISPO World Wide Web site, the ISPO Infodesk and a range of communication initiatives targeted at its key audience (citizens and user associations, schools and cultural institutions, local and regional public administrations and small- and medium-sized companies).

ISPO is also in charge of the development of a number of information society-related inventories, among which, in particular, are the Global Inventory Project (one of the 11 projects adopted by the Group of seven most industrialised countries at their 1995 inter-ministerial conference in Brussels), and the European survey of projects and actions in each member state.

The main objectives of the office are to:

- help industry and users contact the Commission and make optimal use of the existing instruments and resources
- act as a broker in information and ideas for interested parties
- create awareness of the potential impact of the information society
- address information society issues by providing a forum for the pooling of relevant solutions
- facilitate the launching of relevant international co-operation actions.

"Europeans can expect new job opportunities, new services and new markets to develop in the wake of the information society," Commissioner Martin Bangemann says. "ISPO's mission is to help all interested parties benefit by offering a new source of assistance and orientation as well as a new market place of ideas."

The five main functions of the office are:

- to be a user-friendly interface. The office will help industry and users (such as local authorities) to contact the Commission and make the most of existing EU instruments and resources. The office will handle information requests from participants, the media and public and send the requests to the relevant services, ensuring that answers are returned and making information available in general.
- to act as a catalyst. The office will be a go-between and

broker of ideas. It will encourage the creation of partnerships and help diffuse ideas and projects launched within the framework of the information and communication technology programmes.

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- raise awareness of the information society. The office will publicise actions which it supports and act as a clearing house for information on these projects. It will also organise awareness and information campaigns across the EU, review and summarise relevant studies and articles on the information society on a regular basis and distribute them

through a magazine.

- share experiences and highlight best practice. The idea is to contribute to the learning process and help speed up the adoption of information society-related applications and solutions. The office will organise workshops and demonstrations of advanced applications as well as

disseminating information on these applications, highlighting problems, solutions and best practice.

- promote international co-operation. The office will be a link between potential participants from the private sector and the Commission services responsible for international co-operation. ■

For more information on the Information Society Project Office contact ISPO Secretariat, BU24 2/78, 200 Rue de la Loi, B 1049 Brussels (Tel: (322) 296 8800 or 8900; Fax: (322) 299 4170 or 4180; E-mail: ispo@ispo.cec.be; Web: <http://www.ispo.cec.be>).



Ideas for European initiatives

The following are the 30 projects initiated at the Prague information society forum.

Monitoring EU-associated country information society pilot actions (MISAC)

MISAC will provide information on national schemes, give assistance in implementing actions and act as a contact point for all interested parties. Companies will be encouraged to use a central secretariat to find partners. It will edit an electronic newsletter and prepare a status report on projects.

Global inventory project (GIP)

The G7 (the group of the seven most industrialised countries — Japan, the US, Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Canada) global inventory project aims to create an Internet-based multi-media inventory of national and international projects, studies and other useful information related to the information society.

Access to data and expertise in Europe (ADE)

ADE will disseminate information on the information society both inside and outside associated countries and will foster trans-European exchange of expertise. Web sites of selected institutions from the 10 associated countries will connect up to others through hyper-links (this is an area on the computer screen, such as a word or part of a graphic, that the user can activate by clicking on it to enter a new information sector).

Awareness week in the associated countries 1996/7

This will raise awareness of the information society among small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). It will also help stimulate cross-border co-operation between European companies. Around 8,150 SMEs based in several countries are the target audience. A number of events are planned, including hands-on demonstrations and workshops.

Infodays on EU research and development programmes

These will help spread information about research and development in information society-related fields and demonstrate their applications to scientists and enterprises.

Awareness seminars on language

A number of seminars will help raise awareness of the implications of a multilingual information society — including the potential usefulness of technology in translation services. The European Commission, which has substantial experience in this area, will be closely involved.

Fellow members of the Community innovation relay centres (FEMIRC)

FEMIRC will help build an infrastructure to spread information and advice on EU research and development activities. They will promote technology transfer and services which support innovation. One important focus will be the marketing of research and development results.

European strategic initiative in electronic commerce (ESIEC)

ESIEC will promote electronic commerce for both public and private sectors in the 10 associated countries. It will also promote standardised solutions to the development of this new form of trade, including the creation of European electronic commerce standards.

MARIS activity in the Baltic Sea

MARIS is a G7 project managed by the European Commission. It aims to develop inter-connections and access to different systems to create a global maritime network. This project will, among other results, bring together the Baltic maritime industry, help transfer advice in critical situations and disseminate MARIS (a pilot network for maritime players) results throughout the region.

European chambers of commerce network (ECCN)

ECCN's target will be a network of easily accessible information providers, which could help small- and medium-sized enterprises find investment opportunities, addresses and partners across Europe. It will also help strengthen the role of chambers of commerce in the 10 associated countries.

Multi-media action group network (Magnet)

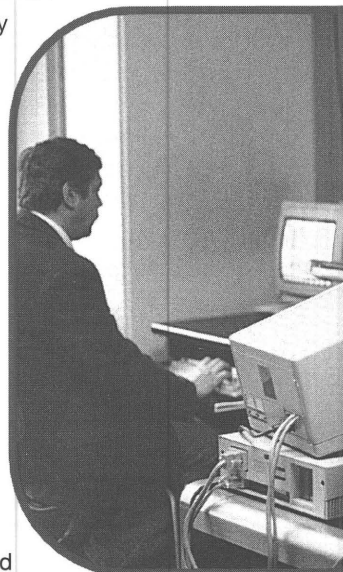
Magnet should foster the multi-media market across Europe, especially by facilitating contacts between multi-media content suppliers and creating a pan-European association.

Investigation into obstacles to investment in telecommunications

By setting up an fictitious telecommunications company to serve as a model, investigators will help identify both existing and potential obstacles in each participating country to successful investment in the information society. They will then determine their causes, who is responsible and possible solutions as well provide advice to governments. Businesses, banks and governments will be involved.

Multi-lingual support for the information society

This will help electronic dictionaries, language data banks and other similar projects to develop effectively following basic quality standards. The results will then be disseminated, and put to use in the right markets. It will also promote the extension of existing computerised translation tools and the development of new tools for the languages of central Europe and the Baltic states. The final objective is to break down east-west linguistic barriers.



Information technology European awards (ITEA)

ITEA will reward innovative European companies and give information technology greater public recognition. At least five finalists out of 25 will be from the associated countries. Five of the 1996 finalists were from central Europe and the Baltic states.

Information technology applications for freight operations

This project will help improve safety, reliability and efficiency for different types of transport. Road, rail, inland waterways, sea and air transport will be covered.

European local authorities networks (ELAN)

ELAN will foster open networks for urban development and link European cities and regions in an information network. It should contribute to regional cohesion.

Euromethod pilot project in the 10 associated countries

Euromethod will help the central European and Baltic countries to design information systems at home and improve international understanding on how such systems work.

European geographical information system

The project will create and commercialise harmonised databases for regional infrastructure development and environmental monitoring. National statistical and mapping agencies will be involved.

Trans-European research networks (TEN-34)

This project will help foster international investment in national research networks and help test transfer technology before introducing it. The Commission has already allocated Ecu 25m for TEN-34.

Web for schools in Europe (WFSE)

WFSE should demonstrate potential uses of the Internet in schools and identify specific needs in central Europe. It will also aim to adapt school curricula to the information society.

Video-lecturing in European universities (VILEC)

VILEC could transfer lessons to central European and Baltic state students quickly and cost-effectively. One goal will be to create an inter-operable video-lecturing system and develop other forms of long-distance learning.

European computer driving licence (ECDL)

This driving licence will be a qualification providing a basic level of literacy in the information society. It will hopefully facilitate workforce mobility.

Tele-medicine services delivered to the point of need (TEMPEP)

TEMPEP will establish a trans-national and multi-lingual consultation system for medical emergencies. This could be especially valuable in isolated areas or for long-distance travellers.

European health card (EHC)

The card should promote the use of standard medical cards, passing substantial EU experience in this field to the 10 associated countries.

Cross-cultural education and training (Tel-Lingua)

This project will demonstrate the possibility of a global network for foreign language training, eventually leading to a greater understanding of other cultures. Tel-Lingua will prepare professionals, students and entrepreneurs for work in the global marketplace.

Information technology for teachers training

This project will prepare teachers and trainers for the information society, but also develop new technologies for in-service teacher training. It should also promote Europe-wide exchange of teaching materials and experience.

National regulatory authorities

The aim of this project is to help the associated countries adapt their regulatory framework in the telecommunications sector to market oriented principles. By doing this, these countries will create a favourable environment for attracting investment to this sector.

Licensing regulation and procedures

This project will prepare a model framework for telecommunications liberalisation based on the relevant EU directive. Economic and social goals should then be complementary, giving consumers access to basic services. Draft terms of reference for this project have been prepared.

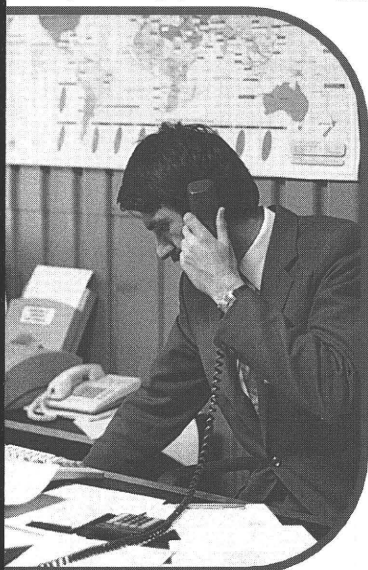
Libraries in the information society

Co-operation between thousands of libraries will be intensified. Libraries will be helped to modernise their infrastructure and gain access to knowledge from EU-based libraries. Training may also form a part of this project.

Information technology applications for the environment

Better communications should help citizens to participate in and influence decisions affecting the environment. Through this program, public authorities will be able to define and execute better policies. ■

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TELECOMMUNICATIONS HAS AN IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY

In addition to the action plan projects — which should get underway within the next few months — a clear priority for both the EU and the 10 associated states is telecommunications liberalisation. The main aim is telecommunications and a total infrastructure which

questions (reaching far beyond telecommunications) over whether the 10 associated country administrations are sufficiently strong to implement their new rules and regulations. It is recognised that the young post-transition administrations have a lot of catching up to do in this regard. ■

Some EU countries do not expect to liberalise fully before well into the next millennium and have derogations allowing them to delay full conformity with internal market rules.

encompasses the entire population of the country and not just a few major sectors. But this, of course, costs money. However, almost all the associated countries are up to speed with their western neighbours in this sector, at least on liberalisation. Although the EU has already liberalised most services, including satellite services, it is still far from a free market in public voice telephone and infrastructure.

Some EU countries do not expect to liberalise fully before well into the next millennium and have derogations allowing them to delay full conformity with internal market rules.

The main aim is telecommunications and a total infrastructure which encompasses the entire population of the country and not just a few major sectors. But this, of course, costs money.

In the 10 associated states all, except Slovenia, have opened value-added services to competition. Except for Slovenia and Latvia, all have or will soon have more than one operator in public data transmission services.

Seven of the associated states which provide satellite services do so under a liberal regime and all but two have multiple existent or planned GSM providers.

