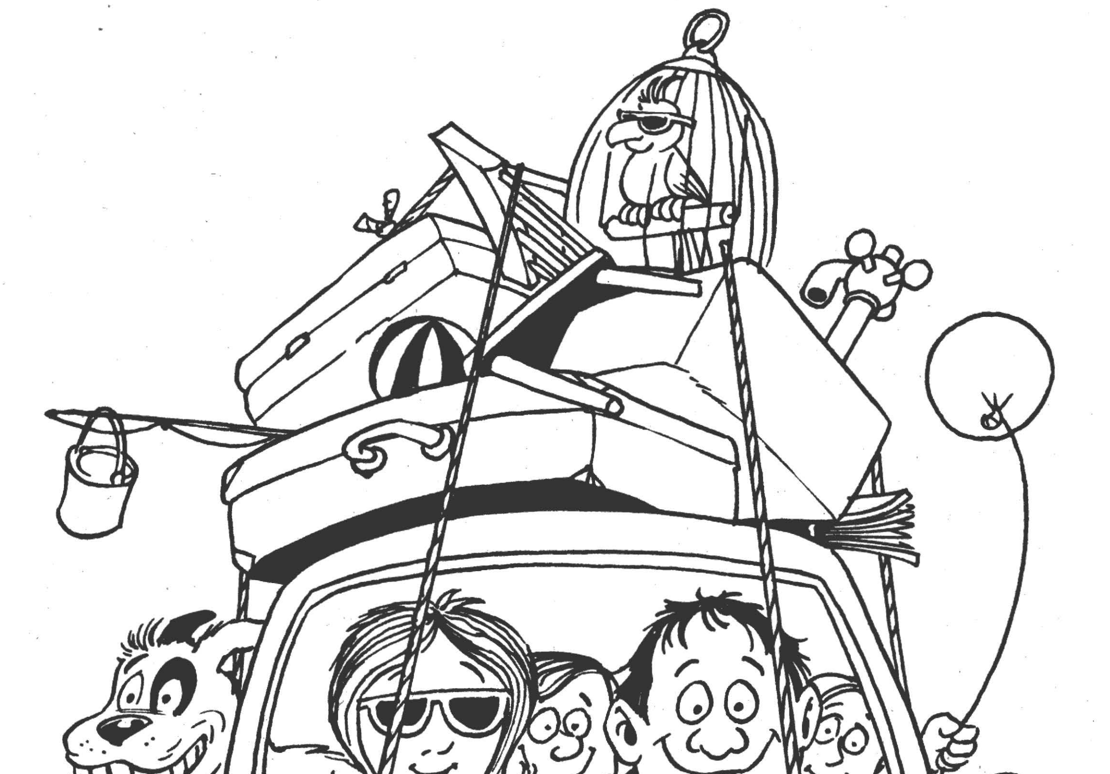
Euroforum



Cutting through red tape for a happier holiday. See page 3.

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Euroforum

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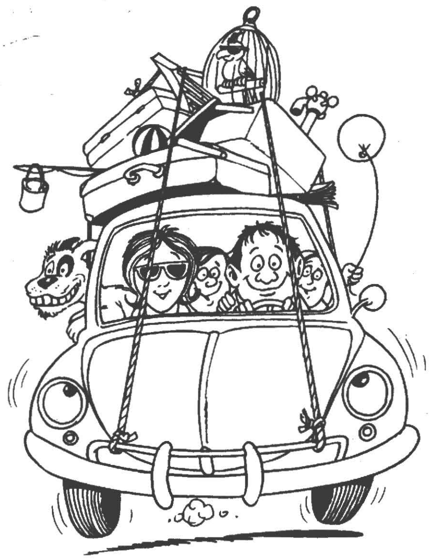

Cutting through red tape for a happier holiday

Sunny ski slopes, sandy beaches, lush green countryside, historic cathedral cities—Europe has got all this and a lot more to offer in the way of holidays.

And if you're planning to spend the summer break abroad in another European Community country it could be easier than you think. Would-be holidaymakers will benefit more than ever this summer from Community measures to help travellers.

Planning holidays is part of the fun. But things can always go wrong. Falling ill or having an accident in a foreign country is hardly calculated to boost holiday spirits. Not being able to speak the language makes it worse. A motoring accident can be expensive. But don't despair.

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Take medical costs, for example. Being presented with a huge medical bill for emergency treatment is one of those nightmares that would just about ruin anybody's idea of a good time.

Illness and accidents can't always be avoided. But the financial headaches that accompany catastrophes when abroad can. Provided you are insured through your own national insurance scheme, you are entitled to receive emergency medical care on the same terms as the people whose country you are visiting.

This doesn't mean that treatment will always be free. But it does mean that if you are taken ill on holiday or on a business trip abroad you will only have to pay a small proportion of the costs involved.

Insured workers or pensioners and their families who want to insure themselves against trouble abroad should get the European certificate E-111 from their nearest social security office before they go on holiday. The form isn't necessary if Community citizens are staying in the UK or if UK nationals are staying in Denmark or Ireland.

Sickness expenses will be paid by the insurance organisation at the place where you are staying in line with the system in force in that country.

In Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands and the UK medical care is given free by doctors approved by the insurance organisations. Medicines may also be provided free in the Netherlands and Ireland.

In other countries insured people have to make a contribution which they won't get back. Holidaymakers in Belgium, France and Luxembourg normally pay all or part of the costs incurred and are later reimbursed by the competent sickness insurance organisation in the place they are staying.

But how do you explain to a doctor what you think is wrong with you? This, again, is less of a problem than it used to be. Community regulations on the free movement of workers mean that Community citizens staying in a member country other than their own may well come across doctors and nurses of their own nationality.

Since the end of 1976 doctors and specialists throughout the Nine have been able to practise and provide medical services anywhere in the Community. Nurses will enjoy the same right starting next month.

The Community has existed now for more than 20 years. But frontier controls remain. The cross-frontier transport of passengers and goods is still badly hampered by checks and formalities. The European Commission has been trying to make things easier.

Most of us are familiar with long queues at frontier posts but they could be a lot longer were it not for Community harmonization of customs formalities for commercial vehicles. Because of the abolition of tariff barriers and other restrictions between the Nine, Community citizens are waved across its internal frontiers a lot more freely than they used to be.

However, frontier checks, and the queues they create, will not disappear until a true common market exists and as long as terrorists, drug smugglers and the like continue to operate.

There may not be any insurance to protect us against these enemies of society. But at least other forms of insurance are more obtainable. Drivers on holiday, for example, no longer need a 'green card'. Frontier officials no longer ask motorists to present it if they cross the Community or if they enter or leave Austria, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway or Finland.

Insurance companies within the Community must provide third party cover for motorists travelling to other Community countries and they have extended the principle to the other countries mentioned. Motorists wishing to be fully insured against accident should make their own private arrangements.

Insurance companies guarantee to settle claims in respect of accidents caused by vehicles normally based in another Community country or in one of the other countries mentioned. Anyone injured by a foreign car no longer needs to initiate proceedings for compensation abroad—which can be expensive.

