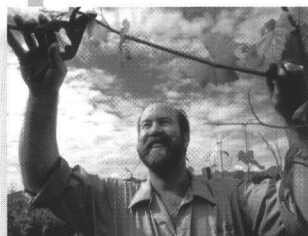


CES: 1

European Economic and Social Committee



European Economic and Social Committee



BULLETIN

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Facts and figures - October 1998

PRESIDENCY

President: Beatrice RANGONI MACHIAVELLI
(Italy - Various Interests)

Vice-presidents: Josly PIETTE
(Belgium - Workers)

Aina Margareta REGNELL
(Sweden - Employers)

Secretary-General: Patrick VENTURINI

ORIGINS

The ESC was set up by the 1957 Rome Treaties in order to involve economic and social interest groups in the establishment of the common market and to provide institutional machinery for briefing the European Commission and the Council of Ministers on European Union issues.

The Single European Act (1986), the Maastricht Treaty (1992) and the Amsterdam Treaty (1997) have reinforced the ESC's role.

MEMBERSHIP

The 222 members of the ESC are drawn from economic and social interest groups in Europe. Members are nominated by national governments and appointed by the Council of the European Union for a renewable 4-year term of office. They belong to one of three groups: Employers (Group I - president: Manuel Eugénio Cavaleiro Brandão - Portugal), Workers (Group II - president: Roger Briesch - France), Various Interests (Group III - president: Anne-Marie Sigmund - Austria). Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom have 24 members each, Spain has 21, Belgium, Greece, the Netherlands, Portugal, Austria and Sweden 12, Denmark, Ireland and Finland 9 and Luxembourg 6.

THE MEMBERS' MANDATE

The task of members is to issue opinions on matters referred to the ESC by the Commission and the Council, as well as the European Parliament pursuant to the Amsterdam Treaty.

The ESC is the only socio-occupational advisory body that can be consulted by the EU Council of Ministers.

ADVISORY ROLE

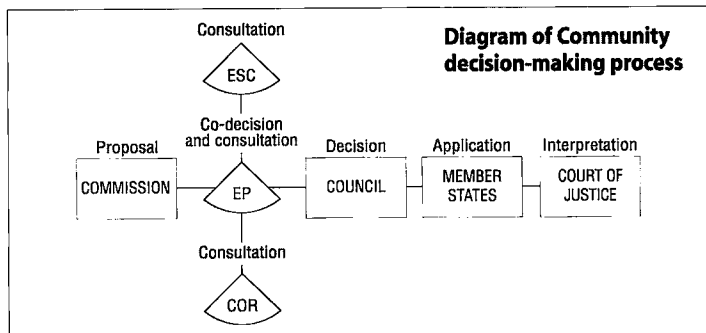
Consultation of the ESC by the Commission or the Council is mandatory in certain cases; in others it is optional. The ESC may, however, also adopt opinions on its own initiative. The Single European Act (17.2.86), the Maastricht Treaty (7.2.92) and the Treaty of Amsterdam (signed on 2.10.97) extended the range of issues which must be referred to the Committee: regional policy, environmental policy, employment policy, broad guidelines for economic policies, combating social exclusion, etc. The ESC produces 180 opinions a year (of which 15% are issued on its own initiative). All opinions are forwarded to the Community's decision-making bodies and then published in the Official Journal of the European Communities.

INFORMATION AND INTEGRATION ROLE

Over the last few years the ESC has stepped up its role in the European Union and has transcended the straightforward duties flowing from the treaties. It acts as a forum for the single mar-

ket and has hosted, with the support of other EU bodies, a series of events aimed at bringing the EU closer to the people.

Diagram of the Community's decision-making process



INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

1. Presidency and Bureau

Every two years the ESC elects a Bureau made up of 21 members (seven per group), and a president and two vice-presidents chosen from each of the three groups in rotation.

The president is responsible for the orderly conduct of the Committee's business. He is assisted by the vice-presidents, who deputize for him in the event of his absence.

The president represents the ESC in relations with outside bodies.

