

euroforum

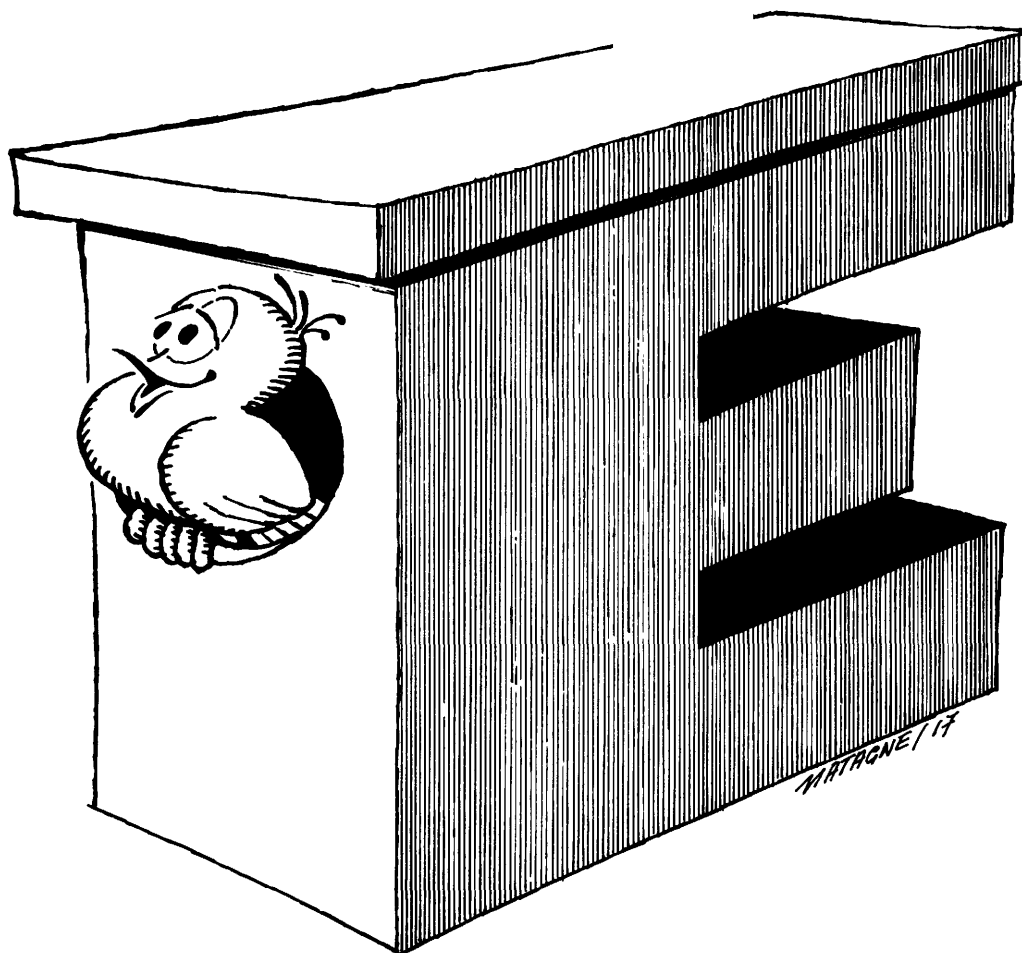
weekly

production authorized

europa day by day

Brussels, 9 May 1978

N° 18/78



A habitable Europe is the aim of our environment policy.
For progress so far see page 3.

This bulletin is published by the

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B-1049 - Brussels - Tel. 735 00 40

Further information is available from the Commission's press and information offices in the countries listed on the back page.

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++ ENVIRONMENT POLICY IS NO LUXURY

"Environmental problems in the larger sense of the word have the same origins as the problems caused by the current economic crisis and both should be resolved in an overall policy".

Extracts from the speech given by Mr. Michel Carpentier, Director General of the European Commission's Environment and Consumer Protection Service on the Community's environment policy are presented in Annex 1.

++ ENVIRONMENT : COMMUNITY ROUND-UP

Water pollution, atmospheric pollution, noise, paper recycling, town and country management, the protection of fauna and flora and many more have already been dealt with or are to be covered by Community directives.

In Annex 2, Euroforum presents a progress report on the Community's environment policy.

++ DECOMMISSIONING NUCLEAR POWER STATIONS

Nuclear power stations do not last for ever and sooner or later they have to be taken out of service for reasons of either profitability or safety. Making an old "nuke" safe is a complicated task and to deal with the large commercial reactors currently coming into operation, a lot of research work into decommissioning still has to be undertaken.