The Community has also made an important contribution to road safety. Minibuses travelling in Europe with seats for more than nine people including the driver must be fitted with a tachograph. The tachograph also applies to lorries, by measuring the distance driven over a specific period it helps ensure against driver fatigue and thus helps to reduce the number of accidents.

Still on the subject of coaches, the Community is expected shortly to sign a convention with six other European countries which will cut down red tape at borders for holidaymakers using this form of transport.

If you like the country you holiday in so much that you would like to live there you are now free to do so. Community citizens are entitled to look for and take employment in any Member State.

You no longer need a work permit, you must be employed on exactly the same terms as workers of the host country, and you enjoy full trade union rights. You don't need to have a specific job arranged and you can claim unemployment and medical benefits while you are looking for a job. Families can go too.

If you're not thinking of staying, or, indeed, if you can't wait to leave, the Community has made coming home that bit more pleasant by increasing your duty-free allowances.

The amount of wine, spirits, tobacco and perfume that holidaymakers can take home duty-free has been increased considerably since the Community was established. You can check these allowance before you go on holiday at the airport, sea-port or other point of departure. If you holiday outside the Community you can also now bring home more duty-free goods than before.

The European Commission has been working on other measures designed to make travelling easier. The eventual introduction of a Community passport and a Community driving licence are expected to improve the flow of traffic across frontiers. (See also Focus, Page 15).

However, these may not become a reality for some time because, although the nine Community countries agree to the principles involved, many technical difficulties still have to be resolved.

For example, eight of the Nine agree that drivers in one Member State should automatically be entitled to obtain a licence in another if they went to live there but the UK argues that driving tests should first be standardised.

However, even if the driver's licence has been stalled, the Community has, we feel, done its bit to make your holidays more enjoyable.

Euroforum wishes you 'bon voyage' wherever you go.

TAXATION

High cost of dying varies between nine Member States

The death of a close friend or relative can be a rather unnerving time for most people. But once the funeral rites have been disposed of, the really trying time may only be just beginning. For it is then that the Inland Revenue comes on to the scene to assist in the carving up of the estate.

This can often mean that the next-of-kin have to cope with a mass of highly complicated legislation, which in many cases leads to complaints of a lack of foresight on the part of the unfortunate deceased.

As part of the general tax avoidance game, human beings seek ways of holding back as much as they can from the State. Some dodges can be gleaned from a recent OECD report which includes the nine Member States of the European Community in its statistics. An obvious way in Ireland and the United Kingdom is to make someone a gift of your valuable stamp collection during your lifetime rather than leave them to inherit it after your death.

The rate of tax on gifts in Ireland is only 75% of that levied on transfers at death. In the UK it is 50% for the first £100 000. But, if you suddenly have this flash of inspiration on your death bed, beware. If the present is given within 2 years in Ireland, and 3 in the UK, of your death, the full death rate applies. In the Netherlands, the time limit is only 6 months.

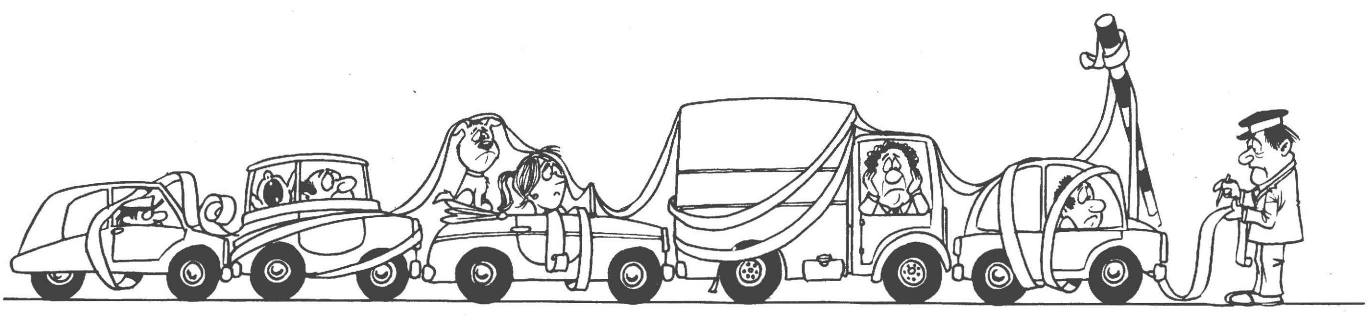
Another difference in death duties between the Nine concerns the treatment meted out to your family. In the Netherlands, for instance, members of the family are taxed at a lower rate than a non-member, on the basis that the latter's windfall is more unexpected and so should be prepared to pay more tax!

Even stranger logic would appear to be at the root of legislation in Belgium and Luxembourg. A surviving spouse of a childless marriage is treated less favourably than spouses with children.

But tax authorities are not completely without feeling and there are a number of legacies that are totally or largely exempt from death duties. Leaving your possessions to charities or other public bodies is one fairly common example.

In Denmark, the government has a discretionary power to charge a low rate. In Belgium you would again pay a low rate, while in the United Kingdom, gifts to charity made more than one year before you die are totally exempt.

In Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, political parties are treated on the same basis as charities. In Ireland, they would also be exempt from tax as such a donation is defined as being for the public benefit!



A comforting thought for British citizens—and the UK is the only member of the Nine to do this—is that death duties will not be charged if you die on, or as a result of, active service or service of a warlike nature.

Woodlands would appear to be a good area to put your money into if you are Italian. Provided they have been planted or improved according to legislation to favour mountain country, no death duties are paid when transferred to a member of the direct family.

Relief of up to 75% is also given in France, while in the United Kingdom, the payment of tax on woodlands transferred on death may be postponed until the trees are sold or given away.

Exemptions for household and personal effects are also fairly common. A German may transfer these assets, including works of art, cars and boats up to 40 000 DM (a little over £10 000) without paying tax, provided they go to his wife, children or grand-children.

Jewellery is one exception to this general rule. Only in Denmark is it totally exempt from tax. Other countries grant exemptions if its total value is not substantial: Germany (10 000 DM or around £2 750), Luxembourg (100 000 Lux Fr or around £1 500). In Ireland jewellery is exempt if it is of historic or national interest and is available for viewing by the public.

IN BRIEF

If we drove on gas instead of petrol, each tonne of petrol replaced by gas would mean a cut of 380 grams of lead released into the air and a 70% reduction in emissions of carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides.

The Community currently has petrol stocks to last about 100 days. While this is a drop from 113 days stocks at the end of last year it is above the figure of 90 days considered as the absolute minimum.

Petrol prices have increased by 24% so far this year. Energy Commissioner Guido Brunner reckons that the overall rise for 1979 should be around 20% on current estimates.

We have been asked to make clear that ECSC house building or improvement loans for workers in the coal and steel industries (Euroforum 7/79) are paid directly to the workers concerned and not to their firms.

INDUSTRY

Inventors' right to cross-frontier protection patented

It is one thing to have a good idea, another to market it; but perhaps the biggest problem is to prevent other people pinching it and reaping the rewards.

In the past, separate patents had to be purchased for each country in order to gain protection. This was both expensive and time-consuming for business. For individuals, the cost was almost prohibitive.

However, since October 1977 a European Patent Convention has been applied in 16 countries, including the Nine Member States of the Community. Nearly every West European country is included.

