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This newsheet is published in six languages (English, French, German, Dutch, Italian and Danish) by the Directorate-General for Information of the

Commission of the European Communities,  
Rue de la Loi 200 - 1049 Brussels     um.  
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Its contents do not necessarily reflect the official views of the Community institutions.

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TRADE : Protecting against unfair competition

Staying competitive is an absolute necessity in today's crisis-plagued international economic environment.

Sometimes it means modernising or trimming down excess costs, which can result in unpleasant job losses and plant closures. Those decisions are, of course, hard ones to make when there are already so many unemployed all over the world and so little investment capital. As a consequence, some companies, industries or countries avoid making such harsh decisions and instead try to shore up otherwise uncompetitive industries by giving them subsidies or by undertaking largescale export drives to dump their surplus production on their trading partners. This kind of practice, which passes on the problem of modernising or eliminating non-competitive operations to other countries, probably creating unemployment in the importing markets, has been condemned by most of the world's major trading nations.

Despite pledges to avoid such practices and international rules against them, examples continue to abound and even increase. The international rules, adopted by members of the world organisation known as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in Geneva, give countries whose markets are being invaded by imports sold unfairly below their true costs, otherwise called "dumping", the right to apply a duty to offset the unfair advantage these goods would otherwise enjoy. In this way, countries can protect their own companies and industries which are trying to compete according to the rules against those who are not.

With more and more sectors facing serious difficulties, it stands to reason that more are resorting to such tactics. Probably one of the sectors in Europe most affected by this competition is the chemical and synthetic fibres field, both byproducts of petroleum. Complaint after complaint has been filed with the European Commission in Brussels about such products being sold at unfair prices and capturing an increasing share of the European market. The problem has been especially acute in connection with petrochemical products originating in the United States. This is because the past Governments there have kept prices of petroleum and natural gas used for such manufacturers artificially low through controls. This means American producers can turn out goods cheaper than their overseas competitors. Figures released by the European Commission late in 1980 indicated that, since the beginning of 1979, it had opened 33 anti-dumping or anti-subsidy investigations, of which 10 had concerned the United States, including seven out of 14 opened in 1980. Nine of these involved chemicals or chemical related products, ranging from fertilizers to synthetic fibres.

This was the case again recently when it introduced a duty on certain polyester products it had found to be dumped from the United States and raised a duty it had already set on American styrene monomer exports.

WOMEN : The outlines of a portrait for a generation

Humourists like to remind us that more than one man out of every two on earth is ... a woman. But if women represent a majority in our society, they have not yet overturned the dominant role exercised by men in political, economic, scientific or even cultural fields. Accustomed as they have been for centuries to their triple role of wife, housekeeper and mother, they have not yet emerged from a certain obscurity.

But suddenly the spotlight has just been focussed on the European Community's 138 million women citizens. In this case it involves a voluminous document published by the Community's Statistical Office, more commonly known as Eurostat. Entitled "The Economic and Social Conditions of Women in the Community", this document compiles, in a little more than 300 pages, a welter of statistical information concerning the female population of Europe, its activities, its training, its life expectancy, its geographic and professional mobility and other matters. This close-up of the European woman pays particular attention to three specific aspects. These involve the age of marriage, the activities of married women and the means of transport used to get to work. In all the member countries of the European Community, with the exception of Denmark, young women marry at an increasingly younger age. On average, the age at which young women slip a wedding ring on their finger is 22 years and some months, while in 1960 they were waiting until 23, 24 or even 25 to take the step. Only Danish women have followed a reverse pattern, marrying at 24 against 22.9 in 1960. At the same time, the age difference between bride and groom has had a tendency to decline in all European countries except Germany. Husbands are on average 2 years and some months older than their wives.

The second major statistic involves the percentage of women holding down a job. In this respect Denmark is again the exception. It is the only European country where the majority of married women (52.7 per cent) are in the labour force, whether actually working (48.8 per cent) or temporarily unemployed (3.9 per cent).

