



# a newssheet for journalists

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Mailed from: Brussels X

Journalists

**ENVIRONMENT: A sharp eye is to be kept on the dumping of waste**

The European Commission proposes a directive guaranteeing environmental protection during the dumping of waste.

Some 2.2 billion tons of waste pour into the European Community's dustbins each year. Around 780mn.t. of this, consisting of municipal waste for 70% and industrial waste for 35%, ends up on dumps. In Britain and Greece as much as 80 to 90% of all waste ends up on dumps as against only 20% in Denmark.

The European Environment Commissioner, Carlo Ripa di Meana, has proposed the introduction of very strict checks on these dumps, on the basis of very high environmental standards. These standards would be enforced throughout the Community, in order to safeguard the soil and underground water.

A valid authorization would be needed in order to open, exploit or close a dump, and each of these three steps would be closely monitored. Checks would continue for 30 years after the dump had closed. There would be a ban on dumping waste on the first available dump. Hazardous waste, for example, could only be dumped where there were special facilities for handling it safely.

Believing that prevention is better than cure, the European Commission wants to encourage a reduction in the quantity of waste that is produced up-stream and the recycling of such waste as is produced. It has therefore warned Member States against the very widespread notion that disposing of waste on dumps is the cheapest solution. It is necessary to take into account the true cost of setting up, exploiting and eventually closing down dumps, according to the Commission. It maintains that the prices at which waste is currently being disposed of do not reflect the totality of costs. Other solutions, such as the use of biodegradable packaging and recycling, can turn out to be more suitable and less harmful for the environment.

The Commission is also proposing the establishment of a financial guarantee, covering the estimated cost of closing down a dump and subsequently managing it as well as the creation, in each Member State, of a fund for the subsequent management of dumps. The fund would be used to cover the normal costs of monitoring dumps no longer in use, as well as the expenditure arising from preventive operations or the resorption of pollution, when such expenditure cannot be recovered or is not covered by a financial guarantee. In cases of environmental damage, the operator of the dump would be held responsible.

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For waste which must be eliminated, the Commission takes the view that it must be treated suitably, in order to reduce its potential noxiousness to a minimum. Mr Ripa di Meana has claimed that "this proposal creates the conditions needed to eliminate existing abuses as regards the dumping of waste and contributes to a better protection of the environment and to an improvement in the quality of life of the citizens of the 12-nation Community."

**SPORT: Cross-border football is a stage nearer**

It will be possible to field up to five foreign players in first division matches from the 1992 season onwards.

From the 1992 season onwards, first division football teams in the European Community will be able to field at least three foreign players, plus another two "acclimatised" foreigners - professionals who were playing on that date in the country in question and since five years without a break, three of them with youth teams. The national federations are free to take steps which are even more favourable to the free movement of players, if they so desire. This is already the case, in fact, in England, Scotland and Belgium. UEFA and the European Commission will consult each other every four years in order to check on the satisfactory operation of the new system.

This in sum is the substance of the agreement between the European Commission and UEFA, reached after negotiations lead by the Commission Vice-President, Martin Bangemann, and representatives of the Union of European Football Associations. It marks a small step forward, especially given the specificity of the case and the traditional attitude of UEFA as well as certain football associations. If it is true that such an agreement hardly modifies the situation which exists in many countries, including Italy, it is equally true, and noteworthy, that the principle of the free movement of players has been accepted.

Even so, this did not prevent the Belgian player, Jean-Marc Bosman, who plays for a second division team in France, from describing the agreement as "illegal", in the light of a 1976 ruling of the European Court of Justice, which held that any restriction on the number of players from another European Community country was contrary to the EC treaties. Mr Bosman has expressed his intention of taking the European Commission to court.

**INDUSTRY: Five guidelines for getting the electronics industry back on its feet**

Disturbing statistics and a signal from the European Commission.

European living rooms are full of television sets, VCRs, hi-fi equipment and video cameras - all sporting a "Made in Japan" label. This is not especially surprising: Japanese companies account for 55% of world production of consumer electronics, as against only 20% for their European rivals. In addition, Japanese firms control 25% of the European production of these items. The result was a trade deficit for the European Community in this one sector of more than ECU 9 billion\* in 1989. And consumer electronics is only one sector of the electronics industry. But it is in need of a sharp recovery, according to a report adopted by the European Commission at the end of March.

