

AJ347

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES
Directorate-General Audiovisual Media, Information,
Communication, Culture



a newssheet for journalists

Weekly N° 26/93

19 - 26 July 1993

S U M M A R Y

- 2 INFORMATION: The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth
European Commission adopts a new approach.

- 3 ENVIRONMENT: A green label for washing machines and dishwashers
European Commission has set out the criteria for the award on an EC ecolabel for these two appliances.

- 4 CONSERVING EUROPE'S HERITAGE: ECU 3.16m. is to be spent this year by the EC on ...
... gardens and parks of historic interest.

- 6 EMPLOYMENT: Who can create jobs?
"There is no miracle solution", according to a European Commission report.

- 8 SINGLE MARKET: The EC's regime for bananas became operative on July 1
EC Court of Justice has refused to put off the date for Germany.

- 9 COMPETITION RULES: European information colloquium for lawyers ...
... in Brussels on September 27 and 28.

Mailed from Brussels X

The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the official views of the institutions of the Community.
Reproduction authorized.
200 rue de la Loi • T-120 7/56 • 1049 Brussels • Belgium • Tel.: 299.90.52 • Fax: 299.92.08

europafoocus

INFORMATION: The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth
European Commission adopts a new approach.

"The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth". This is the European Commission's new motto in information matters, according to the Commissioner responsible for such matters, Prof. João de Deus Pinheiro. "As in the courts, and as from now", he added, when presenting the Commission's new approach to the press on June 30.

Concretely this means that the public will have access hereafter to all European Commission documents, the few exceptions having to do with reasons of security. Prof. de Deus Pinheiro pointed out that the Commission will thus be following the system currently in force in Denmark and Sweden, the European countries which are the most open in this connection. So far the Commission has made available only certain categories of documents.

The Commission has also taken a series of measures which will allow it to (1) follow public opinion in the 12 Member States more closely, (2) coordinate its information activities more effectively and (3) make greater use of audiovisual and information technologies. The Commission wants at the same time to give its own departments much greater responsibility and to decentralize the spread of information by making better use of its national and regional offices.

Last year's campaigns for the first Danish referendum and the French referendum on the Maastricht Treaty highlighted the paucity of information on the building of Europe. The Commission has thought hard on the matter since then and has now taken its first steps towards greater openness; further measures are in the offing.

But the Commission insists that all EC institutions, including the Council of Ministers and European Parliament, as well as national authorities are responsible for providing news about "Europe". For Prof. de Deus Pinheiro, what is needed is a communication policy for the entire Community, and not for the Commission alone. The latter now envisages a joint campaign with the European Parliament, aimed at encouraging Europeans to vote in next year's elections to the European body.

ENVIRONMENT: A green label for washing machines and dishwashers

European Commission has set out the criteria for the award of an EC ecolabel for these two appliances.

The European Commission has just set out the ecological criteria which washing machines and dishwashers must meet in order to be awarded the European Community's green label. The aim is to encourage manufacturers to produce appliances which are less polluting by offering them an ecolabel, which will boost both their public image and their sales, if indirectly. A survey has shown European consumers to be increasingly concerned over environmental protection: 80% of them would like to be told about products and processes which do not damage the environment.

Provided they do not consume too much energy, water and washing powders, and meet certain efficiency criteria, these two types of appliances will hereafter be able to display the ecolabel.

In order to obtain the ecolabel, washing machines must require no more than 0.23 kWh of electricity and 17 litres of water per kilo of washing. The corresponding thresholds for dishwashers are 0.125 kWh and 1.85 litres per place setting. Both washing machines and dishwashers must not lose more than 5% of the washing powder employed. In addition, both appliances must meet strict standards as regards efficiency, which is a guarantee of high quality for the consumer.

The EC's ecolabel will gradually replace the various national green labels, to the benefit of both manufacturers and consumers - and the environment, of course.

Manufacturers will no longer be required to contact the authorities in individual EC countries in order to obtain their national green labels: the label given by the competent authorities in one Member State will be valid throughout the EC. The ecolabel will be issued on a one-time payment of ECU 500*. Manufacturers whose product has been awarded an ecolabel will have to pay the national body which made the award a sum equivalent to 0.15% of their annual sales of the product in question.

For their part, consumers will no longer be confronted with a multitude of green labels, including some fanciful ones. The ecolabel is easily recognized: it consists of a daisy, its petals represented by the EC's 12 stars. Thanks to the daisy, consumers will know they are buying a product which is less harmful to the environment and just as effective.

*

1 ECU = UKL0.77 or IRL0.80.

CONSERVING EUROPE'S HERITAGE: ECU 3.16m. is to be spent this year by the EC on ...

... gardens and parks of historic interest.