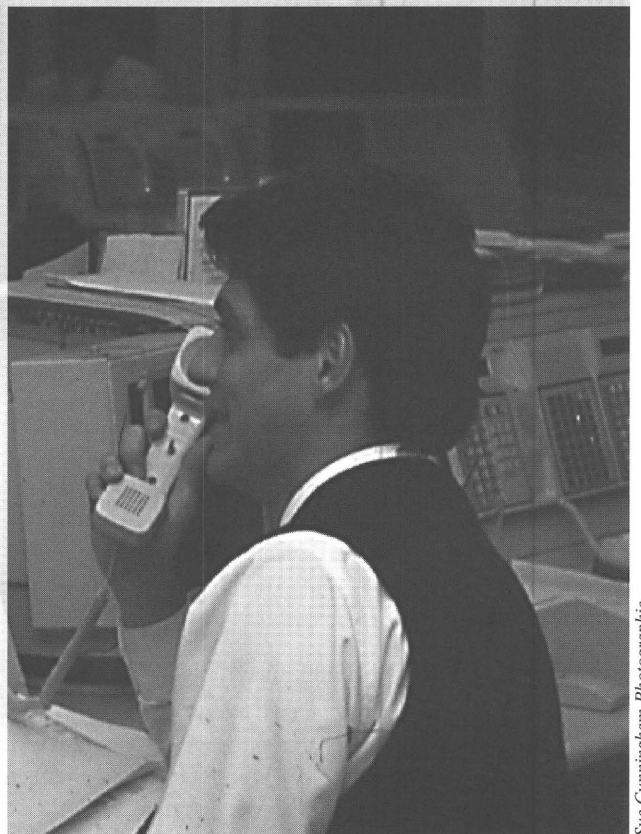
As for public voice telephone, all countries except Latvia promise liberalisation by 2002, one year before Greece's derogation runs out. Finally, telephone operators should be privatised, to a greater or lesser degree, in all the associated countries within five to 10 years.

The Commission's requirements for future members in the telecommunications sector were last revised in April 1996 and by all accounts will not be a major obstacle to eastern enlargement.

It lays down four pre-requisites for any country hoping to accede:

- a well-developed regulatory mechanism for competition in both public and private sectors
- the separation of regulation from operational responsibility
- the development of cost accounting systems which make it possible to identify the different costs of different services
- the designation by governments of "notified bodies" to issue approvals, and make a posteriori checks.

But despite a large amount of goodwill, there are still some



Sue Cunningham Photographie

Singapore results could help associated countries work more closely towards EU membership

The Singapore ministerial conference of the World Trade Organisation showed that the trade group can make deals. The 10 associated countries should see some direct trade gains from the meeting.

Many observers expected little from the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Singapore ministerial conference in December 1996. Since the end of the Uruguay Round in April 1994, the WTO inability to strike substantial deals in financial, telecommunications and maritime services and its incapacity to intervene in trade crises — such as the car parts dispute between the US and Japan — have led observers to believe the WTO was a too tiny and powerless engine powering a too large agenda. But observers have proved to be wrong. Singapore was a success, despite the problems at the Seattle meeting in October 1996 of the Quad (Canada, European Union, Japan and the US). At that meeting the EU agreed to scrap its high duties on information technology products like chips, computers, software and telephone equipment. That was the price it had to pay in order for its chip makers to become part of the Japanese-US semiconductor private agreement. After last minute hesitations the EU confirmed its commitment in Singapore.

Meanwhile, at the Subic

meeting in November 1996, key Asian countries (members of APEC, the Asian Pacific Economic Conference), endorsed the principle of an information technology agreement, building a momentum for a WTO agreement in Singapore.

The Singapore agreement has more than an information technology element. Tariff elimination was also agreed for 450 pharmaceutical products. Even more importantly, progress was made towards opening basic services in telecommunications. Working groups on foreign investment, transparency in public procurement and competition policy have been decided. Last, but not least, no trade sanctions have been attached to a vague reference to "internationally recognised core labour standards".

What are the direct gains for the 10 associated countries from the Singapore agreement? The information technology deal suggests obvious ones. To the extent that producing such goods requires relatively skilled labour, the 10 associated countries with abundant labour forces at that level

may become a good place to produce them. Even more importantly, these goods which are so crucial for catching up with the more developed economies in Europe, will be easier and cheaper to import.

A better chance to get a WTO telecommunication agreement in basic services would also benefit the 10 EU associated countries.

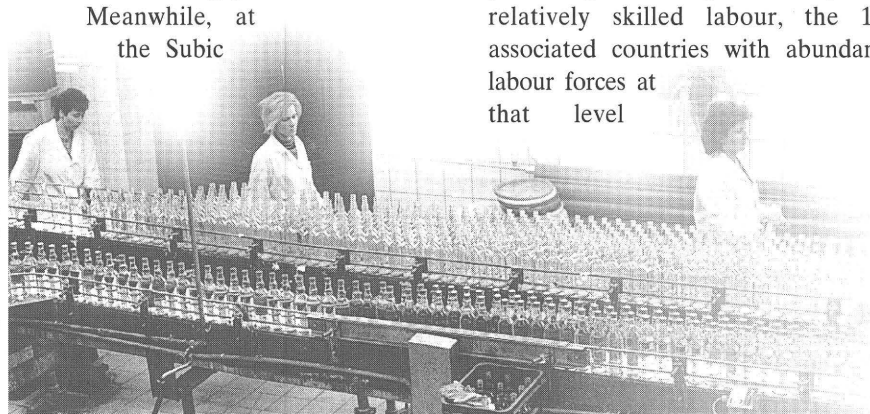
Singapore will induce the 10 associated countries to introduce more competition in their telecommunication service markets. That will allow the 10, especially those which are connected to major land, sea or air routes, to catch up even faster. They will import modern technology and ideas faster, enabling them to develop faster their own contribution to new technologies and ideas.

In addition to direct gains, the Singapore conference provides indirect lessons. It demonstrates how crucial it is to participate in the WTO forum, particularly important for the associated countries which have key interests in agriculture and natural resources. WTO negotiations on agriculture are scheduled to start again in 1999 with or without a global round. Such a schedule has to be put in perspective. In trade matters a country is the sum of conflicting domestic interests. Economic analysis shows that protecting one domestic industry is always at the expense of the other domestic industries — and only rarely at the expense of foreign interest.

As a result trade negotiations require



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from all domestic actors and especially from the government, a careful assessment of the economic benefits and costs of liberalisation. Without such a domestic study, the country has little capacity for initiatives and reactions in WTO discussions — a frustrating situation, as illustrated by the erratic French attitude at the end of the Uruguay Round negotiations. Detailed analysis from the economic point of view and coalition building operations from the political side require time. Preparing negotiations in 1999 should start in early 1997.

Singapore has shown that the US and EU monopoly on WTO negotiations is declining. Small countries emerged as decisive players. In particular the small Asian members of APEC now have a strong bargaining power, based on their regional coalition which is oriented towards freer trade.

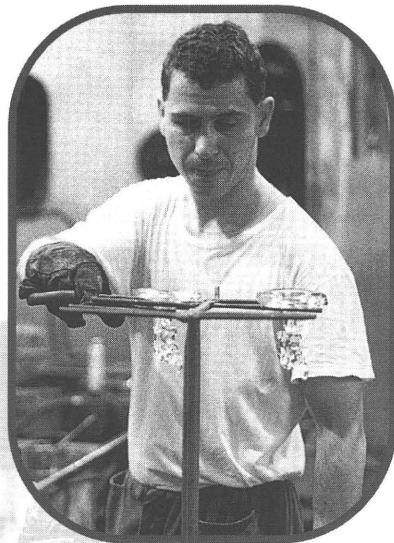
This lesson comes at a perfect time for the 10 associated countries. The existing Central European Free Trade Agreement (Cefta) has many limitations which are reminiscent of the Asian trade agreements of the 1970s and 1980s. Since then the Asian countries have boosted their commitments to free trade by creating APEC and by taking a deeper interest in WTO matters.

The associated countries should do the same. The APEC approach has one additional appeal for the central European and Baltic states. It could be an instrument to accelerate their accession to the EU. The differences between the tariffs that most of the 10 associated countries impose on imports from non-central European and Baltic states and non-EU countries — the so-called most-favoured nation (MFN) tariffs — and the corresponding MFN tariffs imposed by the EU are large. They vary between 15-25 per cent. The transition period necessary for the associated countries' tariffs to converge to the lower EU tariffs will be long.

If the associated countries do nothing to address this issue before joining the EU, the transition period (based on the average schedule of previous accessions to the EU) will last for

most of them for 10 years at least. This situation is not acceptable to the associated countries or probably to the EU.

Following the APEC approach means the associated countries will unilaterally and jointly declare that they would reduce by, say, half the differences between their own MFN tariffs and the EU MFN tariffs during an early period, for example 1998-2005. Such an initiative would have almost the same economic effects as a formal customs union between the 10, without them having to bear the political and bureaucratic costs of such a union. It would also allow the associated countries' MFN tariffs to be much closer to the EU tariffs by the year 2005, shortening their EU membership transition period.



Sue Cunningham Photographic

Such an initiative would have three other crucial advantages for the 10 associated countries. First it would keep intact the interests of the 10 in joining the EU because it should cover central European and Baltic state MFN tariffs that are higher than the EU tariffs. Excluding the 10 associated MFN tariffs which are lower than the EU tariffs from a joint associated country declaration makes economic sense. The 10 associated countries should contribute to the opening of the EU markets as well as to their own. Membership should not be a one-way convergence.

Second, this initiative would send a strong message to the WTO and domestic audiences because it has the merit of putting the focus on the right

perspective — freer trade is not a requirement to be met by the associated countries for joining the EU, but it is a policy with its own merits. Such a policy brings net gains to the populations of central Europe and the Baltic states.

Third such a trade initiative would deliver a crucial political message to the EU prior to opening membership negotiations. It would show that the 10 associated countries can work together and have a fully acceptable community spirit — the cornerstone of European construction and an absolute prerequisite from the west European point of view. It would also bring the associated country-EU discussions about the *acquis communautaire* (EU law) into a different perspective.

Imposing every detail of the existing *acquis* on the 10 applicant countries would take decades. Such a daunting task could be seen as counter-productive to the EU itself. It would tend to freeze the EU evolution in terms of the necessary regulatory reforms.

That leads to a clear conclusion: the EU will have to review the *acquis communautaire* and to make a distinction between the core *acquis* — which has to be adopted and fully enforced by the associated countries — and the rest of its laws. In this context trade policy is crucial.

In the associated countries' case, for at least the decade to come, an open trade policy is a good substitute for many other policies. It is the best competition policy. It is a strong discipline on subsidies or tax arrears. It is the strongest incentive to get a modern and well-enforced tax system. In summary there is a trade-off: the more open and non-discriminatory the 10 associated countries policies become, the smaller the non-negotiable core of *acquis communautaire* could be in the future. ■

Patrick Messerlin, Professor of Economics and Director of Groupe d'Economie Mondiale, Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris, Paris

How the EU works: democracy and decision-making

The internal workings of the European Union are complex and often confusing. *European Dialogue* begins the first in a series looking at how the EU works with an overview of several of its institutions.

If there is one characteristic which separates the institutions of the European Union (EU) from other

international organisations, it is their substantial independence from the member states. The EU is quite different from the UN and other intergovernmental organisations in the way it passes the bulk of its laws and takes most of its decisions.

Indeed, the EU appears to have all of the institutional equipment of a sovereign nation — an executive, an elected parliament and a court of justice whose actions are regulated by a written constitution — the Treaty of Rome and subsequent additional treaties.

However, while its powers and responsibilities are extensive, they are not those of a nation-state: the EU does not dispose of a standing army and take care of the defence of its territory; it does not have exclusive responsibility for foreign policy and it has little impact at this moment on the justice and internal security policies of member states.

Moreover, its use of power is conditioned by the philosophy of subsidiarity — a concept which has been taken very seriously since the late 1980s. This is enshrined in the 1993 Treaty of European Union and means the Community takes action only when the desired objective cannot be sufficiently achieved by member states.

Relations between the EU's eight institutions are based on partnership, co-operation and mutual dependence. For nearly 40 years they have provided a democratic framework which has permitted effective decision-

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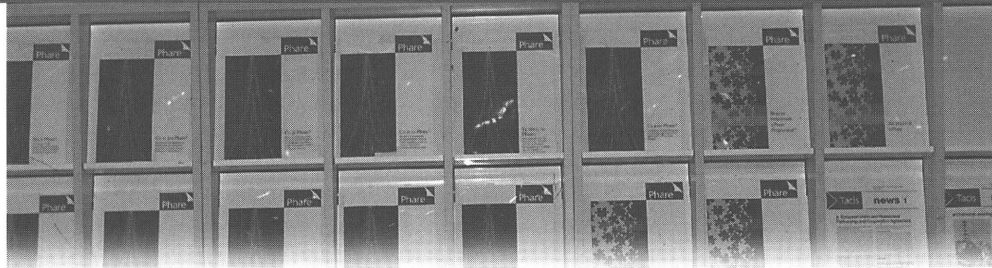
making as well as scrutiny and checks on the use of executive power. This is despite the fact that their staffing is extremely small — they employ altogether only 24,500 people, which is less than half the number administering the city of Stockholm.