The fact is the Community's trade deficit for the electronics industry as a whole came to ECU 31bn. in 1989. The weakest sector in this connection is that of computers and other related equipment: it turned in a deficit of more than ECU 15bn. in 1989. European suppliers are meeting only 40% of Community demand. The combined turnover of three European companies - Siemens, Bull and Olivetti - is only one-third that of IBM, the American giant. Nor is the situation much better in the microchips sector. The EC had a trade deficit of ECU 5.6bn. in 1989 and accounted for only 10.5% of world trade, as compared to nearly 50% for Japan and 37% for the United States. The Europeans are better placed only in the case of software and informatics services.

It is easy to see why the European Commission attaches so much importance to the electronics industry. Some 60 to 65% of the Community's workforce depends on it, directly or indirectly, for its livelihood. The market for electronic products accounts for some 5% of the Community's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), a percentage which will have doubled in the year 2000. What is more, the technologies developed and put to use in the electronics sector are then utilized in a variety of other fields.

The European Commission is not thinking in terms of subsidies for electronics companies in order to put the industry back on its feet. Rather, it wants to create the conditions which favour its development. To this end it is proposing five guidelines, of which the first seeks to stimulate demand by interlinking the computer networks in the EC countries and creating a European telecommunications network. The second guideline is aimed at speeding up the introduction of technical standards which would

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apply throughout the Community, while the third deals with new technologies. It is a question of financing new research projects, by concentrating the means available on a small number of ambitious projects, likely to produce saleable products rather quickly. The fourth guideline is aimed at improving vocational training and the fifth and last deals with the Community's relations with its main competitors, the United States and Japan. In this connection, the Commission wants to make sure that European companies enjoy as favourable an access to the American and Japanese markets as is enjoyed by the world's electronic manufacturers on the European market.

\* 1 ECU = UKf 0.69 or IRf 0.77

#### UNEMPLOYMENT: Slight rise in February

8.5% of the Community workforce was jobless.

The rise in unemployment rates noticed last December would seem to be confirmed: the proportion of those out of work in the 12-nation European Community (less the former East Germany) rose from 8.4% in January to 8.5% in February. These figures, published in mid-April by Eurostat, the EC's statistical office, are all the more discouraging if compared to the unemployment rate in February 1990 - 8.4%. This is the first time since the end of the summer of 1985, in fact, that the unemployment rate for the Community as a whole is higher than it was at the same time a year ago.

The situation varies from country to country. In the 12 months to February 1991, the number of jobless rose sharply in Britain and, to a lesser degree, in Belgium, France, Ireland and Denmark. It fell, however, in Italy, Spain and Portugal over the same period. Germany's situation is rather special: unemployment rose considerably in former East Germany but fell sharply in West Germany.

**TELEVISION: A global Community strategy for the TV of the future**

A consensus is needed for the introduction of high-definition television.

The television of the future, everyone agrees, is high definition television (HDTV). By the end of the century all the sets currently in use will have become museum pieces. Much sharper pictures, thanks to 1,250 lines instead of today's 625, a bigger screen and digital, stereophonic sound await us.

The economic stakes are without precedent for this sector, given the size of the market. Battle is already being waged, notably between Europe and Japan, and within Europe itself. The private television companies defended their policies in Cannes, on the occasion of the international television fair. Through Gaston Thorn, President of ACT (Association of Commercial Television), they proclaimed their support for HDTV, eventually via D2 Mac (the Franco-German project which has the backing of public television). But they voiced their opposition to all extreme forms of regulation and to any deadline. D2 Mac can represent a way to HDTV - but not the only one. There can be no question, therefore, of banning an improved PAL system, or any other technical standard.

The problem is how to phase in high definition television gently, without putting too great a financial burden on manufacturers, producers and viewers, forced to replace their TV sets with new models. The European Commission has been studying for several months a draft directive, or "European law", which would make possible the transition from the present system to high definition, which must be ready before the end of this year, when the present directive, dealing with standards for transmission by

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satellite, expires. At Cannes the EC Commissioner with responsibility for the audiovisual industry, Jean Dondelinger, stressed the need to adopt in this connection a global strategy at Community level. He recalled the European Commission's determination to seek a consensus-based approach for the introduction of the new technology, rather than to have recourse to binding measures. "We have reiterated that we want for Europe our standard for the diffusion of high definition, which will become operational four or five years from now at most. There are various ways of getting there. By keeping one standard and knocking the others on the head for example. In other words, forcing it on everyone, with all the economic and political difficulties this implies. Another way would be to ask everyone involved in the European audiovisual industry to try to understand each other's point of view, to start a debate and bring all the parties concerned to the negotiating table: manufacturers, broadcasters, programme makers, cable companies - as well as the major organizations like EBU and ACT."

