

# Towards a people's Europe



## European File

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‘The European Community is all very well but what does it do for me? What effect does it have on my everyday life?’ At the June 1984 meeting of the European Council, the Community Heads of State or Government set up an *ad hoc* committee for a people’s Europe to suggest ways of strengthening the identity and improving the image of the Community, partly in order to answer the above questions.

The committee was made up of the personal representatives of the Heads of State or Government and the President of the European Commission. It was chaired by the Italian representative, Mr Adonnino. Before winding up its work, it sent two reports to the European Council, the first in March 1985 and the second in June 1985. The Heads of State or Government approved the reports and asked the Community institutions and member governments to implement rapidly their conclusions.

### **Urgent measures with long term implications**

Some of the proposals of the People’s Europe Committee are new. Others endorse and extend work already in progress. The Committee made reference for example to numerous demands from the European Parliament and proposals from the European Commission for the abolition of all frontier checks by 1992. But the personal representatives of the Heads of State or Government put the greatest emphasis on measures capable of being rapidly implemented while the political will exists. The committee has not, therefore, covered the whole field. It has concentrated on measures which will have an impact on people’s everyday lives and help further the closer union of the peoples of Europe.

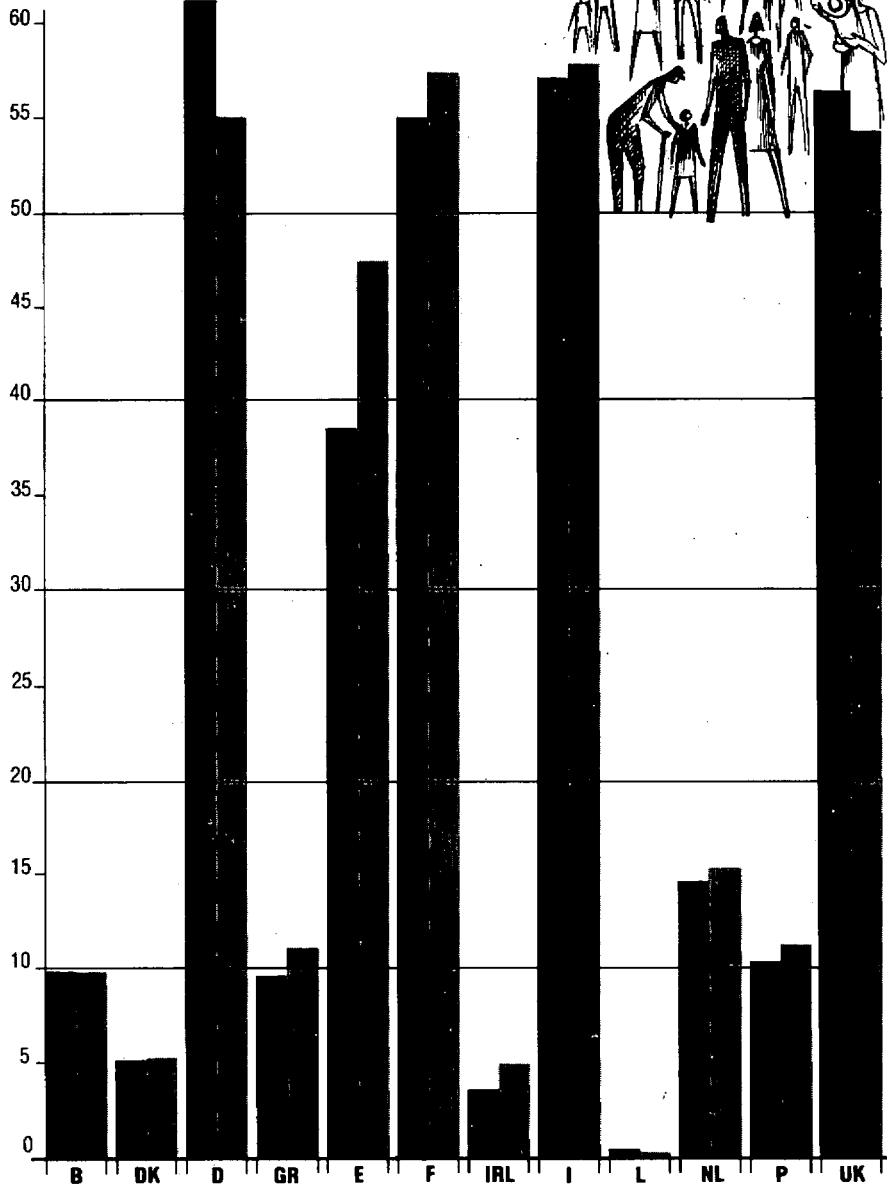
Such a union is a fundamental objective of the Community, whose aims are not purely or even essentially economic. The European treaties aim, by strengthening ‘the unity of economies’, to ‘confirm the solidarity which binds Europe’ and bring about ‘an ever closer union among the European peoples’ which will in turn ‘strengthen the cause of peace and liberty’.