The headquarters of the European Patent Office is in Munich and its receiving office is in The Hague. It takes about 18 months to process a demand for a patent. The first European patents are expected to be issued this year.

A European patent will be valid for 20 years and for the moment, infringements within the Community will be dealt with under national law rather than through the European Court of Justice.

However, the Member States signed an agreement, the Luxembourg Convention, in December 1975 and its ratification by the nine parliaments is expected to be completed next year. Its purpose is to make sure that the European Patent Convention is applied uniformly throughout the Community.

The advantage of such a patent is that it will become both much cheaper and quicker to gain protection for new ideas. Instead of paying nine times, a patent can now be purchased for just over £1 000. This sum covers the cost of researching, examining and filing patent demands.

Last year, 15% of the requests for European patents were made by individuals and 36% by small and medium sized businesses. This shows that the patent is within reach of the smaller inventors.

The European Commission is also studying ways of promoting technological innovation, especially by individual inventors. It is looking at methods used by other countries such as Sweden.

Although it seems unlikely that the cost of patents can be reduced, financial and technical aid could be provided to help inventors gain maximum benefit from their inventions.

ENVIRONMENT

The Seveso legacy: legislation could reduce the risk

Anyone who personally witnessed, or who followed closely the story of the cloud of poisonous gas which erupted over a chemical factory at Seveso near Milan in July 1976 will be well aware of the dangers of the pollution which can be caused by an industrial accident.

An explosion two years earlier at a chemical works in Flixborough in the United Kingdom is yet another dramatic example of the risks involved in certain types of industrial installation.

While it seems unrealistic to expect that any industry can be 100% pollution-free, environmentalists continue to seek better protection from the risks of such industrial fallout.

Experts slot these risks into two categories, 'systematic' and 'possible'. The first is predictable and is consequently more manageable. The second can, like the Seveso accident, come like a bolt out of the blue.

In the case of systematic risks, there are clearly-defined dangers and, generally, a clearly-defined policy designed to cope with them. It is up to each government or regional authority to decide on acceptable and unacceptable risks, as, for example, in the case of nuclear power stations.

However, the area of possible risks is far less clearly-defined. The chance that an accident may occur may be low, but quite often the risk is not known at all. The aim must be to reduce the chances of accident to a minimum by increasing the reliability of those parts of an installation whose failure, provided it can be anticipated, could lead to an accident.

Fortunately, a great deal of progress has been made in reducing the blurs in this grey area, thanks to a relatively new science know as system security.

This is a method whereby all possible combinations of events which could produce an accident are analysed and their probabilities estimated separately, in order to identify the crucial points at which security must be improved. So far, these techniques have been developed to a large extent in the field of nuclear reactor safety, with varying results.

In an effort to reduce such risks as much as possible, the European Commission is working on a piece of draft legislation which it hopes will eventually lead to tighter standards being applied throughout the Nine Member States.

It envisages that an industrialist who is planning to build a factory which may involve a possible risk would be responsible for having a study made of the design, construction and operation of the installation to assess the probability of an accident occurring.

He would also be obliged to choose the most appropriate technology, in other words the technology presenting the least possible risk. In addition to adequate security equipment and alarm systems, he would have to prepare contingency plans to cater for a leak, a fire, an explosion or other form of accidental pollution which threatens to contaminate the environment either inside or outside the factory.

The same legislation would oblige an industrialist to inform his personnel of any dangers presented by the substances involved in the production process, make sure that all employees know how to react in the case of accident, and inform the appropriate authorities immediately in the case of an accident and supply them with all the information they need to combat it.

In the case of installations using highly-toxic chemicals the owner should be obliged to complete a formal notification to the authorities, which would include all the information necessary to check that all the obligations outlined above have been fulfilled, right down to the name of the person in the plant in charge of accident prevention.

However, not all the responsibility would rest on the shoulders of the industrialist. Modern technology is, after all, the product of the development of society and it is for society, or rather its appointed authorities, to make judgment on the acceptability of a risk once all the facts are made known.

Because of this, the Commission believes that the authorities in each Member State should carry out their own evaluation where a possible risk is notified to them, to demand any modifications necessary to minimize the risk, to carry out regular inspections and to inform the public of the risks involved and of the measures taken to reduce them to a minimum.

The proposed legislation will be concerned primarily with new installations but it is hoped to extend it eventually to existing plants as well.

In addition, the Commission would like to set up a data bank in which experience of these types of precautions can be pooled and put at the disposal of any national authority.

Risks cannot be eliminated from life, but they can often be foreseen and reduced. The implementation of the Commission's ideas would go a long way towards ensuring that, barring unavoidable human error, accidents of the Seveso type will remain without parallel within the Community.

LIFESTYLE

Beer drinkers' toast of the future may be to cheaper wine

Wine drinkers in the United Kingdom, Belgium and the Netherlands could be in for a pleasant surprise if a recent European Commission proposal is adopted by the Nine's governments.

It could effectively bring down the cost of a bottle of wine in these countries. French and Italian wine growers could also relish the future as sales shoot up.

The Commission has suggested that there should be some link between the rate of excise duty charged on a pint of beer and a glass of wine. As any experienced drinker knows, the strength of a bottle of wine tends to be three times that of an equivalent amount of beer. Thus the duty should be no more than three times, it is argued.

Most of the Nine's excise rates fall within this ratio, but in Belgium and the Netherlands the excise on wine is slightly greater than three to one compared with beer. Wine drinkers in the UK, however can argue that they are the hardest done by. They pay almost five times more duty for their tipple than their beer-supping brethren.

This has led to charges that the government is protecting its own domestic beer industry against competition from foreign wines. The seriousness of these allegations has prompted the Commission to open legal proceedings against the government before the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg. There are cases involving other governments too.

This formula of relating the rate of excise duty to the strength of the brew will, the Commission hopes, break the deadlock over its long-standing proposals to harmonize the structure—but not the rates—of duty on beer, wine and spirits. The latter are, however, exempt from the ratio.

The Commission argues that a harmonized structure is necessary to ensure fair competition between different drinks so that the customer's taste, and not the tax, would dictate his choice of tipple.

However, its proposals have been deadlocked because national governments have, not surprisingly, shown a bias in favour of whichever domestic industry is stronger—beer in northern Europe and wine in the south.

How, then, are the governments likely to react to the latest Commission proposals?

They might decide to raise the duty on beer until the correct ratio is established. But this is considered a definite vote loser.

Reducing the duty on wine could be preferable.

This would have other notable advantages apart from purely pleasurable ones. It would help to prevent a recurrence of Europe's wine lake. What's more, doctors and health farms could see an upsurge in business as they are called upon to cure the outbreak of liver complaints that may well follow an increase in wine drinking among north Europeans.

Who knows, it might even help to promote greater understanding among Europeans as traditional beer drinkers learn to appreciate what heavy wine drinkers in France are talking about when they complain about 'crise de foie'!

Europeans' life expectancy shows steady increase

The days of our age are three score years and ten, says the Book of Common Prayer. But, like many universal truths, it is slightly blurred at the edges!

If you are an average male living in the European Community you can expect to live to just over 68 years, according to the latest Eurostat figures. An improvement on twenty years ago when a bookmaker would have given you long odds on passing 64. The healthiest men appear to be in the Netherlands and Denmark where the average is 71.