They are not perfect, however. Decision-making procedures are too many and varied and some are unnecessarily complicated. They will need adapting if the Union of 15 member states is to fulfil its commitment to enlarge to a membership of 25 or more through the entry of the associated countries. The task of redesigning the institutions so that they can efficiently serve a larger Union is currently being addressed by the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) of member states whose work is due to be completed this year.

In order to understand how the institutions work and how they relate to each other, it is necessary to take a closer look at each of them in turn.

The European Parliament is the largest multinational parliament in the world. The Union's 370m citizens are represented by 626 members elected every five years. The Parliament's most important powers are:

- legislative — the European Parliament shares the power of decision over the content of legislation with Europe's Council of Ministers in some, but not all, areas. On some matters, for example agricultural prices, Parliament can only give an opinion on proposals made by the Commission for adoption by the Council. In areas such



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If there is one characteristic which separates EU institutions from other international organisations, it is their substantial independence from the member states.



J.N. Hughes-Wilson - Artists Copyright 1988

as regional spending and research, Parliament can amend legislative proposals and on issues such as the free movement of workers, education, culture and health the European Parliament shares decision-making equally with the Council. Parliament's assent is needed for important international agreements such as the accession of new member states and association agreements with non-member countries.

- budgetary powers — the European Parliament approves the Union's budget each year. It is allowed to propose changes to the Commission's original proposals and to the positions taken by the Council. On farm spending the Council has the last word, but on other expenditure Parliament decides in co-operation with the Council
- supervision of the executive — executive power is shared between the Commission and the Council and their representatives appear regularly before Parliament to explain and defend their actions. Members may put written and oral questions to the Commission — usually more than 4,000 a year — and they regularly interrogate Commissioners during plenary sessions and at meetings of specialised parliamentary committees.

The EU is quite different from the UN and other inter-governmental organisations in the way it passes the bulk of its laws and takes most of its decisions.

Ministers from the member state occupying the rotating presidency of the Council (the country changes every six months) present the presidency's programme at the beginning of their term and gives an account of it at the end. Ministers attend plenary sessions and take part in "Question Time" and in important debates.

It is in the Council that the member states legislate for the Union, set its political objectives, co-ordinate their national policies and resolve differences among themselves and with other institutions. Some matters are settled by majority voting, others require unanimous agreement.

Legally, there is only one Council, but in practice there are 25 different types attended by different national ministers according to their responsibilities. General Affairs, attended by Foreign Ministers, is the senior council which meets monthly, as does Agriculture and Economy and Finance. Others, such as Transport, Environment and Industry meet two to four times a year.

Since 1974, heads of state or government of the member states, together with the President of the Commission, have been meeting at least twice a year in the European Council. The European Council has gradually become one of the driving forces of the EU, setting priorities and

direction and resolving contentious issues that have proved too difficult for the Council of Ministers.

Presidency of the Council rotates between member states every six months: January until June, July until December. The present Commission has been appointed for five years and has 20 members — two each from France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Britain and one from each of the other member states. Five Commissioners are women — more than ever before — and like their male colleagues they are nominated by member governments in consultation with the President. The current President is Jacques Santer, a former prime minister of Luxembourg, who, like his predecessors, was chosen by the European Council, but for the first time his appointment and that of his Commissioners had to be approved by the European Parliament.

The Commission stands at the heart of the EU's policy-making process and provides the impetus and energy for its development. Its 15,000 staff work in 24 directorates general (DGs) and additional specialised services.

The Commission's role turns on three functions:

- initiator of laws — the legislative process has to begin with a Commission proposal. But in two areas, foreign and security policy and justice and home affairs, the Commission does not have exclusive right of initiative
- guardian of the treaties — the Commission makes sure member states apply Union laws correctly. If they do not honour treaty obligations, they will face Commission action which may include legal proceedings at the Court of Justice
- manager of policies and negotiator with the outside world — the Commission manages the annual budget (Ecu 86bn in 1996) and executes a wide range of policies including the EU's competition rules. Externally, the Commission negotiates a large number of trade and co-operation agreements on behalf of the member states.

The EU is founded on the rule of law and the role of the Court is to ensure that the law is obeyed in the interpretation and application of the treaties and in all of the activities of the Union.

The Court, made up of 15 judges (one from each member state) and nine advocates general, deals with cases brought by the member states, by EU institutions and by individuals and companies. It is supported in its work by the Court of First Instance, also consisting of 15

judges appointed by the member states. It was created in 1989 and deals with legal challenges to decisions of EU institutions and agencies.

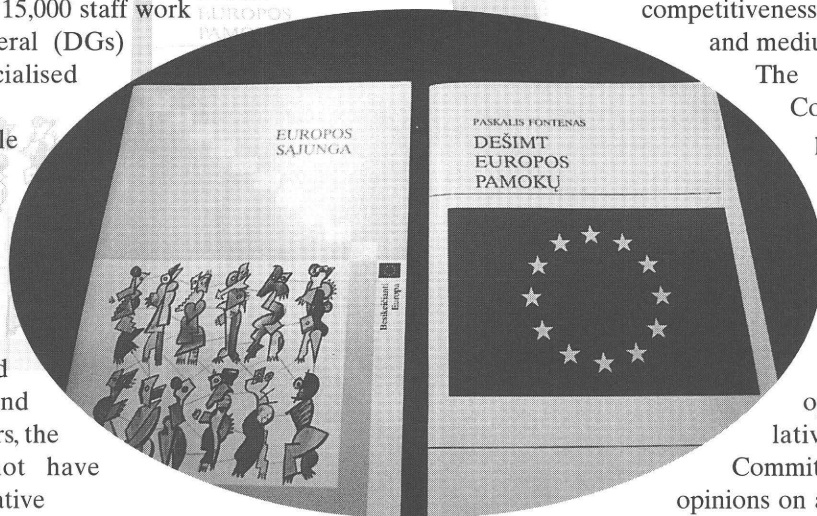
The interests of European taxpayers are closest to the heart of the Court of Auditors. Its task is to make sure the EU spends its money according to its budgetary rules and regulations and for the purposes for which it was intended by the Council and Parliament. The Court is completely independent and carries out on-the-spot audits wherever necessary.

The European Investment Bank (EIB) is the Union's financing institution providing long-term loans for capital investment projects which promote balanced economic development and integration. With annual lending in Europe of Ecu 20 bn, it is one of the largest international financing institutions in the world. The EIB's objectives include strengthening the economies of less favoured regions, enhancing international competitiveness and supporting small- and medium-sized enterprises.

The Economic and Social Committee (ESC) has a purely consultative role in the Union's legislative and decision-making process. The Commission and Council are obliged by the treaty to ask the Committee for an opinion on certain legislative items, although the Committee has the right to issue opinions on any matter of interest to the EU.

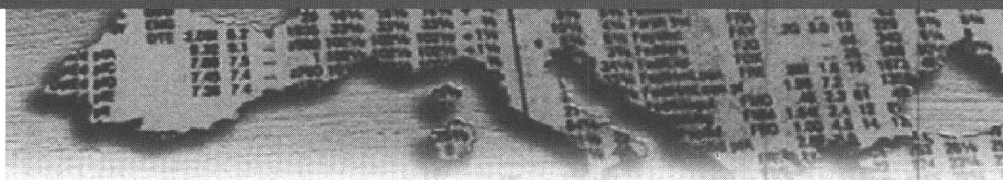
Drawn from a broad cross section of the Union's economic and social life, its 222 members represent employers and employees (the social partners) while others are active in farming, commerce, the professions and small- and medium-sized enterprises. Meeting for the first time in March 1994, the Committee of the Regions is the newest of the EU's institutions and reflects the desire of member states to respect regional and local entities and to involve them in the development and implementation of European policies. Its members are elected officials including regional presidents, mayors of cities and chairpersons of city and county councils. The treaty requires the Committee to be consulted on matters relating to trans-European networks, public health, education, youth, culture and economic and social cohesion. ■

John Wyles, Brussels



Sue Cunningham Photographic

in brief



Central Europeans hold summit

Prime and foreign ministers from 16 European states met in Graz in November 1996 for a meeting of the Central European Initiative.

Participants agreed to increase joint efforts to fight drugs and that more international aid for the reconstruction of Bosnia is needed.

At the meeting the Slovak Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar said the organisation should not deal with questions of national minorities, but that the standards set by the Council of Europe should apply and no others.

Slovak Foreign Minister Pavol Hamzik and his Hungarian counterpart, Laszlo Kovacs, discussed the need to create an intergovernmental commission to oversee the fulfilment of the bilateral treaty recently signed between the two states. Plans are still incomplete, but the commission is expected to have several working groups, including one for national minority issues.

At the meeting Moldova was accepted as a member of the regional co-operation grouping.

Members of the initiative are Albania, Austria, Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine. The group was set up in 1989 by Austria, Italy, Hungary and Yugoslavia.

WEU wants more action

The last Western European Union (WEU) assembly held in 1996 which discussed the eastern dimension of European security, concluded that "Nato has been far too hesitant about presenting a concept on 'who' and 'when' in relation to its planned enlargement, and maintaining that the reasons it has given in answer to 'why' will not be convincing until the new nature of security risks and the future political and military role of the Alliance in the new security environment have been clearly defined."

A draft memorandum adopted at the meeting fears that moves to include central European and Baltic states in western security institutions "might be subject to further delays on account of differing views on the kind of congruence there should be between Nato, WEU and the EU in relation to enlargement and the priorities to be set for its time-frame." The WEU document also regrets that "many European and American politicians are neglecting developments in Belarus and are not paying enough attention to the anti-democratic and autocratic tendencies within the country's present regime or to the importance of its independence and the need to maintain a permanent dialogue with it."

The council recommended that the OSCE should draft "a common concept of the 28 WEU countries on WEU's contribution for enhancing security and stability in central

and eastern Europe and . . . make arrangements with Nato allowing all associate countries of WEU to participate fully in actions . . . and prepare a flexible approach to its enlargement policy."

In its declaration the WEU invited "all European member countries of Nato to accede to the modified Brussels Treaty, allowing the possibility of upgrading the status of associate partner countries to that of associate member countries provided that the interested European states settle any bilateral problems they may have with neighbouring countries and leave no doubt that all 10 WEU associate partner countries should be considered as potential candidates for accession to Nato."

The WEU also urges the EU "not to slow down the process of its enlargement".

Ambitious plans for 1997

The Commission's work programme for 1997 singles out four major priority areas

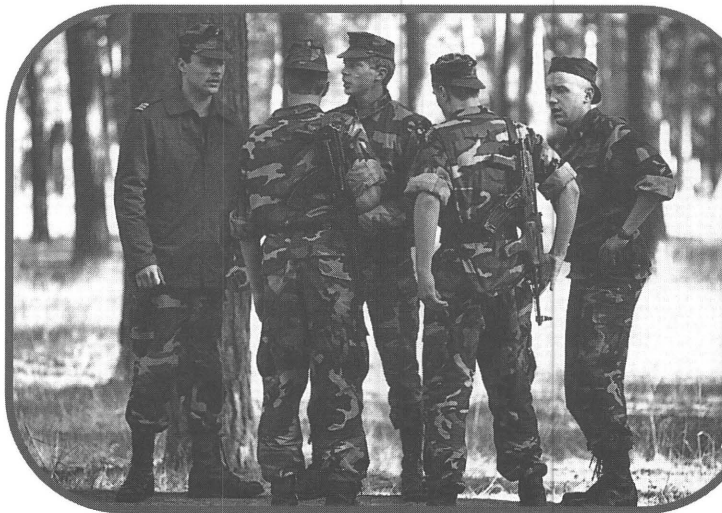
for action. These include growth and employment and the Euro, promotion of the European model of society, Europe's role in the world and preparations for the Union's future.