The European Commission has allocated ECU 3.165m. to 58 projects for the conservation of gardens and parks in the 12 EC countries this year. These projects will be financed in the framework of the action undertaken annually by the Commission to safeguard Europe's architectural heritage. The Commission received more than 600 requests for financial aid from national, regional and local authorities, as well as from private bodies and individuals. The 58 winning projects were selected by a jury of independent, internationally famous experts.

The theme chosen for this year is the conservation of gardens of historic interest. The concept covers both small-scale gardens and larger parks, botanical gardens, monastery gardens, orchards and green areas in historic centres.

The work of restoration over, the gardens and parks will not only recover their former animation but also serve to publicize the conservationist's craft and contribute to regional and cultural tourism. Once restored, these gardens will be open to the public. At the end of the year the Commission will organize a photographic exhibition in Brussels devoted to the 58 pilot projects. The exhibition will give the European Commissioner for cultural affairs, Prof. João de Deus Pinheiro, an opportunity to present the successful applicants and award the prizes at an official ceremony. Next year's theme is the restoration of historic buildings and sites used as theatres, concert halls, etc.

The following pilot projects have been selected this year in Britain and Ireland:

UNITED KINGDOM

Painshill Park, Cobham, South East - Laid out between 1738 and 1773 by Charles Hamilton, the 64 hectare park was at the forefront of a landscape movement. Work is required to renovate the monuments and reinforce the banks of the lake which are suffering from erosion.

Harewood Terrace, Leeds, Yorkshire and Humberside - The Italian-style parterre which reflected the style of its designer, Sir Charles Barry, was laid out between 1844 and 1851. The projects will carry out urgent treatment to the statues and ornaments and re-create the original parterre.

* 1 ECU = UK£0.77 or IR£0.80

... / ...

Antrim Castle, Antrim, Northern Ireland - This 15-hectare garden is a unique survival in the region of a 17th-century Anglo-Dutch formal water garden. The projects will re-establish public pathways, stabilize the mound and re-route vehicular traffic away from the park's sensitive areas.

Brantwood Garden, Coniston, Northern - Brantwood occupies a wild and spectacular site besides Coniston Water. A thorough restoration project is to be undertaken based on John Ruskin's writings and paintings.

Hanbury Hall Garden, Droitwich, West Midlands - An early 18th century park designed in the Anglo-Dutch style by the landscape architect George London. The projects will reinstate the formal garden to its original setting. When completed, visitors to the park will view an Anglo-Dutch garden in its entirety.

Prior Park, Bath, South West - Prior Park is an important example of an 18th century Capability Brown landscape park. The project will improve the main entrance and then restore ornamental buildings and structures.

IRELAND

Iveagh Gardens, Dublin, Leinster - Iveagh Gardens were constructed as part of the Dublin International exhibition of 1865. Aim is to restore the rustic grotto and the cascades and fountains.

Killruddery, Bray, Leinster - Killruddery was laid out in the 17th century in the French style and is one of the earliest gardens in Ireland that still survives intact. The retaining walls of the canals must be repaired and the cascades and fountains cleaned.

Powerscourt Gardens, Enniskerry, Leinster - A High Victorian-style garden, laid out at the turn of the century. Work is required to make public pathways safer.

Hilton Park, Scotshouse, Ulster - An 18th century pleasure park of approx. 16 hectares. The project will remake pathways and restore the rose garden and follies.

Kilfane Glen and Waterfall, Thomastown, Leinster - A rare surviving example of a late 16th-century romantic landscape. The garden was abandoned in 1830. The restoration project will replace broken bridges, repair the grotto and clean and seal the canals.

EMPLOYMENT: Who can create jobs?

"There is no miracle solution", according to a European Commission report.

"We must be wary of simplistic solutions ... Isn't a bad job better than no job at all? ... Social security systems must provide incentives to work". These were among the words pronounced by the European Social Affairs Commissioner, Pádraig Flynn, when presenting the European Commission's latest annual report on employment, and they set the tone for the document itself. The report raises questions, upsets preconceived ideas and offers food for thought - without providing either facile explanations of the problem of unemployment or ready-made answers.

The 12-nation European Community lost roughly one million jobs last year. By the end of this year, all the jobs created during the second half of the 1980s will have been lost and the Community will soon find itself facing once again the record level of unemployment reached in 1985. Five EC countries in fact have already set new records; they are Britain, Denmark, France, Ireland and Italy.

Paradoxically, a modest rate of economic growth resulted in a sharp rise in employment at the end of the 1980s. This was particularly true of the Netherlands, where many of the new jobs were part-time jobs. The situation in France and Italy was very different, however. Both countries recorded rates of economic growth which were above the Community average, but added few new jobs. Spain and Ireland failed to translate their impressive growth into jobs.

