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Mailed from Brussels X

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EUROFOCUS

ENVIRONMENT: "Cleaner" vans and minibuses ...

... with anti-pollution standards that are in line with those for cars.

As from next October 1 new models of vans, delivery vans and minibuses will have to meet anti-pollution standards as stringent as those already in force for passenger cars, in order to be marketed throughout the European Community. As from 1 October 1994, this requirement will apply to all new vehicles in these categories, including existing models. EC environment ministers adopted, by majority vote, limits on pollutants contained in exhaust emissions from minibuses carrying fewer than 10 people, including the driver, and vans and delivery vans below 3.5t.

The Twelve have no intention of resting on their laurels. They have undertaken to adopt even stricter standards before the end of next year. These standards could come into force as from 1 January 1996 for new models and from 1 January 1997 for new vehicles in existing models.

ENVIRONMENT: Limiting emissions from petrol ...

... in oil refineries and during transport to service stations.

You have only to walk past a petrol pump to catch a strong whiff of what scientists call volatile organic compounds, or VOCs. EC ministers have decided to fight these harmful emissions. They reached agreement at the end of June on a directive ("European law") which provides for the gradual introduction of measures aimed at limiting VOC emissions from petrol stocks at oil refineries and during its transportation by road, rail and waterway.

In addition to this directive, which still awaits examination by the European Parliament, the European Commission will shortly propose another, aimed at limiting VOC emissions when tanks at service stations are being filled. The transportation of petrol by sea-going tankers poses regulatory problems at the international level.

ENERGY: A helping hand for renewable sources and energy savings

The Twelve adopt two anti-carbon dioxide programmes.

Only through a series of modest measures, taken at every level, can the European Community hope to meet its undertaking to stabilize carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions in the year 2000 at their 1990 level, in order to prevent global warming - the greenhouse effect - considered dangerous by the experts.

The ALTENER programme - ALT as in alternative and ENER as in energy - is designed to help the Twelve reduce by some 180m. tonnes their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions between now and the year 2005, by replacing energies which pollute with solar, wind and hydraulic energy as well as energy from biomass and biofuels. With ECU 40m.\* between now and the end of 1997, the EC will finance the development of technical standards for these "ecological" forms of energy. It will also help by meeting between 30% and 50% of the cost of developing and improving the necessary equipment; the introduction of an information network designed to coordinate the activities of the 12 EC countries and, finally, studies on the large-scale production of electricity from natural waste - from biomass.

The aim of the SAVE programme is to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by saving energy. It is in fact a "European law" which requires the Twelve to take action in such matters as the systematic evaluation of energy consumption in buildings and enterprises which are large-scale users of energy; the thermal insulation of new buildings; the regular inspection of boilers and the preparation of bills for heating and hot water on the basis of actual consumption.

The Twelve already adopted at the end of March a European mechanism for keeping an eye on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (see Eurofocus N° 14/93). But they have been unable to reach agreement on a tax that would be levied on the forms of energy "responsible" for CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The war against the greenhouse effect has not yet been won.

\* 1 ECU = UKL0.77 or IRL0.80



**FISHERIES: A warning to those who cheat at sea**

The Twelve adopt new control measures.

Those fishermen who cheat, by systematically catching more fish than the EC's fisheries policy allows them, will find it increasingly difficult to evade the law, be it Community law. EC fisheries ministers reached agreement at the end of June on greatly strengthened controls, to come into force on 1 January 1994.

The common fisheries policy, which saw the light of day just 10 years ago, limits the quantities of fish that can be caught each year in European waters as a conservation measure. But Community rules in this sector have never been applied automatically; no more have controls near coastal areas and in ports. With the measures adopted at the end of June, the EC will have, for the first time, effective means for checking on the implementation of the common fisheries policy.

The Twelve have envisaged a system which makes it possible to pinpoint the location of fishing vessels on a continuous basis, not only from land but also using satellites. It will be tested on an experimental basis, between now and end June 1995, by vessels from each EC country. The vessels, at least 10 from each country, will be over 40m. in length, and will be taking part within the framework of a project financed by the Community. If the experiment seems conclusive, the Twelve could adopt this formula definitively.

