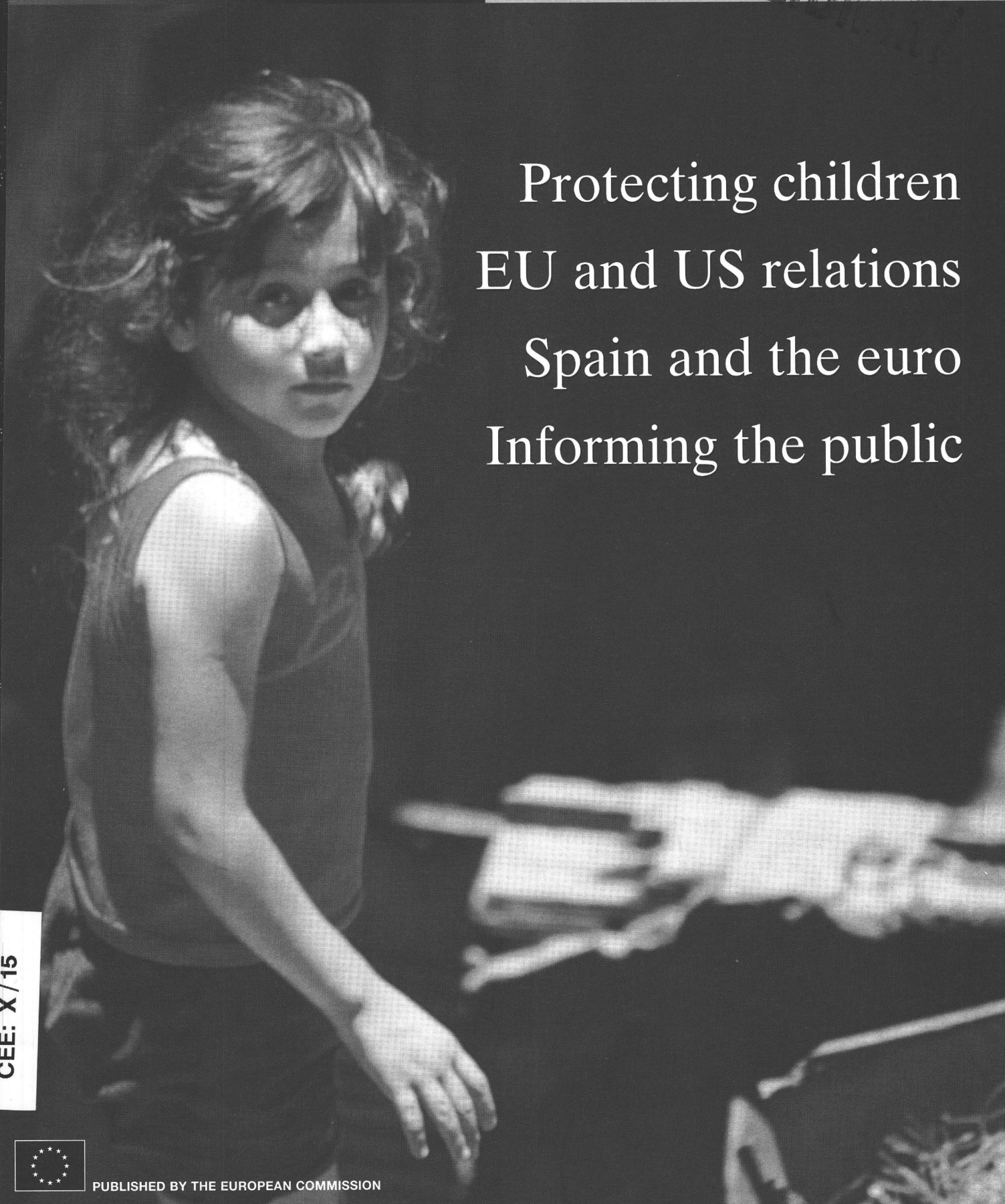


European Dialogue

THE MAGAZINE FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1998/6

LIBRARY



Protecting children
EU and US relations
Spain and the euro
Informing the public

CEE: X/15



PUBLISHED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Video-film highlighting 40 Years of the EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK

This short video tells in an informative and entertaining manner the story of 40 years activity of the European Investment Bank, the European Union's project financing arm.

The film is available in English, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese.

The video is generated to the general public, TV stations, Chambers of Commerce and Industry, EU-institutions and missions abroad, European organisations, professional associations, universities and schools will find it particularly helpful for "explaining the EIB" which holds the unique distinction of being both an institution of the European Union and a bank.

The film shows projects, capital markets and "the Bank at work", highlighting the contribution it is making to improve standards of living and quality of life in the Member States of the European Union as well as in other regions of the world.

In a history section sub-divided into four decades, well-known world events and personalities are presented side by side with EIB activity during the same period. Towards the end of the film, EIB-President Sir Brian Unwin explains the Bank's Amsterdam Special Action Programme - ASAP, the EIB's response to the Resolution on Growth and Employment of the Union's June 1997 Amsterdam Summit.



**For additional copies or other film material on the European Investment Bank,
please contact S. Decelle at**

**100, Bd. Konrad Adenauer, L-2950 Luxembourg,
Tel. +352 4379 3135, Fax +352 4379 3189, E-mail : S.DECELLE@eib.org**

Contents

■
PUBLISHER

European Commission
(Directorate-General for Information)

■
EDITORIAL BOARD

Jacques Vantomme, Chairman,
Louis Hersom and Colin Walker
(Directorate-General for Information),
Hans Jørn Hansen and Elizabeth Golberg
(Directorate-General for External Relations),
Joan Pearce (Directorate-General
for Economic and Financial Affairs),
Marc Jorna (Task Force
"Accession Negotiations")

■
EDITOR

Margie Lindsay
Tel : +44 (181) 546 9245
Fax : +44 (181) 287 1725
E-mail : MargieLindsay@compuserve.com

■
PRODUCTION

Cartermill International

■
**SUBSCRIPTION AND ADVERTISING
ENQUIRIES**

Cartermill International
26 Rue de la Loi (B1)
1040 Brussels / Belgium
Tel: +32 (2) 280 1737
Fax: +32 (2) 280 1912

© 1998 European Communities

■
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.

Letters to the Editor should be addressed to:

The Editor of *European Dialogue*
c/o Colin Walker
(Directorate-General for Information)
European Commission
200 rue de la Loi - 1049 Brussels / Belgium
Tel: +32 (2) 299 9022
Fax: +32 (2) 299 9288
E-mail : colin-norman.walker@dg10.cec.be

■
COVER PICTURE

Sue Cunningham/SCP

TYPESET / LAYOUT & DESIGN

TPP Brussels

PRINTED BY

Impresor

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



ENLARGEMENT 10

The first twinning operations began with the unification of Germany when western banks moved eastward to transfer knowledge and know-how. Now the EU is expanding the concept to aid the enlargement process.

EU IN THE WORLD 13

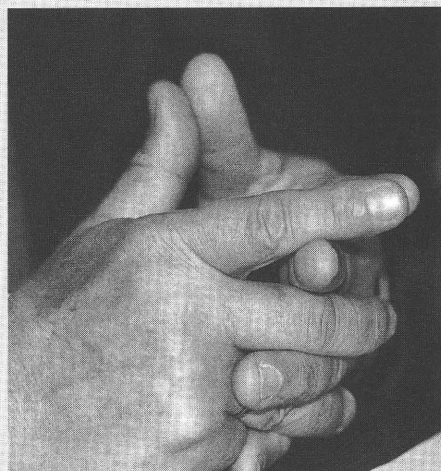
A special relationship exists between the EU and its largest trading partner, the US. The EU and US work together politically, culturally and commercially to their mutual benefit.

APPROXIMATION: CHEMICALS 16

EU legislation in the field of chemicals is complicated and technical in nature. It emanates from different directorates including health and safety, consumers, environment and industry.

2 EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN
Within the EU there is growing public support for measures to protect children and young persons. Recent cases of abuse have led to a public outcry and European Dialogue looks at what the Union is doing to safeguard young people.

8 ECONOMIC AND MONETARY UNION
Spain's financial community is gearing up for the introduction of the single currency. The business community's perception of EMU is that initially it will have little impact on day-to-day trade.



20 POLITICS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS

22 PUBLIC INFORMATION
What public information challenges face the EU and the applicant countries now engaged in the process of integration and accession? European Dialogue examines the issues and suggests some strategies.

27 STATISTICS : CHILDREN AT RISK
Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child has been far from easy to implement in central and eastern Europe. An assessment by an independent committee monitoring its implementation "indicate a number of concerns over problems that are clearly common to all, or virtually all, countries in the region".

CEE : X/15

Union struggles with child abuse issues

There is growing public support within the EU for collective measures to protect children and young persons. Recent cases of abuse have led to a new impetus in Union reactions and measures to combat violence and other abuses against children and young people.



One yardstick of a society's health and development is how it treats its children. The

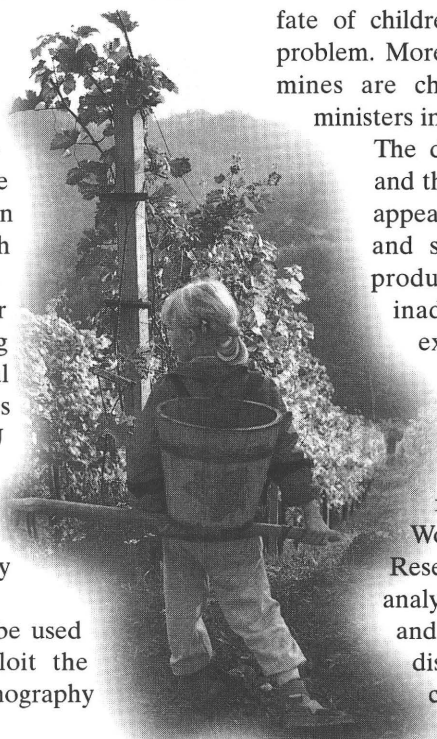
more developed tend to have in place legislation specifically designed to protect minors' rights and prevent them from being exploited.

The difficulty for legislators and child campaigners, however, is that just when they might have thought they had headed off one particular threat, another may appear on the horizon.

This is especially true in the modern world, where as the EU has found, it is no longer sufficient to stamp out nineteenth century Dickensian practices by legislating against the use of underage labour within its own frontiers. The same practices may well be widely prevalent elsewhere in the world. Not only is the protection of a child's rights a universal value, as opposed to a purely European one, but the use of cheap underage labour can give some exporting developing countries an unfair competitive advantage.

Governments are also faced with the increasingly worrying phenomenon of sex tourism as a combination of cheaper travel to exotic destinations and the difficulties of effective policing encourage many, often elderly, men from western Europe to indulge in practices which would be illegal in their home countries. Another phenomenon, particularly over the past decade has been the trafficking of women and young girls from central and eastern Europe to work as prostitutes in the EU. The fact that internal EU borders have largely disappeared makes it even harder for the authorities to try and trace such illegal immigrants once they have successfully entered the EU.

Even technological breakthroughs can be used by the unscrupulous to try and exploit the underaged as the presence of child pornography on the Internet so clearly demonstrates.



Sue Cunningham/SCP

The fact that the EU, particularly given its current concern with projecting a more friendly human face, must respond to these concerns has been explicitly recognised by the Austrian Foreign Minister, Wolfgang Schüssel. When his country took over the rotating EU presidency at the beginning of July, he specifically listed this as one of its priorities during its six-month turn at the EU helm.

"Among other things this means combating child abuse and preventing violence and addiction of youths and children. The Union should put more emphasis on these issues in international fora: for instance on the fight against child labour in the framework of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and on the further development of the UN convention on the rights of children. The fight against child pornography on the Internet has to be led more intensely on a global level. The fate of children in war is also a particularly pressing problem. More than 40 per cent of the victims of land mines are children," Mr Schüssel told EU foreign ministers in his opening presidential address.

The dangers which children face are universal and the threats are even more serious when they appear against a backdrop of profound economic and social upheaval. Child labour is both a product and producer of poverty and of inadequate employment policies. It is an example of social dumping at its worse, leading to international de-localisation of labour to where children are employed on the black market with little or no protection. It is also a violation of ILO rules and undermines the provisions of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Research* by the UN Children's Fund (Unicef), analyses the various risks ranging from poverty and environmental degradation to war and dislocation faced by the 10m children in central and eastern Europe. It noted that with few exceptions children in the region

had been more affected by the increase in poverty than other traditionally vulnerable groups, such as the elderly. "A number of countries show some evidence of growing child maltreatment, including the detrimental use of child labour. These phenomena may be associated with loosening social controls and day-to-day tensions related to making ends meet," the Unicef report concluded.

According to Unicef, child labour was reduced in the more developed countries by a combination of legislation, the introduction of compulsory education and the increase in family incomes and technological progress which made child labour less attractive to employers.

Many of these policies, such as education, child benefit allowances and health provisions, are national responsibilities. The EU also has a role to play in stamping out child labour. One of the first pan-EU measures it adopted was to prevent children being exploited at work.

