

euroforum

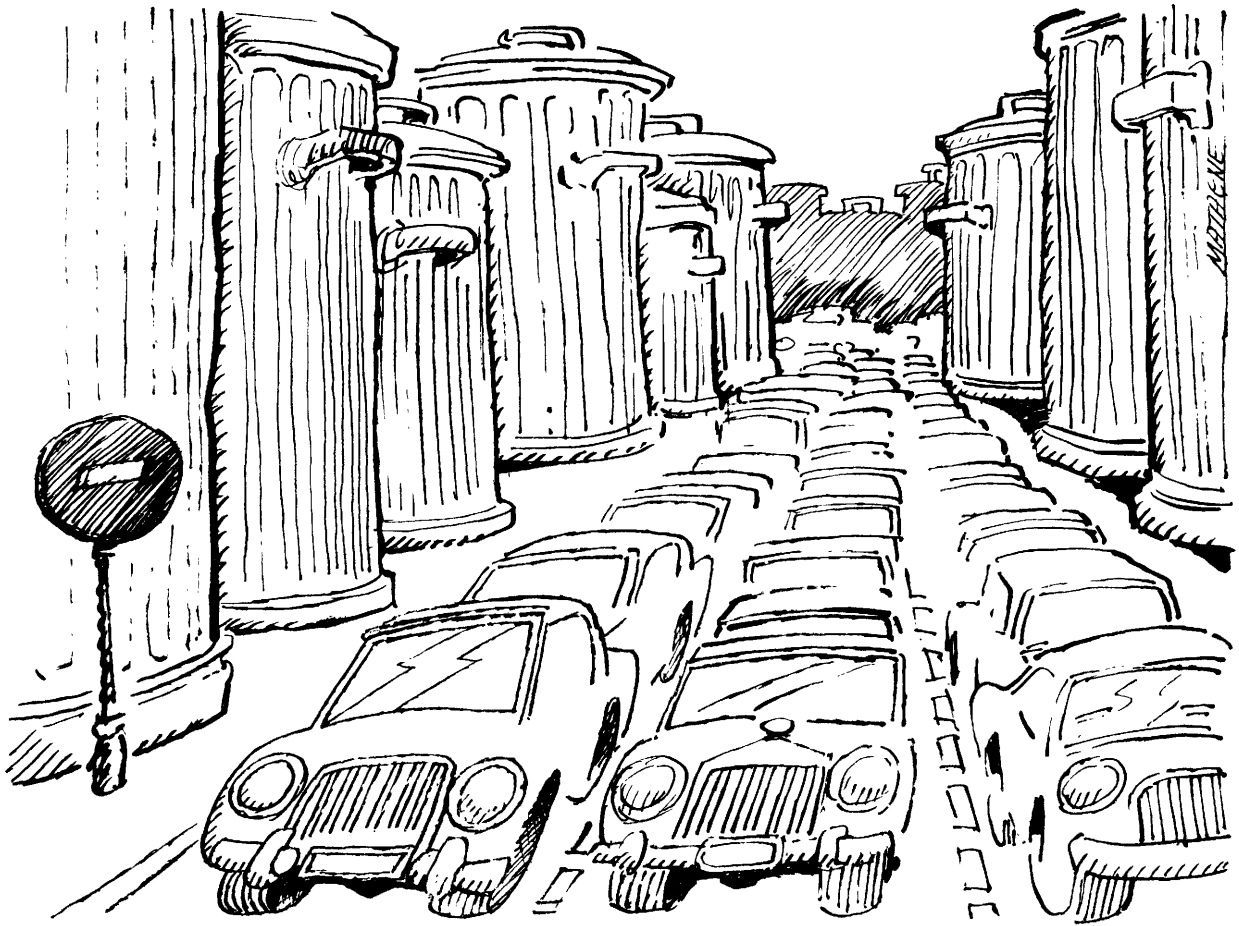
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How habitable are Europe's city centres? See page 3.

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++ CITY CENTRES : OFFICES OR DESERTS?

Closely packed office block complexes surrounded by stifling polluting traffic congestion - the centres of Europe's major cities have drastically changed in recent years. The architectural heritage of the past is being obliterated by the invasion of offices, and the various services and facilities which existed to meet the needs of local inhabitants have been eclipsed by the demands of office life.

Making city centres more habitable and preserving the quality of the urban environment is the problem. Annex 1 presents some solutions drawn up by the organisation 'Mens en Ruimte' who have been looking at the problem at the request of the European Commission.