Successive wars cost the lives of millions of men and women and left Europe ravaged, ruined, divided and weakened in comparison with other parts of the world. It was to break with this disastrous cycle of conflict that the founding States made a formal gesture of reconciliation and solidarity and founded the Community in 1951.

Thirty-five years later, in a world still troubled and uncertain – a world in which Europe can only keep up through increased cooperation – the development of the Community is essential. To this end, the new generations must be given concrete evidence of the advantages of Community solidarity. They must learn to get to know and understand one another across Community frontiers. This is the main finding of the People’s Europe Committee, whose conclusions are summarized below.

**Europe and its citizens: the population of the European Community Member States (1985 and forecast for 2020 in millions)**

Total 1985: 321 million (6.8% of the world total)  
 2020: 329 million (4.2% of the world total)



Source: Eurostat.

## **Living and working in the country of one's choice**

The right to settle for long periods in other Member States has already been guaranteed to salaried workers and the self-employed. This right must be extended to all people with sufficient means to avoid burdening the social services of the host country. At the same time an effort must be made to relax the bureaucratic regulations which afflict Community citizens when they live in another Member State. From 1986, for instance, the introduction of a Community driving licence should remove the necessity to acquire new documents when moving to another member country. The temporary importation of motor-vehicles for private use should also be eased.

The citizens of most Member States can already work in any part of the Community they chose. From 1988 this right will apply to wage earners in and from Greece. From 1993, it will apply to Spain and Portugal. Improvements are, nevertheless, necessary:

- The right of establishment should be extended to all. Member countries still restrict the conditions under which the members of certain liberal professions can practise in their territory. In some cases, in the health professions for instance, these conditions have been harmonized throughout the Community. The legislative route to achieving such a harmonization is very lengthy. A new approach is needed for other areas in order to make the right of establishment available to all Community citizens without delay. This new approach should be based on the reciprocal recognition of qualifications, without prior harmonization. The twin foundations of such a policy should be mutual confidence and widespread information. Where discrepancies exist between training requirements, a given number of years of professional experience in the country of origin should be taken as sufficient qualification.
- Professional qualifications acquired in one Member State must be sufficiently transparent to be acceptable in another. There should be a system for comparison of qualifications and also a European professional training card setting out each person's qualifications.
- Finally, there should be new national, bilateral or Community rules to ease the fiscal, monetary or social problems encountered by people living in one member country and working in another, particularly frontier workers.

## **Freedom of movement and freedom to buy**

The European Community has set a target date of 1992 for the completion of the European internal market. By this date all the physical, technical and financial barriers which, despite the abolition of customs duties, still impede trade within the Community should be removed. European citizens would no longer face checks at internal frontiers. Consumers would enjoy the full benefits of the common market.

To achieve this aim it will be necessary to agree increased Community cooperation on immigration and drugs abuse, common European product standards (or the common acceptance of national standards) and much smaller divergences between national VAT rates. All the same, some measures, which would be of direct benefit to Community citizens, can be introduced immediately:

- The simplification of frontier formalities by extending to all internal borders the system already introduced by some countries: green stickers to allow cars to cross frontiers at reduced speed, but without stopping; specific procedures and gates for Community citizens at ports and airports; a system of occasional spotchecks, at random or in emergencies.
- The gradual merging of frontier posts and checks by adjacent Member States; new measures to make life easier for road hauliers; taxation on coach journeys to be unified in the country of departure.
- The complete revision, or at least the inflation-linked indexation by simplified procedure, of the VAT and excise allowances for travellers and small postal consignments; the abolition of customs acceptance charges on small packages and the introduction of new allowances for newspapers and books sent to individuals. In all cases, beyond these limits, the principle of no double taxation formulated by the European Court of Justice, should be applied.
- Easier access to medical care throughout the Community. Members of health insurance schemes travelling to another Member State can already enjoy the same benefits as local people if they obtain an E111 form from their insurer. But the validity of such forms is limited in time and a more practical system is long overdue. At the same time European norms should be introduced for the information carried on medical cards issued to certain sick people by many Member States to assist medical staff in an emergency.
- More consideration for the needs of border residents: more convenient opening hours for border posts and the organization of cross-border emergency aid, where needed.
- The development of national and Community programmes to assist tourists: radio broadcasts in their own languages; efforts to prevent accidents to tourists, within the framework of the road safety year in 1986; extension of rescue and assistance schemes; better staggering of holidays.
- Continued efforts to create a common market in services, which are all too often restricted to national markets, to the consumer's cost. Many services go beyond national frontiers: telecommunications, air, road and rail transport. In these and other areas the Community must generate new work opportunities for the service professionals and reduced costs for users and consumers.

## **To be recognized as a citizen of Europe**

Citizens of Member States of the Community are also citizens of the Community itself. Special rights should be accorded them throughout the Community:

- The right to participate in the European elections under equal conditions. Electoral procedures should be made uniform, as the European Parliament has requested. Where a Community citizen is travelling or living abroad at the time of the poll, he should have the right to vote in his home country or country of residence.
- The right of self-expression and assembly should be granted to Community citizens on the same terms as nationals of the host State.
- Those living permanently in another Member State (about 5 million of them) should have the right, after a period of time, to vote and stand in local elections. They should also have the right to be consulted on issues which affect them, such as housing or foreign language teaching.
- Border region residents – taken in the widest sense, 48 million people – should have the right to be consulted when the neighbouring country is contemplating developments which could affect them such as major public works, re-organization of transport or measures affecting ecology, health or safety. The European Commission has suggested local cooperation in these areas as well as in employment, training and regional development.
- The right of all Community citizens to enjoy the full benefits of Community policies. In cases where these conflict with national regulations, the citizen can seek redress in the courts. But things would be easier for ordinary people and their legal rights would be underpinned if Member States ensured the total, straightforward and rapid implementation of Community law. It would also help if this law was, itself, codified and simplified. In all cases superfluous legal provisions should be abolished.
- The right to better access to the administration. First of all, the citizen's right of petition should be strengthened and simplified, as the European Parliament has demanded. A European 'ombudsman' or mediator, or as the Parliament requested a mediating commission, would examine citizens' complaints and could help them to obtain redress.
- The right to adequate information on efforts to develop the European Community. The Community institutions and Member States should cooperate more closely in informing their citizens of the historic reasons for the creation of the Community and the importance of current efforts to develop it further. The same applies to explaining the implications of Community policies and the impact on people's everyday life.

- The right of holders of a European passport — which is now being introduced — to benefit from the assistance of the embassy or consulate of another Member State when visiting a foreign country where his own country is not represented.

### **Working together to help the Third World**

One of the greatest challenges of our time is the development of the Third World. The Community already makes a substantial contribution but it should try to involve its citizens in its efforts.

- The Community should extend its links with the non-governmental organizations which express the personal commitment of many Europeans in the struggle against hunger, poverty and their underlying causes, which require long-term action. Organizations and volunteers from the Member States should be encouraged to cooperate more. Member States should guarantee the social rights of volunteers while abroad, as a Community recommendation invites them to do.
- A Community pilot programme should be launched to develop ways of extending volunteer work to people younger than 25, who would be accompanied by indispensable qualified personnel.

### **Young people, first class citizens of the Community**

Young people are Europe's future. The Community should help them to prepare for this future, which will be increasingly European:

- Exchange programmes should be extended. The Community already supports the exchange of young workers and joint university study programmes. But more needs to be done: to reduce the cost of exchanges, to encourage the twinning of schools, to develop information and advice services, to create a major European programme of school and professional exchanges, which would, like all Community actions, bring the benefits to a wider range of people. In higher education, students should be encouraged to undertake part of their studies in another country through the promotion of an inter-university study and exchange programme. To the mutual recognition of certificates and diplomas there should be added a system of recognition of courses followed in other countries (through, perhaps, a system of transferable credits on the American pattern). There could also be European prizes for excellence, awarded for studies and qualifications undertaken in several countries.
- As European education ministers have already declared, all young people should have the opportunity to gain a working knowledge of two languages apart from their mother tongue (including at least one Community language) before their obligatory schooling ends. Visits by teachers to other member countries

should be made more common. Future language teachers should be encouraged to gain a large part of their linguistic training at source: in the countries where their chosen language is spoken.