The basic legislation protecting young people at work in the EU and which will need to be applied by the candidate countries was agreed in 1994 and came into effect in June 1996. As a general rule it stipulates that the minimum employment age should not be lower than the minimum school-leaving age "and, in any case, not lower than 15 years".

At the same time governments must ensure that young people are protected "against economic exploitation and against any work likely to harm their safety, health or physical, mental, moral or social development or to jeopardise their education".

Exceptions are, however, possible to the blanket rules. Governments may exempt from the legislation domestic servants employed in a private household and young people working in the family shop, hotel or business provided their tasks are not harmful or dangerous.

Similarly children with proper authorisation can be employed in cultural, artistic, sports or advertising activities. They are not prevented from doing morning newspaper or milk deliveries.

The legislation clearly sets a limit of two hours a day, or 12 hours a week, on the amount of work which a school pupil may do during term time and even in holidays stipulates that the daily working time should not be more than seven hours.

In a determined effort to prevent employers taking advantage of youngsters' innocence or lack of awareness of the risks involved, there is a blanket ban on work beyond a young person's physical or psychological capacity. They cannot be exposed to toxic agents, radiation, extreme cold or heat or harmful noise or vibration.

Although some of the conditions were contentious at the time they were negotiated, the legislation is now accepted throughout the Union and will only be re-examined in 2001 on the basis of reports from member states on their experience in implementing its provisions.

This basic legislation is backed up by a number of other measures which develop the programme the Commission

drew up two years ago in the fight against the exploitation of children. This action plan calls for specific national agendas by 2000 to reduce the number of children vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation, complete with data banks on vulnerable children and their exploiters.

This would be accompanied by a directory of national experts, specialised in the fight against trafficking and sexual exploitation, who are available to help police forces in other member states when necessary.

The dangers which children face are universal and the threats are even more serious when they appear against a backdrop of profound economic and social upheaval.

Child labour is both a product and producer of poverty and of inadequate employment policies. It is an example of social dumping at its worse, leading to international delocalisation of labour to where children are employed on the black market with little or no protection.

Another practical initiative is the STOP programme which focuses specifically on trafficking of human beings and acts as an incentive and exchange scheme for police departments, judges, public prosecutors and civil servants trying to stamp out the lucrative trade.

Gradually the EU is developing a wider range of actions which try to create a safe environment where children, particularly those in risk categories such as the homeless, displaced and stateless, will no longer be prey to exploitation. These cover training, certain health services, education programmes on sexual behaviour, different research projects, such as trying to stamp out bullying in schools and various monitoring networks.

The contribution which the EU can make in ensuring the world is a better place for children was spelt out recently by one of the EU's main advisory bodies, the Economic and Social Committee.

In a comprehensive report on the exploitation of children and sex tourism it noted: "The EU can lead efforts to help the UN and other international development bodies play an effective role in combating poverty and the most intolerable forms of child abuse and exploitation through a more effective use of their funds, through EU and international legal instruments for action and by clearly incorporating children's rights in EU external relations policies."



Sue Cunningham/SCP



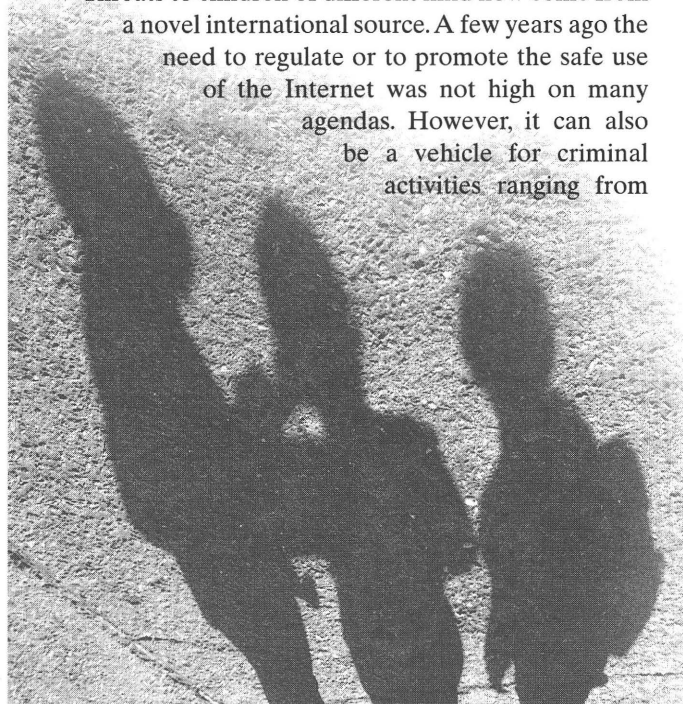
According to the ILO, there are around 400m child workers world-wide between the ages of 10 and 14. The numbers would be even higher if girls doing domestic work are included in the figure. It is estimated that 80m of these children work in dangerous and hazardous conditions, with a fifth of them involved in producing items such as clothing, sports goods and shoes which are destined for export.

According to Unicef, the percentage of children of primary school age not attending school and therefore a source of child labour ranges from 47 per cent of sub-Saharan Africa to 13 per cent in central and eastern Europe. It is estimated that in Europe alone at least 5m underaged children are currently working.

The Union uses the various agreements it has with its main trading partners, whether they be in South-East Asia, Latin America, Africa or the Caribbean, to stress the need to respect international human rights standards. In addition the Commission has proposed a new democracy consolidation programme which, among its many aims, allows it to support projects which protect and promote "the human rights of target groups, in particular children and women".

In general the EU prefers to use the carrot, rather than the stick, when trying to convince its commercial partners of the importance of treating children according to basic human values. It has offered the idea of special incentive schemes which reward governments with good labour standards. It recently proposed tariff cuts ranging from 10 to 30 per cent on imports from countries which could prove that they are implementing ILO rules.

Threats to children of different kind now come from a novel international source. A few years ago the need to regulate or to promote the safe use of the Internet was not high on many agendas. However, it can also be a vehicle for criminal activities ranging from



Sue Cunningham/SCP

instructions on bomb making to abusive forms of marketing, violence and pornography involving minors.

The Commission has tabled a twin-track approach to meeting the problem. One strand is encouraging EU governments to apply a series of guidelines, co-ordinating national strategies and adopting common codes of practice to protect minors and human dignity.

The second, presented at the end of last year, is a more specific action plan against harmful and illegal content and requires industry co-operation as well as a fully functioning system of self-regulation and effective law enforcement if it is to be successful.

The plan recommends that Ecu 30m over the next four years should be made available from the EU budget to encourage ways of cleaning up the Internet. Part of this money would be used to promote self-regulation and the creation of content-monitoring schemes, including a European network of hot lines.

These would be linked to a centre and allow users surfing the Internet to report any content, ranging from child pornography to racism or anti-Semitism, they believed to be illegal. The concept already exists in Austria, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and Britain.

Some of the funds are aimed at encouraging the industry to develop, demonstrate and apply effective filtering systems, while the remainder are intended to promote awareness among parents, teachers and children themselves so that they can take full advantage of parental control software and rating systems.

The various EU measures make for a full agenda and demonstrate how the welfare of children inside and outside the Union is fast moving up the EU's list of priorities. ■

Reports by Rory Watson, Brussels

* *Children at risk in central and eastern Europe: perils and promises, February 1997, Economies in Transition Studies Regional Monitoring Report Number 4, United Nations Children's Fund, International Child Development Centre, Piazza St. Annunziata 12, 50122 Florence, Italy (Tel: 39 (55) 234 5258; Fax: 39 (55) 244 817).*

More information on protecting children from:
Council of Europe, Sophie Piquet and Amanda Raif,
Directorate of Human Rights, Equality Section,
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex (Tel: 33 (3) 88 41 28 36;
Fax: 33 (3) 88 41 27 93)

Child sex tourism attacked by EU

Some travellers flying to traditional child sex tourist spots this summer were surprised to see their in-flight show contain a video highlighting the dangers of what has become a tasteless growth industry.

In a parallel initiative over 300,000 brochures produced by End Child Prostitution and Trafficking were distributed to French, Belgian, German and Dutch tourists this summer along with special luggage labels denouncing child sex tourism.

The messages were clear. European travellers were alerted to the devastating impact sexual exploitation can have on children and potential child abusers were warned of the economic, ethical and legal consequences of such behaviour.

The two ventures were funded by the EU and are part of its attempts to clamp down on child sexual tourism which has expanded in line with the increase in business travel and international tourism in the last half of the 1990s.

While experts treat with caution estimates of the scale of child prostitution, there is widespread agreement that each year throughout the world 1m children join the ranks of the victims of sex tourism and organised prostitution.

There is little doubt that the phenomenon which tends to see sex tourists from the economically developed countries of western Europe, North America, Australia and Asia flock to poorer regions is growing.

Initially concentrated in South-East Asia, child sex tourism has spread throughout Asia to the Caribbean, Africa and Latin America. Certain parts of central and eastern Europe now also attract sex tourists and export child prostitution to other countries.

To gauge the degree of public disquiet at the phenomenon, the European Commission carried out a survey throughout the EU earlier in 1998. The results indicated that 85 per cent of those interviewed were aware of the problem and that just over half (55 per cent) believed it was growing around the world.

While four EU citizens out of five identified the problem with Asia, over two thirds (68 per cent) also located it in central and eastern Europe.

The EU's Economic and Social Committee in a recent report noted: "Particular care must be taken in the context of the dialogue on EU enlargement to make it quite clear in every regard that respect for human rights and in particular the rights of the child and the harmonisation — as well as observance — of laws on child trafficking for purposes of sex tourism are matters of the utmost importance for the EU."

The Commission's strategy has essentially been threefold. Deterring and punishing child sex abusers

is one obvious approach. In addition, with the co-operation of the tourism industry and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in the area, it is trying to reduce demand by stemming the flow of sex tourists from EU countries.

This involves the information and awareness-raising campaigns against child sex tourism as typified by this summer's in-flight video and travel brochures initiatives. It relies on close co-operation with the tourist industry itself, whose reputable members are also keen to ensure certain standards are met.

The Group of National Travel Agents and Tour Operators' Associations in the EU has pledged never to promote tourist tours or programmes with paedophile purposes.

The third element of the EU's strategy is to tackle supply in sex tourism countries as well as demand. It is actively encouraging governments to implement the Convention on the Right of the Child and the action programme on the prevention of the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

In February 1997 the EU adopted a joint action to combat trafficking in human beings and sexual exploitation of children. Under this action member states are committed to take a number of measures to protect children and others against sexual exploitation. These include a review of relevant national laws, including classification as criminal offences of various types of behaviour in this area and provide for extra-territoriality. This makes it possible to prosecute member state nationals and habitual residents for sexual crimes against children committed in third countries.

Whatever the means the message is clear: the EU does not intend to stand on the sidelines and watch children suffer. ■



Sue Cunningham/SCP



Exploitation of children

Trafficking is a major issue

For tens of thousands of women in central and eastern Europe, the closer contacts their countries now enjoy with the EU have led to personal tragedy. They are the victims of traffickers who have smuggled them illegally into the EU to work against their will as prostitutes.

No accurate figures are available, but it is estimated that between 60-80 per cent of the women trafficked into Germany come from the candidate countries, Russia and the former Soviet republics.

Research by the International Organisation for Migration estimates that overall 500,000 women are brought illegally into the EU each year. What also emerges is that there is a growing trend for the trade to focus on young women, many under 18 years of age.

The EU has already begun to respond to the problem by supporting preventive measures both within and outside its borders. The main vehicle for internal action is its Daphne* programme designed to combat violence against women and children.

With the help of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) operating in this area, the initiative is helping to fund a wide range of local, national and EU-wide projects.

These include the creation of networks of experts dealing with missing children, a feasibility study on a register for tracking convicted child sex abusers and an audit on the provisions for child protection now operating throughout the Union.

Given the success of the pilot programme, the Commission has now come forward with a five-year action plan running to 2004 with a proposed budget of Ecu 25m.

"The EU has to a large extent been on the forefront of the actions against sexual exploitation of children," says Interior Affairs Commissioner Anita Gradin. She particularly points to the strengthened police co-operation, actions against sex tourism and the abuse of the Internet and the agreement among member states to make sexual exploitation of children a criminal offence.

"For the future we need to strengthen our co-operation further, in the judicial field and concerning missing children. The involvement of NGOs should be encouraged further. We must also make sure that the issue of child exploitation is high on the agenda for enlargement," Ms Gradin says.

Projects put forward by candidate countries would also be eligible for funding under the programme. The Union is already lending its weight to moves to eliminate trafficking in candidate countries. Under the EU's Phare programme the Union is supporting the La Strada organisation in Poland to draw the public's attention to the violation of human rights involved in the trafficking of women (ED 1998/2, page 7).

The move to step up efforts against the trafficking trade coincide with preparations for 1999 when special emphasis will be placed on the problems of violence against women. EU governments are being encouraged by the Commission to organise and fund information and awareness campaigns and to promote research and data collection shedding more light on the scale of the problem.