Women are more hardy. Their average life expectancy is 75 with the Dutch and the Danes again leading the field on 78 and 77 years respectively.

Given that women tend to live some six or seven years more than men, it is not unusual that of the 258 million people in the Community, well over half (133 million) are women.

But, perhaps surprisingly at first glance, it is women who are more likely to have a wider choice of partners in the marriage stakes. Men are more numerous in the 0 to 44 age bracket, and it is only thereafter that early male deaths bring women into the numerical ascendancy.

This is particularly marked for our senior citizens. 21 million women are over 65, while there are only 14 million men in this category. Women over 85 (1.5 million) outnumber men three to one.

Male supremacy in the early years is assured by 100 000 more boys being born than girls. However the birth rate for both sexes combined has fallen from 4.1 to 3.2 million over the last twenty years.

The highest birth rate in the Community is in Ireland, where there are 21 babies per thousand of the population. Elsewhere it is around 12-14, except for Germany, where the current figure of 9 babies per thousand is only half what it was twenty years ago.

Another interesting statistic now appearing in demographic tables is the number of illegitimate births in a country. Denmark has the dubious honour of leading the field here. For every 1 000 babies, 259 are born out of wedlock. The next highest is the United Kingdom with 95, while in Belgium, the Netherlands and Italy the figure is nearer 30.

The population of the Community appears to be shrinking at both ends. Not only is the number of births decreasing, but the number of deaths is rising. In 1960 2.5 million died. By 1976 the figure had reached 2.8 million.

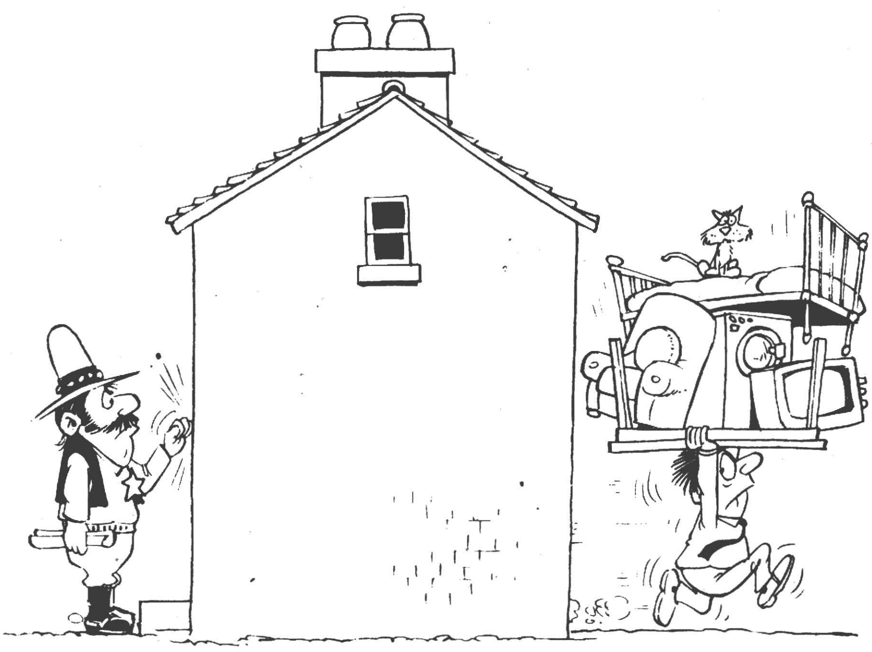
Different values and behaviour patterns are now reflected in the statistics on marriages and divorces. The marriage rate in the Community has fallen from 7.4 per thousand twenty years ago to 6.4 per thousand.

But while weddings may be losing their attraction, those who do decide to take the plunge are a little younger nowadays than their parents were. Nevertheless, they are not all that much more adventurous. Over the last quarter century the average age for first marriages has dropped by only one year —to 25 for men and 23 for women.

But you can't mention marriages without mentioning divorces, which have increased almost threefold since 1960, from a rate of 0.5 per thousand to 1.3 per thousand.

The highest rates are in Denmark and the United Kingdom where just over two people per thousand get a divorce.

THE LAW



Making it easier to keep in touch with your money

Bankruptcies are not very pleasant, especially when they happen to you or to someone who owes you money. Worse still if your debtor lives in another country.

It was pointed out in the European Parliament recently that, under the law as it stands someone, in Britain, for instance selling his goods to a client in Belgium cannot reserve his right of ownership if the latter goes bankrupt.

Such a case would be settled by Belgian law which does not grant the seller the right to recover his goods in the case of insolvency.

But the Nine are working together to draw up a 'Draft Bankruptcy Convention'. This would set out to regulate certain aspects of insolvency in the Community.

It would be supplementary to a Judgements Convention which dates from 1968 but which does not cover bankruptcy. The convention was signed by the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark last year but has not yet been ratified.

Because the practices and law surrounding insolvencies are so complex, it was decided to deal with bankruptcies separately.

THE BUDGET

Better share-out of Community cake is 1980 budget aim

For one reason or another, the European Community's budget has been very much in the news in recent months. First, there was the row between the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers over the adoption of this year's budget. Then there has been the growing call from the British government for a reduction in its budgetary contributions.

Now the procedure of drawing up next year's budget has begun and the European Commission, which is responsible for drafting the budget, has put forward its estimates for 1980.

It considers that 13 billion European units of account (approximately £8.7 billion pounds) will need to be paid out to run the Community next year. This includes financing the various common policies and covering general running costs.

The Community's budget is, like national budgets, paid for by the taxpayer. However, it costs him far less.

For every pound we earn, 32 pence on average goes into government coffers. Less than one penny goes to the Community budget.

If the budget the Commission has proposed for 1980 is adopted it will work out at around 60p (1 EUA) a week for each Community citizen, taxpayer or not. That is not much more than the price of a pint of beer or a packet of cigarettes.

The Commission's main strategy when drawing up the budget, which sees a 10% increase over this year's figure, was to concentrate on sectors of current concern to the Community rather than on sectors of traditional expenditure.

The need to reduce structural imbalances, in other words, gaps between prosperous and declining or backward regions, is clearly recognized. Consequently, important increases have been proposed to the Regional and Social Funds (increases of 22% and 42% respectively) and to the guidance section of the Farm Fund which is designed to modernize agriculture.

On the other hand, it is recommending that money for farm price support policies should be proportionately reduced to discourage over-production and thus to help keep down surpluses.

Next year will be the first time that the entire Community budget will be financed from what are known as 'own resources'. These come from the receipts from customs duties, agricultural levies and a percentage of value added tax collected in the Nine Member States which pass directly into the Community's budget.

The budget forecasts presented by the Commission will now be discussed by both the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers before they are finally adopted.

IN BRIEF

Unit labour costs in industry in the European Community rose more slowly last year than in 1977. The rise was 6.9% compared with 8.3% the previous year.

1978 exports up but Community still buys more than it sells

The European Community is the largest trading group in the world, accounting for around 40% of total world trade. Last year, it continued to expand its trading role.

Its exports to all third countries rose by 6% to total around £117 billion. Imports rose by only 4.1% to stand at £120 billion.