In the other member countries, the proportion of married women who work is extremely varied. It ranges between 14.2 per cent in Ireland or 17.8 per cent in the Netherlands, and 44.3 per cent in France or even 48.1 per cent in the United Kingdom. For the Community as a whole, excluding Greece, the proportion, established in 1977, was 36.8 per cent. Nevertheless, among the 63.2 per cent non-working women, some 3 per cent have a part-time job and 4 per cent an occasional job.

Finally, there is information that, while appearing to be only incidental, is nevertheless interesting. It appears that many European women walk to their work (25.5 per cent instead of only 13.3 per cent of the men) or use public transportation (30 per cent instead of about 17 per cent of the men). On the other hand, only 30.5 per cent use their cars, while 51.6 per cent of the male workers take the wheel each morning.

This might lead to the conclusion that traffic congestion and urban pollution could well be reduced if more men stayed at home while their wives went to work.

#### EXTERNAL RELATIONS : Improving Links with Papua New Guinea

Not all of Europe's trade and economic partners come from the industrialised world. While close links have been set up with Japan, the United States, Canada and Australia, the Community is also on very good terms with some of the poorest countries of the world. Trade and cooperation agreements have been signed with Bangladesh, for instance. The Lomé Convention, linking the EEC and 60 African, Caribbean and Pacific States, includes some of the world's least developed countries. Papua New Guinea is one of the newest members of this Convention.

Papua New Guinea has a population of some 3,270,000 living on 462,840 square kilometres (that is, a density of 7 inhabitants per sq. km). Languages spoken in the country include English, pidgin, motu and several other dialects. The per capita GNP is estimated at £ 250 (1977 figures).

The European Community is the leading market for Papua New Guinea's exports. In 1978, it took in 93% of the country's palm oil exports, 54% of coffee exports, 52% of copra exports and 29% of the country's copper, gold and silver. Under the terms of the Lomé Convention, Papua New Guinea received about £ 10 million in aid from the EEC. This aid is expected to be increased under the second Lomé Convention. Priority in the coming five years will be given to agricultural and rural development, social infrastructure, technical assistance, training, etc. The main goal of such cooperation is to reduce the country's dependence on imports of foreign labour and food products. Papua New Guinea also receives aid from Australia, members of the Commonwealth, the Asian Development Bank and the United Nations.

BUDGET : Ready for increased social needs

In anticipation of a continuing increase in unemployment and the consequent need for more social action and investment, European authorities are preparing to devote more financial resources to combatting the economic crisis. Virtually all the experts have agreed that, although there are some encouraging economic signs on the horizon, solidarity and efficient coordination of scarce financial resources can help see us through the recession. Local, regional, national and European authorities are all deeply conscious of the need to put scarce budgetary resources to best use. In view of these continuing problems, European Community authorities have once again proposed a new annual budget for next year that tries to put more emphasis than before on spending for social, regional and industrial programmes and seeks to slow down the rate of spending for the traditional farm programmes. But, as in past years, such proposals made by the European Commission in Brussels may mark the resumption of the controversy with the Community Member States over the relative weight to be given to agricultural versus social spending by the Community institutions.

In introducing the budget plans for 1982 recently, Commissioner Christopher Tugendhat explained that the share of agricultural spending in the budget had been reduced to 62.3 per cent of the total as opposed to 64 per cent in 1981 and that spending for regional and social projects had been increased by 25 per cent and 40 per cent respectively. While over-all farm spending was being increased by only 12.8 per cent above 1981, important increases were being sought from the Council of Ministers for research and development, industrial aid, food shipments for the developing world and other programmes.

In the social field, the Commission budget proposals foresee expenditures for such activities as retraining, early retirement or other programmes for workers in the steel, textile, shipbuilding and other hardhit industries, as well as special programmes for young people.