The EU's statistical office, Eurostat, will accompany these measures by collecting and analysing publicly available statistics on the sexual exploitation and abuse of children within the EU. ■



Sue Cunningham/SCP

* Daphne Programme: European Commission, Anthony Simpson, Brussels (Tel: 32 (2) 296 6933).

Fighting violence

Recently the Commission adopted a communication on measures relating to violence against children, young persons and women. The communication also sets up the Daphne programme. Daphne offers assistance to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) active in the fight against violence towards women, young persons and children.

"The NGOs play an essential role in the fight against violence. Often they have better ways of raising awareness among the public and reaching out to those at risk than public authorities. With the help of Daphne the expertise and experience of NGOs can be stimulated and shared with like-minded organisations in other member states and in the applicant countries," says Commissioner Anita Gradin.

The communication is a follow-up to the Commission's previous communication on trafficking in women and the Stockholm agenda for action against the sexual exploitation of children.

The Daphne programme builds on the Daphne initiative which since 1997 has supported non-governmental and voluntary organisations in the EU active in the fight against violence towards women and children.

Increased co-operation at EU level is also needed in the fight against child pornography and illegal and harmful material on the Internet.

Isolated national actions are insufficient to cope with these growing international problems.

The programme will set up and reinforce European networks and the implementation of pilot projects, the results of which can be disseminated and shared throughout the EU. Activities will focus on two principal areas: exchange of information and co-operation networks on an EU level and the raising of public awareness and exchange of best practices.

The Daphne programme will be open to the 10 applicant countries.

In the case of violence against children, the Commission wants Eurostat mandated to collect and analyse publicly available statistics on sexual exploitation and abuse of children in the member states in order to provide a basis for future understanding and action. It also supports the



POZOR

Sue Cunningham/SCP

involvement of Europol in the establishment, maintenance and standardisation of official registers of missing children within member states.

Increased co-operation at EU level is also needed in the fight against child pornography and illegal and harmful material on the Internet. Isolated national actions are insufficient to cope with these growing international problems.

The European Parliament has on several occasions underlined the need for action and has asked the Commission to draw up and implement co-ordinated action programmes to combat violence against women and children.

The Commission and the Council have taken actions in the fields of justice and home affairs, social policy, education, audio-visual services, the Internet, information policy, tourism and the EU's external relations.

The basis for the EU actions in the fight against sexual abuse and exploitation of children was set out in the Commission's aide-mémoire in September 1996. ■

Spain prepares for single currency

Spain's financial community is gearing up for the introduction of the single currency. While many smaller companies still have not started preparations, the business community's perception of EMU is that initially it will have little impact on day-to-day trade.

Spanish businesses are eagerly looking forward to joining the European single currency in January.

Big companies and the banks have been gearing up for more than a year. Although small- and medium-sized enterprises remain unprepared for full transition to the euro in 2002, Spaniards' renowned flare for last minute improvisation is expected to have them ready in time.

In a recent survey of Spanish business opinion by Price Waterhouse Coopers, nearly all entrepreneurs thought membership of the single currency would benefit the Spanish economy and to a lesser degree their own business. They are, however, in no rush to see it happen. Only 20 per cent of those surveyed — mainly the banks and insurance companies — said they would join EMU at the first opportunity.

"The final phase of economic preparation for the euro has already produced a dividend," says Emilio Ontiveros, director of the consulting company International Financial Analysts. "The conviction that Spain would join in the first round produced a spectacular fall in interest rates to 4.5 per cent from 8.5 per cent two years ago and a fall in the public debt from 9 per cent to 5 per cent. This would never have happened but for the discipline of preparing for the euro. It's a bonus in advance."

As a result he says Spanish companies and the financial sector are much healthier than a few years ago — a situation boosted by a favourable economic cycle and a degree of immunity from the Asian financial crisis. The stock market has reached record highs, encouraging an increase in Spanish investment abroad, which has more than doubled since 1995.

So successful has the export of Spanish capital become, that for the first time a new breed of Spanish mini-multinationals has emerged.

The euro will bring entrepreneurs a greater degree of certainty, Mr Ontiveros adds. "It gives a certificate of good conduct to the Spanish economy and frees us to concentrate on the main task of improving competitiveness. Now we must see if our entrepreneurial capacity is up to it."

Spanish companies expect to use the euro as a platform

of co-operation with other member states, and as a way of opening a market share in the dollar area. The new currency will carry greater international clout than the peseta in competing against the dollar.

This view is endorsed by Juan Iranzo, director of the liberal economic think-tank Economic Studies Institute. He reckons "preparing for the euro has given us a timetable, a deadline and a political argument. Being in the euro zone will make our economic policy stricter. There will be less inflation, a smaller budget deficit and a wider, more flexible market and greater stability."



Sue Cunningham/SCP

Spain's achievement is all the more remarkable, he says, because as a late and relatively undeveloped joiner of the EU in 1986 it started the race behind the front runners. "We always said we had to join, but we had to accelerate the taxi to catch the high-speed train," Mr Iranzo says. He warns of the inflationary dangers of companies rounding up to the nearest euro. Paying 0.18 euro for a newspaper or 0.07 for a yoghurt sounds a small amount, he says, and psychologically the temptation will be to round up prices. "But this could lead to a backlash among the public that could be very damaging to the credibility of the euro."

For Spain's banks, however, the advent of the euro is intensifying pressures that are making the sector a high-risk operation. Low interest rates which were a prerequisite in preparation for the euro have brutally squeezed margins, fuelling their fierce drive to diversify into new activities such as fund management or seeking new markets overseas, primarily in Latin America.

José Juan Ruiz, strategy director at Banco Santander, Spain's largest bank, says these pressures are not new. "All the main tendencies — globalisation, the technological revolution, the squeezing of margins, shifting of savings from short- to long-term deposits and the development of capital markets — precede the euro. The euro is facilitating or accelerating some processes already in train."

Being in the euro zone will make our economic policy stricter. There will be less inflation, a smaller budget deficit and a wider, more flexible market and greater stability.

One important likely change is the emergence of a savings pool.

"People are starting to think that the state won't pay their pensions, that social security won't cover their health care of education. The mechanism to mobilise these funds is not the banks, but the capital markets, and specialists will emerge to produce profitable financial products to attract these savings," says Mr Ruiz at Banco Santander.

An EU-sponsored awareness campaign, operated jointly with the government and the employers' organisation CEOE, is preparing Spaniards for the euro, which from January will co-exist with the peseta for three years. The campaign includes radio and television spots and euro-priced tickets in supermarkets.

José Maria Aguirre, vice chairman of CEOE and chairman of its economic and financial policy committee, is satisfied that preparations have sharpened up the economy. "The government policy of austerity in spending has created a sense of price stability that didn't exist before." Inflation, forecast at 2.1 per cent for 1998, is well within the Maastricht criteria and heading downwards.

The euro presents the Spanish economy with a "unique opportunity," says Mr Aguirre.



See Cunningham/SCP

Real estate, transport, tourism, telecommunications and services are most likely to benefit from the euro, Mr Aguirre believes, but says risk capital ventures offer the best prospect for creating jobs. Sectors likely to suffer include construction and public works whose subsidies will be cut when the candidate countries join the EU.

"Spain won't be able to get the same subsidies from the cohesion funds for public projects and construction companies will be affected. But new suppliers will enter the market." Gas, electric and other energy utilities face having their government guarantees and prices subjected to market forces. Joining the euro will intensify all these trends, he says.

Mr Aguirre predicts some teething problems during the co-existence between the peseta and the euro and anticipates initial chaos when Spanish equities start being quoted in both euros and pesetas. For the wider public "it'll be confusing for traders having to give change in euros to payments in pesetas. In some parts of the country a trader might not be sure if an Austrian euro is the real thing. It's not like the dollar which is the same everywhere." But he believes the problems will be overcome without great difficulty.

Mr Aguirre says, "In general no one yet believes the euro will impact upon their company. The big companies and the banks are ready, but the small ones are not and neither is the consumer." Mr Ontiveros agrees. "Consumers hardly know what the euro means yet. But there's time. It's a gradual process and anyway the impact on small companies and consumers will be limited."

Mr Ontiveros also believes Spain is more integrated into Europe, and so the economic cycle between the EU member states and Spain is more closely synchronised than between Britain and the EU. More than 70 per cent of Spanish international exchange is with the euro 11. "But we mustn't be triumphalist. Just because we've passed the exam it doesn't mean we're going to be a success. But we confounded the sceptics by making huge economic changes without worsening employment. I'm optimistic," concludes Mr Ontiveros. ■

Elizabeth Nash, Madrid

Twinning programme offers long-term helping hand

The first twinning operations began with the unification of Germany when western banks moved eastward to transfer knowledge and know-how. Now the EU is expanding the concept to aid the enlargement process.



Soon after the Berlin Wall was breached almost a decade ago, bankers, businessmen and government officials from what used to be West Germany began to move eastwards.

On secondment to their newly found compatriots in the former east Germany, their brief was to share their knowledge and know-how and help ease the transition of a centrally planned economy into West Germany's market model.

Now the same principles are being applied on a much wider scale by the EU as it assists applicant countries to put in place the bedrock of legislative, administrative and judicial structures which will enable them to handle the responsibilities of EU membership.

By the time they become members, each applicant must have on the statute books and be able to implement effectively around 100,000 pages of EU legislation. It is a daunting challenge. To help the candidates meet the challenge, the EU is making available Ecu 500m (one-third of the total allocation a year) to help these countries develop their human resources and management skills as they strengthen their administrative capacities in order to prepare and participate fully in the EU once they are members.

The key mechanism in this institution building exercise is twinning. The EU sees twinning as one of the main mechanisms through which the various institutions which are needed to underpin

civil society and make it work effectively are put in place and given the authority and confidence they require.

"Twinning projects need to be sufficiently long-term and are designed to harness the know-how present in existing member states' administrations. They must also guarantee results," explains Carolyn Leffler-Roth, who is handling the operation in the Commission.

Twinning is the mechanism designed to tackle the priorities identified in the accession partnerships and in the needs analysis carried out in the annual framework Phare programme.

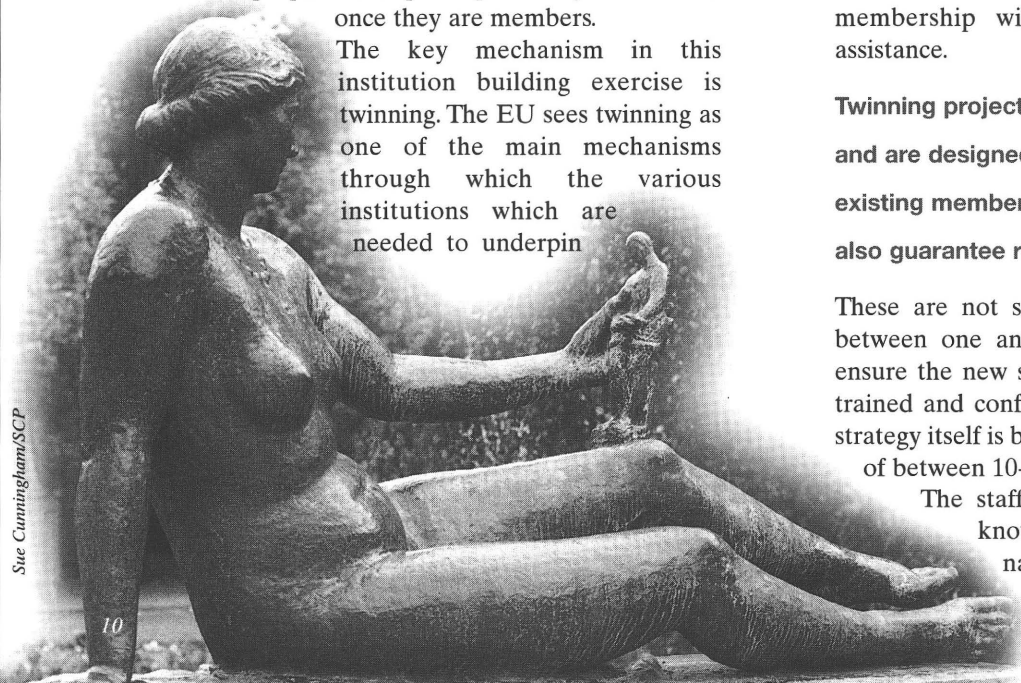
At the centre of this complex hub of partnerships' stands the Commission, acting as a sort of marriage broker, sifting through the different requests and offers and trying to ensure supply satisfies demand.

The exercise is not designed to provide assistance on general public administrative reform. It is targeted at specific areas and must yield guaranteed results. The aim is that when the particular programme is completed, the candidate country will be able to stand on its own two feet and run that particular area of responsibility of EU membership without needing any further outside assistance.

Twinning projects need to be sufficiently long-term and are designed to harness the know-how present in existing member states' administrations. They must also guarantee results.