Annex 3 outlines the research programme proposed by the European Commission to develop this knowledge.

++ SOCIAL FUND BENEFICIARIES

Guidelines for the management of the European Social Fund up until 1981 have been drawn up by the European Commission. First priority is to go to those vocational training projects which are most likely to result in secure jobs. In addition, the Commission will devote considerable effort to training qualified labour in declining industrial regions. It will also expand its assistance to projects aimed at finding jobs for young people.

++ MEDICINE PRICES

Consumers are often surprised by the price differences that still exist between Community countries for identical medicines. Some of these differences are due to strict price control in some countries and an absence of control in others, different VAT rates applied to medicines, different

marketing prices imposed by manufacturers, etc. All these factors are the result of the disparities which still exist between policies in Community countries.

To improve the situation, the Commission is trying to persuade Member States to bring about free movement of medicines, and has just set up a medicine price committee composed of national experts to swap information on the problem and combine their experience.

The Commission has also decided to encourage parallel imports of medicines to hamper unjustified price differences.

Finally, it will be carrying out surveys whenever companies in a dominant market position appear to be abusing their power, or when there appear to be restrictive agreements.

++ CUSTOMS OFFICIALS

Over the last 20 years, there has been surprisingly little change in the number of customs officials manning the borders between Community countries. The current total stands at 103,525 and Germany has the most and Luxembourg the least.

Customs officials in the Nine, July 1st, 1977

D	B	F	I	LUX	NL	DK	IRL	UK	TOTAL
29859	7491	20012	4870 (+)	486	5204	4786	1840	28977	103525

++ EUROPEAN PASSPORT PROBLEMS

In December 1974, the Nine's leaders requested that the possibility be examined of introducing a uniform passport for Community countries. The European passport has not yet come into being however and Mr. Willi Müller of the European Parliament has asked the Commission whether this setback is due to linguistic problems.

The Commission has replied that the introduction of a uniform passport is being held up by three problems : the choice of languages to be used; the preeminence of the title "European Community" or the name of the country on the cover of the first page; the legal implications of introducing the passport.

Once the uniform passport has been introduced the problem of creating a European identity card could be investigated the European Commission adds.

++ NATIONAL REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

The nine Community countries have reported to the Commission their regional development programmes as was stipulated in the regulation on the European Regional Development Fund.

The Regional Policy Committee will give its opinion on these programmes and they will be published as soon as possible upon consultation with national authorities.

++ POLLUTION AND JUSTICE

Making laws is one thing, enforcing them is another. The Commission has always stressed that the effectiveness of environmental protection legislation depends on effective implementation and the Commission has welcomed the Council of Europe's recommendation to its 20 member governments that they introduce penal sanctions against environmental polluters. It is up to Community Member States to apply penal sanctions and use the law most effectively.

++ ANIMAL COMMITTEE

The creation of an advisory committee for the training of veterinary surgeons has been proposed by the European Commission to ensure that the vets have an equivalent level of training in all countries.

The committee would also ensure that the vets are kept up to date on the latest developments in medical science and teaching methods.

++ ENERGY TRADE WITHIN THE NINE

Energy is now an expensive and relatively scarce resource, and cooperation between Community countries has been increasing, to develop our own resources and facilitate intra-Community energy trade. The link up of the European gas and electricity networks is an example of this, and there are now pipelines linking the Dutch gas fields with Belgium, France, Germany and Switzerland and Italy by way of Germany.

As imports of natural gas from third countries have been increasing, so this interconnection between national energy networks has to increase. Electricity networks are also inter-linked and in 1976, the quantity of energy traded between members of UCPE (the union for the coordination of the production and transport of electricity - composed of seven Community countries out of a total of twelve) amounted to 5.5% tax of total electricity production in these countries.

The Commission is also trying to encourage trade in the fields of coal, gas, nuclear fuel and hydrocarbons.

++ WORK EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

The Commission should soon be proposing to the Council a second exchange programme for young workers. By permitting young people to work in other Community countries, the Commission aims to:

- encourage the European spirit;
- enable young workers to gain experience and improve their languages at the same time;
- and last but not least, to improve their work experience and thereby improve their chances of finding a job.

++ PAPER RESEARCH

The Community market for paper and cardboard is very import-oriented, to the tune of 50% of consumption. The European paper industry mostly uses imported raw materials (the Nine's forestry resources only cover one sixth of our needs). For both economic and ecological reasons, the Commission proposed to the Council in July 1977 (see Euroforum 33/77) a multiannual research and development programme on the recycling of paper and board. The Council has now adopted this proposal - the programme will have four research sectors:

- establishing the characteristics of recycled fibres and the processes to be used;
- eliminating the nuisance effects of contaminants in waste paper;
- ink removal and the processing of effluents in waste paper recycling factories;
- use of municipal fibres and the health problems posed by the use of waste paper.