On the political front the Commission is to undertake a far reaching reform to modernise the way it runs itself. Reforms will concentrate on three main areas: decentralisation, rationalisation and simplification.

This year is expected to see the conclusion of the Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC).

According to the Commission's programme, the IGC needs to focus on three priority objectives. These are to "produce an institutional system enabling an enlarged Union to operate efficiently". The insistence on unanimity and the complexity of the existing decision-making procedures would paralyse the Union.

Second, come up with real answers to the public's concern about matters such



Sue Cunningham Photographic

as internal security, employment and the environment.

Third, give the Union a genuine external policy. This will mean adjusting the common commercial policy and external economic relations to the changes in the modern world and undertaking a thorough reform of the common foreign and security policy (CFSP).

The coming future enlargement will also loom large. A general document setting out a coherent approach to the whole issue will be presented and the Commission will also make a detailed assessment of the impact of enlargement on EU policies.

The work programme for 1997 also lists a number of new legislative initiatives, covering a range of areas. The 16 new legislative proposals are:

- strengthening of convergence for member states not participating in the third stage of economic and monetary union (EMU)
- broad principles of operation of value-added tax (VAT) in line with the needs of the single market
- indirect taxation: mutual assistance for the recovery of public, tax and customs debts
- primary products in the pharmaceutical industry
- compulsory third party insurance for motorists (visiting motorists directive)
- encrypted services (this is a follow up to the Green Paper of March 1995)
- harmonisation of copyright and related rights (this is a follow-up to the Green Paper on these issues in the information society)
- common system of taxation applicable to interest and royalty payments made between parent companies and subsidiaries in different member states
- fifth framework programme for research and technological development
- environmental control of plants not covered by the integrated pollution control directive
- training of safety advisers for the transport of dangerous goods by road, rail and inland waterways
- composition of ship crews, rest time and sailing time
- framework for noise measurement and noise monitoring around airports
- issuing of air carrier certificates
- harmonisation measures required for the deployment of telematics for road transport
- European voluntary service for young people.

News in brief ... News in brief ...

The EU has granted Albania Ecu 33m to help with reform measures and infrastructure projects, including modernising the judicial and education systems, supporting market reforms and improving roads. The EU has granted Albania a total of Ecu 212m until the year 2000.

The European Parliament is continuing to resist Commission plans for new EU environment laws. MEPs condemned the Commission's review of EU waste policy, after having slammed plans to update the 1992-2000 EU environment action plan and law on environmental impact studies. Green MEPs called for Environment Commissioner Ritt Bjerregaard to resign and asked the Commission to review the waste management strategy (COM(96)399).

The European Investment Bank (EIB) is lending Slovenske Elektarne, Slovakia's electricity utility company, Ecu 70m for the refurbishment of a power plant in Vojany in the eastern part of the country. This brings total EIB financing in Slovakia to over Ecu 320m.

The OSCE high commissioner for minorities, Max van der Stoel, visited Slovakia in November for a two-day meeting following his trip to

Hungary. His recommendations concerning the Hungarian minority issue in Slovakia were given to the Slovak government in August 1996 and the government's answer, received in October, is now publicly available. Mr van der Stoel suggests that Slovakia should pass a law enabling the use of minority languages in official contexts. A spokesman for Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar told the OSCE commissioner that "more loyalty from the Hungarian minority toward the Slovak state is needed".

The Commission has approved a communication on harmful and illegal content on Internet and a Green Paper (initiated by Commissioner Marcelino Oreja) on the protection of minors and human dignity in the context of new electronic services. Both documents advocate a closer co-operation between member states and on an international level, the use of filtering software and rating systems and an encouragement to self-regulation of access providers. The Commission's ideas were discussed by the Telecommunications Council meeting at the end of November.

EU Transport Ministers have agreed to liberalise

News in brief ... News in brief ... News in brief ... News in brief ...

ground-handling services at airports. The new rules will gradually liberalise airport services, such as baggage handling, aircraft refuelling and passenger check-in. Complete liberalisation of services is foreseen at EU airports by 2003.

Romania and Bulgaria have again asked the EU to drop visa requirements for its citizens entering the Union. Former Bulgarian deputy minister Konstantin Glavanakov asked the EU to "reconsider its policies on visas".

The single market has helped create between 300,000 and 900,000 jobs, increased the EU's income and lowered inflation, according to the results of 38 economic impact studies undertaken by the Commission.

The European Investment Bank (EIB) is lending Daugava hydropower plants in Latvia Ecu 6m for rehabilitation works and dam safety improvements. Work will be on generators and improvements to the dams on the Daugava River in central Latvia.

Former Polish under-secretary of state for European integration, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, has been appointed vice-rector of the College of Europe in Natolin, Poland. His appointment was made by the administrative board of the College of

Europe in Bruges, which is chaired by Jacques Delors. The students' association Eurelie (which groups five national students' associations) is using a London double-decker bus to visit seven associated countries. The bus has been converted into a high-technology information office offering many information services mainly for students and researchers. The bus will visit universities in around 30 cities in Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania and Bulgaria. Information on European integration in general and the enlargement process will be offered, including copies of *European Dialogue* magazine.

The European Investment Bank (EIB) has granted Romania a loan of Ecu 70m for the renovation of the European E81 road linking the cities of Cluj Napoca and Satu Mare in the north of the country. The loan brings to Ecu 455m the total of loans granted by the EIB in Romania.

In the Czech Republic the EIB is providing two loans totalling Ecu 255m for upgrading the Warsaw-Ostrava-Vienna railway line and for a new combined heat and power plant in Mlada Boleslav. This brings total EIB lending in the Czech Republic to nearly Ecu 1bn. Ceske Drah,

the Czech state railway company, will be given Ecu 200m for modernisation and SKO Energo Fin will be granted Ecu 55m to help finance the replacement of Skoda's lignite-fired power plant.

In Lithuania the EIB has granted a global loan of Ecu 5m to the Lithuanian Development Bank for the financing of small- and medium-sized enterprise projects in the industry and tourism sectors and in services linked to industry, small infrastructure and the environment.



Sue Cunningham Photographic

Protecting languages proves a challenge for EU officials

Defining a minority language is generally both a political and cultural issue for many states. The European Union is currently not devoting a great deal of time and money to tackling it, but with enlargement to the east looming, more attention is being paid to the problems — both present and future — which minority languages could pose.

No one knows for sure just how many minority languages are spoken in the 10 associated

countries of central Europe and the Baltic states. But when those countries enter the European Union, EU officials might be in for a shock.

EU structures already have a hard time coping with the more than 30 minority languages spoken in the Union. The Commission is being pressured to step up EU protection for people who speak these languages, although estimates vary considerably. In addition to the official languages of member states spoken in the EU, up to 40m European citizens according to some estimates speak minority or regional languages traditionally used in their territory. For example, Catalan is spoken by around 7m people in Spain, France and Italy (Alghero on Sardinia). Other European languages spoken in the EU include Basque (Spain and France), Breton (France),

While there is some attempt to help minority languages, many administrative problems and inconsistencies remain.

Corsican (France), Frisian (Netherlands), Friulan (Italy), Galician (Spain), Occitan (France), Ladin (Italy), Sard (Italy), Sorbian (Germany) and Welsh (Britain) among others.

A further category of linguistic communities in a similar position to speakers of minority languages are those who speak the official or majority language of a neighbouring state but who live in a country where another language predominates. German speakers in Belgium, Denmark, France and Italy are in this position as are Albanian, Croat, Greek and Slovene speaking communities historically domiciled in Italy. While these languages are not themselves likely to decline, on account of their official status elsewhere,

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Predarea limbilor
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grupurile lingvistice
ryvlja isté pomôct' menšinovým jazyko

the language and associated cultural heritage of these regions and territories are subject to similar pressures as those of the lesser used languages. Irish and Letzebuergesch may be added to this list despite being



Sue Cunningham Photograph

official languages within their respective countries. In total over 40 autochthonous regional or minority language communities have been identified within the EU. As well as these territorial languages, Gypsy and Yiddish languages, which have been traditionally spoken throughout Europe, are included.

At the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) in Flensburg, Germany, experts estimate the number of minority languages spoken in Europe as a whole may be as many as 200. It counts 100m people as minorities in both central and western Europe as well as the Baltic states.

The Dublin-based European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages is pressing for the rights of minorities inside the EU to be more firmly anchored in law. The bureau wants the revised union treaty that emerges from the current Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC) to recognise linguistic and cultural diversity and protect and promote linguistic minorities.

Little finance is available for regional and minority languages and that money is managed by Directorate-General XXII (education and training). In 1995 it financed 170 projects worth almost Ecu 4m.

While there is some attempt to help minority languages,



Sue Cunningham Photographic

many administrative problems and inconsistencies remain. For example, Catalan speakers are not entitled to assistance under the EU's LINGUA (a language training programme aimed at young people and emphasising economic and business life) or MEDIA (a fund for supporting the audio-visual industry in EU states) programmes.

Although EU financial assistance has made teaching materials available to some minority languages, lobbyists recognise that it is up to them to organise their activities and publicise the plight of minority languages.

Minority language speakers in the 10 associated countries have even fewer hopes of plugging into EU funding. The DGXXII budget only applies to protection and promotion of minority languages spoken within the 15 EU member states and Efta countries.

With just over Ecu 4m allocated in 1996, it makes only limited project support possible. In 1997 the budget has been cut to Ecu 3.675m. DGXXII is fighting hard to fend off further cuts and hopes that by giving its programme legal status, it can hang onto and possibly boost funding.

Attempts to broaden the scope of the programmes to countries which are not yet EU members — particularly the 10 associated countries — have been unsuccessful. One Commission official says any attempt to launch a study of language groups within central European and the Baltic countries is doomed because staff at DGIA, responsible for the associated countries, say they have too much other work to undertake a study for this region.

A comprehensive study of language groups within the EU took DGXXII four years to complete. Euromosaic was difficult to carry out (see separate article). "Some

member states do not even accept their own minorities," one Commission official told *European Dialogue*. Even if they do, it is hard to get reliable information from some governments or from the minority groups themselves, says the Commission official. "One has an interest in deflating population numbers while the other is interested in inflating them," says the official.

If DGXXII's minority language programme is extended to the 10 associated countries, minorities there could then expect some help in obtaining teaching materials and training. But getting the money for projects is a bureaucratic affair. Minority groups have to apply to the Commission for assistance, responding to a yearly call for project bids. They also need to be able to finance at least half of any programme (see box article).

In addition to the money available for minorities, other EU funds may be used for European minorities. Some of the EU's education programmes have recently been extended to the 10 associated countries to help them prepare for EU membership. These indirect programmes of the Commission's regional policy directorate have also provided encouragement to minorities living in the EU's border regions.

On Germany's borders with Poland and the Czech Republic, on Austria's borders with Hungary, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Slovakia and on Italy's border with Slovenia, EU regional funds are coupled with money from national or local government to pay for regional economic programmes on both sides of the border.

The national and linguistic minorities on these borders are giving EU officials hints as to the kinds of cultural differences the EU will have to deal with as the 10 associated countries come closer to membership. While at present funds are used to protect Polish speakers in Germany, after the next EU enlargement the task will shift to protecting, for example, German speakers in Poland.

That kind of problem is already being dealt with in the EU's Phare and Tacis democracy programmes through projects such as Phare's interactive educational programme for minority groups in Bulgaria. That project aims to give minority groups better access to state education as well as "increasing the responsiveness of local and central education departments towards cultural and minority groups in the regions concerned". The project also wants "to develop effective models of communication and conflict resolution in Bulgaria".

The project highlights the political sensitivities of working with minority groups, even if the stated goal is as seemingly apolitical as helping them retain their traditional language.