These are not short-term schemes. Each will run for between one and three years — a sufficient time to ensure the new structures are well embedded and staff trained and confident — although the overall twinning strategy itself is being seen within a far longer time frame of between 10-15 years.

The staff who will help communicate western know-how and experience are coming from national civil services which themselves



Sue Cunningham/SCP



have the extensive experience of applying the many aspects of EU legislation.

In the absence of active civil servants with up-to-date experience in their particular field, the twinning projects can also use recently retired officials, members of professional bodies and other experts who may be brought into public service on temporary contracts provided they have proven practical experience in implementing EU legislation. This participation can either take the form of long-term seconded officials, a programme of ad hoc or repeated missions and other related contributions such as computer software or staff training.

An important aspect of this partnership is the prominent role which the 10 candidate countries are planning the current exercise. Earlier this year they each tabled a carefully selected number of areas where they sought practical assistance. That particular shopping list came up with just over 100 projects.

The vast majority were in four priority sectors: agriculture, environment, finance and justice and home affairs — also identified by the Commission in the all accession partnership. Some governments also raised the need for assistance in implementing EU standardisation norms.

Hungary, for example, sought a specific partner to help it develop veterinary and phytosanitary control systems and ensure consumer quality guarantees for its agricultural products.

Among Poland's requests were assistance in implementing EU environmental standards on drinking water, the waste sector and air pollution and financial rules on the liberalisation of capital markets and adoption of state aids legislation.

One of Latvia's specific priorities was the need to train border guards to carry out effective border supervision and control frontier crossings. The emphasis given to the need to strengthen the independence and functioning of the judiciary and the effectiveness of law enforcement in general was highlighted by two Czech projects.

In its campaign against serious organised crime, the Czech government is concentrating on specialised training and education for ministry staff and the police. It aims to achieve this by exchanging experience with existing EU member states by developing a comprehensive programme of human resources management for the country's police and by increasing communication between and within difference law enforcement agencies.

The programmes' objectives for the judiciary are even more ambitious. The government is seeking training to achieve a deep change in the thinking of judges and public prosecutors and to provide information on the concept and ethical principles of the judiciary in the EU.



Sue Cunningham/SCP

It is also looking to improve a judges' professional communication skills, to develop their ability to communicate with interest groups and to tutor them in psychological techniques which will help them carry out their judicial duties.

On the basis of its needs analysis which it circulated among the 15 EU member states, the Commission invited offers of assistance.

The response was surprisingly positive, given the tight time constraints under which the twinning mechanism was operating. Almost 400 replies were received of which just under 300 fitted the stated requirements.

Equally satisfying for the Commission organisers was the fact that the offers of assistance were well spread out between the candidate countries and targeted all but 10 of the original list of 100 requests.

In some cases as many as nine offers were made for the same project with especially strong interest shown by the public service in Germany and France. Drawing on the expertise of its delegations in the candidate countries and the line services, the Commission made an initial assessment of the offers from member states. This was followed by a series of meetings during the summer in which each candidate country was able to discuss the individual offers in each sector face to face with their potential counterparts from the EU.

The meetings were seen as an essential way for the technicians who would be involved in the projects to explore further what was being sought and what was on

offer and where there was competition between different offers, to enable the candidate country to select its preferred partner.

By the time they become members, each applicant must have on the statute books and be able to implement effectively around 100,000 pages of EU legislation. It is a daunting challenge.

In some cases the candidates chose more than one. Where no offer was considered suitable, the candidate country had to justify its decision to reject what was on the table and wait for applications under the second round of tenders which took place in late summer.

In order to ensure that each project can achieve its guaranteed results, the Commission has insisted that clearly identifiable and measurable intermediary benchmarks be established and met by the dates set — a novel methodological tool for some of those involved.

As an example it points out that where legislation is required, this should be passed by a certain date and further signposts should be laid down for establishing the necessary inspectorate, hiring and training of staff and for deciding when these will eventually be able to operate autonomously.

The technique is considered essential if a complex innovation such as value-added tax has to be introduced into a country. This requires not just approval of the necessary legislative, regulatory and fiscal texts, but the application of accountancy rules to business accounts and involving appropriate organisation of fiscal services and the public treasury, suitable computerisation of the administration with a new software, appropriate training of civil servants and general information to the public.

A further guarantee that the targeted results will be met is provided by the presence of two leaders for each project: one in the candidate country and one in the EU member state. They must be senior officials who have the authority necessary to get through to the highest decision-makers when required.

Another central features of the twinning mechanism is the presence of long-term seconded experts, known as pre-accession advisors. Their remit is to ensure the continuity and steady progression of the whole process and see that each component is implemented satisfactorily and on time. ■

Rory Watson, Brussels



Sue Cunningham/SCP

EU-US relations enter new phase

A special relationship exists between the EU and its largest trading partner, the US, which transcends purely commercial areas. The EU and US work together politically, culturally and commercially to their mutual benefit.

Both politically and commercially the EU's main partner is undoubtedly the US.

This is not to downplay the range of relationships which the EU has forged and continues to strengthen with other nations around the world, but merely acknowledges the depth and breadth of its trans-Atlantic contacts.

That relationship moved onto a new plane earlier this year as EU and US leaders agreed a programme in London which will take the partnership into the next century. Building on the new trans-Atlantic agenda, which was signed in Madrid in 1995, the two parties agreed to establish a new trans-Atlantic economic partnership.

British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, while holding the rotating EU presidency in the first half of 1998, commented at the end of the May summit: "We have today launched a major new trans-Atlantic trade initiative, the trans-Atlantic economic partnership, which will further add momentum to the process of developing what is already the most important bilateral trade relationship in the world. We have also agreed to work ever more closely together to promote multilateral trade liberalisation. Finally, we have welcomed the substantial report presented to us by our senior officials on the progress achieved since our last summit towards further implementation of the 1995 new trans-Atlantic trade agreement."

On the US side President Bill Clinton commented on the US-EU relationship: "America welcomes a strong partnership with a strong and united Europe. I am very pleased that we have agreed to new steps to strengthen that economic partnership. We will work to dismantle trade barriers, both bilateral and multilateral, in areas such as manufacturing, services and agriculture, while maintaining the highest standards of labour and environment."

Over the years the prosperity and well being of populations on both sides of the Atlantic have become more closely intertwined. Two-way trade was worth \$266bn in 1996. Each accounts approximately for half of the other's foreign direct investment abroad and over 6m jobs are dependent on these investments.



Under the trans-Atlantic agenda agreements were reached on mutual recognition of testing and conformity assessment, customs co-operation and equivalency in veterinary standards — all practical measures to cut red tape and speed up commercial exchanges.

Building on these achievements, the EU and US have spent the summer working on an action plan setting out areas of possible bilateral and multilateral co-operation to encourage trade and investment.

Multilateral efforts are inevitably largely centred on the Geneva-based World Trade Organisation (WTO). These include the liberalisation of services, continued reform of the Union's agricultural policy, further reduction of industrial tariffs, better protection for intellectual property rights and development of a comprehensive work programme for handling the trade-related aspects of electronic commerce.

Within the International Labour Organisation, both sides are committed to ensuring that widely recognised core labour standards are respected, while rejecting any suggestion that this commitment may be used by industrialised countries as a form of protectionism against competitors from the developing world.

On the bilateral front the EU and US, much in line with the ambitious new trans-Atlantic marketplace scheme which Trade Commissioner Sir Leon Brittan had floated



Stue Cunningham/SCP



earlier in the year, will continue to reduce and eliminate barriers to trade and investment between the two sides. In the May summit communiqué the two sides stated: "Such efforts will expand trans-Atlantic commerce and reduce friction, benefiting both our peoples. Our partnership will not create new barriers to third countries."

Whenever trouble spots flare up, whether it be Kosovo or Iraq, the EU and US co-operate closely in trying to douse the flames.

The list set out specific areas — reducing technical barriers to trade, improving market opening opportunities for companies of all sizes, strengthening regulatory co-operation on agricultural and human health matters, increasing access to public procurement markets and encouraging dialogue between scientists, regulatory bodies and standards institutes on both sides of the Atlantic.

Both the EU and the US have a fundamental interest in a widely respected system of international trade rules and have often led the way in encouraging multilateral efforts to open up markets. They also insist that the latest trans-Atlantic economic partnership, far from being of sole benefit to its two members, is not an exclusive club.

On the contrary it is intended to help set the agenda for a more open and accessible world trading system. As was demonstrated during the long-running negotiations which established the WTO, when the EU and US see eye-to-eye on something it becomes easier to secure an agreement which can command the support of well over 100 countries.

One of the mechanisms which has helped to focus on co-operation has been the trans-Atlantic business dialogue, bringing together the EU and US business communities. Launched by the Commission and US administration, the dialogue plays a practical role in identifying and helping to remove remaining barriers to trans-Atlantic trade and investment.

Launched at the end of 1995, the dialogue brought together chief executive officers from over 100 US and EU companies, all committed to removing costly inefficiencies caused by excessive regulation, duplication and differences in European and US regulatory systems and procedures.

The dialogue provides a framework in which senior executives can work closely with the highest levels of government from the US and EU and draw on the resources of existing companies and organisations.

The group, which holds its annual conference in Charlotte, North Carolina this month, operates through 30 working groups, some of which cover specific sectors such as cars, while others are more issue-oriented and focus on electronic commerce and intellectual property. Less developed, but increasing in importance, are similar contacts between consumer and trade union representatives across the Atlantic. More recently non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are being encouraged to make their contribution to the growing debate on the relationship between consumer protection, scientific and environmental issues and international trade.

It would be wrong, however, to perceive trans-Atlantic relations purely in commercial terms, no matter how important these are. Political contacts and co-operation are also highly developed and this year's EU-US summits are designed to give these even more political momentum as relationships mature in the post cold war period.

Whenever trouble spots flare up, whether it be Kosovo or Iraq, the EU and US co-operate closely in trying to douse the flames. On longer term issues such as encouraging economic and political reform in the former Soviet Union or in the search for peace in the Middle East, the trans-Atlantic partners increasingly strive to come up with a shared agenda and have made this a priority in the months ahead.



Although they may not always agree on whether a carrot or a stick is more appropriate in dealings with a country like Iran, they are both committed to working together to fight terrorism and oppose any form of nuclear proliferation.

That co-operation is now extending to law enforcement as they join forces to tackle crimes which straddle national frontiers. They are working together to stop trafficking in women from Poland and Ukraine, in tackling corruption and money laundering, in clamping down on the drugs trade and in combating the growing phenomenon of stolen cars.

Despite this extensive co-operation, much of it behind the scenes, the EU-US relationship, like any partnership, can at times appear stormy.

The influential trans-Atlantic policy network, an organisation of political and business leaders from both sides of the Atlantic, would like to go further. It believes the two partners must link together their political, economic and security interests against a background of uncertainty in the Nato alliance and the growing interplay of their global interests.

It is advocating the launch of negotiations on trans-Atlantic political and economic treaty capable of dealing effectively with any substantive issue which arises in the partnership.

Despite this extensive co-operation, much of it behind the scenes, the EU-US relationship, like any partnership, can at times appear stormy.

Invariably what is at stake is a sensitive commercial issue, whether it be export subsidies, hormone-treated beef, bananas or genetically modified organisms.

A lot of heat can be generated by these trade wars as commercial, ethical and other interests cross swords. Even during such moments of tension, co-operation in other areas continues unaffected and any disputes are sent to the World Trade Organisation for adjudication without either side resorting to unilateral action.

In addition one of the major causes of friction between the EU and US was largely defused at the May summit meeting. For months the EU had rejected the US stance that companies in Europe or elsewhere doing business with Cuba, Iran and Libya should be sanctioned. Not only did the EU firmly believe the US policy was illegal, it also considered it counter-productive. In May an arrangement was worked out which effectively allowed EU companies to conduct commercial activities with the three countries without the threat of US penalties hanging over their heads.

In parallel with the closer contacts between business and

government leaders on both sides, there is growing pressure for more central involvement in this process by the European Parliament and the US Congress.

This emerged strongly during the June meeting in Texas between representatives of the two institutions when both pledged "to limit the growth of an emerging democratic deficit in EU-US relations".

They specifically requested the US President and the EU presidency to associate members of the European Parliament and Congress with all future EU-US summit meetings. This, they suggested, could be achieved by involving them in preparations for the summits to ensure that issues of direct concern to legislators are not left off the agenda and by allowing them to attend some sessions as observers.

In addition the two delegations agreed to consider how to transform their existing inter-parliamentary exchanges into a de facto trans-Atlantic assembly which would help clarify and resolve substantive issues of common interest to the two legislatures. ■

Rory Watson, Brussels



Sue Cunningham/SCP

Industry helps with adopting of complex community law

EU legislation in the chemicals sector is complex and technical. In order to help all 10 candidate countries come to grips with these laws, Cefic and EU chemical companies have begun a twinning programme dealing with the legislative issues.