Mr. Dondelinger took the opportunity to give a progress report on the new projects to be undertaken via the MEDIA programme in 1991 to 1995, as approved in Cannes by the Consultative Committee on April 18. The three following initiatives should soon be operational: (1) the GRECO project - this is the acronym for the "European Grouping for the Circulation of Works" in French - which aims at encouraging the television broadcasting of fictional works produced by independent producers; (2) the IVENS project (backing for documentaries) which seeks to promote and strengthen the production of documentaries and their showing by television companies and (3) the MAP-TV project (Memoirs Archives Programme), the aim of which is to encourage the use of audiovisual archives to produce documentary and fictional programmes and contribute to the development of a "secondary market" for programmes.

**OPINION POLL: How Americans see Europe**

With much sympathy (at the personal level) and some unease (economic).

Americans always feel strongly sympathetic towards their "cousins" across the Atlantic, even if the man in the street seems more lukewarm than the country's political, economic, trade union and religious leaders. On the other hand, America's leaders are far more uneasy than the average American when faced with the European Community as a competitor in world markets. These are the two main conclusions to be drawn from an opinion poll carried out last November by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations. The results of the poll were presented in Brussels in mid-April.

Asked to give their views on 23 countries around the globe, among them the "big four" of the European Community, those polled put Britain, France, Germany and Italy among the first eight countries. They awarded Britain 74 points, just after Canada (76 points), on a "sympathy" scale of 0 to 100. Germany was in third place, with 62 points. Italy tied for fourth place with the Soviet Union (59 points), while France tied for eighth place with Mexico (56 points), just behind Poland (57 points). The four European countries were ahead of others, such as Israel, Brazil and Japan.

Does the United States have vital interests in Europe? American leaders seemed more convinced that it does than the common or garden American. 95% of a sample consisting of leaders from the world of politics, business, the media, the universities, the trade unions and the churches were of the view that Uncle Sam has vital interests in Germany, the country which in fact headed a list of 22 countries from around the globe, together with Japan. The corresponding figure for American public opinion as a whole

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was no more than 73%, less than for the United Kingdom (79% against 86% in the case of American leaders) but more than France (45% as compared to 63% in the case of the country's leadership). The popularity of the three European countries has declined all round, however, since the previous poll, carried out in 1986. Last November, under pressure of current events, the American public ranked Saudi Arabia and the Soviet Union first among the countries in which the United States has a vital interest, with 83% for each of them.

But there is a change in attitudes once Europeans were viewed as competitors on world markets. Thus 41% of the leaders who were polled felt that economic competition from the European Community posed a serious threat to America's vital interests, a view shared by only 30% of Americans at large. Among the four "bogey-men" presented by the pollsters European competition was ranked second by American leaders, after Japanese economic power (63% were uneasy) and well ahead of Soviet military might (20%) and the rise of China as a power (16%). For the man in the street, European economic competition was the least of his worries; he was far more concerned over Japanese economic strength (60% were uneasy) and China (40%), with the Soviet Union just behind (33%).

Finally, European Community leaders did well in the popularity stakes. Americans ranked four of them among the first 12 from a list of 18 names, which included not only George Bush and Helmut Kohl but also Saddam Hussein. Margaret Thatcher, who was prime minister at the time of the poll, had the second-highest score among Europeans, with 66 points; she was just behind Pope Jean-Paul II (67 points), who ranked first in 1986 also. Chancellor Helmut Kohl shared ninth place with Nelson Mandela (53%). French President François Mitterrand was eleventh (50 points) and European Commission President Jacques Delors twelfth (47 points). The Europeans were ahead of the Japanese and Israeli prime ministers, but nearly all of them were beaten by President Gorbachev (64 points), who outranked even President Bush (63 points).