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When in 1995 the EU wanted to extend the MEDIA programme to the 10 associated countries, the European Parliament appointed a rapporteur, Bernd Posselt, to look into the idea. He reported that the issue was much less about money and funding than it was about co-ordinating political discussions on the legal and political situation of minorities.

Governments in the 10 associated countries need to sort out their own approach to minority language groups, protecting as well as promoting these languages.

At the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages, spokesman Christian Demeue-Vallee says the problem is due to the fact most decisions about whether the language spoken by a minority is a language or merely a dialect. This is usually more a political than linguistic decision. "Unfortunately there are no accepted scientific criteria of what constitutes a language," says Mr Demeue-Vallee, suggesting that one commonly used definition is whether an accepted written form exists.

The Federal Union of European Nationalities secretary general Armin Nickelsen says when a minority group and a government from one of the 10 associated countries dispute a group's status, the federal union undertakes a fact-finding mission to the area and produces a study which the minority group can take to the federal union's congress. This can then be transformed into a resolution which can be presented to the ministry of education or culture in the country concerned.

The federal union of European nationalities has made some progress in Poland and Hungary using this method. But the problems for minority languages in the 10 associated countries vary. In Hungary many minority language speakers have their own schools and kindergartens. Poland's problem however, is a lack of teachers for its German-speaking minority.

Even inside the EU the status of linguistic minorities varies greatly. The European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages co-ordinates the efforts of national committees in the EU member states and they decide what can and cannot be considered a distinct language. Governments in the 10 associated countries need to sort out their own approach to minority language groups, protecting as well as promoting these languages.

The Council of Europe has tried to help through its 1992 European Charter on the Protection of Minority Languages. So far only four of the Council's 39 member states have ratified the charter. ■

Bartholomew Dandridge, Brussels



Sue Cunningham Photographic

DEFINING MINORITY LANGUAGES IS A POLITICAL HOT POTATO

The EU's own definition of minority languages is indirectly given through its call for proposals for Commission support for the promotion and safeguarding of regional or minority languages and cultures. According to the call for proposals* the languages able to benefit from EU support "are the autochthonous [a Greek word similar to indigenous which means that something has belonged for a long time to a specific territory] languages traditionally spoken by part of the population of a EU member state. This definition excludes both immigrants' languages and artificially created languages."

The principal objectives of the programmes supported by the EU are to:

- encourage initiatives in the fields of education, culture and information
- safeguard and promote regional or minority languages and cultures
- strengthen the European dimension and stimulate co-operation between all those seeking to preserve and promote these languages and cultures
- improve the exchange of information and transfer of experience
- systematise, improve or promote the teaching of regional or minority languages from nursery school to adult educational training.

Projects are given funds only if the project involves "at least two linguistic communities or member states or else is

capable of generating the transfer of experience and knowledge from one region to another". Projects need to be linked with existing projects or initiatives and have a lasting and widespread effect. Applications for proposed programmes should be made by "language planners, belonging to research centres or voluntary institutions or organisations promoting regional or minority languages". Projects should use the latest available teaching methods for "the widespread dissemination of information".

Commission financing is limited. As it receives more requests than it can possibly fund, it part-finances projects which are already being given support through national,

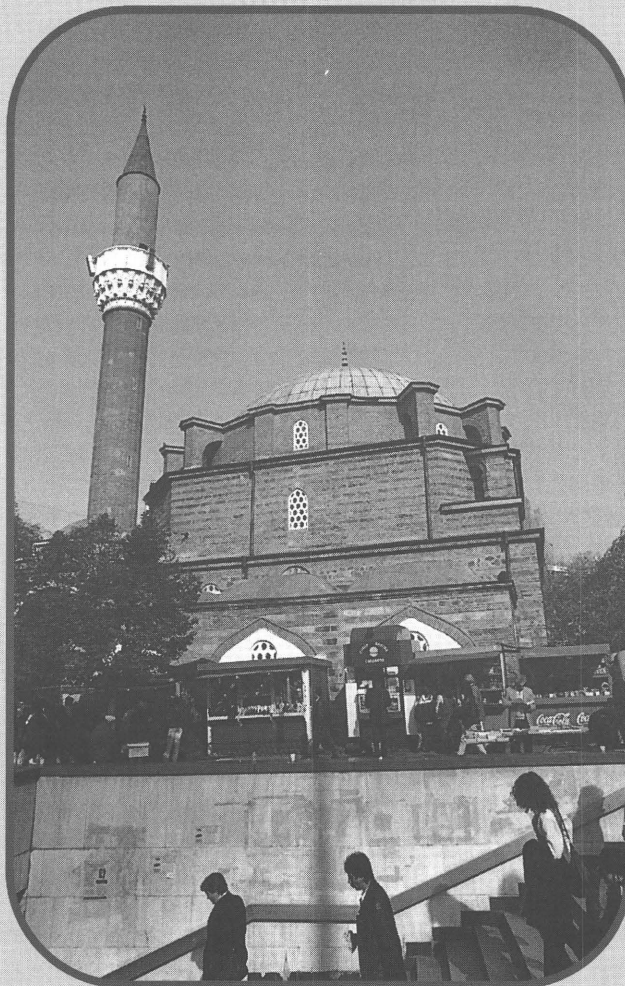
regional or local aid programmes. Financing is on a yearly basis and covers a maximum of half a project's costs.

Although the precise status and position of the linguistic communities vary enormously, there are a number of common interests and factors which bring together many of these groups across the Union. According to a Commission communication+ on this subject, some communities have links across member state borders, such as Basque

speakers in Spain and France, while others have traditional cultural and historical ties, such as the Celtic language groups in France, Ireland and Britain. While the Commission believes these links are important and may be promoted at the inter-regional level, nearly all of the lesser used language communities have in common a range of deeper interests both in relation to the continued development of their languages and also concerning the realisation of their potential within the EU.

Many of the language communities face common difficulties: they are often located in rural areas and in peripheral regions where local economic prospects are a cause for concern and communities may have to cope with a decline in the use of a language, in part due to the increasing influence of a dominant language spoken there.

The Maastricht Treaty extends the competence of the Union to cover culture (article 128) and education (article 126) which makes reference to the need to promote the learning of languages. The treaty also underlines the importance for the EU to assure the continued diversity of European cultures (article 128). Within Europe as a whole, the foremost development in recent years has been the adoption in 1992 by the Council of Europe of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages**. This document sets out objectives for those states which have signed it in relation to language encouragement and promotion, covering a range of domains of language use. The charter is a comprehensive



Sue Cunningham Photographic

document. Part of it deals with objectives and principles while other parts relate to measures to promote the use of regional or minority languages in public life. It deals in detail with education, judicial authorities, administrative authorities and public services, media, cultural activities and facilities, economic and social life and trans-frontier exchanges. The convention covers a wide range of different language situations and offers a number of options to its signatories.

* *Call for proposals for European Commission involving actions in favour of promoting and safeguarding regional or minority languages and cultures, Official Journal C322, December 2 1995.*

** *European Treaty Series 148, Strasbourg 5x1992, ISBN 92 871 2210 5.*

+ *Lesser Used Languages of the European Union: report of activities 1989-93. COM(94) 602, December 15 1994. Available from the Office for Official Publications, L2985 Luxembourg.* ■

EUROMOSAIC STUDY HELPS CLARIFY THE SITUATION

In 1984 the Commission published a major study on the condition of the lesser used languages. This was followed in 1990 by publication of a survey* of the position of linguistic minorities in Greece, Spain and Portugal, which had recently joined the Union.

But more information was needed on both the basic data relating to the number of speakers and the use of languages in various domains (home, school,

work, public administration, commerce, media and cultural activities, for example) and to assess the socio-linguistic vitality of a language (whether the language or linguistic community was in a state of decline, revival or stability). So, following a call for tender, a contract was awarded to a consortium of experts in linguistics representing four of the leading European institutes in this area: Fédération des Foyers Ruraux, Paris; Institut de Sociolingüística Catalana, Barcelona; Onderzoekscentrum Meertaligheid, Brussels; and Research Centre Wales, Bangor. These institutes came together under the title, Euromosaic.

The researchers collated data from official sources, publications, studies, consultations with experts and interviews with EU leaders. A series of detailed questionnaires were used to compile comparative data across the EU. A limited number of empirical surveys were also undertaken in selected regions.

The final report** concluded that there is a "wide range of situations involving the various language groups. The straightforward division between stateless languages and extra-territorial state language groups conceal enormous internal variation. The tendency to think in terms of languages rather than language groups leads to the claim that stateless languages are more threatened, in that the generic feature of languages will ensure that at least the intra-territorial state version will persist, even if the extra-territorial language groups disappear."

The report raised a number of issues. One of the points made in its conclusions concerns the problem of developing an effective policy to deal with linguistic issues. As Euromosaic concludes: "What we have sought to do is to give a pattern to that [language] mosaic, arguing that there is order in what initially appears to be a dislocated myriad. We are by no means implying that there is a similarity across

all cases, but we do imply that we have succeeded in classing the different language groups into categories which are confronting the forces of change from similar resource positions. In this respect we would argue that while some policies can have an impact on all minority language groups, it should also be clear that different groups will require different forms of policy implementations and practices. We hope that those responsible will have the wisdom and courage to seize the challenge for the benefit of all. Europe's diversity belongs to us all. It is our wealth."

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* *Linguistic Minorities in the European Economic Community: Spain, Portugal, Greece, summary of the report, Miquel Siguan, University of Barcelona. Office for Official Publications, Luxembourg.*

** *Euromosaic: the production and reproduction of the minority language groups in the EU. Price Ecu 14.50. Available from the Office for Official Publications, Luxembourg.* ■



Sue Cunningham Photographic

MERCATOR CAN HELP

The European Network for Information, Documentation and Research (MERCATOR) into regional or minority languages was created in 1987 to improve the accessibility and exchange of information on regional or minority languages and to inform speakers of "majority" languages about minority languages in a more systematic way. MERCATOR, a documentation and information network for the "small" languages in Europe was set up, adopting the sixteenth century cartographer Mercator as its name. He was the first to mark different place names on maps in the language of the area involved.

There are three MERCATOR centres dealing with education, media and legislation. They co-ordinate their separate thematic networks. The Commission is the co-ordinating body for the three MERCATOR networks.

More information on these networks is available on Web site <http://www.troc.es/mercator/index.html>. MERCATOR centres and co-ordination include the European Commission DGXXII as well as Ned Thomas at Prifysgol Cymru Aberystwyth SY23 3AS, Cymru, Britain (Tel: (44 1970) 622 533/6; Fax: (44 1970) 622 190; E-mail: merc@aber.ac.uk) for the media; Durk Gorter at Doelestrjitte 8, 8911 DX Ljouwert Fyslan, the Netherlands (Tel: (31 582) 131 414; Fax: (31 582) 131 409; E-mail: mercator@fa.knaw.nl) for education and Oriol Ramón, Rocafort 242 bis, 08029 Barcelona Catalunya, Spain (Tel: (34 3) 444 3801; Fax: (34 3) 444 3809; E-mail: ciemem@abaforum.es) for legislation. ■

Modern Spain finds ways to deal with Franco language legacy

“I remember when I was at school that if I let slip a word of Catalan, I had to carry a heavy weight, a metal ball, until another unfortunate child made the same mistake, and then I could pass it on to him.” Thus one leading Catalan art designer remembers childhood miseries more than 20 years ago under Spain's dictator Franco.

Another Catalan, a successful journalist, recalls soiling himself on his first day at school because he did not know the Spanish words to ask to visit the lavatory and his teacher refused to understand his mother tongue.

For Spain's most widely spoken minority language, the situation today could not be more different. Not only is Catalan — spoken by over 3m people in Spain — an accepted language in democratic Spain, but in the autonomous region of Catalonia, it is the main working language of officialdom and education, as well as of everyday life.

This dramatic transformation within a single generation was achieved relatively peacefully, as part of Spain's transition to democracy. The ebb and flow of ancient non-Spanish languages has less to do with the migration of people or the arbitrary boundaries of imperial carve-ups than the degree of political authority imposed from Madrid.