EU legislation in the field of chemicals is complicated and technical in nature. It emanates from

different directorates including health and safety, consumers, environment and industry. Those falling under the management of directorate-general III (DGIII, industry) include limitations; classification, packaging and labelling; detergents; fertilisers; drug precursors; explosives for civil uses and good laboratory practice.

As compliance with the chemicals *acquis* is mainly a matter for companies, with national governments monitoring and enforcing the law, it is important that all sides in the process understand the law and its implications.

Aside from chemicals, DGIII is also responsible for certain EU measures relating to motor vehicles, foodstuffs, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, legal metrology and pre-packaging, electrical risk and electrical equipment, consumers, other product groups, horizontal and procedural measures for industry and industrial policy in general.

Recognising the specific problems inherent in adopting the chemicals *acquis*, DGIA and DGIII together with the European Chemical Industry Council, Cefic, put together a programme designed to facilitate the adoption of the *acquis* while at the same time putting into place the needed contacts and networks between individual candidate country governments and their chemicals industry representatives as well as the links necessary between the candidates and Brussels in this area.

Cefic began its association with the candidate countries in 1992. So far the chemical industry federations of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia have become members of the Brussels-based association. "The project we developed with DGIII, DGIA and the candidate countries covered three main areas. First was twinning of the industrial groups in the 10 candidates. By twinning I mean the aim here was to develop the capacity in the local chemical associations

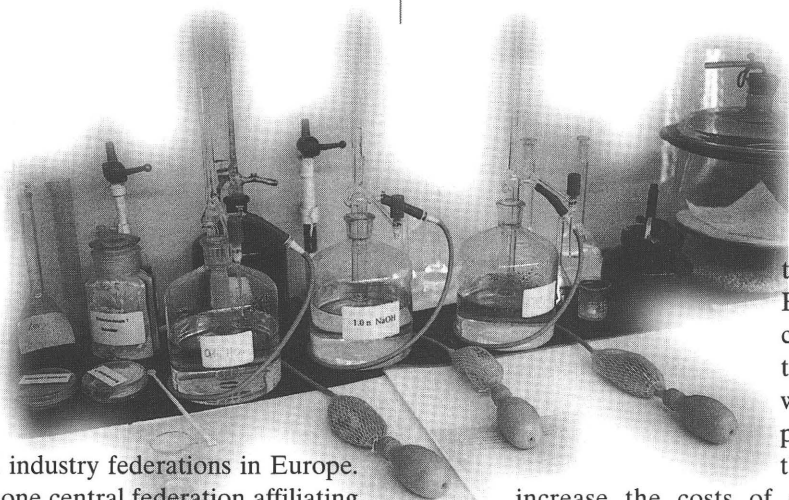


and companies which are members of these federations to deal with the EU legislation and legal compliance issues. Second we developed a relationship between the associations and the government relating to new legislation which was being adopted through the approximation process. Third, we identified the problems and contributed to the process through expert advice and legal proposals," explains Frantisek Doktor, manager of central European and regulatory affairs at Cefic*.

Cefic carried out a joint project with the Commission, financed by the EU Phare programme, covering the most important issues relating to single market legislation on chemical products. This included key rules on classification, packaging and labelling of dangerous chemical substances and preparations, notification and risk assessment of new chemical substances, risk assessment of existing substances and restrictions on marketing and use of certain dangerous chemical substances and preparations.

"We found the project very useful," says Maria Marini from the legal department of DGIII. "Cefic through the project has created a network in the candidate countries by appointing in each country a focal point responsible for chemicals legislation. They chose competent people in the private sector and administration to represent the industrial point of view. They brought people together, organising seminars explaining what we do. Now we are able to locate those who know something about the legislation. The national administrations needed constructive input from industry. The situation is of course different in each candidate country, but there are cases of similar problems and co-ordination efforts to transpose and implement correctly the legislation. One of the most useful outcomes of this project was the creation of a network which continues, even if the project ends. There is now a network of contacts which the administration and we can use," she explains.

The basis of this network was a national co-ordinator for each candidate country. This person was in day-to-day



Sue Cunningham/SCP

contact with the national authorities and local chemical companies and responded to the ongoing legislative process. The basis of the network was the structure of chemical industry federations in Europe. In every country there is one central federation affiliating chemical companies representing the vast majority of total chemical output.

Another key aim of building this network was to train experts on legislative issues for these federations and to have the national co-ordinators as insiders, rather than consultants working independently of the federation.

Eight Cefic and EU chemical company experts were added to the team. These experts started twinning with their partners in the candidate countries dealing with the legislative issues. This formed a core team of 18 industry experts from 15 countries including both EU member states and candidate countries. Each member of the team established a network of contacts with the relevant authorities and chemical companies at European and national level to communicate and discuss the findings, conclusions and recommendations.

"We would like to continue the project," says Ms Marini. "We've now got a very comprehensive analysis from the local industry helped by Cefic representatives. We were impressed by the quality of the output. The issues were clear and these people understood EU legislation, were able to analyse our legislation, see what was not coherent in their national law and able to propose how to solve problems. This is very complicated legislation and in less than one year these people have given results. Each country report, apart from the general analysis of where each country is in the approximation process, competently analysed existing and EU legislation. We used and continue to use these reports as a framework for the screening exercise."

According to the Cefic report on the project, the main reason for the adoption of the *acquis* and approximation of national legislation is to "establish the conditions for the enlargement of the single market and is supposed to lead to the adoption of the EU chemical control system in full, including utilisation of the work already done by the EU. The outcome of this process, however, leads to the institution of only some parts of the EU system. The remainder shows differences, often resulting from the inaccurate transposition of relevant EU directives or from the misunderstanding of directives, or from a tendency to merge old existing legislation with new legislation."

The outcome of the approximation process is not transposition legislation but legislation parallel to EU laws. In some cases the approximation process was actually drawing new regulatory borders, imposing a variety of non-

tariff barriers to trade. Besides the negative consequences on chemical trade and the resultant worsening of the economic performance of companies, this will substantially

increase the costs of chemical control in the associated countries and the relevant authorities will face different technical and legal problems in the implementation and enforcement of the new legislation, says the Cefic report. This means the chemical industry in the candidate countries will have to adapt first to interim legislation and then to harmonise legislation after the country becomes an EU member. This puts a great financial burden on industry and is unnecessary in the approximation process.

The candidate countries need to develop new legislation fully harmonised with the EU system from the beginning to avoid negative consequences and the duplication of adaptation procedures for chemical companies. The aim of the approximation process is to create a wider European economic and regulatory area in the chemicals industry.

To make the point, Cefic found that routine compliance costs were estimated to be on average 1-3.5 per cent of the total turnover of the companies, depending on specific circumstances. The adaptation requires a substantial initial financial outlay. The ability of companies to adapt to the new requirements will depend on whether the new regulations establish a fully harmonised system, avoiding incompatibilities, over regulation and elements of the old system as well as how the new system will be linked with the European system. Another question is whether the mutual acceptance of new chemical substance notifications and testing data is established. The critical point will be whether the companies have to adapt twice or only once to EU law and whether the adaptation is split over a realistic time scale. The concern of the industry is not mainly focused on the EU requirements but on the real eventual outcome of the approximation process.

In chemicals this is important as the approximation process helps integrate the candidate countries into the EU's single market. As compliance with the chemicals *acquis* is mainly a matter for companies, with national governments monitoring and enforcing the law, it is important that all sides in the process understand the law and its implications.

"We'd suggest that this project be used as a model in other areas. We've tried to convince both DGIII and DGIA to continue this project, but in a new phase. We would like if possible to extend this project to cover other areas which are covered by the chemicals *acquis*, such as detergents and fertilisers," says Ms Marini. She points out that many of the candidate countries still lack a stable organisation



within in the administration to enforcement and implement legislation. "We've tried to impress the authorities that at least from their point of view, they sometimes lose sight of the principle of the legislation — the producing companies carry out the risk assessment, labelling and other requirements; the government is there to ensure implementation, to monitor and to enforce the laws," she explains. "I would say the authorities in these countries have an open mind and understand what is needed, but it takes time to assimilate. This is after all a system which is completely the opposite of the one which was imposed for over 40 years." ■

* *European Chemical Industry Council (Cefic), Frantisek Doktor, manager, central European and regulatory affairs, Avenue E. Van Nieuwenhuysse 4, Bte 1, B-1160 Brussels (Tel: 32 (2) 676 7209; Fax: 32 (2) 676 7388; E-mail: fdo@cefic.be).*

More information on the chemicals acquis is available from Marianne Van Steen (Tel: 32 (2) 299 3931; Fax: 32 (2) 296 0851); copies of the acquis are available from Ms McCumiskey (Tel: 32 (2) 296 0730; Fax: 32 (2) 296 0851).

Approximation: chemicals

Controlling chemical risks concern of DGXI

Aside from DGIII (industry), other directorates have a role to play in regulating chemicals. These include health and safety, the single market and environment. Of these three, DGXI (environment) plays a major role and legislation falling under its jurisdiction surpasses that of even DGIII.

Measures emanating from the environment directorate control the marketing and use of dangerous chemicals and the classification, packaging and labelling of dangerous substances and preparations. There are requirements which attempt to limit major accident hazards and control the export and import of certain products, such as fertilisers and sewage sludge.

Environment's role in chemicals legislation really began as a result of an accident in 1976 in Seveso in northern Italy which contaminated a large area with a highly toxic dioxin. As a result of this accident and increasing public concern about the use of chemical products within the EU, more stringent measures have been taken by the Commission to reduce the risks arising from the manufacture and disposal of chemical substances.

Directives are aimed at regulating such things as the classification, packaging and labelling of dangerous substances as well as the composition of detergents.

Since 1981 there has been a European inventory of existing chemical substances which lists all chemical products on the market, enabling them to be subject to a general procedure for notification, evaluation and control. A directive adopted in June 1982 makes sure manufacturers in all member states inform the authorities about substances, plants and the possible location of accidents.

Chemical legislation is one of the oldest in the EU. In 1967 the EU adopted directive 67/548/EEC on the classification, packaging and labelling of dangerous substances. This was the first of a number of directives to protect human health and the environment from chemicals.

Over the years the EU has established and developed a comprehensive system of laws and programmes to make sure chemical products are manufactured, used and disposed of in safety and without harming the environment.

These countries need to make the right choice because chemicals affect not just environment but other areas. They need to make the choice in light of the existing chemical industry in their own country. It is different in each country and depends on what they have had in the past and what they expect to have in the future.

In the early years the chemicals control legislation was laying down a legal foundation of basic standards, many of which are still relevant. With the advent of the fifth environmental action programme, the EU's legislation in this area took a new direction. It is now based on a partnership between regulators, industry and the general public. The key legislation which makes up the EU's chemicals control system covers:

- new chemicals coming onto the market
- existing chemicals (some of which are dangerous)
- standards and voluntary programmes which foster good environmental management and environmentally friendlier products.

The chemicals control legislation takes a preventive approach. Industry is asked to identify, assess and inform governments and the public of potential risks and safety measures. Later legislation is developed based on this information.

Commercial confidentiality is protected by the chemicals notification procedure. However, any data relating to health and environmental protection and the chemical

make-up of any dangerous substance has to be made public.

This is guaranteed through directive 90/313/EEC on the freedom of access to information about the environment. This directive gives the public greater access to information held by public authorities and requires all member states to disseminate regularly basic information about the state of the environment.

A recommendation (92/214/EEC) defines the information on a chemical's identity which must be given to member states by anyone who has notified a dangerous preparation under directive 88/379/EEC.

It also provides a guide for setting up alternative designations through the use of generic names.

In 1979 the EU adopted what is known as the sixth amendment (to the directive 67/548/EEC). This sets up a system for testing and notifying the new chemicals coming onto the market.

A seventh amendment was made in 1992 through directive 92/32/EEC which mainly looked at ways to assess potential risks of notified chemicals.

Pre-market notification gives new commercial chemicals a "doorway" through which they can be sold within the EU. Anyone manufacturing chemicals outside the EU can use someone inside the EU as their sole representative for the purpose of notification.

The Commission and member states have wide powers to monitor the quantities and uses of chemicals and preparations in the EU and to identify and control potential problems. Industry must provide information about uses and potential exposure. Member states are able to demand further tests and information from manufacturers.

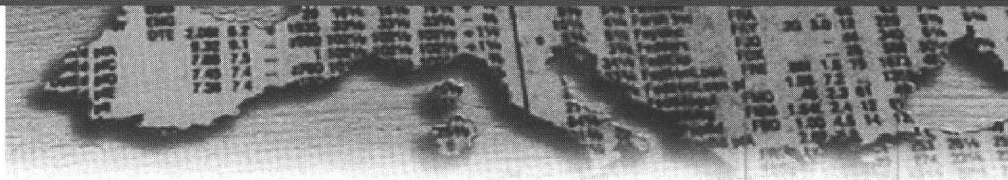
While Guy Corcelle, head of DGXI's chemicals unit, sees chemicals legislation as of fundamental importance within the EU's environmental framework, he believes the main challenge facing the candidate countries in this area is capacity building. "This is a very complex issue — technically and strategically. These countries will need institutions, quality people and good organisation in order to take on the EU *acquis* in this area," he says.