Joint briefs (relations with EFTA, CEEC, AMU, ACP countries, Latin American and other third countries, and the Citizens' Europe) fall within the remit of the ESC Bureau and the president.

The Bureau's main task is to organize and coordinate the work of the ESC's various bodies and to lay down policy guidelines for this work.

2. Sections

The Committee has six sections:

- Section for Economic and Monetary Union and Economic and Social Cohesion - secretariat tel. 546 9366 (president: Umberto Burani - Group I - Italy)
- Section for the Single Market, Production and Consumption - secretariat tel. 546 9598 (president: Klaus Schmitz - Group II - Germany)
- Section for Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society - secretariat tel. 546 9611 (president: José Ignacio Gafó Fernández - Group I - Spain)
- Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship - secretariat tel. 546 9215 (president: Jan Olsson - Group III - Sweden)
- Section for Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment - secretariat tel. 546 9687 (president: Etienne de Paul de Barchifontaine - Group III - Belgium)
- Section for External Relations - secretariat tel. 546 9537 (president: Tom Jenkins - Group II - United Kingdom)

3. Study groups

Section opinions are drafted by study groups, varying in size from three to 15 members, including a rapporteur who may be assisted by as many as four outside experts.

4. Other bodies

The ESC has the right to set up other ad hoc

structures under its Rules of Procedure, known as sub-committees, for specific issues. It has also set up a permanent Single Market Observatory.

5. Plenary session

As a rule, the full Committee meets in plenary session ten times a year. At the plenary sessions, opinions are adopted on the basis of section opinions by a simple majority. They are forwarded to the institutions and published in the Official Journal of the European Communities.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

1. Relations with economic and social councils

The ESC maintains regular links with regional and national economic and social councils throughout the European Union. These links mainly involve exchanges of information and joint discussions every year on specific issues.

The ESC also liaises worldwide with other economic and social councils at the "International Meetings" held every two years.

2. Relations with economic and social interest groups in third countries

The ESC has links with economic and social interest groups in a number of non-member countries and groups of countries, including Mediterranean countries, the ACP countries, central and eastern Europe, Latin America and EFTA. For this purpose the ESC sets up delegations headed by the president or a vice-president. Some meetings involving the countries of central and eastern Europe have been institutionalized with the agreement of the Council, e.g. with the Committee's counterparts in Hungary and - in the near future - with those in Bulgaria and Poland. There are also formal links with socio-economic interest groups in Turkey.

PUBLICATIONS

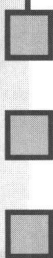
The ESC regularly distributes a number of publications, including its main opinions in brochure format, a monthly newsletter entitled ESC INFO and its Annual Report.

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

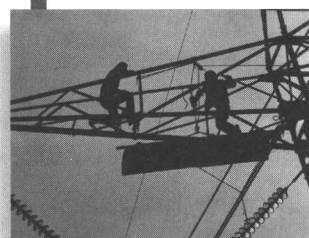
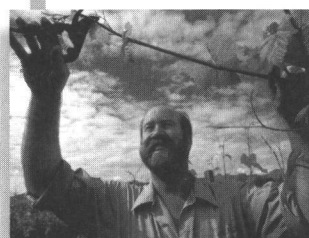
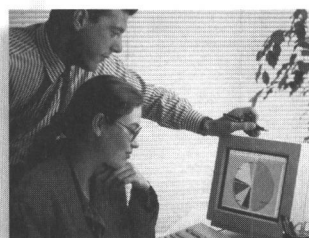
The Committee is serviced by a secretariat-general, headed by a secretary-general who reports to the president, representing the Bureau.

135 staff work exclusively for the Economic and Social Committee. Since 1 January 1995, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions have shared a common core of departments whose staff, numbering 516, are mostly members of the ESC secretariat.

European Economic and Social Committee



European Economic and Social Committee



BULLETIN

3 '99

CES: 1

This Bulletin reports on the activities of the Economic and Social Committee, a European consultative assembly. It is published after plenary sessions in French, English and German. Versions in the eleven official languages of the European Union are available on the ESC Internet site (<http://www.esc.eu.int>).