As a result, the trade balance improved strongly from a deficit of £4.7 billion to around £3 billion.

The improvement in the trade balance was mainly due to a £6 billion reduction in our trade deficit with developing countries. This was particularly true of the OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) group. The improvement was due as much to an increase in exports (up 7.7%) as to a fall in imports (5.3%) mostly oil.

Our position towards the rest of the industrialized world was less healthy. A £2.4 billion surplus in 1977 was replaced by an almost £2 billion deficit last year. This was mainly brought about by a fall in our trade surplus—from £7 billion in 1977 to £4.3 billion last year—with the seven European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries, as well as continuing deficits with Japan and the United States, both around £3.3 billion.

A more detailed look at some of these figures published by Eurostat, highlights the importance to the Community of its trade with the South Mediterranean countries, with whom the Community has a number of preferential agreements. A large part of our fresh fruit, some clothing and various minerals come from this part of the world.

Israel, for instance, is a major supplier of juicy oranges (374 000 tonnes last year), while another 250 000 tonnes came from Morocco. Clementines are another Moroccan speciality—we bought close on 100 000 tonnes in 1978. But Israel is again out on its own when it comes to grapefruit (209 000 tonnes) with its nearest competitor, Cyprus, providing 45 000 tonnes.

For tomatoes we depend largely on Morocco, which exports just over 100 000 tonnes annually, while potato sales are of major importance to the Cypriots. They sold us 134 000 tonnes last year, with Egypt (88 000 tonnes) and Morocco (45 000) also being major suppliers.

The Community buys a great deal of its oil—36 million tonnes last year—from another Mediterranean country, Libya. But this was a significant 6.4% reduction in volume terms on the previous year's figure. At the same time, the value of the European unit of account appreciated against the US dollar, in which oil prices are quoted, resulting in an effective reduction in the price of Libyan oil of about 10%.

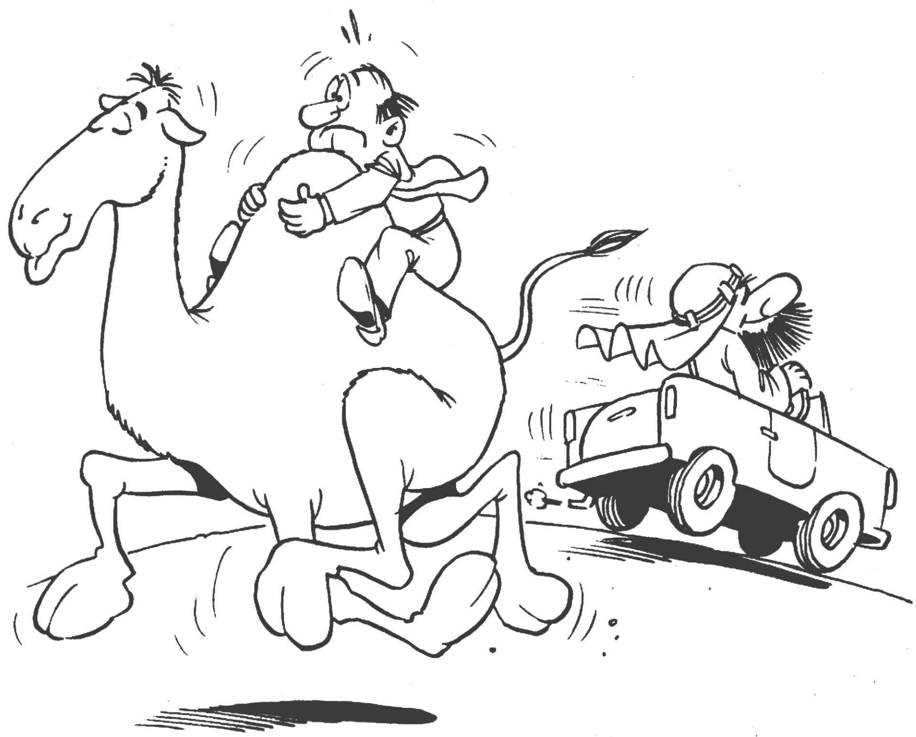
In general, for all the South Mediterranean countries—other suppliers are Algeria, Egypt, Syria and Tunisia—the price of imports of energy (oil and gas) has fallen by over 9% in each of the last two years. This has more than outpaced the 3.6% rise in the volume of these imports.

We still rely heavily on Morocco for calcium phosphates, importing over 4.7 million tonnes last year. Talk of diamonds and most people think automatically of the Kimberley fields in South Africa. It is often forgotten that Israel is also a significant exporter of diamonds. Last year the Community imported some £180 million worth of Israeli diamonds. This represented 24% of its total imports from Israel.

Cotton and olive oil are two of the other major items the Community purchases from Mediterranean countries. Cotton comes mainly from Egypt (22 000 tonnes) and Syria (41 000). Olive oil is a major Tunisian export (42 000 tonnes last year) while Morocco sells 3 000 tonnes on the Community market.

A further feature of the 1978 results is that the Community's trade with the 57 ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) States, to which it has been linked since 1975 under the Lomé Convention, moved into surplus, having been about balanced in 1977.

Exports to the ACP rose in value terms by 2.1% to £8.5 billion, and imports fell by 4.8% to £7.9 billion.



'Frozen' Community aid released to post-Amin Uganda

With the removal of Idi Amin as President, from power, urgent steps are being taken to put the Ugandan economy back on its feet after eight years of neglect.

As we already reported, the European Community recently granted £200 000 of emergency aid. Since then, officials from the European Commission have gone to Kampala to help draw up a larger short-term Community aid programme worth about £13 million.

Under the 1975 Lomé Convention, Uganda was expected to receive around £50 million over a five-year period. But, in protest against the atrocities of the Amin regime, most of the aid was frozen. This means there is a substantial amount of aid available.

The short term programme will aim at meeting Uganda's basic economic needs and restoring essential public services.

A large part of the aid will be used to help restore communications badly dislocated during the fighting. Road and rail networks will be repaired especially sections used for food transport. Lorries, spare parts, fuel and technicians will be provided to help transport basic foodstuffs to Kampala.

Uganda also needs aid in restoring basic infrastructure. Kampala's water and electricity supply systems need repairing, for instance.

Community aid could be provided to help restore agricultural production. Seeds, fertilizers and pesticides could be given to farm cooperatives.

The Community's food aid programmes in Uganda, which have been blocked for the past couple of years, could be speedily released. About 500 tonnes of powdered milk and 100 tonnes of butter-oil are currently being delivered. There are also 200 tonnes of butter-oil waiting for delivery in Mombassa.

Uganda is also in need of medical aid—medicine and doctors—to help combat outbreaks of disease in various part of the country.

The remaining £36 million of Community aid available under the Lomé Convention will be used for longer-term development projects. Feasibility studies have already been completed for three projects.

£40 million aid from Community for African refugees

Food aid, emergency aid and educational scholarships are some of the major ways in which the European Community has helped refugees in Africa in recent years. Since 1976 it has contributed around £40 million to this cause.

The latest grant of around £20 000 was used to help promote a greater understanding of this growing problem. It covered part of the costs of the Pan-African Conference on Refugees organized by the Organization of African Unity and the UN Economic Commission for Africa. This was held in Arusha last month.