Mr Corcelle remains convinced that the key to successful implementation and enforcement of the EU's chemicals rules and regulations is setting up a workable system. "The problem is not that there will be more legislation. We have completed our task and legislation covers the selling, export, import and other areas of chemicals manufacturing. We need to restructure our existing legislation. It needs to be simplified and made more effective. In short, the focus will be on the product itself: the processes, production approaches — including recycling and final waste," says Mr Corcelle. ■



Sue Cunningham/SCP

in brief



Transport costs

The Commission has estimated that the cost of developing a transport network in central and eastern Europe will be almost \$100bn by 2015. The region needs to find most of the financing itself. Transport Commissioner Neil Kinnock says senior officials from the candidate countries (including Cyprus) and the current EU members have endorsed an integrated outline transport network for an enlarged EU. The plan focuses on upgrading and modernising existing infrastructure in the candidate countries. The network would link 18,000 km of roads,

20,000 km of rail, 38 airports, 13 seaports and 49 river ports. It would include 10 pan-European transport corridors, such as road and rail routes between Berlin and Moscow and between Helsinki and Warsaw. Most of these routes were identified in 1994. The Commission hopes the transport links will help integrate the prospective members into the EU. For most of the candidates, the cost is not expected to exceed 1.5 per cent of forecast GDP up to 2015. This compares with levels inside the EU for total infrastructure investment of up to 2 per cent of GDP. "The applicant countries will have to shoulder the major share of the cost of developing the network," says

Mr Kinnock. Financing could either come from public sources, borrowing from institutions like the European Investment Bank or from private investments. The EU will also intensify its financial support for the projects. The Commission is proposing Ecu 500m a year starting in 2000 to support infrastructure investments. "At accession the new member states then become entitled to make claims on the regional and structural funds," says Mr Kinnock.

Taiex gives prizes

Bridget Czarnota, head of the Technical Assistance Information Exchange Office

(Taiex), found a novel way of using free air miles gained over the past year. Taiex sponsored the 1998 Young Europeans Award Competition*. Essays on the topic, what will future membership of my country in the EU mean to me, were received from university students and young professionals. As part of their prize, the five winners from each of the 10 candidate countries took part in a study trip to the EU's headquarters in Brussels in September. The winning essays pointed out the challenges facing the candidate countries in their bid to join the EU. "The way to Europe is through reforms. We will have to make some unpopular decisions," says Lithuanian winner Audrone Rimkutė. "The EU is not a situation, but a process... we have to find our place in this process," concludes the Bulgarian winner Albena Draganova. Other winning essays pointed out the fact that not only were their countries joining, but individuals also needed to understand the process of European integration and make their own decisions about it and how it would affect them.

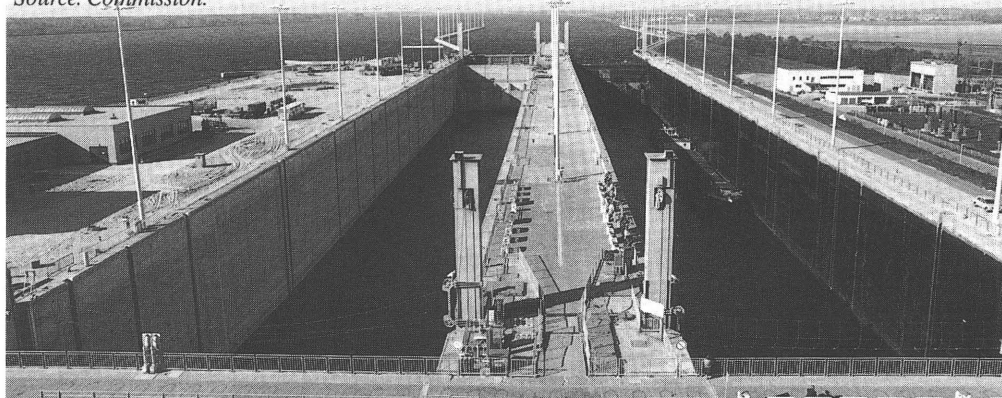
"EU membership will bring along more working opportunities... The EU will give our children opportunities to study in the EU," says Slovak winner Irena Hergottová.

* Full texts of all 50 winning essays are available on the Taiex web site: <http://www.cadmos.carlbro.be>.

Estimated costs of the transport infrastructure network (Tina) in million Ecu

	Road	Rail	Inland waterway	River ports	Sea ports	Airports	Terminals	Total
Bulgaria	2571.5	4077.7	0.0	39.6	181.6	369.4	73.5	7313.3
Czech Republic	4294.9	3770.3	713.5	0.0	0.0	231.0	0.0	9009.7
Estonia	215.6	247.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	22.9	0.0	486.0
Hungary	3617.0	991.7	0.0	180.0	0.0	271.2	150.0	5209.9
Latvia	205.6	924.0	0.0	0.0	550.0	65.0	0.0	1744.6
Lithuania	607.0	992.6	0.0	0.0	588.0	140.9	0.0	2328.5
Poland	15389.0	14577.1	412.0	0.0	610.0	3081.5	16.0	34085.6
Romania	11573.0	4291.4	183.0	574.9	0.0	79.0	0.0	16701.3
Slovakia	4719.3	1901.3	0.0	540.3	0.0	22.8	0.0	7183.7
Slovenia	2583.0	843.6	0.0	0.0	60.0	127.3	0.0	3613.9
Total all 10	45775.9	32617.2	1308.5	1334.8	1989.6	4411.0	239.5	87676.5

Source: Commission.



Sue Cunningham/SCP

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

Slovenia's Tomaž Petrovič has been named as the "international arbitrator" on the committee that supervises radio and television of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Slovenia's Prime Minister, Janez Drnovšek, on an official visit to Sofia, said Bulgaria could become "Slovenia's bridge" to other countries and regions. The two countries signed four accords, including a memorandum on mutual protection of investments and an agreement on transport links between the two countries.

The prime ministers of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have signed an agreement standardising customs procedures. The three agreed to draw up a treaty in 1999 on the free movement of labour. The three also signed an accord pledging that each country will recognise the others' secondary and vocational school certificates.

Günter Burghardt, director-general of DGIA, says he is worried by the slow pace of economic reforms in Romania. Romania, he says, has the worst economic performance of any EU applicant over the past year and reforms have been stalled by political

infighting, corruption and too much bureaucracy.

The Slovak Foreign Ministry says the ignorance of the international media and western "double standards" are the reasons why the country has been kept out of EU and Nato accession talks. Slovakia, says the ministry, has been "undervalued" and "systematically hurt" by ignorant foreign media reports. Both the EU and Nato have named Bratislava's poor democratic record as the main reason for not inviting the country to expansion talks.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán says EU internal reforms are not expected to hinder EU enlargement. In talks with French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, Mr Orbán said Hungary will "not offer areas and industries for colonisation but will present economic opportunities" for EU countries. Trade between France and Hungary rose around 23 per cent in 1997 compared with 1996.

The Bulgarian government has approved a joint programme with the EU and the UN that will step up the fight against drug trafficking in south-eastern Europe. Romania and the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia

are also participating in the two-year, \$7.5m (Ecu 7m) project, which will upgrade border checkpoints and custom offices as well as establish and train inspection teams.

External Affairs Commissioner Hans van den Broek says Lithuania is making good economic progress but must remain "somewhat patient" about joining the EU. He praised Lithuania for speeding up privatisation and for economic growth estimated to top 5 per cent this year. He added that Lithuania still needs to make progress "in the modernisation of enterprises and in achieving a clear, transparent, and predictable economic environment".

Bulgaria is to join the Central European Free Trade Agreement (Cefta) on January 1 1999. The trade group includes the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Cefta plans to phase out tariffs between member states by 2002 and is seen as a stepping stone to EU membership.

The Council has approved additional protocols to the free trade agreements and Europe agreements with Lithuania and Latvia. These accords, provisionally in force

since January 1998, extend and modify certain provisions of the agreements on trade in textile products.

The new Czech government is considering banning skinheads and will take a much tougher line against them than did the previous government. The skinhead movement, although not officially registered, is "organised" and has published magazines which the government alleges is spreading national and racial intolerance.

The Bulgarian parliament has added a provision to the new media law allowing for broadcasts in foreign languages aired for "Bulgarian citizens whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian". The main purpose of the provision is to allow broadcasts in Turkish in regions populated by ethnic Turks.

The Polish government has approved a plan to reform the country's judicial system in order to bring it closer to EU standards. "The reform will speed up proceedings in courts cases," Justice Minister Hanna Suchocka says. The reform will create 400 local courts to deal with minor offences, giving judges more time to tackle major cases.

Communication important lubricant in enlargement process

What public information challenges face the EU and the applicant countries now engaged in the process of integration and accession?

"Communication is either the single most important element or, as it is now, a stumbling block, to enlargement," comments one senior Commission official. This comment could equally have been directed at the wider role of public information and communications in general.

Governments and other administrative bodies are dependent on effective communications. Their ability to create and maintain dialogue with their constituencies — to communicate information to them and then listen, understand and react to their responses — is often the difference between political success and failure.

This imposes an important obligation on both the EU and the applicant countries preparing for the mirror-image processes of enlargement and integration/accession. The challenge, as one member state official put it, is that "accession requires a collective effort of will, by people as a whole and cannot be delegated to their political leaders". From the EU perspective many at the heart of the process believe successful enlargement can only come through informed debate in the widest possible EU circles, in open forum, and not behind the closed doors of meeting rooms. The provision of effective public information and communications is a necessary practical function for democratic governments. Openness is also seen as a statutory obligation on public administration

at every level in democratic societies.

In the candidates' drive towards full democratisation, providing effective public information is another important goal.

These factors were foreseen in the conclusions of the 1994 European Council in Essen. It noted that to prepare the associated countries for accession so that they could "assume their responsibilities as future member states" there was "a need among EU member states and the associated countries to have better understanding of



each others' societies. Therefore, expansion and deepening of information efforts are necessary."

This statement was in many respects the starting point for the March 1997 re-orientation of the EU Phare programme with respect to information.

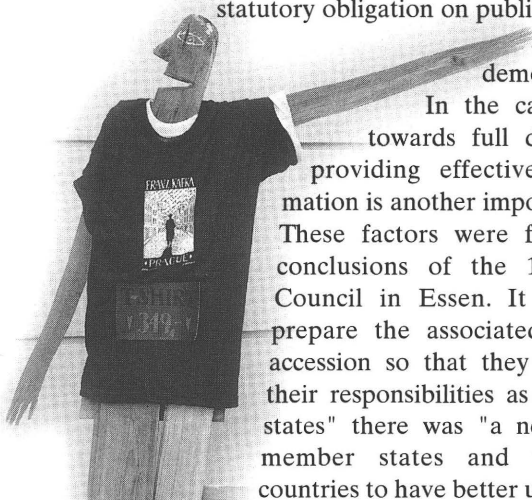
Research by DGIA in late 1997 and early 1998 revealed almost unanimous agreement among those interviewed in Brussels and EU capitals on the importance of informing applicant country audiences about the EU and the implications of accession. Many interviews done in the applicant countries also recognised this need, but in the candidate countries there was less commonality of view than among their EU counterparts.

Exaggerated public expectations in the candidate countries emerged as a prominent EU concern. Although the Union's image among its own public can be controversial, the EU wants to ensure that new member states do not stumble straight from the euphoria of accession into public disillusionment, leading to Euro-scepticism and even Euro-phobia.

Research reveals almost unanimous agreement on the importance of informing applicant country audiences about the EU and the implications of accession.

The EU's policy of encouraging comprehensive public awareness is partly enlightened self-interest, but there are other constructive reasons behind it. Increased access for key target groups, such as businessmen, to focused information about, for example, east-west commercial co-operation possibilities and opportunities, can be an important economic generator and fuel for the integration process.

Catherine Day, director responsible for relations with central Europe in DGIA, emphasises the importance of raising the awareness and understanding of interests groups in particular. "The EU touches almost every aspect in daily life. People in central and eastern Europe need to organise themselves to deal with the EU. The



Sue Cunningham/SCP



groups which represent the interests of farmers, the business community, trades unions and so on, need to find out what the EU is about, how it works and how they can and should be involved into the process. After all, a very significant proportion of the policy and legislation we produce here originates with such groups within the EU. Candidates must get up to speed with this or they stand to lose out in the process."

Effective awareness raising is crucial. So is timing.

While there is a temptation to put public information about the EU far down the list of things to do, it should not be left until the last minute when governments begin to worry about referenda (ED 1997/3, page 20).

