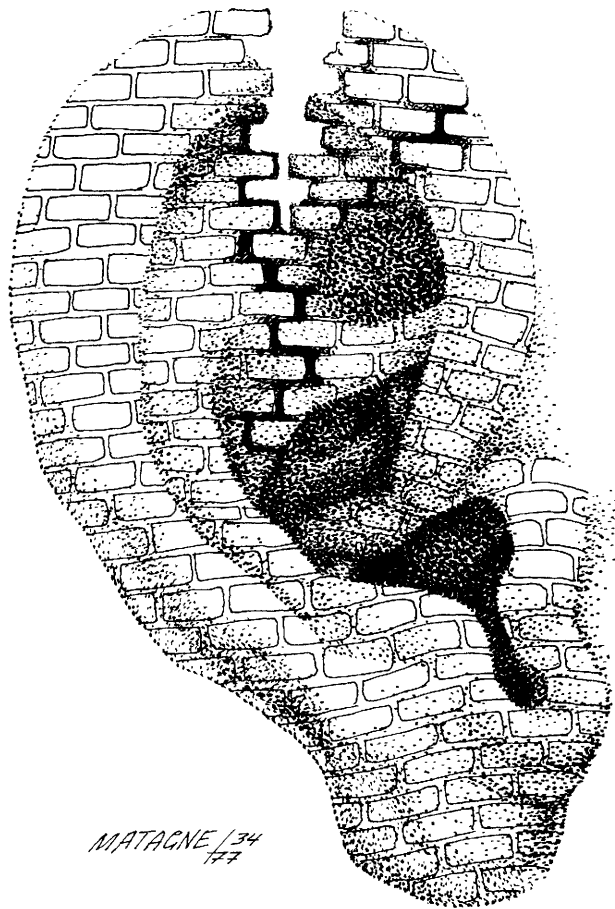


# euroforum

## europa day by day

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Has noise reached the limit? (See page 3)

X/561/77

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++ FAITH IN EUROPE

Sixty nine percent of Europeans consider science to be one of the principal factors likely to improve the quality of their existence.

Euroforum presents in Annex 1 the results of a Community-wide survey which demonstrates that Europe has faith in its scientists.

++ COMMUNITY HUSH

People have been complaining about noise for centuries but now it has reached the danger level.

In Annex 2, Euroforum outlines the European Commission's plan to deal with noise.

++ EDUCATION YEAR 2000

How many students will there be in the Community's schools and university lecture theatres by the year 2000?

Euroforum presents in Annex 3 some figures gathered by the Community's Statistical Office.

++ CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

The consumer price index for August 1977 drawn up by the Community's Statistical Office is presented below (1970=100):

	<u>August 1977</u>	<u>Variation July/August 77</u>	<u>Variation Aug 76/Aug 77</u>
D	146.9	- 0.1 %	+ 3.9 %
F	185.1	+ 0.5 %	+ 9.9 %
I	239.4	+ 0.9%	+18.6 %
NL	177.4	+ 0.5 %	+ 6.9 %
B	176.1	+ 0.3 %	+ 7.2 %
LUX	167.0	- 0.2 %	+ 6.2 %
UK	252.5	+ 0.4 %	+16.4 %
IRL	252.4	+ 1.1 %	+13.5 %
DEN	189.9	+ 0.9 %	+11.6 %

++ PRUDENT FARM PRICES

In the years to come the European Community will have to develop a "prudent" policy concerning agricultural prices. This was the central theme of a speech given by Agricultural Commissioner Finn Olav Gundelach to the Community's Consumer Consultative Committee.

The principles and instruments available to the common agricultural policy (CAP) are adequate and can be effective, as was proven by the stabilisation of prices and Community supply during the world sugar and cereal shortages a few years back. The problems of surplus would, according to Mr. Gundelach, be less serious if the prices of cereals had not been fixed at such a high level at the beginning of the CAP. The prices of agricultural products (beef and veal for example) which are based on these cereals have consequently also had to be set too high. Agricultural surpluses are due in part, according to Mr. Gundelach, to consumer resistance to high consumer prices. This is true, in varying degrees, for a good number of agricultural products. In the case of beef and veal, this resistance has been very evident. The Agricultural Commissioner recalled, however, that consumer prices are only partly the result of the prices guaranteed to producers. Processing and marketing costs constitute a large and growing element of prices.