Previous examples of Community help for refugees in Africa include £25 million of food aid (mainly cereals and milk products) to Zimbabwe, Angola and Zaire.

Under the Lomé Convention, which links the Nine with 57 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, around £50 000 has been given in grants to refugee students from Namibia and around £350 000 to the UN Institute for Namibia in Lusaka, the Zambian capital. The universities of Botswana and Swaziland, which receive an increasing number of these refugees, have been given grants totalling around £2.5 million.

The Community's emergency aid is paid directly to the countries providing shelter for the refugees. In this way, £50 000 went to Botswana, £1.7 million to the Comoros Islands and £175 000 to the Congo.

But the lion's share—almost £10 million—has been allocated to the UN High Commission for refugees to help refugees in the Horn of Africa and the central and southern parts of the African Continent.

Aid to Lomé States: a small price for Europeans to pay

European Community countries will be contributing a little over £400 million this year to their partners in the Lomé Convention.

The Convention, which links the Nine with more than 50 States in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific in a trade and aid pact, expires early next year and is currently being renegotiated.

£400 million may seem like a lot of money, but its impact on our tax returns is negligible. Each Community country pays a share of the total amount according to an agreed scale. France and Germany each contribute a quarter, for instance, while Luxembourg gives 0.2%.

The average cost of this aid is a mere £2 (3 European units of account) annually for each European. Belgians contribute most on a per capita basis—£2.6 (3.9 EUA)—and the Irish the least (65p—1 EUA). The inhabitants of all other Community countries supply anything between 2.5 EUA (Germany) and 3.4 EUA (the Netherlands), except in Luxembourg (1.2 EUA) and the United Kingdom (2 EUA).

IN BRIEF

Transport Commissioner Richard Burke makes no bones about the importance of his sector, which has been slow-moving in the past. He pointed out the other day that it accounts for around 5% of the Community's GNP, 33% of public and 11% of private investment.

The Community's industrial production is improving, according to the latest figures for February which show a 2.3% improvement on the previous month.

The Community is giving £200 000 to the tiny Caribbean island of St. Vincent to help victims of the recent volcano there. It is contributing around £30 000 to the World Health Organization's aid for cholera victims in Mozambique.

Greece, Nine sign on dotted line for 1981 accession

Greece was formally accepted as the tenth Member State of the European Community on 28 May when the Treaty for its accession was signed in Athens in a ceremony attended by one Head of State and five Prime Ministers.

The signing in the Zappeion Palace came almost four years after Greece applied for membership and was the culmination of three years of hard negotiations between the Greek Government and representatives of the Nine which ended only a month ago. The Treaty must now be ratified by all 10 Parliaments, a process that is expected to take many months, enabling Greece to join the Community on 1 January 1981.

The two-hour ceremony signified a personal triumph for the Greek Prime Minister, Mr Constantine Karamanlis, who described it as 'a historical moment which marks the end of a long narch and which solemnly seals the fusion of our destiny with that of Europe'.

It was Mr Karamanlis who, as far back as 1961, first opened the way for eventual Greek membership when, as Prime Minister, he successfully applied for associate membership. This was designed to ease Greece towards full membership through a gradual elimination of trade and other barriers.

This association agreement was frozen between 1967 and 1974 during the seven-year tyranny of the colonels' regime but was resurrected soon after the dictatorship was toppled and Mr Karamanlis returned to power.

Mr Karamanlis articulated his long-held belief in Greece's future within the Community at the signing ceremony when he said: 'A steady vision and an unswerving belief in the necessity of a united Europe and in the European destiny of my country have at long last, after 18 years, found their justification'.

The attendance at the ceremony included President Giscard d'Estaing of France, which currently holds the presidency of the Community, the Prime Ministers of Italy, Ireland, Luxembourg and Belgium, and a number of government ministers of the Nine.

Roy Jenkins, President of the European Commission, who also attended, told the gathering that 'Greece is at once the oldest and the newest member of the Community of Europe'.

The glitter of the ceremony in the 3 000-year-old city which has contributed so much to European civilization did not dazzle those present into forgetting the difficult economic path which lies ahead of Greece as she adjusts herself to full Community membership.

However, Greece will have a transitional period of five years to attune herself to the economic rhythm of a Community where the gross domestic product is 2½ times its own.

In addition, a number of concessions were made by the Community negotiators during the final phase of the accession talks to make this adjustment as easy as possible for Greece.

The Greeks, moreover, believe that their economy is in good shape and point to a growth rate of 6%, an inflation rate which, though currently around 11%, is falling, and an unemployment level of 2%, though this is not strictly comparable with Community statistics.

EMPLOYMENT

Workers' rights will be protected when a firm goes bankrupt

Bankruptcies are no pleasure for anyone and in the current difficult economic situation the mortality rate for business is uncomfortably high.

Creditors and suppliers are frequently left holding unpaid bills and sometimes have to settle for less than the full amount owed. But all too often the forgotten element in such corporate failures in the employee.

The unfortunate workers of a failed firm are often paid their severance pay only after creditors get what is due to them. Sometimes they receive nothing at all. Even if they do get an indemnity and benefit from unemployment insurance, they are often still out of pocket.

What happens to pension rights, accumulated holidays, seniority built up with the defunct firm and a number of other hard-earned rights that are either cut off completely or suddenly jeopardized by the bankruptcy?

In order to remedy some of the problems, many governments have enacted laws which seek to protect these accumulated rights for workers. But up until recently not all countries in the European Community had such protection. This void will be filled by a recent agreement of the Nine's Ministers for Employment and Social Affairs to set up a mechanism to guarantee the unpaid claims of workers of an insolvent firm.

Under the new system, which is due to be fully operational within three years, each government will set up an official institution to guarantee payment of employees' claims in a case of insolvency. However, there will be a ceiling on such payments.

Employers will have to contribute to the guarantee institution in each country unless the government chooses to finance it out of public funds.

The new legislation marks an important step in the implementation of the Community's programme for the protection of workers' rights.

AGRICULTURE

Gundelach repeats warning against dairy surpluses

The need to cut back the European Community's dairy surpluses is a message which the Agricultural Commissioner, Finn Olav Gundelach, has been hammering in recent months.

He spelt it out again in London recently when he told an audience that this was the most serious problem facing the Community's common agricultural policy.

He warned that a failure to do something about it could inflict heavy damage not only on the CAP in particular but on the Community in general.

Although the milk surplus is already a major drain on the Community's funds, it looks as if it will get even worse. Production is 2½% more than last year's already high figure and the butter mountain now stands at 300 000 tonnes.

If the Nine's ministers fail to grasp the nettle and reduce milk production, a crisis is inevitable Mr Gundelach warned.

He added: 'I can foresee that when the crisis comes it will take the form of demands for quotas or some radical reduction in the level of dairy price support. A quota system would spell doom to the necessary move towards a more efficient agriculture'.

FISHERIES

Green light for aid to Irish and Danish protection fleets

The European Commission has given the go-ahead for a massive investment from the Community's funds in ships and aircraft to be used by the Irish and Danish Governments for fishery protection.

The Irish Government intends to buy five coastguard vessels, two helicopters and five reconnaissance aircraft, as well as to lease other craft.