The captains of all fishing boats over 40m. in length will be required to keep a log, showing for each species of fish the quantities caught and stocked on board.

The new regulation will allow European Commission inspectors to make surprise visits, in order to see how the national authorities, who alone have competence in the matter, control fishing boats.

The measures will apply to all fishing boats working the Community's waters, regardless of nationality, and to the activities of Community vessels throughout the world.

SMEs: New measures aimed at simplifying VAT are in the works

A detailed assessment of "border-free VAT" will be ready in September.

The system under which VAT is paid at the EC's internal frontiers without controls, in force since January 1 for all commercial transactions carried out within the EC, should have proved simpler for businesses than the one it has replaced. But some aspects of it are posing problems for a number of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) - which is why the European Commission is working on new measures to simplify the system. This was one of the points made by the European taxation commissioner, Mrs. Scrivener, in an address to representatives of business organizations, who had met in Brussels in the context of the committee which acts as their sounding board.

The Commission in fact is drafting a "European law" aimed at simplifying buying and selling operations involving more than three companies. As regards the repair of machinery or vehicles belonging to companies, where it is not always clear in which country VAT is to be paid, the Commission is proposing to exonerate companies which would recover the tax in any case. In the case of newspapers and other publications sent to another EC country, the Commission is studying a greatly simplified system covering relatively low-priced items. The Commission is also looking into the case of large yachts used for business purposes.

More generally speaking, the European Commission will make a full assessment of the first six months of operation of the new "border-free" system for VAT and excise duties - the special taxes levied on alcoholic beverages, tobacco products and fuel.

SMEs: Help with adapting to European standards is on the way

European Commission launches a pilot scheme covering 700 businesses.

From the businessman's viewpoint, the European single market, which was largely completed on January 1, is a large number of "European laws" embodying technical standards, quality requirements and rules on health and safety at work. For small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the new European framework

often means a considerable effort to adapt. To help them, the European Commission launched a pilot scheme at the end of June, the aim of which is to have business consultants evaluate the needs of some 700 SMEs.

The work of evaluation will begin this summer and last until the end of the year. It should result in a report, to be ready early next year. The report should give a clear picture of the problems European SMEs face as they try to adjust to the single market; at the same time it should make it easier to find more general solutions.

SMEs that want to take advantage of the pilot scheme should get in touch with:

#### Great-Britain

Greater Manchester Business  
Innovation Centre in Tameside  
Windmill Lane  
Denton, Manchester M34 3QS  
Tel.: 61-337 86 48/49/50  
Fax: 61-337 86 51

Ewbank Preece Limited  
Prudential House  
North Street  
Brighton BN1 1RZ  
Tel.: 273-72 45 33  
Fax: 273-20 04 83

European Economic Development  
Services Ltd.  
10, Market Place  
Hexham, Northumberland NE46 1XG  
Tel.: 434-60 89 98  
Fax: 434-60 98 44

City of Newcastle-upon-Tyne  
Development Department  
Civic Centre  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE1 8QN  
Tel.: 91-232-85 20  
Fax: 91-232 39 92

Newcastle Polytechnic  
Sutherland Building  
Northumberland Road  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE1 8ST  
Tel.: 91-235 82 34  
Fax: 91-261 12 64

#### Ireland

IQC - International Quality Consultants Ltd.  
Cross Street  
IRL - Galway  
Tel.: 91-65 265  
Fax: 91-65 304

Byrne Lowe & Associates  
Innovation and Development  
Consultants  
Hallcon House - Glengearry Office  
Park - Dun Laoghaire  
IRL - Dublin 4  
Tel.: 1-285-04 09  
Fax: 1-285-04 09

EDUCATION: There are important regional variations in the EC

Higher education accounts for only 7% of students in Portugal, as against 14% in Denmark.

In 1990/91 there were some 76 million pupils and students in the European Community, nine million of them in some form of higher education, according to Eurostat, the EC's statistical office. There were few differences among EC member states as regards compulsory education. But the situation was very different in the case of kindergartens, on the one hand, and higher education on the other: here there were substantial differences.