The key solution to the problem of agricultural surpluses will be, Mr. Gundelach affirms, to pursue a prudent price policy. It should be pursued over several years to make itself felt on all aspects of production (investment etc.) and to allow the latter to adapt to the realities of the market. It will be necessary, Mr. Gundelach has stated, that all those responsible should recognise that an agricultural policy which supports superfluous production, that does not satisfy demand and finds its only outlet in intervention stocks can not survive.

The first step in the right direction was taken at the beginning of this year when guaranteed farm prices were only increased by a modest amount. Mr. Gundelach stressed however that we should not underestimate the difficulties in continuing this policy, which will arise in a period of inflation where one is increasingly confronted by monetary complexities and fluctuations.

The modest increase in prices will be sufficient for the efficient farms. For such a policy to be effective from both the social and policy point of view, all modernisation and rationalisation efforts must be increased to enable the most number of farms to reach the necessary level of efficiency. Structural measures to rationalise and improve processing and marketing will also be necessary to bring producers closer to consumers. Finally, social measures will be an important aspect of actions envisaged and notably in regions where

economic alternatives are rare or non-existent. In such a case the Community could consider the introduction of direct income support.

Mr. Gundelach declared himself in favour of developing international trade in agricultural products. He recalled, however, that the Community is one of the largest importers of farm products in the world. Its agricultural imports are continually increasing whilst its exports are decreasing. Any further opening up of the Community can only be undertaken in the framework of international negotiations and under strict conditions of reciprocity, thereby enabling the Community to have access to certain third world markets.

#### ++ ENERGY, EUROPE AND THE WORLD

The current lull on the world energy market and the Community energy market should not make us forget the fundamental problems which exist over the medium and long term. This is the substance of the European Commission's view of the current energy situation. The increase in output from the North Sea (3.7 million tonnes for the first half of 1976 rising to 16.9 million tonnes in the second half of 1977) together with the slackening of demand will ensure the downward trend in oil imports from third countries.

Following the price increases imposed in January and July by the OPEC countries, the average cost of imported crude oil should increase by around 9% with respect to 1976. For the European Community however, the increase in the oil bill will be offset by North Sea oil. It will still amount to around 2.5 billion dollars for the whole year.

#### ++ THE ZIP WAR

Will the Community win the zip fastener war? Numerous members of the European Parliament have questioned the European Commission about the causes and consequences of the invasion of Europe by Japanese zip fasteners. In 1973, anti-dumping measures were brought in against the Japanese firm YKK, following which the firm had to alter its export practice and raise its prices considerably.

The Commission has indicated that the imports of Japanese zips will continue to be monitored until the end of December 1978. Any further action will be based on the results of this monitoring.

#### ++ THE LUMP

A few weeks ago the Belgian police broke up a rather unusual gang who were secretly supplying Belgian companies (mostly construction companies) with unemployed Dutch workers. Whether undeclared employment is as organised as this or not, it is a major feature of our present economic crisis. According to

BIT (the International Work Bureau) 3-5% of the industrialised world's labour force are working illegally.

The European Commission takes the view that action has to be taken on the causes rather than the effects of undeclared work. Some of the main causes are the taxation and benefit schemes covering small companies combined with a general disorganisation in the labour market. Among the solutions proposed by the European Commission to the Community's Council of Ministers is one to put the accent on harmonising measures to deal with illegal immigration and illegal employment. The Commission is trying to encourage the cooperation of the labour market institutions, particularly employment agencies.

++ 700 KG SLUDGE PER PERSON

Seven hundred kilogrammes a year of sewage sludge is produced per inhabitant in the Community. To this must be added the biodegradable industrial sludges generated by the food industry, breweries etc. The disposal of these sludges causes serious environmental problems which can only be overcome if improvements are made in sludge processing techniques to obtain products which can be used, with minimum pollution and at acceptable cost, to improve and enrich farm land.

This in mind the Council of Ministers has just adopted a research programme drawn up by the European Commission on the treatment and use of sewage sludge.

The programme has four main themes : sludge stabilisation and odour problems; dewatering of sludge; problems related to sludge characterisation (pollutants, microbiology); and environmental problems associated with dressing farm land with sludge.

++ COLOURANT E 123

The addition of amaranth to fruit juices, jams etc. is banned in France and Italy but this does not mean that the colourant is toxic. This is the view of the European Commission which recalls that foodstuff additives are only authorised in the Community if they can be proven to be harmless. This is the principle of the positive list of additives. A State may, however, impose more severe restrictions than Community legislation covering the use of colourants in certain food products.

At the Community level, the Scientific Committee for Human Foodstuffs has been set up to fix the daily acceptable dose for man of the various colourants. Amaranth has been authorised under the colourant reference of E 123.