++ SCIENCE AND EUROPE'S RENAISSANCE

There is a real danger of Europe becoming under-developed in relation to the USA and Japan according to the president of the European Research and Development Committee, Mr. Andre Danzin. Europe is losing its technological superiority and is no longer a leading force in major innovations (space exploration, data processing, etc.).

Danzin's proposals to stimulate a renaissance in European research are outlined in Annex 2.

++ TRIPARTITE CONFERENCE

No agreement could be reached on reducing working hours. The trade unions pressed for a 10% cut over four years but this was rejected by all employer representatives. One national government also came out against the idea though the others took a sympathetic line.

The three proposals put forward by the European Commission (against overtime and the abuse of temporary workers, introduction of flexible retirement systems) were regarded as negotiable by both employers and government representatives.

This latest Tripartite Conference which focused greatly on the question of work-sharing, was at the same time a semi-success and a semi-setback. Mr. Henk Vredeling, Vice-President of the European Commission was pleased that the Conference had approved the Commission's proposals as a basis for further action.

++ WAGES IN INDUSTRY

Taking October 1972 as the base year (index = 100) in European industry, wages in October 1977 have risen as follows:

	<u>Average gross hourly earnings of manual workers</u>	<u>average gross monthly earnings for office workers</u>
	(in industry)	
Germany	150.5	154.9
France	210	180.2
Italy (Apr. '76)	206.8	180.4
Netherlands	181.7	172.8
Belgium	201.6	190.7
Luxembourg	194.9	189.3
U.K.	213	-
Denmark	205.2	183.9

Gross earnings represent the remuneration directly payable by the employer (and paid regularly) before deductions for tax and social security payments (for both employer and employee).

These figures are taken from the study "Hourly earnings - working hours" published by the Community's Statistical Office (ref : CA-AC-78-002-6A-C) which is obtainable from Community bookshops listed on the back page of this bulletin, priced £6.40.

++ FOOD WITHDRAWALS

What quantity of foodstuffs did the Community destroy in 1977 asks Mr. Gert Petersen of the European Parliament. The European Commission has replied, stressing the fact that what Mr. Petersen terms "destruction of foodstuffs" is in fact "withdrawals" operated in the fruit and

vegetable sector. This type of intervention, the Commission states, is designed to prevent a collapse in market prices and in prices paid to producers, by withdrawing from the market any surplus supplies resulting from the inevitable fluctuations in production which is, of course, subject to the vagaries of the weather. The products concerned are difficult to store and are as a rule highly perishable. The rules governing the organisation of the common market for fruit and vegetables provide that in certain circumstances, producer organisations may receive financial compensation for the withdrawals they operate.

Most of the produce withdrawn from the market is earmarked for one of the uses specified in Community regulations : distribution to charitable organisations (free of charge), feeding stuffs, distillation, etc.

During the 1977/78 marketing year 201 000 tonnes of produce was withdrawn from the market under the intervention system:

- cauliflower	30 000 tonnes (2% of total production)
- tomatoes	23 000 tonnes (0.5%)
- peaches	60 000 tonnes (4%)
- pears	41 000 tonnes (2)
- apples	2 600 tonnes (0.5%)
-oranges	16 000 tonnes (1%)
- mandarins	28 000 tonnes (7.5%)

++ THE PATIENT PATIENT

If your doctor prescribes "Celestan" for you (a cortisone-based medicine) you could buy some in Germany for DM 60.97 (100 tablets) where it is prepared by the Schering laboratories or you could get them in Switzerland at half the price (29.30 SF) where they are imported from Schering-USA.

Mr. Hans Jahn of the European Parliament has quoted this example of price distortion in mentioning a case of particular civil duty by a German patient : the patient in question was prescribed three of these tablets per day and saved his health insurance company some DM 4 000 over a ten year period by ordering the product directly from Switzerland, though he naturally had to sacrifice some of his leisure time to do so.

Mr. Jahn asked the European Commission whether it believes that Community citizens should be expected to sacrifice some of their leisure time to help combat the inordinately sharp increase in the cost of medicinal products. Should this not be the task of the appropriate bodies, particularly Community bodies he asks.

The Commission feels that it is up to the competent national authorities to combat high medical costs in Member States. The Community's own institutions may, however, lend them support by exercising the powers conferred upon them by the EEC Treaty to eliminate distortions of competition. The Commission has started a preliminary inquiry to see if the competition rules laid down in the EEC Treaty have been infringed.