- European problems should be discussed more often in the classroom. The necessary structures should be set up at national and Community level. Teachers should be provided with the necessary written and audio-visual teaching materials.
- The Community must help young people to find jobs. Community ministers have already committed themselves to providing, up to 1988, work training or work experience of at least six months to all interested school-leavers. To intensify the struggle against youth unemployment, this guarantee should be extended to one year, or even, if possible, two.
- More Community aid should be given, through a pilot programme, to voluntary holiday workshops which bring together young people from different countries for social, cultural, ecological and archaeological activities.

### **Bringing the Community into everyday life**

A people's Europe must also extend to the everyday concerns and interests of Community citizens, health, sport, culture, television, as well as the symbols of a living Community.

- The European Commission programme on health and dangerous substances should be extended by increased cooperation in areas where joint action is more effective than individual efforts: improvement of living conditions for the handicapped, medical research, the fight against cancer, the prevention of drug addiction, and the treatment and rehabilitation of drugs victims.
- Sport should unite Europeans, not divide them. The ministers responsible should increase their cooperation against stadium violence. At the same time Community competitions should be organized, such as the European yacht race sponsored partly by the European Commission. There should also be more sporting exchanges and European sports events for schools and for the handicapped. At international sports events, national emblems and colours should be accompanied by a Community emblem. Why not, where appropriate, pick Community sports teams?
- The Community should give more support to the practice of 'twinning', which has linked the peoples of many European cities, towns and villages.
- As for radio and television, all the necessary technical and legal provisions should be introduced to allow Community citizens to enjoy their right, conferred by the Treaty of Rome, to watch the greatest possible number of



European television stations, relayed either by cable or satellite. For cultural reasons and also for economic reasons (especially the threat of American and Japanese competition) a special effort is needed to promote the production and showing of European programmes. European co-production should receive financial support. A multilingual European television channel should be created. Other initiatives are possible within the framework of a European cinema and television year in 1988, the centenary of the 'seventh art'.

- Also in the cultural field, it would be desirable to set up a European Academy of Science, Technology and Arts. This would be an independent body, intended to reflect the richness and originality of European civilization. It would give opinions and award European prizes. At the same time steps should be taken to ensure that the reduced prices offered by museums and theatres, especially to the young, should be available to all nationalities. Finally, consideration could be given to the creation of a European lottery to provide financial support for Community cultural activities.
- The Community should strengthen its identity by making use of the language of signs and symbols which helps people to express themselves, to communicate and to identify one another in everyday life. First of all the Community should have its own flag and its own emblem – twelve stars and a Greek 'E' in gold against a blue background. It should also have an official anthem – Beethoven's hymn to joy. There should be a Europe Day each year to mark the anniversary of the 9 May declaration by Robert Schuman in 1950 which led to the creation of the Community. The day could be used to transmit information on the Community on television and to schools. Other measures should include the design of postage stamps with Community themes and extend internal postal rates in each country to letters and parcels sent anywhere in the Community. Finally, to make a distinction between the external and internal frontiers of the Community, signs proclaiming 'Customs' should be removed between Member States. Customs duties have already been abolished within the Community and Member States are being urged to remove all frontier controls, for taxation or any other purpose, by 1992.

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The conclusions of the People's Europe Committee received the political assent of Community Heads of State or Government. They have also been approved by the European Parliament. Their implementation will require either new laws and regulations or changes in mentality and behaviour. The European Commission has already made many proposals in this area. Some have been adopted. The Community Council of Ministers increased the franchise on small postal consignments (now £58 or Ir. £72) and travellers' allowances (£207 or Ir. £252 for each adult

and Ir. £64<sup>1</sup> for each child). The council also approved directives on the comparability of professional qualifications and the right of establishment of architects and pharmacists. It is now up to the Council of Ministers and the Member States to take rapid decisions on other measures which would make a people's Europe a reality ■

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<sup>1</sup> However, Ireland applies a tax on individual objects above Ir. £55 in value.

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