Catalan, Basque and Galician suffered under Franco's 40-year insistence on the primacy of a single Spanish state. But a Statute of Autonomies negotiated in 1979, four years after Franco's death, loosened this iron grip

and allowed Spain's historic nations — the Basque Country, Galicia and Catalonia — varying degrees of home rule, the better to bind their loyalty to Spain.

For Catalans the right to exercise their language was paramount. The pro-democracy movement focused on the recovery of their language and institutions according to rights established by the republic in 1932 and taken away by Franco in 1939. This aim crossed from left to right and united Spaniards and Catalans. “It legitimised

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our future language policy far more than speeches,” says Miquel Strubel, director of the Catalan autonomous government's Institute of Catalan Socio-Linguistics. Catalans insisted on the right to teach their language in schools and to conduct official business in Catalan. Many Spaniards from elsewhere in Spain complain

that this discriminates against non-Catalans who work in what is after all part of their own country, but bilingual Catalans shrug and say it is no longer an issue.

After Franco's death the Catalan regional government ruled that Catalan and Spanish be taught in schools on an equal basis. For a while street signs appeared in both Spanish and Catalan, before Catalan became the rule. The 1979 statute went further, recognising Catalan as Catalonia's own language and the official language in Catalonia “as Spanish is throughout Spain” — a pragmatic and ambiguous wording that satisfied all parties.

Spaniards from poor rural areas flocked to industrial

Catalonia during the 1950s and 1960s, drawn by jobs and prosperity. Most continued to speak Spanish, but were content for their children to grow up with Catalan as their first language.

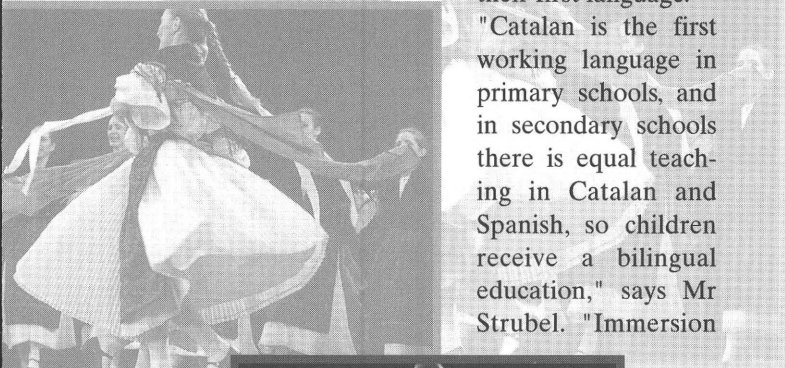
"Catalan is the first working language in primary schools, and in secondary schools there is equal teaching in Catalan and Spanish, so children receive a bilingual education," says Mr Strubel. "Immersion

programmes in Catalan in secondary schools have been very successful, but remember they are both Romance languages. University lecturers choose to teach in either language, but read and understand Catalan texts and exams," he says.

The aim, says Mr Strubel, is to achieve bilingual competence in Catalonia. "Nothing is enacted to wipe out Spanish or prevent Catalans being completely competent in Spanish. Here no one would call Spanish speakers in Catalonia a minority"

An Englishman resident in Barcelona and married to a Catalan paints a less rosy picture. He accepts that youngsters should be taught in Catalan, but fears his daughter will become more fluent in Catalan than Spanish. "The responsibility for refining Spanish has moved on to the family," he says. "There is a momentum to make people speak Catalan if you can, and it's increasingly necessary for getting work in Catalonia. In some areas you are at a disadvantage, but in general there is surprisingly little friction." ■

Elizabeth Nash, Madrid



Sue Cunningham Photographic



Finland and Sweden busy building bilingual societies

Finns have been growing up in a bilingual society for decades, so it has been natural for the government there to extend the teaching of new languages to the system as citizens of far-flung nations take up residence in Finland.

The Finns became accustomed to minority languages early on in their history. Around 5.5 per cent of the population is Swedish and as such use Swedish as a first language — albeit with a strong accent that Swedes over the Gulf of Bothnia love to imitate playfully. These Swedish Finns have helped to encourage the teaching of minority languages for other groups. Added to the medieval Swedish influence is the heavy influence of Russia, which shares a 1,500 km border with Finland and the government is faced with a linguistic cocktail that demands considerable care and attention.

"The trend is to give better service to immigrants, but you have to understand we have fewer [refugees] than in other Scandinavian countries," says Erik Geber, head of teaching of Finnish to the country's Swedish-speaking minority at the National Board of Education.

There are around 15 minority languages spoken in Finland including Vietnamese, Chilean, Somalian and Chinese as well as the more common European languages. All these languages are taught in Finland

without causing any fuss. "It helps a lot that all our children grow up in a bilingual culture," says Professor Geber.

Swedish apart, the minority language teaching is limited to language only and no broader education takes place. This somewhat minimalist approach is more a reflection of the small number of immigrants and non-Finns resident in the country rather than any political or educational policy, according to an Education Board official.

Finland was once accused in the cold war past of having an occasionally unwelcoming attitude towards refugees and other immigrants from the Soviet Union — but it nowadays has a new image. The end of communism has meant an increase in the number of immigrants from Russia and the Baltic states. The teaching of Russian in schools, colleges and adult education centres is increasing.

Finland has, however, never felt the need to make such a huge investment in teaching immigrants and refugees as in neighbouring Sweden, where every immigrant child or adult has a right — enshrined in law — to be taught in their mother tongue.

At the end of 1996 there were around 68,000 foreign citizens living in Finland, which has a total population of 5m. Russians, with 11,400, make up the biggest group,

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followed by 9,000 Estonians, 5,500 citizens from former Soviet states, 4,500 Somalis and 2,100 Vietnamese.

Neighbouring Sweden has a different approach. Sweden is finding out that the noble and ambitious targets it has set for the instruction of "home languages" is a costly and resource-hungry business. As its cost-conscious government looks for savings in all quarters, the expensive business of fulfilling its promise to educate immigrants in their own language is looking more and more difficult to sustain.

Immigrant or refugee children — even those without residence permits — qualify for free state education and are taught in their home language with Swedish as a second language.

Municipal authorities are obliged by law to offer immigrant children education in their own language.

"Home language instruction is intended to strengthen their self-esteem and promote their development into bilingual individuals with a dual cultural identity and cultural competence," says Sweden's school authority Skolverket.

Skolverket recently took two major Swedish communes — Malmö and Uppsala — to task for failing to supply education in a child's home language. Malmö city council faced criticism for not even having anyone in charge of the programme to teach immigrants Swedish.

Skolverket's Ulla Bergholz said a thorough re-examination of the teaching of minority languages nationwide is underway. ■

Harry Joyce, Stockholm

Romania extends rights to ethnic minorities

According to article 118 of Romania's education law "persons belonging to ethnic minorities have the right to study and receive instruction in their mother tongue at all levels and all forms of education in accordance with the present law".

This has proven to be more than mere words. In the school year 1994-95, 4.3m pupils were enrolled in pre-university education of which 230,000 (5.4 per cent) attended classes in their (non-Romanian) mother tongue. Text books in either Hungarian or German are provided for subjects in the curricula — over 330 textbook titles. At the higher education level some courses are conducted in Hungarian or German on request.

For the 1.7m ethnic Hungarians in Romania, the issue of teaching in the mother tongue has, understandably, on occasion, been a source of tension since the overthrow of communism. Two recent events — the signing of the Romanian-Hungarian Treaty and a parliamentary win by the opposition in the November 1996 elections — have signalled a breakthrough in the process, according to Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania (UDMR) deputy Laszlo Borbely.

"The signing of the treaty is a positive step," he told *European*

Dialogue. "It contains an article ensuring the possibility of teaching in the mother tongue in all structures of education. This is a base for changing some articles of the education law which are against Hungarian schools and

According to article 118 of Romania's education law

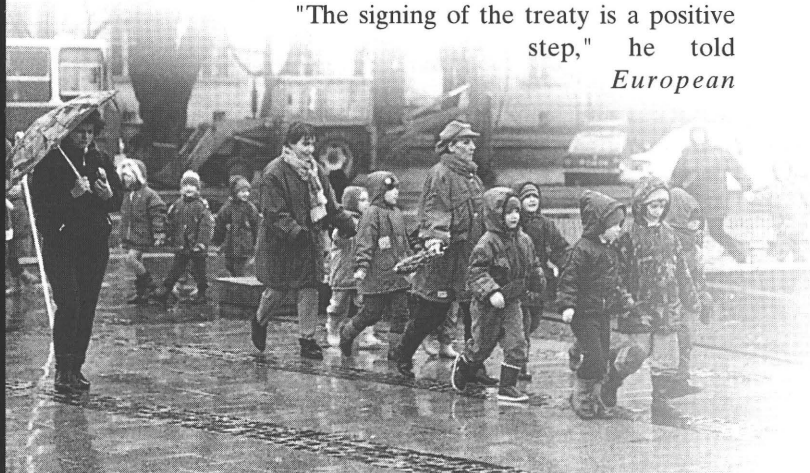
"persons belonging to ethnic minorities have the right to study and receive instruction in their mother tongue at all levels and all forms of education in accordance with the present law".

also for broadening the range of university courses available in Hungarian, for example law and engineering. Secondly, the opposition win means we may participate in a new parliament, and have more say on the education issue. We support the [majority] Democratic Convention which has already talked about decentralisation of all education. This would help local authorities to decide the needs of individual communities," says Mr Borbely.

A dialogue with the outgoing ruling party, the Social Democratic Party (PDSR), was hampered, he said, by its coalition with nationalist groups who basically opposed rights for Hungarians. Dialogue was crucial, he says, because the next four years will be important for the process of Romania's integration in the European Union. Resolution of ethnic minority rights are a key condition of admission to both EU and Nato.

According to Romanian Education Ministry statistics, around two per cent of the ethnic Hungarian population have access to education in their mother tongue. Mr Borbely says, there are several areas of contention.

"While we have the right to learn in the mother tongue at high schools, all vocational schools teach in Romanian. Also, we can sit university entrance examinations only for faculties which already teach in Hungarian. Further, the study of history and geography is permissible in Hungarian only at primary school level."



Sue Cunningham Photographic

Hungarian schools, he says, are presently concentrated in the eastern Transylvanian counties of Harghita and Covasna — areas where there is an ethnic Hungarian majority.

The situation for ethnic Germans residing in Romania is a bit different. There are around 300 educational units in the county — including kindergarten to grade 13 (18 years of age) — which teach in the German language. Education in German is seen as crucial for Romania's 80,000 ethnic Germans, according to Dr Tomas Prinz, first secretary at the German embassy in Bucharest. "It's one of the most important factors in the whole policy of the country. If parents couldn't ensure German language education, they would leave Romania immediately," he believes. "It's of absolute importance for us that these schools are protected under the law."

The embassy began its educational support programme in 1990 when one of the largest waves of German emigration from Romania to Germany occurred. Over 100,000 ethnic Germans left Romania then, with the result that the school system, especially in rural areas, began to break down.

Mr Prinz sees German language schools as an important element in terms of integration in the community, although he points out that the German minority is now so



Sue Cunningham Photographic

small — depleted from its pre-World War I peak of around 1m — there is no question of it not inter-relating with its Romanian neighbours. More importantly, he says, Romanians who attend German-speaking schools usually continue to maintain strong links with Germany, often going to work for German companies. "We call these students 'bridges of understanding'," he told *European Dialogue*. ■

Keith Henderson, Bucharest

Germany's Turks face feeling of isolation

Over a quarter of a century after the beginning of Turkish immigration into Germany, schools and other training institutions in Germany are still wrestling with the problem of integrating millions of young Turks into German society and working life.

As experts explain the problems confronting Turkish children, adolescents and their parents are part economic and part cultural.

Germany's Turkish population of about 3m has been hit particularly hard by mounting unemployment. An estimated 20 per cent of the Turkish minority are currently on the dole — almost double the national average.