++ COMPULSORY POLLUTION CONTROLS IN EUROPEAN PORTS

The coast of Brittany has been hit by many oil slicks and whilst the ecological disaster of the Amoco Cadiz is still fresh in the minds of many, other oil spillage accidents still occur. To limit the risks of further maritime pollution, the European Commission has already proposed a number of measures to the Council of Ministers and intends to draft additional measures.

Recently it proposed that the Council take a decision to reinforce controls applied to ships putting in at European ports (whatever flags of convenience they fly under). The intention here is to make certain control procedures compulsory as at present they are only non-obligatory resolutions. If this is adopted by the Council of Ministers, the Nine will incorporate into Community law the marine safety standards and the oil dumping controls contained in three international conventions of the Intergovernmental Marine Consultative Organisation (IMCO).

The Commission is aware that the measures it proposes will not be sufficient on their own to guarantee more effective control in ports, and ensure respect for international standards. The Commission will soon propose additional measures covering the frequency and methods of inspections. It is currently examining the problems of sufficient port inspectors. There are basically too few to ensure the desired frequency of inspections of foreign vessels. Whilst the oil loading terminals do not have sufficient personnel to examine the tank cleaning methods used on each tanker, the seemingly adequate legal provisions tend to be ineffective in practice.

++ FRENCH CUSTOMS BAFFLE GERMAN

The German advertising manager of a Franco-German group of companies travelling on business to France was fined FF 2 000 by the French customs for taking photographic equipment for professional use across the French border. Although he had documents with him (telexes, copy, drafts and layouts) to prove that his visit to France was connected with cooperation between the French and German companies, the head of the French customs authorities in Metz maintained that he was unlawfully importing goods - the photographic equipment - and must be fined. The customs authority also ordered the equipment to be immediately re-exported under the direction of a customs agent. Worse still, the German businessman was ordered to leave the country immediately.

Quoting this decidedly anti-European incident, Mr. Hermann Schwörer of the European Parliament asked the Commission whether the French customs are entitled to do this and whether this occurrence was not in fact a further indication of the urgent need to abolish customs formalities?

In its reply the Commission explained that certain formalities are still required at the Community's internal frontiers which extend to equipment which travellers carry with them for professional use (particularly in view of the different VAT rates applied in Member States). In such cases these formalities would ensure that equipment temporarily imported free of VAT would indeed be exported back.

The Commission is fully aware of the inconvenience that such formalities cause and intends to propose a new regulation to the Council next year which would greatly simplify the procedure for carrying around such equipment.

The fine was imposed because the traveller did not comply with the formalities when bringing his equipment into France. However, the French authorities have informed the Commission that in view of the explanations and the evidence he provided, they have reimbursed the fine.

++ DISTURBING SOCIAL TRENDS

"In its 1978 action programme, the European Commission proposes 'the reinforcement of action to lessen inequalities' which is essential in a Community where disparities of income and living standards are once again tending to become as marked as they were before 1939. What measures

have been taken so far by the Community to reduce social inequalities and justify it proposing a "reinforcement" of its action?" asks Mr. Willy Dondelinger of the European Parliament.

In its reply the Commission mentions its efforts to achieve equal pay for men and women and, more generally, equal opportunities for women at work. At the same time the Commission has also undertaken or intends to undertake studies on certain aspects of the problem:

- low earnings groups in the Community;
- a study of the concept of minimum incomes for those who work and those who don't;
- a study of the problems involved in reducing the divergence of personal income levels and their repercussions on other objectives such as reducing unemployment and inflation.

The Commission will decide in the light of these studies whether it should make proposals aimed at reducing income inequalities.

++ COMMUNITY AID TO LORRAINE STEEL

Lorraine (France) is one of the areas of Europe most hit by the steel crisis. Between 1968 and 1978, the Commission allocated some FF 93 million to be spent on behalf of workers in the Lorraine steel industry. It is not possible however to say how that amount has been distributed between the different types of aid: occupational rehabilitation and training, tideover and topping-up allowances, resettlement allowances, etc. since the funds have not yet been exhausted. It is estimated that more than 15 698 workers have so far benefited from this aid. More than 79 million of the FF 93 million were committed between November 1977 and July 1978, the time when the crisis really started to bite.