The complete texts of ESC opinions are available:

- *in the Official Journal of the European Communities,*
- *on the CELEX database,*
- *at the ESC Internet site,*
- *on written request from the ESC General Secretariat.*

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I. 362nd PLENARY SESSION - 24 and 25 MARCH 1999

The European Economic and Social Committee held its 362nd plenary session in Brussels on 24 and 25 March 1999. The ESC president, Mrs Rangoni Machiavelli, took the chair.

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* *

In the course of the session, the Committee adopted the following opinions:

Section for the Single Market, Production and Consumption
Joao Pereira dos Santos, Head of Division - ☎ (32-2) 546 9245

1. CUSTOMS 2000

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the proposal for a European Parliament and Council decision amending the Decision of 19 December 1996 adopting an action programme for customs in the Community (Customs 2000)
(COM(98) 644 final - 98/0314 COD)

(CES 322/99 - 98/0314 COD)

Rapporteur: Helmut GIESECKE (Germany - Employers)

Gist of the Commission document

The Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 December 1996 adopting an action programme for customs in the Community (Customs 2000) was designed to improve overall customs efficiency in the Community by making the work of the customs authorities of the European Union more transparent and through cooperation between these authorities and the Commission.

In its report to the European Parliament and the Council of 24 July 1998 on the implementation of Customs 2000, the Commission emphasized:

- the need to make Community measures more consistent and transparent. It suggested

bringing all these measures together within a single legal instrument to allow a more unified approach to customs operations;

- the importance of the partnership between the Member States and the Commission in defining programme content, underpinned by the establishment of an institutional committee to assist the Commission in implementing the Decision;
- the importance of opening up the programme to associated countries in the light of the future enlargement of the European Union.

The present proposal supersedes an earlier one of 3 September 1997, which has been withdrawn.

The proposed amendments to the initial Customs 2000 Decision are based on the conclusions of that report and would integrate the following into a single legal instrument, under a single budget heading:

- joint measures with the Member States to develop new working methods, provided for by the current Customs 2000 Decision;
- computerization, so far covered partly by Customs 2000 and partly, until 31 December 1997, by the first IDA programme;
- training measures currently covered by the Mattheus programme;
- access for non-EU countries (the applicant countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Cy-

prus, Turkey and Malta) to cooperation and technical assistance operations in the customs field.

In addition to the Customs Policy Committee, whose competence is confined to the training measures introduced by the 1991 Matthaëus Decision, an institutional Committee is needed to assist the Commission in the practical implementation of the guidelines set out for different spheres of activity in the amended Decision. This proposal therefore provides for such a Management Committee to be set up to replace the present Committee.

Gist of the opinion

In its Opinion of 13 September 1995 the Committee endorsed the objectives of the Customs 2000 programme and welcomed their implementation. It is therefore natural for the Committee to give its support also to the proposed amendment under review which basically represents a logical extension and a necessary further development of the original programme. The Commission is, in the Committee's view, acting in a consistent way by advocating that all the measures linked to the programme be integrated into a single legal instrument and that the programme be financed from a single budget heading.

In this context the Committee assumes that the fact that the IDA budget is no longer to be drawn upon does not imply any renunciation of the principles of the IDA system. It is absolutely vital that these principles - maximum cost effectiveness, a rationalized approach to establishing networks, and adaptability to technological progress - continue to be observed.

With a view to ensuring that customs law is applied as evenly as possible, the Committee approves the Commission's proposal with regard to the exchange of customs officials and the organization of further training seminars. The Committee also welcomes and highlights the importance of the recently introduced practice of also inviting leading economic operators to the seminars.

Extending the scope of the programme to include the applicant states of central and eastern Europe, together with Cyprus and Malta, is a logical step. Flexibility should also be shown with regard to the

participation of Turkey, which is already joined to the Community in customs union, to prevent any appearance of discrimination. In the context of these programmes, attention should be paid, in particular, to the consequences of the entry into force of the Amsterdam Treaty. Account should also be taken of the concerns of both the EP's committee of inquiry and the Court of Auditors. Furthermore, importance should be attached to cooperation between the respective customs authorities of these states.

Finally, the Committee asks the Commission to brief it annually on the use and effectiveness of funding.