Most Turks born in Germany seldom make it to university, and only 2.5 per cent of Turks have given up their Turkish passport and opted to become German citizens. "Their parents want them to have a good education, but for the young men, it means a traditional working class job, such as steelworker or builder. Those are precisely the areas where unemployment is worst," says a social worker working with the Turkish minority.

With knowledge of German still a problem for most first and many second generation immigrants, some schools and professional training centres in districts with a strong Turkish presence offer special courses to bring young Turks' — or their parents' — language skills up to scratch.

However, Germany's decentralised federal structure, particularly evident in areas such as education, means

that measures to support the Turkish minority are largely left to Länder, regional and local authorities.

Policies are highly diverse. While some schools offer young Turks with insufficient language skills special support classes to catch up, others try to train teaching staff to target their needs within the framework of ordinary classes.

"The situation is really diverse," says Walter Koch, a collaborator of Germany's only member of parliament of Turkish descent, Czem Oeztemir. "Some young Turks are completely integrated, even speaking the local German dialect," he says. But other, says Mr Koch, communicate too little with their German contemporaries.

A major problem social workers are often reluctant to acknowledge is a growing aggressive attitude towards society. "They feel rejected, and they reject society in turn," says one social worker focusing on the Turkish minority. "Their often very conservative family education clashes with the liberal attitudes of modern German society, which can heighten tensions."

Some blame it on the recent growth of a politicised, aggressively militant version of Islam. "There is little we can do against this," says a social worker in Germany's industrial Ruhr region. "For these youngsters militant Islam seems far more attractive than anything we have on offer. We observe a growing tendency towards an authoritarian ideal." ■

Thomas Klau, Brussels

Trade with the EU

EU trade with central Europe and the Baltic states (1995)

EU imports from central Europe and the Baltic states: Trade by products*

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	92/91	93/92	94/93	95/94	95/91
	(in billion Ecus)					(% variation per year*)				
Total (0-9)	16.2	22.5	26.8	33.9	41.7	17.3	16.8	26.6	23.0	20.8
Raw materials (0-4)	4.6	5.4	5.5	6.3	6.5	-5.3	0.9	14.5	2.6	2.9
Food, beverage and tobacco (0+1)	2.2	2.2	2.1	2.3	2.3	-7.8	-9.5	10.8	0.6	-1.8
Crude materials except fuels (2+4)	1.3	1.7	1.7	2.2	2.6	16.2	-2.3	26.6	19.4	14.5
Mineral fuels (3)	1.1	1.4	1.7	1.8	1.5	-25.4	21.6	6.7	-15.2	-4.8
Manufactured products (5-8)	11.3	16.7	20.7	27.1	34.5	26.5	21.9	30.5	27.3	26.5
Chemicals (5)	1.5	1.7	1.7	2.3	3.1	2.0	-0.3	30.1	36.6	16.0
Machinery and transport equipment (7)	2.3	3.7	5.1	6.9	9.7	30.2	38.0	35.9	41.0	36.2
Miscellaneous manufactured goods (6+8)	7.4	11.3	13.9	17.9	21.7	30.3	20.1	28.5	20.9	24.9
Other not classified goods (9)	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.7	11.9	15.0	0.2	47.1	17.4
EU total imports (extra-EU)	492.6	487.1	493.2	543.2	575.2	-1.1	1.3	10.1	5.9	3.9
EU total imports from CIS**	18.2	16.6	21.3	21.3	23.2	-8.6	6.7	19.9	8.8	6.2

EU exports to central Europe and the Baltic states: Trade by products*

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	92/91	93/92	94/93	95/94	95/91
	(in billion Ecus)					(% variation per year*)				
Total (0-9)	17.7	24.6	33.2	40.3	49.3	22.8	32.2	21.4	22.4	24.6
Raw materials (0-4)	2.7	3.8	4.9	5.1	5.5	18.1	24.8	4.7	8.3	13.7
Food, beverage and tobacco (0+1)	1.7	2.3	3.2	3.4	3.7	11.8	34.6	6.2	8.6	14.8
Crude materials except fuels (2+4)	0.5	0.7	0.9	1.1	1.4	16.8	15.0	23.9	26.1	20.4
Mineral fuels (3)	0.5	0.7	0.8	0.6	0.5	41.0	3.7	-21.9	-23.1	-3.2
Manufactured products (5-8)	14.3	20.1	27.3	34.1	42.5	25.0	33.7	24.8	24.7	27.0
Chemicals (5)	2.0	2.8	3.8	4.8	6.1	22.7	34.3	25.8	26.6	27.3
Machinery and transport equipment (7)	7.2	9.6	12.5	15.5	19.1	20.3	29.1	23.5	23.8	24.1
Miscellaneous manufactured goods (6+8)	5.1	7.7	11.0	13.8	17.3	32.7	39.1	25.8	25.0	30.5
Other not classified goods (9)	0.7	0.8	1.0	1.1	1.3	-4.6	28.3	9.7	17.8	12.2
EU total exports (extra-EU)	432.2	436.1	491.1	541.5	89.3	3.0	12.6	10.3	8.8	7.9
EU total exports to CIS**	14.0	13.0	14.8	16.0	17.9	-7.1	14.3	8.0	11.5	6.8

EU trade balance and cover ratio in value with central Europe and the Baltic States

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
	(in billion Ecus)					(cover ratio = export/import)*100)				
Total (0-9)	1.5	2.1	6.4	6.4	7.6	109	109	124	119	118
Raw materials (0-4)	-1.8	-1.6	-0.6	-1.2	-1.0	60	70	88	81	85
Food, beverage and tobacco (0+1)	-0.5	0.1	1.1	1.1	1.3	76	104	152	146	157
Crude materials except fuels (2+4)	-0.7	-1.0	-0.9	-1.1	-1.3	43	42	50	49	52
Mineral fuels (3)	-0.6	-0.7	-0.9	-1.2	-1.1	36	53	48	35	32
Manufactured products (5-8)	3.0	3.4	6.6	7.0	8.0	127	120	132	126	123
Chemicals (5)	0.5	1.1	2.1	2.5	3.0	136	161	220	213	197
Machinery and transport equipment (7)	4.8	5.9	7.4	8.6	9.4	307	262	246	224	197
Miscellaneous manufactured goods (6+8)	-2.4	-3.6	-2.9	-4.1	-4.4	68	68	79	77	80
Other not classified goods (9)	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.6	0.5	190	174	196	215	172
EU total imports (extra-EU)	-69.4	-51.0	-2.1	-1.3	14.1	86	90	100	100	102
EU total imports from CIS**	-4.2	-3.7	-5.3	-5.3	-5.3	77	78	84	75	77

Notes: The standard international trade classification is an analytical nomenclature introduced by the United Nations for economic analysis. In these tables the third revision of the nomenclature (SITC Rev 3) introduced in 1988, is used in central Europe and includes the applicant states of central Europe plus Albania, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. * The percentage variation was calculated by using only the countries from the respective previous year's grouping. ** For 1991: USSR, from 1992: CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States)..

Source: Eurostat, Statistics in Focus: External Trade.

EU trade flows with central Europe and the Baltic States

EU exports

	1995	1994	1995	95/94
	% share	Ecu bn	% variation	
Albania	1.0	0.43	0.50	18.4
Bosnia-Herzegovina	0.3	0.10	0.14	47.6
Bulgaria	3.8	1.60	1.87	17.2
Croatia	6.2	2.86	3.07	7.0
Czech Republic	20.5	7.93	10.12	27.7
Estonia	0.9	0.31	0.45	46.2
FYROM	1.6	0.74	0.80	7.9
Hungary	14.7	6.15	6.77	10.0
Latvia	1.3	0.49	0.63	28.8
Lithuania	1.7	0.72	0.83	14.5
Poland	27.4	10.83	13.50	24.7
Romania	7.2	2.65	3.55	34.2
Slovakia	5.5	1.79	2.68	50.1
Slovenia	8.9	3.67	4.38	19.1
Total	100	50.26	49.29	22.4

EU imports

	1995	1994	1995	95/94
	% share	Ecu bn	% variation	
Albania	0.5	0.12	0.21	74.5
Bosnia-Herzegovina	0.1	0.01	0.02	84.5
Bulgaria	4.2	1.34	1.76	31.4
Croatia	4.2	1.81	1.75	-3.3
Czech Republic	18.8	6.36	7.86	23.5
Estonia	1.0	0.27	0.43	62.9
FYROM	1.5	0.66	0.64	-2.8
Hungary	15.6	4.92	6.50	31.9
Latvia	2.1	0.73	0.87	18.0
Lithuania	2.1	0.75	0.88	17.5
Poland	26.6	9.11	11.10	21.9
Romania	7.8	2.51	3.26	30.1
Slovakia	6.3	1.87	2.62	39.6
Slovenia	9.1	3.42	3.78	20.6
Total	100.0	33.89	41.69	23.0

EU trade balance

	1994	1995	1994	1995
	Ecu bn		% of total trade	
Albania	0.30	0.29	55.2	40.4
Bosnia-Herzegovina	0.08	0.12	77.5	72.7
Bulgaria	0.25	0.11	8.6	2.9
Croatia	1.06	1.32	22.6	27.4
Czech Republic	1.56	2.26	10.9	12.6
Estonia	0.04	0.02	7.3	1.9
FYROM	0.08	0.15	5.5	10.7
Hungary	1.23	0.27	11.1	2.0
Latvia	-0.25	-0.24	-20.4	16.2
Lithuania	-0.03	-0.05	-1.8	-3.1
Poland	1.72	2.40	8.6	9.7
Romania	0.14	0.29	2.7	4.2
Slovakia	-0.08	0.08	-2.2	1.4
Slovenia	0.25	0.59	3.6	7.2
Total	6.37	7.60	8.6	8.3

EU trade flows with central Europe and the Baltic States by EU member state

Exports

	1995	1994	1995	95/94
	% share	Ecu bn	% variation	
Belgium/Luxembourg	4.5	1.74	2.23	28.2
Britain	5.4	2.21	2.69	21.7
Denmark	2.3	1.00	1.14	14.0
France	8.3	3.34	4.08	21.9
Germany	50.2	20.12	24.73	22.9
Greece	1.7	0.77	0.86	11.9
Ireland	0.6	0.16	0.31	90.7
Italy	28.6	7.39	9.16	24.1
Netherlands	6.1	2.62	3.01	14.9
Portugal	0.2	0.06	0.08	45.9
Spain	2.0	0.86	1.01	16.5
EU 12	100.0	40.26	49.29	22.4

Imports

	1995	1994	1995	95/94
	% share	Ecu bn	% variation	
Belgium/Luxembourg	3.8	1.26	1.60	27.4
Britain	6.2	2.31	2.57	11.6
Denmark	2.3	0.94	0.95	1.6
France	7.4	2.61	3.09	18.7
Germany	54.2	18.09	22.61	25.0
Greece	1.9	0.57	0.77	35.5
Ireland	0.3	0.11	0.13	24.0
Italy	15.3	5.27	6.39	21.2
Netherlands	5.9	2.03	2.46	21.6
Portugal	0.3	0.09	0.13	47.0
Spain	2.4	0.63	0.98	57.6
EU 12	100.0	33.89	41.69	23.0

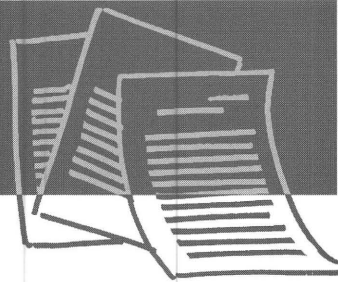
Trade balance

	1994	1995	1994	1995
	Ecu bn		% of total trade	
Belgium/Luxembourg	0.48	0.63	16.0	16.3
Britain	-0.10	0.11	2.2	2.1
Denmark	0.06	0.18	3.1	8.8
France	0.74	0.98	12.4	13.7
Germany	2.03	2.12	5.3	4.5
Greece	0.19	0.08	14.5	5.0
Ireland	0.05	0.19	19.5	42.6
Italy	2.11	2.78	16.7	17.9
Netherlands	0.59	0.55	12.8	10.0
Portugal	-0.03	-0.05	-22.2	-22.5
Spain	0.24	0.03	16.3	1.3
EU 12	6.37	7.60	8.6	8.3

Notes: As of January 1 1995 the EU was enlarged to 15 member states. However, this report analyses figures for only 12 EU countries as detailed data for 1995 could not be supplied by the three new members, Sweden, Finland and Austria. Central Europe is defined as follows: until 1991: Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, Czechoslovakia (until 1992) and from 1992: plus Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and from 1993 plus Czech Republic, Slovakia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Source: Eurostat, Statistics in Focus: External Trade.