Between 1975 and 1978 the Commission financed five projects which should lead to the creation of around 7 500 new jobs by 1983 in Lorraine. The Commission is ready to consider further applications from Lorraine for redeployment loans. The French authorities are preparing applications to this effect.

From 1975 to 1977 the European Regional Development Fund also supported thirty nine industrial investment projects in Lorraine, four of which were in the steel sector itself and involving a total allocation of FF 91.37 million.

++ PETROL PRICES

Since the oil crisis, petrol price fluctuations have often been observed in Community countries. Fixing the base year (index = 100) as January 1st 1972, the index for petrol prices (super grade) has moved as follows:

Germany (Superbenzin ARAL)	:	138.5
France (Paris zone)	:	195.9
Italy (Benzina auto supercarburante)	:	308.6
Netherlands (Superbenzine, prijszone 1)	:	146.8
Belgium	:	161.7
Luxembourg	:	143.1
United Kingdom (4 star, inner zone)	:	233.7
Ireland (Premium grade)	:	265.6
Denmark (Premiumbenzin)	:	197.2

++ CHLOROFORM AND CANCER

On the question of the possible toxicity of chloroform, the statement in Euroforum N° 38/78 (p. 5) should have read that there has been no evidence to indicate that chloroform is cancer-producing in man even though this is not the case with animals.

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CITY CENTRES : OFFICES OR DESERTS?

- Brussels : bulldozer renovation? In the north of Brussels, a whole area was flattened to make way for the "Manhattan project" - high rise blocks of offices. Though the scale of the project was reduced to a less ambitious size, it is still criticised for not relating to the centre of the town, its lack of respect for the existing style of architecture and above all for the massive demolition of housing to make way for it.

- Maastricht : historic reconstruction or pedestrian victory The renovation of the "Stokstraat" area is one of the most cited city planning successes in the Netherlands. Before the project started the area housed around 1 000 people, 90% of whom were in the low-income bracket. After consulting the residents (as is the tradition in Holland) they were all rehoused in new quarters and their previous district, with its great artistic and historic value, was completely renovated. This added great commercial value to the centre of the town and opened up the main part of the town which was otherwise densely built. Traffic was reorganised to give more room for pedestrians and the streets and open spaces were revitalised.

- Dublin : office invasion Up until recently the Irish capital managed to keep its own character and avoided badly thought-out building developments. Over the last fifteen years or so the centre has seen a growth in traffic and in office development. The change has been all the more brutal since it has not been compensated by the addition of new large capacity trunk roads nor the construction of pedestrian precincts.

- Copenhagen : more habitable homes In the centre of the Danish capital the residential areas have been improved by the extension of parking facilities and open spaces, and by the reduction of housing density through selective demolition of dilapidated buildings. The areas have remained intact and usable houses have been modernised.

These examples are taken from a Commission-sponsored study entitled "The Environmental problems in city centres". The study, by the "Mens en Ruimte" organisation, has examined urban planning policies in Community countries, the basic problems encountered and solutions tried to date. The conclusions presented do not

necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

The booklet is available from Community bookshops listed on the last page of this bulletin priced £7 (ref : EUR 5939, available in English and French).

The development of European city centres is clearly depicted in the examples selected by 'Mens en Ruimte', in particular the rue de la Loi which leads from the centre of Brussels to the headquarters of the European Commission. This large avenue is a main city highway flanked on either side by administrative buildings, insurance companies and banks. Day or night the street does not attract many strollers - the problem is mostly car exhaust fumes. The same situation can be found in the other major European cities which have similarly been remodeled by the rapid expansion of office blocks.

Whilst the growth of offices in itself is not negative, the fact that they have mostly been located in over-populated city centres has led to many problems, in particular the considerable increase in employees converging on the city centre every day, all arriving and leaving at the same time and all requiring city services.

The problem is that the centre can no longer meet the demands put upon it since it is losing many of its characteristic elements. In times gone by one could find homes, small retailers, craftsmen, administrations and industry, schools, offices, historic buildings and leisure areas (green open spaces and small quiet streets). Side by side today the varied nature of city centres has been eclipsed by one single function - offices. The traditional character of the centre has been transformed to accommodate office blocks.

Square foot profit

This expansion of the office block has caused a constant need for high rise buildings, centralised and functional, which can make the most of the land available in city centres. The return per square foot on office buildings is much higher than can be obtained by any other use and property developers are inclined to ask and get the highest price possible. As 'Mens en Ruimte' explain, other sectors

cannot compete with offices on the property market. This phenomenon is aggravated by the fact that offices are now spreading out and the city outskirts are becoming, in their turn, the object of speculators. The uncertainty about the future use of the land leads to rent increases, evictions, and the deterioration of buildings.