But, as with most budgets, the Commission is also straining to make ends meet. In this case, the squeeze is a result of an agreement by Member States which limits the Community budget spending to 1 per cent of the value-added tax collected in the Member States. This limit, along with the past emphasis on agricultural spending, has been at the root of the budget controversies which have gripped the Community in recent years.

ENVIRONMENT : Aerosols posing a threat to the environmental balance

The term chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) is unfamiliar to most people. Nevertheless this substance is used everyday in various household sprays or deodorants, particularly as a propellant in many aerosol cans.

Some 702,000 tonnes of CFC were produced in 1979, the most usual form being called CFC 11 or 12, including some 304,000 tonnes in the European Community. But since 1974 there has been a controversy about the possibility of CFC contributing to the decomposition of the ozone layer which protects the earth's surface against the potentially harmful effects of ultraviolet rays. Some 90 per cent of this ozone is found in the stratosphere, between 10 and 50 kilometers up. Its disappearance would affect the temperature on the ground, the climate and general atmospheric patterns, not to mention the potential dangers to human health.

In the United States CFC in aerosols has been prohibited since 1979. The EEC also reacted as far back as 1978 by deciding to limit the production of CFC 11 and 12, to reduce their use in aerosols and to encourage research on substitute products. Last January, the European Commission also held a meeting of some 30 international experts to discuss the state of current research and the latest findings. It has just communicated a report from this meeting to the Ministers of the 10 member countries.

One result noted was that sales of CFC 11 and 12 for use in aerosols in the Community declined by 29.5 per cent in 1980 compared with 1976. This positive result was obtained by agreement between most of the Member States and the industry.

Aerosols accounted for only 58 per cent of all the sales of CFC 11 and 12 in the Community in 1980, the rest being used in such fields as refrigeration, plastic foams or solvents. However, these latter sectors registered an increase in CFC use of about 35 per cent.

The Commission feels that a policy of prevention should be pursued without adversely affecting the industry or employment. It also recommends that the 10 member countries initiate action on a world scale aimed at the dual objectives of not increasing CFC 11 and 12 production and at a significant reduction of their use in aerosols.

IN BRIEF ... IN BRIEF ... IN BRIEF ... IN BRIEF ... IN BRIEF ...COMMUNICATIONS : To each his own telephone !

An association designed to promote cooperation between frontier communes in Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands will soon set up its secretariat in German territory, near the Dutch frontier.

But last year, the Dutch authorities refused the association's request for a telephone line. This decision is expected to create an obstacle to the functioning of the European-oriented organisation.

Questioned on this issue by a member of the European Parliament, the European Commission has indicated that national legislations of Member States do not allow for the direct linkage of a telephone installed in one EEC country to the telephone network in another state. Any exception to the rule would require an agreement between interested governments.

CULTURE : Promoting European cinema

Six European Parliamentarians have just introduced a draft resolution calling for the promotion of European cinema. This proposal, which will be put to a vote in the European Parliament shortly, urges the creation of a European organisation responsible for encouraging the distribution of European films in the Community and in the world in general. The Parliamentarians also suggest the setting up of a European film prize, which would be given to the best European film every year.

COMMISSION : Edgard Pisani replaces Claude Cheysson

Edgard Pisani has replaced Claude Cheysson as the new EEC Commissioner responsible for development policy. Cheysson is currently Minister responsible for External Relations in the new French government of Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy. He came to the Commission in 1973 and soon built up a name for himself both in Europe and the Third World.

A Socialist and a Frenchman like his predecessor, Pisani was born in Tunis on October 9, 1918. His education includes studies in law, political science and literature. Pisani has held a number of public service jobs. He was named prefect of Haute Marne in 1947, senator in 1954, Minister for Agriculture in 1961, Minister of Supplies in 1966. He was also the mayor of a small commune during the period 1965 to 1975. In that year he became a member of the Club of Rome where he specialised in Euro-Arab relations. Pisani was also a member of the European Parliament from 1978 until he resigned to become a member of the Commission.