The total investment between now and 1982 will be around £Ir.41 million, of which the Community will put up £Ir.30 million.

The total Danish investment will be around £23 million, of which around £15 million will come from Community funds.

REDUCING BARRIERS

Cutting the cost of living for the handicapped

The blind and the deaf have enough handicaps to cope with without having to pay needlessly high prices for artificial aids which help them through life.

Because of this, the Council of Ministers recently agreed that all tariffs or customs duties be removed for a number of special products for the handicapped imported into the Community.

This measure is the fulfilment of an international agreement made within the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

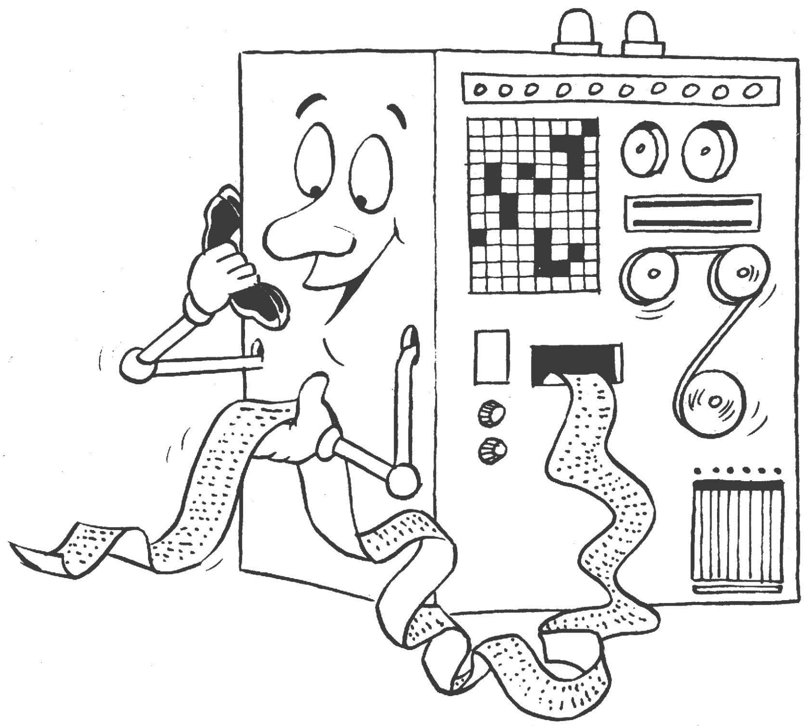
It covers such items as white canes and braille paper for the blind, hearing aids and other special hearing equipment for the deaf. Products such as braille watches or electronic guidance devices for the blind and persons with impaired vision are also included in the duty-free category.

The only exception to this special status, which is designed to reduce the cost of such aids for the handicapped, is when similar products are already manufactured in the Community.

This preferential treatment also applies to goods imported by charitable or other institutions who then lend them or give them to the handicapped without charge.

IN BRIEF

The European Investment Bank, the Community's long-term lending institution, has made a loan worth £Ir10 million to Ireland's Electricity Supply Board for the construction of a power station in Cork.



Dial-a-computer breakthrough for Euro information

With increasing frequency in the coming years, anxious researchers and scientists throughout Europe will be trying to get Diane on the line.

This popular lady is not however, an alluring siren who has captivated the hearts of today's Einsteins, promising a little relaxation away from their laboratories or their wives.

First of all, don't be misled by the name—it's an acronym which stands for Direct Information Access Network for Europe. But even if that robs Diane of some of her glamour and reveals her true identity as a computer, it doesn't mean she isn't without considerable appeal.

This new European network for computerized data is a unique and adventurous undertaking. It means the interconnection of numerous different national users and sources of information all linked through the most advanced computer and telecommunications devices.

This doesn't mean simply plugging in your nearest computer, tapping out questions and just leaning back waiting for a mechanized fountain of knowledge to provide your answer. There are a host of intricate technical problems to overcome before all these modern machines can talk to each other.

However, virtually instantaneous information is already available in a number of highly sophisticated areas at numerous different facilities in the Community and other neighbouring countries. For instance a researcher at the British Museum Library or the Supreme Court in Rome can request information that may be contained in the memory banks of the European Space Agency, the German Institute for Medical Documentation or another source connected to the system.

This new and elaborate system is part of the Euronet computer network which has been studied and established under the sponsorship of the European Commission.

For a number of years it has been working in cooperation with national telecommunications authorities and other research and scientific facilities which will form part of this expanding link-up of computer data banks and users. Euronet equipment has just been delivered to sites in Amsterdam, Brussels, Copenhagen, Dublin, Frankfurt, London, Luxembourg and Paris.

The planning group which has programmed the development of this system is also working on the possibility of incorporating data networks in non-Community countries such as Switzerland, Spain, Sweden and others. There is also the possibility of an interconnection with American networks, but technical difficulties will probably require some two years to resolve, according to experts on the Diane staff in Brussels.

This team is made up of officials and computer experts from a number of different Community countries whose job it is to provide a new information tool to advance science and technology and even other disciplines throughout Europe.

In the past, despite the global character of the computer and information revolution, there were few general European-scale networks that could provide a low-cost link between otherwise-isolated sources of information. The aim of the Euronet and Diane effort is to eliminate these problems so that researchers and data banks can work together to take full advantage of this 20th century revolution.

ENERGY

JET: pointing the way to secure and safe supplies

A project which could solve many of the European Community's energy supply problems in the next century has been officially launched.

Energy Commissioner Guido Brunner recently laid the foundation stone at Culham in the United Kingdom of the main experimental building of the Joint European Torus project—JET for short.

The JET project is a major part of a nuclear fusion research programme being carried out by the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom).

The laboratory is expected to be completed and the doughnut-shaped experimental device, which will be one of the most powerful of its kind in the world, finally assembled in 1982.

With increasing concern now being voiced about the security of Europe's energy supplies, a great deal of hope is being placed in JET to lead the way in guaranteeing that our future needs are met.

Fusion—the source of energy of the sun—is a form of energy which involves fewer problems of radioactivity than present day reactors and which promises almost unlimited supplies of fuel.

Unlike the more common fission, which involves splitting the atoms of heavy nuclei like uranium, fusion involves smelting together light atoms like hydrogen.

There is no fear that fuel will run out, as there is with fossil fuels such as oil. The key elements needed for fusion are deuterium and lithium which are found throughout the world in virtually inexhaustible quantities.

JET will cost about £20 million a year to operate and this will be paid for by the nine Community Member States with contributions also from Sweden and Switzerland. If all goes well, it could be followed in the late 1980s by what is being called Super-JET, which would cost about £500 million at today's prices.

JET is to date the largest single joint scientific venture of the Nine and is the first Community body to be sited in the United Kingdom.

RESEARCH

More cooperation at Community level can pay dividends

Technological progress, whether it covers drugs, labour-saving devices or space travel, does not happen overnight. It is the result of long, painstaking research and involves the investment of huge sums of money.

The work is often unspectacular, involving perhaps years of backroom effort. Success is often elusive and results cannot simply be guaranteed by man hours and money.