++ LABOUR UNREST IN FIGURES

The number of work days lost in 1976 on account of labour conflicts (strikes, lockouts, etc.) in the Community in 1976 have been compiled by the Community's Statistical Office:

	<u>Total number of days lost (thousands)</u>	<u>Number of days per thousand workers (in thousands)</u>
D	534	26
F	5,011	298
I	16,236	1,192
B	897	288
UK	3,287	150
DEN	210	111

Netherlands and Ireland : figures not available.

++ CONSUMERS AND BEEF

The prices which consumers have to pay for beef and veal are not competitive enough with those of other meats and a 'prudent' price policy will have to be introduced in the future. This is the view of the European Commission concerning the organisation of the Community's beef and veal market.

It is true that the market for bovine meat is particularly difficult to organise. A period of relative stability (1968 to 1971) was followed by shortages (1972/73) and then followed by surpluses. The market is currently balanced. To reap the most benefit from the current situation the Commission has submitted a proposal for a number of varied measures to the Council of Ministers.

In periods of surplus, the Commission proposes that the consumers benefit from low market prices so as to stimulate consumption and prevent build-ups of large intervention stocks. In such a case, producer income would be guaranteed by import levies, private storage of meat, premiums payable directly to producers and by intervention purchases.

In periods of shortage, a progressive reduction in import levies and customs duties will be imposed, together with the granting of premiums to encourage slaughtering to increase the supply and reduce the market price to the benefit of the consumers.

Finding a just balance between the interest of consumers and producers in this sector is particularly important since beef is produced by almost two-thirds of the Community farms.

++ 70 OR 75 CENTILITRES?

The 75 centilitre bottle is becoming increasingly popular on the market to the detriment of its 70 cl sister. This trend is noticeable throughout the world as well as Europe. In the USA, for example, the 75 cl bottle is more often used for spirits than the 70 cl. In accordance with this trend the European Commission has proposed that the 75 cl bottle become a 'standardised' measurement. Standardised bottles present no surprises for consumers, and encourage the free movement of prepackaged liquid goods in the Community. This trend towards standardisation also suits the producers. An agreement has been made, for example, between wine producers and governments that in the long term the 70 cl and 35 cl bottles will disappear and be replaced by 75 and 375 cl ones.

++ C'EST LA VIE

France's second TV station 'Antenne 2' has started a ten minute daily broadcast devoted to consumer information. It consists of information flashes, weekly campaigns on specific topics, and reports on various aspects of daily life. The producers of the programme also wish to carry information on similar television programmes on other European networks. In doing this, they wish to follow the cooperation between Europe's TV networks which the European Commission Information Services have been trying to develop.

++ CONSUMER INFORMATION

Some 200 participants are expected for the Symposium on Consumer Information which the European Commission and the Catholic University of Louvain (Belgium) are organising in Brussels on 23-25 November coming.

Some thirty reports are being drawn up to assist the four committees which will be dealing respectively with consumer information supplied by industry (this will require two committees, given the scope of the topic) and that provided by consumer organisations and public authorities.

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## FAITH IN SCIENCE

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There is a group of twenty one people who meet regularly in Brussels. There are no fanfares, TV cameras or journalists when they meet, but their work is directing the future course of Europe. This group is composed of scientific experts, independent and recognised authorities in a variety of scientific disciplines and members of CERD (the European Committee for Research and Development). These 21 people advise the European Commission on the direction Community research should take.

This group has been worried however, and they have discussed their fears with the European Commission: relations between science and society must be improved.

Scientists are variously caricatured as absent minded professors or as sorcerer's apprentices, and science can not develop properly unless it has society's full support.

As a result, the European Commission initiated a number of projects at the beginning of 1977 along the theme 'European society and its interaction with science and technology'. The first task was to obtain a clear idea of the public's image of science. Surveys and opinion polls undertaken by IFOP (French Public Opinion Institute) and eight national institutes covering 9,000 people revealed that Europeans still have faith in science.

### Improving life

Science is regarded by most Europeans as one of the principal factors likely to improve the quality of life, and 59% of those interviewed supported this view (out of a list offering five alternative definitions including three negative). The three negative definitions combined only found 14% in support. Only 6% of the sample found science worthy of superlatives.

Europe's faith in science is somewhat guarded and 67% of the people questioned expressed fears about the dangers involved in civil applications of science.

People can be worried, however, without losing faith. 89% of Europeans think that science still has good things to discover and that research is also likely to improve the quality of life in developing countries (80%).