Why the office growth?

The continued demand for office space is linked to a number of factors : the continued growth of service industries, the growth of economic activity, and international trade. The free movement of capital amongst Community countries has certainly played a role, the study stresses. Not only are more and more firms setting up factories and offices in other countries, but increasingly they are investing in city centre buildings, either for their own use or for reasons of profit. In addition, the developers in those countries where land use is strictly controlled tend to direct their investments towards those countries with the least control. Urban problems thus spread from one European country to another since European countries have not yet reached agreement on city development regulations.

Root of the problem

It is evident, the authors maintain, that the expansion of office space and the density of road traffic which is a consequence are not the only causes of deterioration in city centres. The new office blocks do not themselves cause the bad environment and traffic could easily be better controlled. What has been lacking in most cases is effective city planning to bring about the necessary corrective measures. Only a development plan can control land use and integrate new structures with the old, and gauge the limits which the city can tolerate along with its transport and infrastructure requirements. In many towns an over lax attitude has led to chaos where modern offices clash with the traditional city atmosphere and where the heritage of the past is replaced by the banal image of modern commerce.

Solutions

'Mens en Ruimte' concludes its study with some policy guidelines based on the need to satisfy the needs of inhabitants, workers and tourists at the same time. Some of their ideas are:

- to oppose the destruction of "healthy" old buildings in city centres

Homes and offices can be saved and renovated at a much lower cost than building new ones. And the city centre environment would be much more pleasant to live in if the urban fabric is not destroyed with new buildings thrown up virtually at random. To keep the life of city centres going, a mixture of shops, homes and offices must be preserved.

- to enable people of all income levels and all ways of life to find lodgings in the centre

A large number of old houses occupied by low income families have been demolished and replaced by offices, roads and expensive homes. In city centres only two categories of residents are to be found : the upper middle classes and the poor or migrant workers relegated to quasi-ghetto quarters. The absence of low-cost modern buildings pushes the middle classes to the outer suburbs or the towns. By providing more accomodation in the heart of towns it would be possible to reduce commuter traffic, particularly for low paid workers in the service sector employed in city centres.

- to eliminate any factor which encourages landlords to let their property fall into disrepair (to have it bought up by public authorities)

The severe limitations put on the right of expropriation by public authorities in certain European countries and anti-slum policies have had the deplorable effect of creating slums rather than removing them.

- Coordinating land use policies and transport policies to balance new homes with suitable transport facilities.

As soon as large development projects are approved the developer should be obliged to install sufficient infrastructure at the same time. Factories and offices built on city outskirts should have suitable transport facilities, both in quality and density, to those in the centre so as to relieve pressures on the service sector in the centre.

- to develop an integrated strategy to reduce car traffic in city centres

For example limiting the expansion of trunk roads through cities, reducing car parking in certain zones, increasing the number of pedestrian zones, connecting them with public

transport and making them large enough for pleasant strolls etc. The reduction of cars in city centres will reduce air pollution which is reaching intolerable limits in many cities.

- involving all areas of the public at the beginning of the planning stage

Whether they are home owners, tenants, workers, landlords or tourists, the ideas and interests of all groups concerned should be taken into consideration. The debate should be opened with the city planners right at the beginning and not after the plan is drawn up and the decisions taken. Information, publicity and the use of tribunals and public reports constitute a necessary element of successful planning. Such consultation should increase the feeling of participation and responsibility.

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SCIENCE AND EUROPE'S RENAISSANCE

In one generation Europe has lost political control over one quarter of its people, one third of the earth's land mass and its available primary resources. Shortly after the year 2000 its population will fall below 5% of the world total, whilst in 1800 it exceeded 20%. This shift will reduce western Europe's demographic weight to the level possessed by France in the 18th century or equivalent to that of German speaking countries at the end of the 19th. In relation to the world's continent-states, Europe has little land, few mineral resources and little easily exploitable fossil energy. Its ecological situation is also fragile, Europe can only run its industries by importing numerous basic goods and its farm production still requires supplementary imports. Vital exports are equivalent to 25% of gross domestic product (GDP).