Often there is a tendency to neglect this vital area of activity and allocate funds for more visible and immediate needs. But, without constant research and development (R&D), the European Community economy would stagnate and we would gradually be overtaken by developing countries where raw materials are more plentiful and labour cheaper.

Although the Community accounts for about 20% of world R&D expenditure and 12% of research workers, it lags behind the United States. This is because European research is split nine ways and so does not benefit from the same concentration of effort.

However, R&D expenditure by the Nine Member States has risen considerably over the past 20 years. Between 1967 and 1975 expenditure rose from £10 to £13.4 billion, nearly 4% a year on average.

The increase was highest in Denmark, Italy and Germany (about 7%) and comparatively low in France and the UK (about 2%).

Measured in terms of gross domestic product to show research intensity, the leading countries are Germany, France, UK and the Netherlands. Their R&D expenditure in terms of GDP is about 2% which is around double that in the other Member States.

Germany is the exception in that it has achieved a high rate of growth in R&D expenditure despite having a high intensity research rate. However this is still behind the US (2.2%).

Does this mean, then, that our American competitors are pouring far more money and effort into research and that American industries will soon leave Europe's far behind? Not really.

If military research is excluded then Community and US expenditure would be roughly equal. This is because military R&D expenditure represents 27% of the total in the US but only 10% in the Community.

This does not mean, however, that Europe can be complacent. Far from it. Yet it seems unlikely that there will be much increase in national R&D expenditure in the medium-term and this is where the existence of the Community can help.

The main aims of national research are likely to be the following:

— developing advanced technology industries, such as data-processing, and job-creating industries such as electronics and electrical engineering.
— improving health standards and environmental protection so as to meet social needs.
— greater international independence in vital sectors such as energy, raw materials and agriculture.

The allocation of limited resources among numerous objectives, however, will become steadily more difficult for individual Member States. There will be a growing incentive to coordinate research work between the Nine so as to achieve more fruitful results and a Community framework already exists to assist this joint effort.

As we reported in Euroforum 6/79, the European Commission recently made proposals to the Council of Ministers for a new multiannual research programme covering the period 1980-83. The cost of the programme would be £370 million, of which nearly half would be spent on nuclear safety. This would concentrate on the safety of nuclear reactors (all the more urgent after the Harrisburg accident), plutonium fuel cycles and the handling of radioactive waste.

Now the Commission has come up with two further programmes which willl be discussed by the Council of Ministers for R&D when they meet in Luxembourg on 26 June.

The two programmes, one for the development of nuclear fusion (see our story on JET) and the other for the development of new forms of energy, reflect the Community's concern about the problems of energy, which absorbed about 70% of the Community's R&D budget of £170 million last year.

The Commission is asking the Council for around £245 million for the continuation and extension of the Community's nuclear fusion programme, which integrates the total Community effort in this area and also embraces that of Sweden and Switzerland. JET is an important part of this programme.

The Community's quest for new forms of energy began in earnest in 1973 after the energy crisis with approval of the first research programme in this field. Part of this programme is the construction of a solar power plant in Sicily which we mentioned in an earlier edition of Euroforum.

The Commission is hoping to extend this effort and is asking the Council to approve funds of around £84 million, compared with around £40 million for the previous programme.

The Community's budget for research now amounts to around 2% of the combined R&D budgets of the Member States. However, its role as catalyst and coordinator has already made a contribution that points to money well-spent.

FOCUS

European passport still has some frontiers to cross

A Dane, motoring south to warmer climes for his annual holiday, could cross as many as four or five national frontiers before reaching his destination on the French or Italian Mediterranean coasts. Each one, especially in July and August, would mean queues and probably long delays.

Fortunately, not many of us cross as many boundaries as this when we go on holiday, but, for the many thousands of us who do take holidays in Community countries other than our own, a major irritation would be removed from the journey if we could in future travel from one Community country to another each without each time having to stop to produce identity documents.

To those familiar with long queues for passport checks at airports, ports and road frontiers, such a state of affairs might seem an impossible dream but it was in fact proposed by European Community leaders as long ago as 1974 when, meeting in Paris, they put forward the idea of a European Passport Union.

In its final stage, the Passport Union as proposed at the Paris Summit would mean that citizens of the nine Member States would be able to travel anywhere within the Community without producing an identity document. People coming into the Community from a third country, whether Community nationals or foreigners, would go through passport control at the airport, port or road crossing at which they came into the Community but from then on would move around freely because, in effect, all border controls between the Member States would be abolished However, this will not happen overnight, for security and other reasons.

The idea of a Passport Union is not revolutionary, since similar arrangements already exist between the Benelux countries, between the Nordic countries of Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Norway, and between the United Kingdom and Ireland. But it would certainly help provide a sense of belonging to an otherwise fragmented Community.

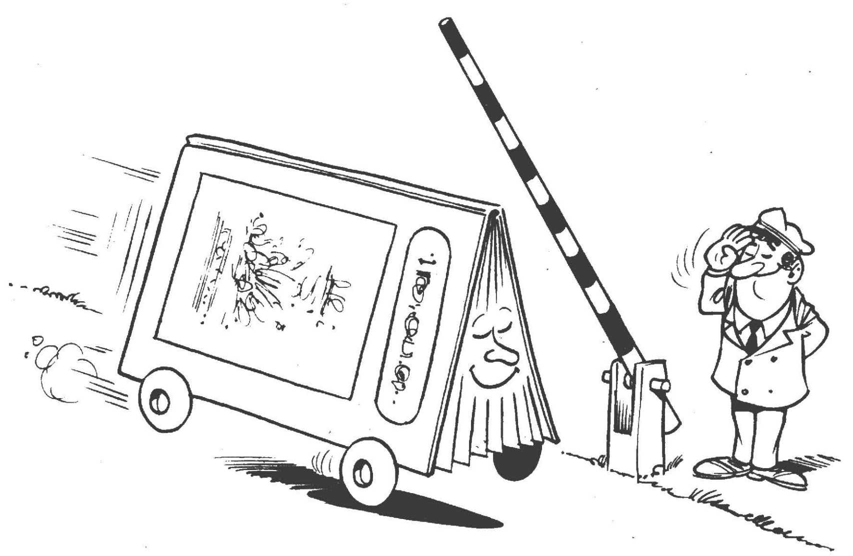
All this, however, would be the European Passport Union in its final form. The first stage would be the issuing by the individual Member States of an identical passport to all holders of national passports. This would bear on its cover both the name of the holder's country of origin plus the words 'European Community'. The European passport would thus give us all a tangible link with the Community and a greater sense of being part of it.

Not only that. Once we had a European passport the Community would be able te negotiate separately with third countries to obtain equal treatment abroad for all Community citizens.

We would then see an end to the situation whereby a Frenchman may need a visa to go into a particular country where a German does not, or vice-versa.

Issuing a 'common format' passport would involve no greater change than substituting one document for another, and work on the passport is already at a fairly advanced stage. At present, however, the various member governments have failed to agree on a small number of technical details to do with the passport's presentation. Among these are linguistic problems relating to the wording of the passport, the design of the cover and some legal questions.

However, it is hoped that these problems will soon be overcome and that the Nine's citizens can then begin to look forward to a genuine Passport Union in which they can move about as freely as they can at present in their own country.



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