Europeans favour the idea of the State supporting scientific research (81%), and are behind the idea of Community States combining their research efforts rather than working in national isolation.

The survey solicited a reaction to the proposition that "scientific research is extremely expensive but can bring

prestige to the countries where it is undertaken. And in such a case it is preferable that European States attempt to poll their scientific research effort, or should they work on their own?"

	<u>For European research</u>	<u>For national research</u>	<u>No reply</u>
EEC	79%	14%	7%
B	82%	8%	10%
DEN	67%	16%	17%
D	73%	19%	8%
F	85%	9%	6%
IRL	71%	24%	5%
I	87%	9%	4%
LUX	83%	6%	11%
NL	83%	9%	8%
UK	74%	20%	6%

### Priorities

Some of the scientific disciplines mentioned in the surveys are in favour, some are unpopular. The priority area of research for most people is medicine. Agricultural research to cope with the planet's food needs came second. Third preference was given to research to reduce and control pollution, while research into new forms of energy and the prevention and treatment of drug abuse was next in order of priority.

Sixth on the list came safety of nuclear installations and much lower down came space exploration, weapons research and national defence, which the public is generally prepared to limit or sacrifice altogether.

Out of favour at the moment are meteorological research and climate control, probably due to their general lack of publicity.

Other questions

Our group of 21 can rest assured that there is no crisis of confidence in science among the general public. The faith which the public has, however, is not without some important reservations. The ambivalence in the mind of the public raises a number of questions, such as how confidence in a particular field of research is reflected, what risks are the public prepared to accept, and what risks do they worry about. On the other hand, the questions : what types of information can stimulate interest or even enthusiasm for science among Europeans or what sort of information reduces confidence and encourages doubts, also spring to mind.

By definition, research is adventure into the unknown and scientists cannot expect public opinion to follow them blindly. From Gallileo to Darwin, Europe's scientists have shown many of the traits of their contemporaries. Stubborn as they may be, they still need to have public confidence.

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## COMMUNITY HUSH

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People have been complaining about noise for centuries. And since the industrial revolution, the number of machines has increased and with it the general noise level. Now it constitutes a permanent nuisance almost everywhere. But not until recently has it become recognised as a serious environmental problem and one that is particularly insidious since it directly attacks a very sensitive area - the human nervous system.

The European Commission considered the whole problem serious enough to devote a whole chapter to it in the Community's Second Environmental Action Programme (covering the period 1977-81).

### Source of the problem

For the first time the battle against noise has been taken to the basic sources, such as motor vehicles, motor bikes (surveys in many cities have revealed traffic noise to be regarded as the pollution enemy number one) aircraft etc. Certain countries and international organisations have laid down maximum noise levels for manufacturers to adhere to. The first principal work which needs to be undertaken at Community level is to harmonise these standards, both concerning noise levels and the ways of measuring them. If the noise limits in the Common Market are not the same for all manufacturers, then such ceiling limits for products/machines etc. could in fact amount to technical barriers to trade, which would mostly injure the most scrupulous manufacturers.

### Question of hearing

What level should these standards be fixed at? This is a delicate problem which involves an appreciation of the criteria which define the nuisance effect of noise. Though the relationship between a violent explosion and a burst eardrum can be established quite closely, it is infinitely more difficult to establish the level at which the growing volume of noise in our daily environment begins to do serious harm.

The nuisance effect of noise is very largely a subjective matter. Noise does not bother those chanting slogans at demonstrations, the hi-fi fanatics testing out their equipment, the handy man with his electric drills, the Sunday gardeners mowing the lawn, but can upset considerably their tired neighbours.

Mystery of the decibel

The decibel frequently crops up in everyday parlance. But though it is now commonly used, it also leads to great confusion. The ear has an elaborate faculty for perceiving sound - from the faint noise of leaves rustling in a tree, to the din of a pneumatic drill. It can cope with sound emissions whose power or intensity vary by a factor of billions. The classical methods of measuring noise, however, are somewhat inadequate. What is now used, in effect, is a logarithmic scale (familiar to mathematicians) known as the decibel. Straight additions cannot therefore be used. When the noise increases by 10 decibels its force is really ten times as great. A 20 decibel increase is one hundred times greater. Consequently, when the experts talk about a victory in bringing noise levels down by 3 decibels, it may sound derisory, but in the language they are using, it signifies that they have reduced the noise level by half!