Only through coordination at the Community level can this research be most effective. The three year programme will be organised in terms of shared cost contracts, with national organisations and the paper industry. The Community's financial contribution will be some 2.9 million units of account (1 u.a. = ± 1.2 dollars).

++ PESTICIDES COMMITTEE

The Commission has decided to set up a Community scientific pesticides committee.

Fifteen scientists (specialists in toxicology, chemistry, applied biology and agronomy) will make up the committee and will advise the Commission in its drafting of regulations on the use of pesticides, and permissible residues in foodstuffs and animal feeds.

ENVIRONMENT POLICY IS NO LUXURY

"The anti-pollution campaign is an element of environment policy which should be understood as both a good resource management policy (the environment which we live from) and a quality of life programme (the environment in which we live)". This was how Mr. Michel Carpentier, Director General of the European Commission's Environment and Consumer Protection Service, opened his address on the Community's environment policy (see Annex 2) to the fourth international conference of the Belgian association of industrial lawyers.

This concept of the environment is composed of four closely related aspects:

- the state of the natural environment which is determined both by natural factors (ecological, climatic etc.) and by human ones (waste, pollution, etc.). The quality of the population's living and working conditions is greatly dependent on the state of the environment.
- land availability is determined by the interaction between natural and ecological processes on the one hand, and by economic and social activities on the other. The organisation and location of these activities has a great influence on the quality of the environment, on living conditions and on the potential to develop natural resources.
- resources - both renewable and non renewable - have to be well managed for both immediate economic reasons and also for the sake of future generations.
- qualitative factors also need to be considered, particularly the improvement of living conditions, working conditions and the state of the environment.

Mr. Carpentier stressed that the strictly economic rationale of the productive system which is the root of our environment problems, only gives partial consideration to these four aspects. For example, resource potential is all too often considered in terms of known and exploitable quantities "under present economic conditions". This view is too short term and environmental problems need to be given more thought instead of simply applying technical solutions. We need to expand the economic and social rationale governing economic decisions. In the field of energy policy for example, a sort of "technological monoculture" has emerged, to use the words of H. Brooks. The coal and oil eras have been replaced by the "all electric, all nuclear" era but research into alternative energy sources (geothermal and solar energy) is still lacking sufficient resources.

The potential for renewable resources has to be realised and our non-renewable resources better managed in the interest of future generations. The efficiency and use of resources needs to be improved and it is regrettable, Mr. Carpentier stressed, that industrial plants should be located on high quality agricultural land.

"Side by side with resource management we have to develop a waste and pollution management policy. Industrial production has to become ecological and emulate the principle characteristic of the ecosystem which is its ability to recycle all its own wastes".

In conclusion, the head of the Commission's environment service stated that "far from being a luxury, an environment policy is a vital necessity for our society. It should consequently be closely linked to economic development policy. In a period when Community states are faced with considerable economic difficulties, some of them tend to regard environmental problems as being linked to abundance, and during an economic crisis, should dwindle in importance in relation to other pressing problems such as inflation and unemployment.

I do believe however that environmental problems in the larger sense of the word have the same origins as the problems caused by the current economic crisis and both should be resolved in an overall policy.

Europe can do more but it does not have much time and should think about implementing what Professor Sachs has called the transitional strategies based on the options for society. This presupposes a re-evaluation of the real individual and social utility of certain goods, a more thoughtful resource management policy, better distribution of income, and a different attitude towards the value and organisation of work".

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ENVIRONMENT : COMMUNITY ROUND-UP

Progress with the Community's environment policy during 1977 and the outlook for 1978 are the subject of a stock-taking report drawn up by the European Commission's Environment and Consumer Protection Service.

POLLUTION CONTROL

Evaluating pollution risks

The Council of Ministers has already adopted a directive on the biological monitoring of the population for lead poisoning (outside the workplace) and the Council should soon be taking decisions on Commission proposals concerning criteria for acoustic nuisances and evaluation of health risks from pollution containing persistent organochlorinated compounds.

The proposal on the determination of criteria for sulphur dioxide and suspended particulate matter in the urban atmosphere is still under discussion.

The Commission is continuing its work on health criteria for organohalogenic compounds, organophosphoric compounds, cancerous hydrocarbons, photochemical oxidants, asbestos, vanadium and for second category pollutants.

