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EDITORIAL : - EUROFOCUS has been published regularly in weekly bulletin format since November 1979. Nevertheless, since its distribution was expanded recently, some new readers have only received the first five issues of this year. For those who have been reading the bulletin for more than a year and those who are just discovering it, a special questionnaire is included on page 8 of this issue that will give us a better understanding of your publication, your audience and the subjects most likely to interest you. Hopefully large numbers will fill out and return this questionnaire so that the service EUROFOCUS provides each week can be improved. Thank you for your cooperation.

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ENVIRONMENT : A return to sources

It is colourless, without taste or smell, and it is above all an essential element of life. How many times during the day do we use this necessary water? Modern life's new comforts have frequently let us take this precious commodity for granted. It is often surprising to learn that underground water, which is even more unseen and unrecognized, constitutes the largest part of our water resources and that, even more, this water is generally of good quality. The long drought of the 1975-1976 period was a reminder of how much our supplies of water depend on climatic conditions. This awareness is now the foundation of current interest in underground water resources. Up to now, data on these supplies were scarce and hard to use for long-range planning.

That's why, at the request of the European Parliament, the European Commission in Brussels has undertaken a general study of aquatic resources in the Community member countries, which for the first time will provide an inventory of a vast underground network.

This study, which will be published soon, involves nine national summaries and a summing up as well as 152 maps drawn to the same scale and therefore easily comparable.

This survey will catalogue existing resources, their origins and their exploitation. The aim is better management of available resources at the Community level.

One realisation is that these resources are not always located in the most useful places. In Italy, for instance, the northern region benefits from ample aquatic resources, while the south is lacking them. France, on the other hand, enjoys a relatively balanced spread of resources.

It also became apparent, that European countries use these resources differently. In Denmark, about 95 per cent of drinking water comes from underground sources, while the percentage is about 50 per cent in France and only between 15 and 20 per cent in Ireland.

Its uses are also varied. Its good quality makes it useful for human consumption and it is also used for agricultural irrigation or in industry.

There are also specific uses such as for fish breeding in Denmark.

Even though it is hardly probable that any restrictions will be placed on European consumption of water in coming years, these resources are important and are seen as providing all our needs at least until the year 2000.

FINANCE : Just as good as having a rich uncle

A large part of the secret to financial success or even survival in our modern societies is connected to the ability of maintaining good credit relations with banks and other sources of needed funds.

That rule generally applies from the average household to the major international company or governmental institution. All of them have to resort to borrowing at one time or another as spending obligations outrun sources of available funds. The latter is also a problem faced by all types of large or small borrowers.

That's why more than passing attention has been given by local, national or even European authorities to their borrowing terms and possibilities in recent years. While local and national authorities have used the capital markets as a source of funds for years, the European Community has only recently cautiously expanded its borrowing as its budget resources failed to keep pace with all the increasing demands by Member States in the midst of a recession.

New aid programmes for the unemployed, depressed regions or industries had to be expanded at the European level, requiring more financing than the real budget would allow. As a result, the Community has become a larger borrower in the international capital markets, accounting for 10 percent of all the loan issues floated in the international markets in the seven years period ended in 1979. Total borrowing in 1979 went up some 21 percent to 3,633 million European units of account (ECU)\*. Loans for projects throughout the Community countries by the four EEC lending institutions also nearly doubled from 1,722 MioECU in 1975 to 3,386 MioECU in 1979. These funds were gathered by EEC bodies such as the Coal and Steel Community, Euratom, the European Investment Bank, and the special programme to help Member States with payments deficits caused by oil price increases as well as a lending programme known as the New Community Instrument. These loans have gone to various Community countries for energy, housing, road, employment and other programmes.

The main recipients of this aid have been Italy, the United Kingdom, Ireland and France, with the other member countries accounting for 11 percent of the total lent by these five funds in 1979.

With the EEC budget reaching its ceiling, the report accompanying the financial statistics indicates that the Community should perhaps think of using its good reputation and credit rating in the international marketplace to increase its borrowing and therefore meet the growing social and economic demands that might otherwise go without funds.

\* 1 ECU = 1975 £ 0,560026  
1979 £ 0,646392

TRANSPORT : Talking about trains and planes

The French take the train, the English prefer to travel by air, and the Greeks are in favour of travelling by boat. These are just some of the interesting points made by a recent statistical study on the means of transport used in the EEC. Included in the analysis are details of utilisation of the Community's railways, civil air transport, and shipping fleet, from as far back as 1978. Both passenger and goods transport is dealt with by the study, which stresses that transport is a key element of a country's economic infrastructure.

France has the largest railway network, possessing 34,000 kilometers of currently used lines, for a total of 110,000 km in the Community as a whole. France is followed by Germany, the United Kingdom and Italy.

The Community's railway network, taken together, is smaller than that of the Soviet Union, and only represents one-third of the American network. In the United States, statistics show that the railway is used essentially for the transport of goods, with people preferring to use the car, bus or plane. In Europe, the railways are used equally for the transport of goods and passengers. Speaking more specifically, the German, French and Luxembourg trains, like the American or Soviet ones, are used more often for the transport of goods. In Italy and the United Kingdom the reverse is true.

Britain tops the list of civil aviation use. The two British companies which share the British air space use about 200 aeroplanes, that is almost a third of the Community's air fleet. There are also two civil aviation companies in France, compared with only one in other European countries and Japan. In the United States, on the other hand, about 7 major companies share the air space, and the market. The Community's airline fleet is half that of the Americans'.

France has the second largest number of airplanes after Britain, followed by Germany, Spain, Japan and Italy.

Only about 55 % of the airline capacity is used currently, a fact which leads to serious financial difficulties for the airlines in question.