Raising public awareness about enlargement and accession

Challenges

The majority of the research into public opinion and information needs has focused on the applicant countries. However, accession and enlargement are a joint venture and, as the Essen conclusions underlined, both sides need to understand each others' societies, on the EU side not least because "the nature of enlargement ahead creates an entirely new set of dynamics". EU governments are now committed to public consultation and communication on this issue.

Public attitudes the world over are generally more materialist and short-termist.

DGIA's 1997-98 research revealed that anti-enlargement sentiments are emerging. These opinions are being formed on the basis of little or no information.

The main focus of member states' EU-related public interest is on EMU and "the public attitude towards enlargement was at best indifferent, at worst uncomprehending and hostile".

Some familiar spectres reappear, in particular immigration and employment – "the same old monsters that frightened people before the Spanish, Portuguese and Greek accessions" notes Catherine Day, adding that "based on rumours and hearsay and not on any objective assessment of likely trends".

Tales from the German mini-enlargement about growing East/West disaffection and the costs of unification to the taxpayers over the past eight years have strengthened these prejudices.

Press comment over the last six months illustrates this general development, but the most telling evidence comes from DGX's Eurobarometer 1997 research within EU member states. The research indicates that greater numbers of the EU public generally oppose candidates' accession aspiration than support them although these

will be hard work. While communication will not be the single driving force in this, it will be an important component in the strategies of both an EU seeking to enlarge and candidate countries needing to convince their populations that Union membership is desirable. ■

Reports by Patrick Brooks, Brussels



Sue Cunningham/SCP

findings vary from one country to another. The general thrust of public opinion is negative and this problem must be addressed (ED 1996/6, page 27).

One German diplomat reflecting on the EU's need to help with the reconstruction of the candidate countries, eventually culminating in Union membership commented, "The EU must export economic prosperity, peace and stability to the region. Otherwise we will end up importing their problems instead."

The EU and applicant countries must address these challenges with hard work and new thinking, if enlargement/accession is to succeed. Rather than demanding to be taken at their own self-estimation, candidate countries will have to look at themselves through member state eyes and develop arguments and strategies that address existing prejudices directly. The old order relied on cultural diplomacy, sending dance troupes abroad to create a good image and win friends. Those days are gone.

This is not an issue for the candidate countries alone. In the view of one Commission official, "If the voters have a poor understanding, enlargement will not be a success. It's a question of democracy. The [EU] public must support the enlargement process – the so-called 'democratic deficit' is big enough as it is." ■



Public information

Accession and enlargement issues are complex

At first glance communication about EU integration with audiences in the 10 candidate countries presents obvious challenges. Together the EU and candidate countries have the opportunity to avoid errors made previously by both the EU collectively and member states individually.

From the EU perspective, the diversity and spread of the applicant countries will clearly require a measured overall approach and presentation, adapted to the specific nature of candidate countries — a macro-political version of the IBM mantra, "Think global. Act local".

Infrastructure weaknesses will make the public information task more difficult in some countries.

The greater challenges which both the EU and the applicant countries must overcome are intellectual ones. Difficulties thrown up by research include:

- enthusiasm for accession that is "largely emotional rather than rational and based on little knowledge or understanding of what the process will mean or of its impact" (DG IA research)
- the fear that "what Russia did with tanks, the EU will do with straight bananas and cucumbers"
- the belief by the public in some applicant countries that "accession won't affect my life", which leads to public apathy
- the sense of inevitability in other cases that "it is out of our hands" and politicians will decide
- the risk at some stage of complacency; a feeling that enough has been done
- the related danger of Euro-fatigue and consequent decline of interest
- a tendency for governments under pressure from voters to make the EU the scape-goat for unpopular policies
- in certain sectors, such as the elderly, unemployed and the lowest paid of some societies, a yearning for the "good old days" when "at least we knew where we stood".

These factors emerged from the Commission's research and in some of the applicant countries findings.

It is impossible to force people to address the issues involved in EU membership. For the governments involved, it will be difficult to present complex and often unappetising issues as the EU represents in a clear and coherent way.

As one EU head of delegation in the region points out "accession can be compared to a driving test. Candidates will have to be at the peak of their knowledge and understanding of the rules, regulations and customs of the road — if only to ensure that they pass the test and begin driving safely and happily."

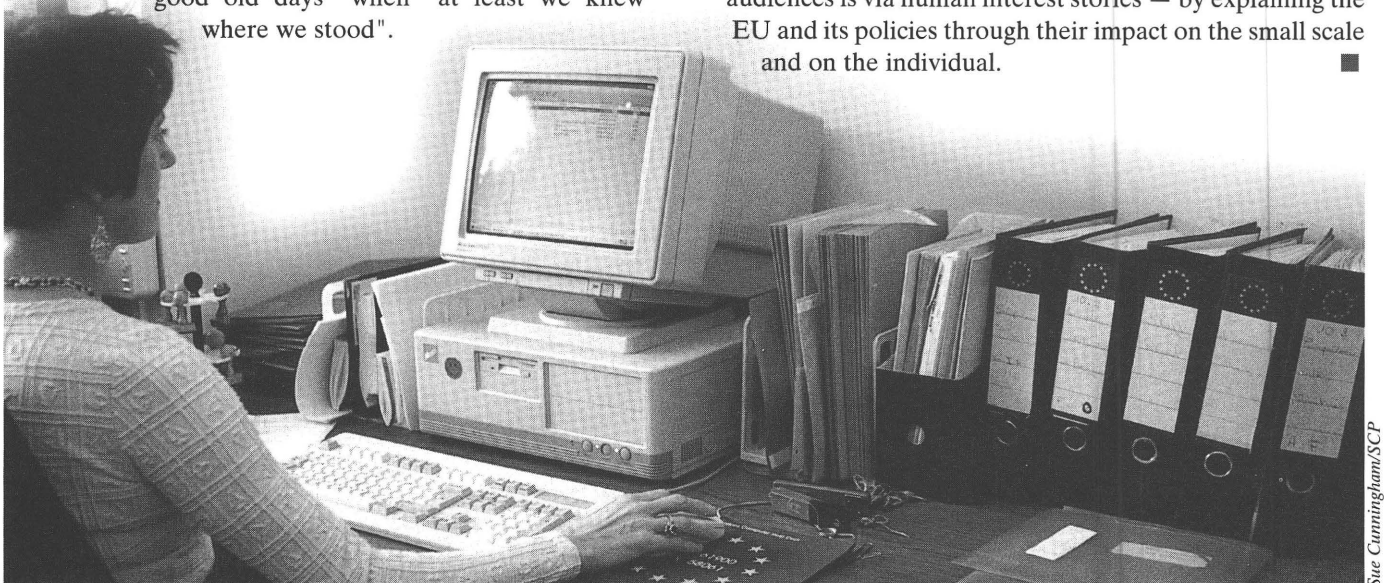
One of the conclusions from the research available is that it is impossible to force people to address the issues involved in EU membership and for the governments involved it will be difficult to present such complex and often unappetising issues as the EU presents in a clear and coherent way to their populations.

Nevertheless, three key conclusions emerged from the research:

- where there is no debate, one must be started and taken to all sectors of society
- when the debate is started it must be informed and educated
- information needs to be framed to make the EU accessible, approachable and, ultimately, sympathetic to candidate country audiences.

As the countries of the last enlargement found, the last challenge is the hardest. It is easy to find fault with the EU but much harder to explain it and harder still to make it sound sympathetic.

DGIA research suggests the best way to reach wider audiences is via human interest stories — by explaining the EU and its policies through their impact on the small scale and on the individual. ■



Steve Cunningham/SCP



Preparations start in the candidate countries

The shape, size and state of advancement of applicant countries' programmes to raise awareness about the EU reflect the diversity and spread of the countries themselves. Their preoccupations are different, as are the geopolitical challenges they face so not surprisingly the various countries are taking widely varied approaches.

Some candidates, such as Slovenia and the Czech Republic, conducted extensive research as a prelude to formulating strategy. Others, such as Hungary and Estonia, identified their basic principles and elaborated them as texts, with research following.

Just as there are different practical approaches to the task, so candidates have different philosophies regarding the role of communications.

Most have, logically, put major emphasis on communicating with certain sectors of their societies. The Hungarian communication strategy of the government preparing accession divided their objectives into four categories:

- large population groups (youth, entrepreneurs, civil servants, rural society)
- groups of opinion leaders (teachers, media, academics, the clergy)
- groups articulating interests (trades unions, professional organisations, chambers of commerce and others as well as local government and non-governmental organisations)
- opposing groups.

Where the awkward problem of those opposed to EU membership is concerned, the strategy defined is to "channel their opposition into professional, occupational or other more manageable conduits".

The Slovenian programme focuses particularly on young people, rural populations, business professionals and opinion leaders. For the Poles, the top priority is the business community, as the engine of economic development.

In a number of countries, including Hungary, Estonia, Poland and the Czech Republic, information centres have emerged as the main planks of the information strategies. Slovenia and Estonia have elected to establish "Euro-information" telephone hotlines. Others have invested in a more corporate approach and commissioned actions to identify and reach key target groups.

Just as there are different practical approaches to the task, so candidates have different philosophies regarding the role of communications. The Estonian model is, in many respects, a "best practices" Scandinavian-type approach (although the government plays this influence down).

Transparency and presenting the full picture are important aspects. "Explanations about the effects [of] joining the EU, the likely gains and possible losses affecting Estonia as a country as well as the individuals living in the country constitute an essential part of the information activities. It is also necessary to make known what is to happen if Estonia will not become a member of the EU," says one official.

By contrast, the Slovenian government's public relation advisors advocate following the Austrian model of "an advertising campaign to establish a clear [EU] identity", although they also warn against the dangers of trying to "sell Europe as a simple and positive entity".

While there could be more activity at this level and some of the programmes could be better targeted, there is a general consensus that many of these applicants have got

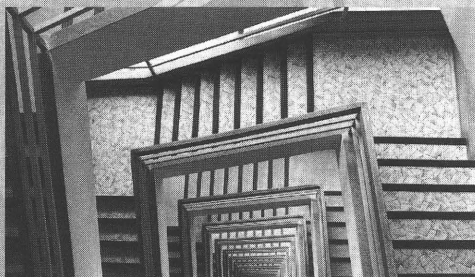
up to speed quickly from almost a standing start eight years ago. An important first step is to identify how best to convey information about the EU taking account of the national psyche. The Slovenian strategy, for instance, underlines the following:

- Slovenes attachment to their new sovereignty
- over-politicisation of the programme, running an elitist programme
- the strong public perceptions about the EU already in Slovenia.

Nevertheless, most officials and observers emphasise that all have a long way to go. One Slovene official regrets that their programme did not start earlier, pointing out that "the strong public perceptions in Slovenia" are a real problem to be addressed. "The European story started badly. First public impressions were very poor. Now things are going better, but still more work is needed, particularly with interest groups and we don't hear enough from the social partners," he says.

Some have further to go than others. For many governments information activities are low priority. One senior official in a Balkan country insists that "We must ride the big horses of the moment. Raising public awareness about the EU is not, frankly speaking, a big horse at this moment."

The danger lies in missing the moment, letting the big horse slip past when no one is looking. The lessons from the last accession show that choosing that timing is crucial but also that, once in the saddle, the candidates must ride the awareness horse right through accession into membership. ■





Public information

Policy and approach needs to be adapted

The March 1997 reorientation of the EU Phare programme changed the role of EU communications with the candidate countries dramatically.

Introducing the information handbook for EU delegations in the candidate countries produced by the DGIA information unit, the director-general Günter Burghardt described the EU's new policy approach to communications in the region as "the burden of the information and communications task is now to raise awareness about the EU generally, about what membership will mean to, and require of, the countries and people of central Europe and the preparations they must make if they are to assume their responsibilities as future member states. To a degree the task is, therefore, to present the picture, warts and all, so that the countries of central Europe have a full understanding of what lies ahead."

The objective, according to DGIA director for relations with central Europe, Catherine Day, is twofold. "In the short-term decentralisation will give the delegations — the people on the spot — more hands-on control of the EU's activities in the region and allow for closer co-operation with partner country governments. Looking to the longer-term, it will also enable delegations to prepare themselves for their role once the candidate countries join the EU, when they will become representation offices."

Ironically this will mean in due course — even immediately, in some cases — that the delegation's direct involvement in supply of information will decrease as this task is delegated to EU information centres established under the decentralised system.

In the member states the source of information depends on individual profiles. Besides the Commission's own InfoCentres, InfoPoints and other information outlets, chambers of commerce supply businessmen, European documentation centres inform the academic world and a variety of non-governmental organisations service a range of interest groups within the community.

Behind the front-line of the delegations, the Commission, in particular the DGIA information unit (Phare), continues to support the delegations' information programmes with a wide range of help and co-ordination actions.

Catherine Day uses good marketing terminology to sum up the EU's approach. "We have to create a recognisable brand for the EU. Then we have to set up our stall in partner country capitals so that our product is readily available to the public."

The burden of the information and communications task is to raise awareness about the EU generally, about what membership will mean and require of the countries and people and the preparations they must make if they are to assume their responsibilities as future member states.