In spite of this problem of subjectivity, various studies have enabled nuisance criteria to be established, ranging from simple disagreement to serious psychological or pathological trouble. The European Commission has identified five such noise problems:

- interference with sleep : at levels above 40 dB (A) it is thought that more than 10% of sleepers will be disturbed, and any brusque change in the sound level of over 10 dB (A) above the ambient level can cause waking.
- interference with language : at the 65 dB (A) level, a normal conversation is just audible one metre away. This can be an important factor in those working environments such as hospitals, schools, factories etc. where intelligibility in transmitting messages is important and can affect health and safety.
- discomfort : at present around 15% of people find a noise level of 45 dB (A) uncomfortable, and over 40% complain at the 65 dB level. These levels are frequently exceeded in towns.
- hearing trouble : permanent damage to the ear will be automatic at sound levels over 150 dB (A). But apart from such extremely violent noises, hearing can be impaired by constant exposure to noise. The danger level for a person who is subjected to noise all his working life, eight hours a day, is about 80 dB (A).

Further research is still needed to examine the effect of intermittent noise and on the effects of the specific frequencies which go to make up noise. In addition, more precise criteria have to be established for the most sensitive categories of the population - young children, the aged and the infirm.

#### Community anti-noise plan

The Community's Second Environmental Action Programme clearly spelt out the need to draw up an anti-noise plan at the Community level. It is not only a question of taking action at the source of the noise. Any action should also take into account the environment in which the noise takes place (the surface of a road is just as important as a car silencer). The European Commission intends to set noise quality objectives which can then be used as a basis for town planning policies. Apart from some interesting projects in a few heavily affected regions, noise has been, by and large, neglected. An ideal approach might be to define particular quiet residential or leisure areas in which noise limits would be laid down by the local authorities.

#### Everyone pollutes

Noise is a two-sided problem. A car horn, for instance, can be a life-saving message and can also be an unbearable nuisance. This aspect of environment policy is clearly one where the cooperation of the population is very important. At one moment or other, every individual is, inevitably, a noise polluter.

A Community anti-noise policy with well defined objectives would seem indispensable both for our peace of mind and to prevent us all going deaf in the not too distant future.

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## EDUCATION YEAR 2000

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How many pupils will be sitting in Community schools and university lecture theatres by the year 2000? This is by no means a purely theoretical question as educationalists need to do their planning a long way in advance.

### Compulsory school

The birth rate differs in Community countries and the trends also differ. Only Ireland will find its number of pupils increasing in the 1981/82 academic year and the 1975/76 index of 100 will increase to 105. In France the number of pupils will be approximately the same whilst decreases are expected in all other Community countries: down 5-10 % in Italy and Denmark, down 10-15 % in the UK, Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg, and down more than 20% in Germany.

Long term demographic forecasts indicate that the proportion of the population subject to compulsory education in the last decade of this century will be 30% less than the current level in Germany and 10% lower in the Netherlands and Luxembourg. After a period of decline which will peak around 1985, the population in the UK should begin to increase once more to regain its current level by the end of the century. France and Italy will follow a similar pattern. In Ireland by contrast, a continuous increase is expected till the end of the century. The section of the population eligible for schooling will exceed the current level by 40%.

Extending the school leaving age to 16 from the end of the 1978/79 academic year will increase the school 'population' in 1981/82 by around 15% in Germany, 14% in Luxembourg, 12% in the Netherlands and 10% in Ireland. In Belgium and Italy where compulsory education ends at 14 years, the increase will be around 27%. In these two countries extending the school leaving age by one year will raise the intake by some 13%.

### Primary school

Over the next five school years, the youngest section of school children will only increase in Ireland, and will be stable in France. In Germany the numbers in this category should decline by one third in 1981/82 whilst the decrease will amount to 10 to 15% in other countries.

In the long term, the numbers receiving primary education should be 30% lower than their present level in Germany, 10% lower in the Netherlands. In France it should remain stable and even rise slightly as will be the case in the UK following a 20% reduction up to 1985.

Secondary education

By 1981/82 the numbers at secondary education establishments should be within 5% of their current levels in all Community countries. After this period, the trend will follow that of the primary group.

Higher education

The numbers following higher education courses should remain stable over the next five years in France, Denmark and Belgium. Other countries will experience increases which will reach a maximum of 15%-20% in Germany. By 1985/86, however, the numbers in Germany, the Netherlands and the UK will begin to decline though they will increase slightly in France.

Towards the end of the century, this trend will result in a slightly higher number in France, slightly lower numbers in the Netherlands and the UK, and a 20% decrease in Germany. These estimates, however, should be offset by the expansion of education (raising leaving age, etc.) which will to some extent compensate for the drop in the numbers of pupils.

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