In relation to the USA and Japan, Europe has seen its technological lead diminish. It no longer leads development in major innovations such as space research, data processing, micro electronics etc. at a time when competition from low wage countries is causing a transfer of jobs in industries such as textiles, steel, watch making etc.

European under-development

This is the sombre outlook Europe currently faces according to Mr. Andre Danzin, president of the European Research and Development Committee (an advisory body to the European Commission).

Mr. Danzin's report sounds the alarm. There is a real danger of Europe returning to a state of underdevelopment, he states. How can this be avoided? Danzin's report entitled "Science and Europe's renaissance" stresses the internal force of European culture. It will probably be possible to find the necessary resources in this culture to change over to a new type of civilisation in which the levelling out of material goods consumption could be offset by a strong growth in cultural activities.

Technological progress could be the key to this new civilisation. The increasing scarcity of raw materials and energy is exerting a pressure to progressively introduce this type of change. One example is the increasing use of micro-processors, automation and 'robot' techniques which will increase time available for cultural and more do-it-yourself activities.

Therapeutic treatment

To push Europe towards this type of civilisation, and away from its decline, the report proposes "gentle therapeutic treatment" to step up research and development. Such a boost is urgent. For many years scientific research in Community countries has dropped off alarmingly in comparison to their principal competitors. This stagnation is explained both by the need to cut back on expenditure in difficult economic conditions, and by the disaffection for science whose social usefulness is contested. This is a double mistake, stresses Mr. Danzin. Only innovation can improve the economic situation and cuts should not be made in preparing for the future. Delays in the scientific field could have tragic consequences for employment. In the second place, science can contribute to man's well-being as effectively as in the past. Has it not opened the horizons of new sources of energy, the exploitation of the ocean's wealth, the sciences of life, the technologies of communication and data processing?

Insufficient European research

Insufficient in comparison to the volume of human and financial needs, European research is, with the exception of a few brilliant projects, disappointing in its effectiveness. The faults are now well-known : insufficient mobility of manpower, structures and objectives; difficulty in organising multidisciplinary teams; the fragile nature of operations involving public funds and/or industrial applications; lack of competition within national frontiers; a tendency for each European country, independent of the others, to look to the other side of the Atlantic for inspiration and fame; obstacles put in the way of originality in the financing for the launch of new products; and too many barriers to innovation, which can only thrive on very large markets (as with telecommunications, health, energy or armaments) etc.

Each time difficult objectives have been clearly presented to European engineers, the results have been conclusive as witnessed by Concorde, the Airbus, nuclear advancement, electronic weapons, etc.

This proves that supplementary effort would be beneficial particularly if it aims to correct the inadequacies of R & D policy in the Nine.

On the other hand, the strictly Community research effort is also very lacking. In 1976 the budget itself (62.8 million units of account or 180.7 million dollars) **only**

corresponded to 1.2% of the Nine's public research effort, or only 0.6% of the total effort (private research funds are virtually equal to public research funds).

Which programmes?

Research programmes vary according to political priorities. In drawing up his report Mr. Danzin has studied cases where scientific policy would be directed towards three goals:

- developing the "sciences of living" and of information:
- tackling survival problems and the problems of energy and techniques which increase industrial productivity;
- working for a better life by applying new techniques of communication and information and by studying the conditions required for growth based on the consumption of cultural goods and on more do-it-yourself activities.

Whatever the priorities, Community research must relate to the European identity.

What research?

In technology the most precious thing is the unexpected. Scientific "firsts" should be exploited without waiting, and rapidly commercialised. These phenomena do not easily fit into plans and centralised structures and Mr. Danzin recommends that projects be handled by multidisciplinary teams selected from throughout the Community. This can improve coordination amongst researchers and stimulate their competitive instincts. Projects financed by the Community should stimulate an association of efforts which will last much longer than the contracts themselves. This basic idea would be for research work to be concentrated in the weakest areas of European R & D, particularly at the juncture between the research and the development, i.e. between the scientific discovery and its practical application.

This proposal is based on the postulate "wealth in diversity". By looking at their differences, European researchers could find new and promising developments, through exchange of experience, success and setbacks. Such methods presuppose the existence of a small coordinating authority, subject to a priori and a posteriori control but free of bureaucratic tendencies familiar to Community activity regarding project execution.

In summary, the report stresses the importance of increasing resources and improving the cumbersome decision-making procedures which characterise the current situation in the Community's science and technology policy.

PRESS AND INFORMATION OFFICES OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

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