The Eurostat survey shows, for example, that pre-primary education accounts for 6% of the total number of pupils in Denmark, as compared with 21% in France. These variations are due to differences in the school system of Member States: Danish children must wait until they are six years old before they can start school, while Belgian, French and Spanish toddlers can do so when they are just two or three years old. The survey points to significant differences within Member States also. In Britain, for example, 5% of children attend kindergarten in the South West, as compared to 12% in Wales.

There are significant regional differences as regards post-compulsory education. In all southern countries, enrolment in general upper secondary education is significantly higher in regions with capital cities. It accounts for 23% of the total number of pupils in Madrid, as against 18% in Spain as a whole; 19% in Lisbon, as compared to 15% in Portugal; 17% in Athens (15% in Greece) and 10% in Rome (8% in Italy).

There are important differences in the number of students in higher education. If 12% on average of students in the EC are enrolled in universities, the corresponding figure for Portugal is 7%, the lowest in the Community. Other countries with rates below the EC average are Ireland (9%) and Britain and Greece (10%). Countries above the EC average are Denmark (14%) and Germany, Italy and the Netherlands (13%).

Here too, the majority of those enrolled in institutions of higher education are to be found in the metropolitan areas. Thus Brussels, Berlin and Madrid account for 22% of such students, Hamburg 21% and Rome 19%. This situation is mainly due to the geographic distribution of institutions of higher education and the variety of courses on offer. But it is also due to the preference shown by foreign students, particularly students from other EC countries, for metropolises. Some 18% of students in Brussels, for example, are non-Belgians, as compared to 10% in the rest of the country. On average, roughly one foreign student out of four is a national of another EC country, but in Belgium and Ireland half the foreign students come from other Member States.

The increases in the number of women students is also noteworthy. In 1990/91 they accounted for 48% of all students in higher education, as compared to 43% in 1980/81. The proportion of women students in higher education is highest in relation to the total number of students in Portugal (56%). Germany brings up the rear, with only 43% of women in higher education.

UNEMPLOYMENT: Rising for the 17th consecutive month

10.5% of the EC workforce was jobless in May.

Unemployment in the European Community went up in May - as it did continuously in the 16 previous months. The unemployment rate rose to 10.5% in May, as against 10.4% in April, according to estimates published by Eurostat, the EC's statistical office, in early June.

The unemployment rate has gone up in every EC country, and more particularly in Spain, Belgium and the Netherlands, in the 12 months to May 1993. There has been a downward trend in Britain since the end of last year.

In the EC as a whole, the unemployment rate has been rising faster for men than for women; this is particularly true of those under 25 years of age. The 12-nation Community has been harder hit by unemployment than its two main competitors. Unemployment in the United States stood at 6.9% in May, as compared to 7.4% the year before. The Japanese unemployment rate has remained steady at 2.3%.



CARS: Price comparisons across the EC are not easy

Prices are highest in Germany and France, since the devaluations.

Where are car prices the lowest in the single European market? It is not easy to compare prices. On the whole, prices are lowest - exclusive of taxes and in ECUs - in countries which have devalued their currencies since last September, and more particularly in Ireland, Spain and Italy. Prices seem higher in Germany and France and, to a lesser extent, in Belgium - countries whose currencies have remained relatively strong. These are the findings of a European Commission study covering 72 of the most popular models, which was published on July 1.

The Commission studied catalogue prices on 1 May 1993 - disregarding possible discounts - in 10 of the 12 countries, on the basis of information provided by the manufacturers themselves. Denmark and Greece were excluded from the study: as VAT and other taxes levied in these countries are very high, manufacturers quote "abnormally" low prices, exclusive of taxes. This is something motorists in other EC countries could bear in mind, given that VAT is paid in the country in which the car is registered. But this would require the absence of any obstacles to such "border-free" purchases, which does not seem to be the case in these two countries.

The Commission study points to substantial price differences from one EC country to another; but they are below 20% most of the time, as compared to differences of 30% and 40% noted in earlier studies. Such comparisons are risky, however, given that these studies took different criteria into account. The Commission hopes to be able to assess changes in car prices on a more scientific basis at the end of the year, after having taken a close look at prices on November 1.

The Commission studies seek to do more than keep motorists informed; at stake is the future of the present system of car sales through exclusive dealer networks. The Commission has authorized this system until 1995.