It should be pointed out that work is not shared in the same way everywhere. In the 1980s working hours for those employed in manufacturing and the service industry fell in all EC countries - and in particular in countries where it was already low - with the exception of the U.K., where the number of hours worked increased. In Belgium, Denmark, France and the Netherlands the number of jobs increased three times more than the total number of hours worked. In Germany the number of people in employment rose more than in the U.K., although the increase in the volume of work was twice as small.

In the 1980s the number of part-time jobs increased in the north of the Community but fell in the south. In 1991 the 12-nation Community lost full-time jobs in particular and created a high proportion of part-time jobs in those Member States in which there was a rise in the level of employment - Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Portugal.

Labour costs, often given as the explanation for unemployment, vary greatly from one EC country to another. In 1990 they were six times higher in Germany than in Portugal, to mention only the two extremes. But as Mr. Flynn pointed out, labour costs cannot be seen in isolation; what matters is the cost price per product or service, as this takes productivity into account. The report thus notes that "labour appears to be relatively cheap in the Netherlands and Luxembourg, despite high wages, as well as in Portugal and Ireland, while it is relatively expensive in Germany and Denmark". However, the differences between EC countries have remained much the same during the 1980s, if the fall in productivity in Britain and Greece is excepted.

Do low educational levels add to unemployment? In nearly all EC countries the level of education of the jobless is lower on average than that of those in employment; but this is not the case in either Greece or Italy. What is more, the unemployed in all EC countries include a high proportion of people who have successfully completed secondary or higher education.

What of laws which protect employment? They were made more flexible in France, Portugal, and the U.K. in particular, in the 1980s, even while they were strengthened in Spain and Italy. On the whole, the level of redundancies is lower in the countries with strict regulations and vice versa; but the exceptions are Britain and Portugal, countries with more flexible regulations.

The report confirms that unemployment strikes the economically backward regions harder than the others. What is more, in such regions the most modern and promising sectors of activity provide fewer jobs than elsewhere.

Women occupy a special place in this overview of employment. Between 1965 and 1991 the number of women in employment in the EC rose by more than 13m., while that of men fell by a million - a phenomenon unique to the West. But women, far more than men, are in temporary or part-time jobs, while some 55% of them work in education, health, trade and catering.

Some 45,000 copies of the European Commission's report on employment have been printed, for distribution throughout the 12-nation Community. The Commission in fact wants to stimulate discussion in the run-up to the report which it plans to present at the end of the year, in response to the request made to it by the Community's leaders at their Copenhagen summit.

SINGLE MARKET: The EC 's regime for bananas became operative on July 1

EC Court of Justice has refused to put off the date for Germany.

The single market for bananas came into force on July 1, as provided for by the "European law" adopted by EC ministers by a majority vote at the end of February. On June 29 the EC Court of Justice refused to grant Germany the right to continue with its duty-free imports of Latin American - or "dollar" - bananas, pending the outcome of its proceedings against the Community.

Under the "European law" on bananas, imports from countries other than the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries linked to the EC through the Lomé Convention, must pay an import duty of ECU 100* per tonne, for a maximum quantity of two million tonnes a year. Germany, the only EC country to import "dollar" bananas duty-free, voted against the new "law". It challenged the very legality of the new law in the EC Court of Justice in May. In order to prevent injury to German importers and consumers, pending the outcome of the proceedings, the German government asked the Court for permission to act as if the "law" in question did not exist.

But the judges held that accepting the German demand could result in even greater injury to the EC's own banana producers. The Court's ruling on the substance of the case is now awaited.

* 1 ECU = UK£0.77 or IR£0.80

COMPETITION RULES: European information colloquium for lawyers ...
... in Brussels on September 27 and 28.

The European Commission has taken the initiative in organizing a colloquium, aimed at informing lawyers and other members of the legal profession who handle competition cases at the Community level, of EC rules and procedures in this area. The lawyers will be able to take advantage of the 2-day meeting to draw attention to the problems they meet in the settlement of certain matters.

The discussions will be led by lawyers specializing in Community competition law as well as the Commission's own experts in competition policy. Themes to be taken up will include the defendant's rights, language problems, delays, access to files, hearings, commercial secrets and third-party rights. The colloquium will offer lawyers an exceptional opportunity to familiarize themselves with the byways of the EC's competition policy.

In addition to its educational character, the colloquium is a concrete manifestation of the Commission's policy of greater transparency at all levels. As lawyers are the representatives of both citizens and businesses, this initiative should help bring the EC's institutions and its citizens closer together. The European Commissioner responsible for competition policy, Karel Van Miert, and the President of the EC Court of Justice, Ole Due, will both attend the colloquium.

For further information on this event, which will take place in Brussels (Centre Borschette) on September 27 and 28, please contact the Secretariat for hearings and consultative committees, European Commission, Directorate-General IV (Competition), Cortenberg 158 - 8/39, 200 rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels, Belgium. Fax (32-2) 296.59 93; Telephone (32-2) 295.59.12 and 295. 10.66