Studies of the impact of certain atmospheric pollutants on vegetation and materials has also begun. The results of this work - expected towards the end of 1978 - will be submitted to a group of national experts.

Preventing and reducing water pollution

Fresh water:

Work has continued in four areas:

- definition of quality objectives;
- reduction of pollution from dangerous substances discharged into water;
- the reduction of pollution caused by certain industrial activities;
- Community participation in international conventions.

Quality objectives:

Directives on the quality of bathing water, and the quality of surface water used for the production of drinking water have come into force. The Council has continued discussions on the Commission's proposal on the quality of waters intended for human consumption, and the proposal on the quality of fresh water for fish breeding. During 1978 the Commission will present the Council with a proposal on the quality of water for agricultural use.

Pollution from dangerous substances

The implementation of the 1976 directive on pollution from certain dangerous substances discharged into the aquatic environment is actively continuing. By the end of 1978 the Commission intends to submit to the Council proposals on the limits and quality objectives for mercury discharged by the sodium chloride electrolysis industry as well as for three pesticides.

Pollution from certain industries

The Council has agreed in principle to the directive dealing with waste from the titanium dioxide industry, and is continuing with discussions on the reduction of pollution from paper pulp factories.

International conventions

The Commission is participating in the implementation of the Convention on the protection of the Rhine from chemical pollution.

Sea water

On June 9, 1977, the Commission presented the Council with a draft resolution on action to prevent, control and reduce pollution caused by the accidental discharge of hydrocarbons at sea. This proposal has yet to be discussed in the Council.

Monitoring water quality

To monitor the effects of measures taken, an exchange of information on water pollution has been organised at the Community level.

Atmospheric pollution

Council discussions on air quality standards for lead, sulphur dioxide and particulate matter and the use of fuel oil are continuing. The Commission is pursuing its work

in establishing reference measuring standards for certain air pollutants, and an inventory of the principle sources of pollution.

Noise

The directive on the determination of noise emissions from factory machines and tools is currently being adopted by the Council. Discussions on various proposals on permissible sound limits for factory machines and also for subsonic aircraft is also continuing.

During 1978, the Commission intends to present the Council with a proposal setting out regulations applicable to light aircraft and helicopters and proposals dealing with permissible sound emissions from motor mowers and air compressors. Work is continuing on acoustic limits for other factory machines.

Noise emitted by household equipment is also to be dealt with by the Commission which is currently drafting a directive on better labelling to provide better consumer information.

Waste

Two directives came into force in 1977 : waste and the elimination of waste oil.

The Waste management Committee set up by the Commission met for the first time in March and identified the following priority problems : toxic waste, waste paper, packaging, use of waste as fuel and their reuse in farming. The Committee has also approved the action programmes on packaging and waste paper. The Commission has presented the Council with a multiannual research and development programme for recycling paper and cardboard.

Chemicals and the environment

The Council examined the 6th modification to the directive on the classification, packaging and labelling of dangerous products. In 1978 the Commission plans to send the Council a proposal for a directive limiting the use of asbestos.

In October 1977, the Commission organised an information meeting on the new US TOSCA regulation (Toxic Substances Control Act).

A proposal on fluorocarbons in the environment was transmitted to the Council by the Commission, which will also forward a proposal during 1978 on the control of certain dangerous industrial activities to prevent accidents and establish intervention procedures.

Scientific work

The Commission has implemented the second environmental pluriannual research and development programme. The Council also adopted a decision on a research programme on the treatment and use of sewage sludge.

IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENT

Land management and protection

Ecological mapping

In close collaboration with Member States the Commission has been developing an ecological map of the Community, and is currently testing the basic mapping method through pilot studies throughout the Community, to see if the adopted method can cope with the Community's diversity.

Countryside

During 1978 the Commission will be setting a group of experts to work on the problems of returning agricultural wastes to the land. The aim is to encourage the use of techniques which will ensure the "health protection" of fruit crops. The Commission will soon be drawing up an assessment of the "ecotoxicity" criteria of the toxic substances used in farming.

Coastal and urban areas

The Commission has undertaken further studies on ecological management of coastal zones and is also coordinating research work on the growth of large urban concentrations.

Protecting fauna and flora

The Council has agreed in principle to the directive on bird protection (species and bird habitats, prohibited hunting methods etc.) Once the directive is adopted the Commission will submit to the Council a list of habitats to be protected.