Letters to the Editor



TO THE EDITOR

The first Euro-textbook dealing with the history of Europe was published in 1992 as a result of the combined efforts of 12 European authors, translators and publishers over a period of four years.

It was published in all the countries and languages of the EU.

The Czech edition was published in 1995.

It is a completely different type of textbook which spends 380 pages mapping out the political, economic and cultural history of the continent.

The introduction to the textbook of the history of Europe deals with the components of European identity. As a geographic concept, Europe is defined by its boundaries.

Topographic division into small units during the centuries conditioned the emergence of various European languages and cultures. Simultaneously, their mutual communication and common existence created European civilisation.

From the other continents it differs by its special variety, the diversity of its landscape, the heterogeneity of its peoples and cultures. The eastern fringes of Europe witnessed many waves of attacks coming most often from Asia, which also led to intermingling of Europe's population.

There are great differences between European languages, although they have common roots. Within the context of the different geographical latitudes of Europe, 43 languages are being used together with three types of alphabets based on the phonetic principle — the Greek one, the Roman one and the Cyrillic one.

The development of individual languages increased the disunity among the Europeans. But it would appear today that Europeans have overcome already the divisive factor of language diversity which, although a brake to communications, is perceived nevertheless as cultural enrichment.

It was in Europe where the conviction was born that it is society's duty to guarantee basic freedoms. That led to the proclamation of the General Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

The European values were later adopted by many other nations. The concept of European civilisation is being linked up today with what is called western civilisation. During the Middle Ages knowledge of Latin was considered to be a must for every intellectual.

From the sixteenth to the eighteenth century a man was considered to be primarily a European. But this common heritage lost its significance with the rise of nationalism in the nineteenth century.

Prof Tomas Jilek
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University of West Bohemia, Plzeň,
Czech Republic

TO THE EDITOR

I am writing to you about my vision of European co-operation after reading the letters to the editor by Ferdinand Stancek and members of the Romanian Senate Educational and Scientific Research Committee.

European co-operation involves, first and foremost, assistance in training offered by European countries. Such assistance in training is evidently based on information received earlier. Since this information has been somewhat tendentious, "new" European countries who have rejoined the old Europe are depicted in a worse situation than they really are: they are seen as having lived in complete isolation without any information. Estonians have a proverb: "Poverty is not a disgrace but a misfortune." One of the cornerstones of the nation's standards of morality is the principle that honesty is something that everyone can have, but often a person's will or work is not sufficient to secure prosperity.

One double standard of morality has been replaced by another. Under Russian occupation we paid lip service to Moscow but acted in our own way.

Today we pay lip service to the ideals of Estonia but try to live like people in Brussels, Bonn or Washington, to become rich immediately and enjoy a good life.

Politicians and others who are genuinely concerned about Estonia's and Estonians' well being and work hard for this purpose are criticised and attacked. This is allegedly what the world and Europe in particular wishes.

Does Europe really promote prosperity as an end in itself but not prosperity resulting from purposeful work and high standards of morality? This can hardly be so.

Thus, training programmes should be set up accordingly.

Training is most needed by ministers and secretaries-general followed by members of the parliament and of city and rural municipal councils.

Having been promoted to high positions by chance, they do not, as a rule, know the history of the world or of their own country. The system of administration is not up to par. Administrators tend to either rule in an authoritarian manner or rely on others under the pretext of liberalism.

Already years ago, before the restoration of Estonia's independence, intellectuals in Estonia knew well what went on in the world and what progress western science and technology was making. We were not ignorant but unfortunate because of the opportunities we could not use.

However, major libraries had good collections of books. We obtained information from the radio and Finnish

TV helped a lot. Thus, persons who were interested in getting information could do so.

There is no doubt that Europe will not want countries which must be constantly supported and trained. It would be much more beneficial to establish a training centre to cater for the future needs of officials and employees.

The content of and the teaching methods used in training, and the nature of financial assistance need to be changed. If ideas, methods and technologies used in the West yesterday are imported into Estonia today, there is little hope that Estonia could join the EU as an equal partner.

The EU will hardly need a testing ground or a country with a special status. However, Estonia needs the EU as a guarantee for its political, military and economic security. Estonia needs the EU to restore its self-respect.

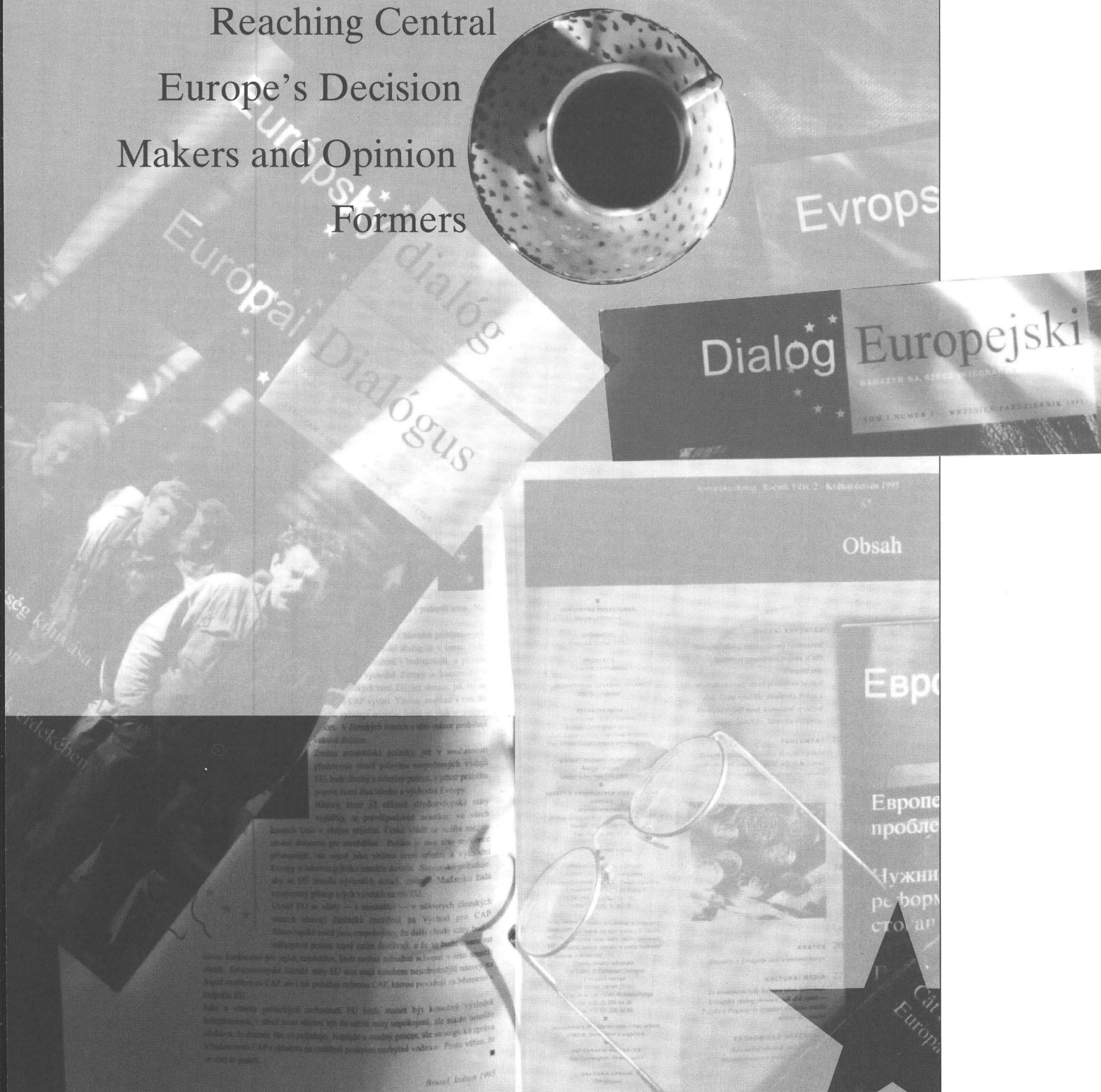
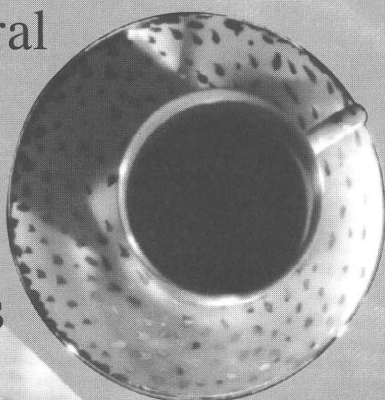
We know ourselves that we have been Europeans for centuries and have never abandoned the European way of life. Now we want to know whether Europe is also aware of this. If so, the fact that Estonia can be part of the EU should be self-evident.

Kalju Luts
Head of Training Department
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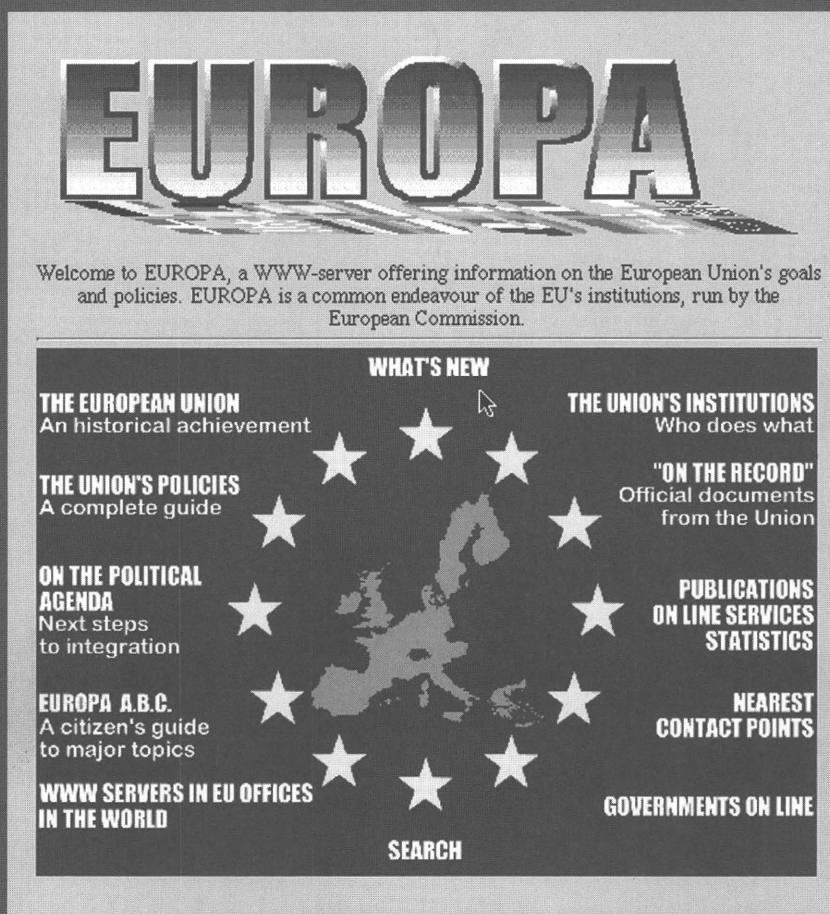


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"TOGETHER IN EUROPE", the European Union newsletter for central Europe, can be accessed on "EUROPA":

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