There is, however, an important caveat. The EU cannot unite its information programme and activities with those of a host government. The logic of this approach, which found almost universal support on both sides of the equation during the DGIA research exercise, is simple. "Our job is to explain and inform. If anyone is going to promote EU accession in the candidate countries it must be their own governments and economic and social organisations. We must, therefore, keep the two approaches separate and distinct," explains Ms Day. ■



Sue Cunningham/SCP

UN convention aims to help protect children

Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the UN general assembly in

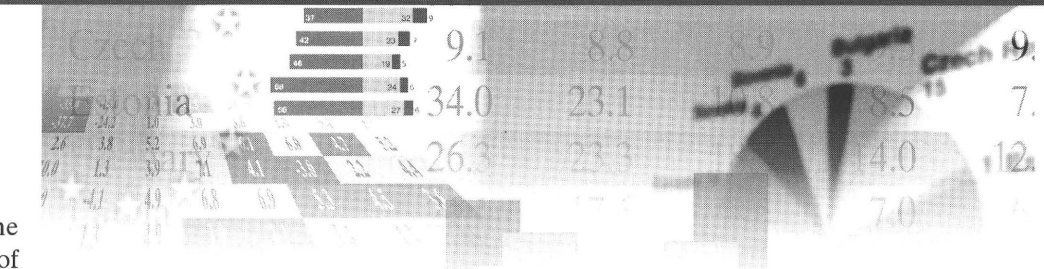
1989, has been far from easy to implement in central and eastern Europe, although every country soon signed up to the obligations and the initiative was initially launched by Poland. A report last year by the Florence-based UN Children's Fund, International Child Development Centre, noted that an assessment by the independent committee monitoring its implementation "indicate a number of concerns over problems that are clearly common to all, or virtually all, countries in the region". It continued: "Not surprisingly the problems identified reflect in part the persistence and ramifications of certain practices and attitudes inherited from former regimes, as well as the difficulties encountered in safeguarding and promoting the rights and interests of children during a transition process that in most countries had devastating socio-economic consequences for large sectors of the population."

It also pointed to the paradox whereby many of the positive aspects of the former regimes' policies for children, such as organised leisure and cultural activities, have disappeared, while it has been far from easy to correct some of the less desirable legacies.

In particular there is till an excessive tendency to place children with physical or mental disabilities or who have been abandoned or are guilty of anti-social behaviour in institutions where conditions are grim and staff under-trained. The report also drew attention to discrimination and unequal treatment against certain groups, such as Gypsies in Romania and Poland or children in rural areas who receive fewer resources than those living in cities.

The committee "expressed concern about the fact that, in several countries of the region, the upper age of compulsory schooling is 15 years whereas save in exceptional cases, the minimum age for employment is 16, implying a potential no man's land at age 15 when children are no longer obliged to attend school but, at the same time, are not allowed to take up employment."

In addition the more competitive labour market has had a direct impact on families and it is not uncommon for children as young as seven to be left without adult supervision for more than two hours a day. The difficulties children face have not been helped by the increase in the divorce rate, the growth in health and



education risks and the need to pay for many services which previously were free.

However, despite undoubted concern among many aspects of the lives of children in the region, the committee noted "directly or indirectly, the convention has already spurred and guided a number of initiatives in certain countries of the region, ranging from review and revision of legislation and policy to the creation of organs and structures to oversee implementation". It also believes the convention is important in encouraging countries in the region to use international co-operation in order to implement the rights it contains, particularly in providing children with the health, education and medical treatment to which they should be entitled. ■

Age 5–19 suicide rate (per 10,000 relevant population)

	1980	1985	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Czech Rep	4.0	3.0	2.3	2.3	3.6	2.9	3.2	3.7	4.6
Slovakia	—	—	2.4	2.2	3.1	1.8	2.5	—	3.0
Hungary	5.0	3.0	4.3	4.5	3.5	5.0	4.2	4.4	3.9
Poland	3.0	3.0	2.2	2.4	2.7	2.7	3.1	3.2	4.0
Slovenia	6.0	5.0	3.4	2.7	3.7	4.2	7.0	6.0	6.0
Bulgaria	—	—	4.0	3.7	3.6	3.8	4.4	4.0	4.0
Romania	—	—	2.3	2.3	1.8	2.1	2.1	—	2.2
Estonia	—	—	—	5.0	5.3	6.9	8.2	7.6	6.0
Latvia	—	—	5.5	5.8	5.2	6.7	6.8	6.0	6.0
Lithuania	6.5	5.2	5.0	3.7	4.9	5.3	5.6	7.2	6.8

Youth sentencing rate (number of juveniles 14–17 years old sentenced per 10,000 relevant population)

	1985	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Czech Rep	—	50.6	21.4	33.6	40.4	50.9	58.4	59.9
Slovakia	—	63.4	40.1	66.6	27.5	75.1	81.5	107.0
Hungary	57.3	80.5	62.1	72.0	78.6	76.0	90.5	110.4
Poland	—	73.4	85.5	81.6	76.8	69.5	62.8	—
Slovenia	—	101.0	84.1	90.0	92.8	90.3	84.9	41.3
Bulgaria	—	33.1	18.9	20.5	19.3	10.2	13.6	13.6
Romania	—	26.6	19.5	37.1	43.7	66.2	83.0	—
Estonia	—	—	80.5	90.1	110.0	112.8	138.6	165.6
Latvia	—	79.4	78.1	70.2	83.9	90.8	85.8	79.6
Lithuania	—	40.8	53.8	57.4	73.7	102.0	111.3	95.6

Source all tables: Children at risk in central and eastern Europe: perils and promises, February 1997, Economies in Transition Studies Regional Monitoring Report Number 4, United Nations Children's Fund, International Child Development Centre, Florence, Italy.



Cause-specific under five mortality rates (per 1,000 live births)

	1980	1985	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Czech Republic									
Infectious diseases	0.19	0.08	0.09	0.13	0.10	0.11	0.08	0.14	0.08
Accidents, poisonings and violence	2.11	1.35	1.06	1.10	1.22	1.27	1.09	1.56	0.97
Slovakia									
Infectious diseases	—	—	0.20	0.09	0.13	0.20	0.23	0.11	0.08
Accidents, poisonings and violence	—	—	1.16	1.14	1.21	0.90	0.98	1.02	0.70
Hungary									
Infectious diseases	0.29	0.18	0.31	0.29	0.24	0.21	0.26	0.27	0.27
Accidents, poisonings and violence	1.40	1.06	0.98	1.02	0.91	0.82	1.06	0.62	0.93
Poland									
Infectious diseases	2.20	1.30	1.09	1.12	0.96	1.04	0.87	0.77	0.71
Accidents, poisonings and violence	1.66	1.40	1.36	1.28	1.21	1.21	1.12	1.05	1.00
Slovenia									
Infectious diseases	0.40	0.23	0.21	0.36	0.14	0.20	0.20	0.10	0.21
Accidents, poisonings and violence	1.84	1.43	0.94	1.25	0.74	0.85	0.91	1.23	0.73
Bulgaria									
Infectious diseases	—	—	0.84	0.84	1.08	0.98	1.10	1.45	0.94
Accidents, poisonings and violence	—	—	1.80	1.84	2.09	2.09	1.72	1.59	1.68
Romania									
Infectious diseases	2.77	1.97	2.63	2.51	1.75	1.84	1.84	2.05	1.21
Accidents, poisonings and violence	3.34	3.34	3.90	3.90	4.01	3.59	3.35	3.26	2.72
Estonia									
Infectious diseases	—	—	—	0.85	0.93	0.78	1.05	0.56	0.44
Accidents, poisonings and violence	—	—	—	3.27	3.21	3.55	2.90	2.82	4.50
Latvia									
Infectious diseases	1.29	1.28	1.36	1.45	1.33	2.22	1.57	1.28	1.06
Accidents, poisonings and violence	3.29	2.54	2.75	3.11	3.38	2.85	3.96	3.95	3.80
Lithuania									
Infectious diseases	2.07	1.09	0.68	0.56	0.32	0.65	0.86	0.91	0.51
Accidents, poisonings and violence	2.16	2.70	2.12	2.23	2.28	2.46	2.23	2.52	2.38



Sue Cunningham/SCP

Welcome to Europa, the *European* *Union's server*



The Parliament, the Council, the Commission, the Court of Justice, the Court of Auditors and other bodies of the European Union (EU) invite you to their server.

News

- brings you the official press releases of the European institutions, and information on the main up and coming events.

Abc

- provides simple answers to key questions:
- What are the objectives of the Treaty on European Union?
- How will it affect citizens' rights?
- How to get documentation?

Institutions

- presents the different institutions and other bodies of the Union, and explains their specific roles. From here, you enter directly into the institution of your choice.

Policies

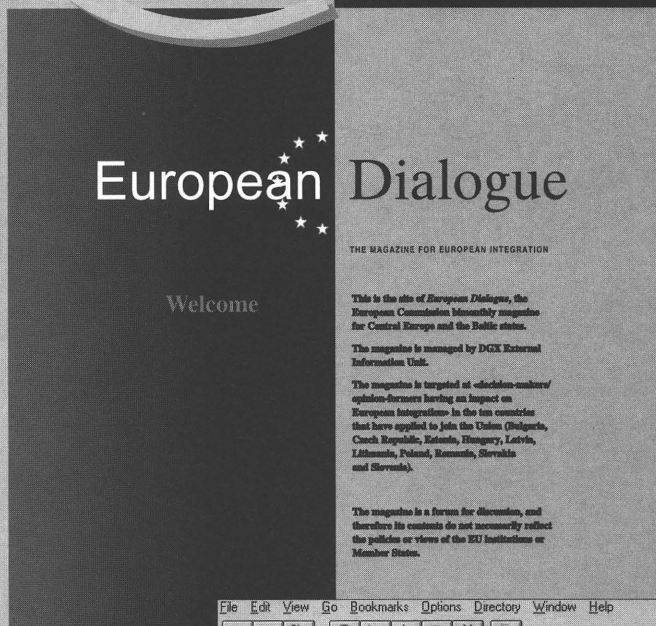
- offers you information on the Union's activities in economic and social matters, security and foreign policy, justice and home affairs.

YOUR COMMENTS ARE WELCOME...

<http://europa.eu.int>

We are

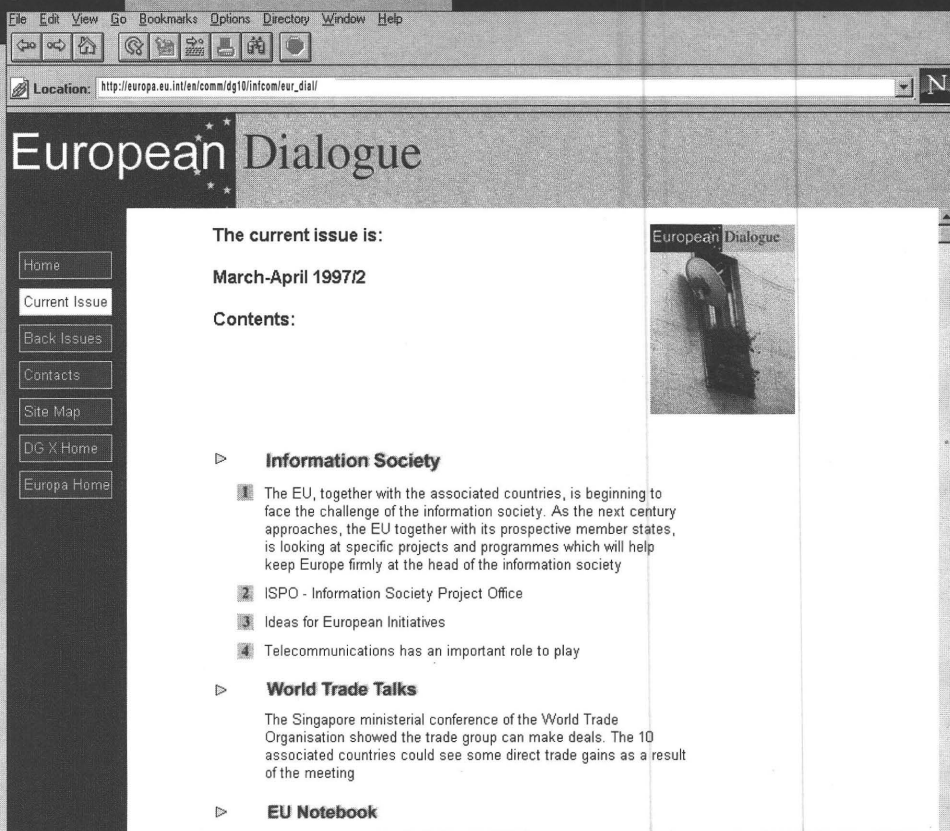
on the net



Now available



Discover
European Dialogue
on EUROPA,
the EU WWW server.
Online access to **All**
issues since 1995



http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg10/infcom/eur_dial/