The world's maritime fleet included 70,000 vessels in 1978, of which more than 15,000 belonged to the Ten, more than 9,000 to Japan, about 8,000 to the Soviet Union and 5,000 to the United States.

The Greek fleet, alone, represented about a quarter of the European total, followed by the British with more than 3,300 vessels, the Germans with 2,000 vessels, and Italy, Denmark and France. Spain, a candidate for membership of the European Community, has 2,700 vessels.

The Ten own 1,567 tankers of the world's total of 6,882. Liberia alone has a fleet of 821 tankers, that is more than the United States and the Soviet Union taken together.

TRADE : Giving Community tobacco the upper hand

Third World production of tobacco is on the way up and will submerge the world and European markets unless action is taken to boost Europe's own tobacco cultivation. Recent figures published by the International Union of Tobacco Cultivators (UNITAB) indicate that tobacco cultivation in the developing countries increased from 44.73% of world production in 1977 to 55.17% of production in 1979. Tobacco production in the industrialised world, on the other hand, fell from 38.7% in 1977 to 32.57% of world production in 1979.

In an answer to a written question asked by a member of the European Parliament, the European Commission indicates that in 1978 the Community had 122,453 planters and about 300,000 salaried workers who were employed in the "agricultural phase" of tobacco production. In the same year, the Community produced about 10.5 billion cigars and cigarillos, 565 billion cigarettes, and 66,000 tonnes of tobacco.

While maintaining certain trade concessions offered to developing countries, the Commission stresses that it will soon take measures to monitor EEC tobacco imports from the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries which are members of the Lomé Convention.

Despite the Community's overall trade deficit, it has a surplus as regards exports of certain varieties and qualities of tobacco. This is essentially due to the fact that the Ten grant a premium to planters which represents the difference between the EEC tobacco variety and world prices for a similar variety (including customs duties). This makes it easier to sell Community tobacco on the world market.

CONSUMERS : Dieting may not always be healthy

With the accent on the slim, youthful look in vogue in most societies, it's no wonder that dieting and special food products have become popular.

New dishes and recipes, new fad diets and products have become a booming industry as millions of generally well-fed and too-sedentary consumers seek to shed some extra pounds or wrinkles which are the consequences of the modern, comfortable life.

Manufacturers have sought to capitalise on this trend by exhorting a flab-conscious public to reach for low-calory, dietetic substitutes for the usual delicacies they consume. For virtually every product on the grocer's shelf there is now a low-calory alternative.

But before buying these items, consumers should be aware of possible unhealthy side-effects connected with some of the ingredients. A recent Dutch case brought to the attention of the European Parliament and of the European Commission is probably a typical example repeated elsewhere in Europe. Dutch European Parliamentarian Johanna Maij-Weggen recently brought to light the case of the cola diet drink "Tab" brought out on the Dutch and other markets by Coca-Cola. The soft drink was originally produced for diabetics and contained the sugar substitutes saccharine and cyclamates and began promoting it on the general market as a "sugar-free slimming drink". However, experiments on animals have revealed these substances to be carcinogenic. The United Nations' World Health Organisation and Food and Agriculture Organisation and the EEC Commission's advisory Scientific Committee for Food have studied the tolerance levels in humans for these cancer-producing substances.

The Commission recently told Ms Maij-Weggen that data indicated that the regular consumption of an average quantity of the drink in question was likely to exceed by far the acceptable daily dose recommended by the scientific bodies. It also notes that in 1978, acting on the advice of the Scientific Committee for Food, the Commission had recommended that Community Member States adopt the minimum allowable dose for saccharine as a standard. advised against the use of saccharine in baby food and also backed informative labelling warning the consumer of foodstuffs containing this product. The Commission also said that the national authorities in this case were handling it and looking into the legal possibilities of putting an end to advertising's abuse of the laws on labelling and of preventing claims about curative or preventive properties.

HANDICAPPED : Transport facilities and problems of youth

Special facilities for the disabled and the elderly should be introduced in the transport sector, including reducing the costs of travel by train, plane and bus. These are among the recommendations made by the European Parliament's Transport Committee to the European Commission and the EEC Council of Ministers recently.

The Transport Committee, chaired by German Socialist Horst Seefeld, made several recommendations on the relationship between the transport sector and the old and the disabled. One suggestion notes that these two categories of people should be assured a sufficient income to cover their travelling costs, while another recommends that they should be offered help as far as their personal transport is concerned. The Committee also proposes that the elderly and the disabled should be offered cut-price transport, especially for seats in trains and planes which are in any case never used to full capacity. The Committee also calls for a uniform definition of a handicapped person, and calls on the Council to issue the people so defined with a special "passport" which would allow them to benefit from special rates on public transport. The problems of handicapped young people has been dealt with in some detail by a European Parliament report on youth activities drawn up by the Committee on youth, culture, education, information and sport. The report notes that while a 1974 resolution adopted by the European Council of Ministers defined disablement as a limitation of physical and mental capacity affecting everyday activities and employment, legal definitions applying in different Community Member States vary, as do the resulting systems of local security.

The Committee stresses that the appropriations earmarked for the disabled in the budget of the European Community should be steadily increased.

As the young disabled must be given the opportunity to leave their ghettos, the report notes that it is essential to promote exchanges at Community level, both at public and private level (in families).

The report also underlines that efforts must be made to adapt architectural design to the needs of the disabled, and finally, that a campaign should be conducted at European level to promote awareness of the problems facing the young disabled.

QUESTIONNAIRE

(Recipients are kindly requested to complete and return this questionnaire to the editorial office of EUROFOCUS, European Commission, 200 rue de la Loi, 1049 Brussels, Belgium).

- 1. Title of your publication .....
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