Studying natural resources

A study has been undertaken on the production, consumption, use and ecotoxicity of cadmium and another study in progress is examining the question of recycling non-ferrous metals and the contribution it can bring to Community self-sufficiency.

Environmental impact

Ways of evaluating the environmental impact of industrial projects etc. have been examined by the Commission and may form the basis of a future directive.

The European Foundation

Now in operation this Foundation has established its action programme. The three main themes are:

- organisation of work (particularly the humanisation of working conditions);
- specific problems of certain groups : young people, pensioners, immigrants;
- quality of life and work : the relationship between work and leisure.

Information and education

The Commission has undertaken a number of measures to make the public more aware of environmental problems in collaboration with non-governmental organisations, in particular with the European Environment Bureau.

Exchanges within a network of pilot primary schools (13 schools and centres through the Community) have been organised to help develop teaching material for primary and secondary school teachers.

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Twenty nuclear power stations have been taken out of service in Western countries and five of these have been in the Community (out of a total of 86 built or under constructions in the EEC). Experience in decommissioning "nukes" is insufficient however since:

- the reactors decommissioned so far are not of the same type as those used in commercial power stations;
- they have all been relatively small;
- they had only been in operation for short periods and experienced a low level of radioactivity. This would not be the case with large commercial power stations.

The European Commission has recommended a research and development programme to the Council of Ministers to extend current knowledge on power station decommissioning.

The ultimate objective in decommissioning a nuclear power station is to make it safe after retirement from service and to release the plant site for other uses. Only a relatively small part of a nuclear power station (15-20%) gives rise to problems associated with the presence of radioactive waste.

The reasons for retiring a plant from service can vary:

- a prototype plant may be decommissioned when it has achieved its objective or when the objective has been abandoned;
- a commercial plant will be retired from service when either economic or safe operation is no longer possible;
- if following an incident it proved too costly or or even impossible to rehabilitate a plant due to radiation.

After a plant has been retired from service, the nuclear fuel, radioactive materials in process and radioactive waste produced in normal operation must first be removed by routine operations. Three subsequent stages of decommissioning have been prescribed by the International Atomic Energy Agency, namely:

- Stage 1 decommissioning

The plant is practically kept intact. The mechanical opening systems (valves, plugs, etc.) of the first contamination barrier are permanently blocked and sealed. The plant is kept under surveillance and inspections are carried out to check that it remains in good condition.

- Stage 2 decommissioning

The primary contamination barrier (1) is reduced to its minimum size and sealed, removing all parts which can be easily dismantled. The "biological shield" (e.g. concrete) is extended so that it completely surrounds the barrier.

After decontamination to acceptable levels, the containment building can be removed. The other parts of the plant (buildings or equipment) can be dismantled or converted for other uses. Surveillance around the barrier is necessary but can be relaxed as compared with Stage 1. The sealed part should be inspected externally.

- Stage 3 decommissioning

All remaining parts of the plant, which still have significant activity despite decontamination procedures, are removed. The plant is then completely derestricted. No surveillance or inspection is necessary for radiological protection.

Community experience

Of the five nuclear power stations already taken out of service in the Community, only one (in Germany) has reached stage 1, but the Community has gained additional experience through:

- the decommissioning of major power components (the dismantling and cutting of thermal shields in the Trino Vercellese and Chooz pressurised water reactors);
- decommissioning research reactors and fuel cycle plants : the total dismantling of the Le Boucher uranium fabrication plant (France) and the small prototype reprocessing plant at Fontenay aux-Roses (France); extensive decontamination operations at reprocessing plants at Mol (Belgium), Dounreay (UK) and Trisaia (Italy).

The Commission has proposed a research and development programme to extend this knowledge and resolve some of the problems posed by the future decommissioning of large commercial power stations. Subjects to be dealt with cover:

- longterm integrity of buildings and systems;
- decontamination during decommissioning;
- dismantling techniques;
- handling of specific waste materials : steel, concrete and graphite;
- large transportation containers for the radioactive waste produced during dismantling;
- estimates of the quantities of radioactive waste arising from power station decommissioning in the Community;
- influence of nuclear power plant design features on decommissioning.

This research would have a dual interest:

- through the results obtained, nuclear power stations could then be designed and operated to simplify future decommissioning;
- the guiding principles for decommissioning should emerge from the research (e.g. criteria for derestricting plant equipment) and could evolve into the first elements of a Community policy.

This programme is planned to run for five years beginning July 1st, 1978 and will cost around 10 million European units of account (1 EUR = ± 1.2 dollars), out of which 6.38 million would be provided by the European Commission and the rest divided between public and private organisations in Community Member States.

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