2. EUROPEAN TOURISM POLICY (*Own-initiative*)

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the *European Tourism Policy*

(CES 323/99)

Rapporteur: Colin LUSTENHOUSER (Netherlands - Various Interests)

Background

At its meeting on 7 December 1998, the Single Market Council could not reach agreement on a proposal for a multiannual programme for tourism. However, the German delegation indicated that the presidency could re-examine the matter during the first half of 1999.

The high-level group on tourism and employment that was set up at the initiative of Commissioner Papoutsis published its report at the end of October 1998. It concludes that:

- the contribution of tourism to growth and employment requires greater political recognition at all levels, and that this should lead to positive action which will reinforce the potential of the tourism industry to bring further and sustainable growth;
- the greater integration of tourism preoccupations and priorities into the development and implementation of Community programmes and policies presents a unique opportunity for the Community to contribute to greater competitiveness of the European industry;

- the development of effective consultation and cooperation among the parties concerned at local, regional, national and European levels is an essential pre-requisite to maximising the contribution of tourism to growth.

The Commission feels that a Council decision on tourism is crucial to policy on competitiveness and jobs, and that at present this industrial sector is losing market share, despite its growth.

Initial reactions to the Group's report have been positive, and confirm that there is a widespread interest in upgrading the Community focus on tourism. The European Parliament's report "Jobs of the Future in Europe", adopted on 27 January 1999, also calls for the Philoxenia programme to be implemented, if not at Community level then at least by individual Member States. Specific Commission proposals are foreseen in the near future.

Gist of the Opinion

The Committee, which has always supported the Commission in its endeavours to develop a proactive EU policy for the tourism-leisure industry and for the benefit of consumers of tourism products, is extremely disappointed at the current state of affairs, and is aware that the special Directorate for Tourism which the Commission recently set up in DG XXIII has a difficult task ahead of it. The Committee lends its full support to this venture, which must be launched and implemented in close cooperation and consultation with tourism, leisure organizations, and the social partners.

The Committee calls on the Council and the Commission - despite the adverse political climate - to make a real start on mainstreaming the challenges facing the tourist industry into all Commis-

sion policies in order to harness the sector's growth potential.

More generally, the EU must help to promote a more business-friendly legislative and regulatory climate. The Committee welcomes the approach taken by the Commission in setting up this so-called "High Level Group on Tourism" and agrees with its conclusions when it says, for example, that the recommendations made by the "BEST Group" (Business Environment Task Force) must be implemented in the short term. The Committee is also interested in the ways the Commission proposes to implement the conclusions of the High Level Group to make a substantial contribution to promotion of employment opportunities in the tourism and leisure sector.

The difficult task ahead of the Commission will - in the Committee's view - only bear fruit as part of a structured dialogue with tourism and leisure industry representatives. The Committee therefore calls for the establishment of a (credible) European Advisory Committee on tourism and recreation.

In conclusion, the Committee urges the establishment of a long-term EU strategy on tourism, endorsed by a Council decision, to ensure the political recognition EU tourism deserves as a leading player for growth and employment. Such a strategy would contribute towards ensuring the effective use of Commission resources, whilst at the same time the recognition of the importance of the sector is the prerequisite for the achievement of the main Community objectives, such as employment, regional policy, environment, objectives related to enlargement, and the overall SME policy objectives.

Section for Transport, Energy Infrastructure and the Information Society
Luigi Del Bino, Head of Division - ☎ (32-2) 546 9353

3. DEVELOPING THE CITIZENS' NETWORK

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee on developing the Citizens' Network -

why good local and regional passenger transport is important and how the European Commission is helping to bring it about
(COM(1998) 431 final)

(CES 324/99)

Rapporteur: Alexander-Michael von SCHWERIN
(Germany - Workers)

Gist of the Commission document

This Communication follows up the European Commission's Green Paper on the Citizens' Network and its work to assess the potential of passenger intermodality.

The key points are:

- good local and regional passenger transport is an essential part of Europe's transport system;
- local and regional transport is primarily a matter for local, regional and national authorities, working with transport operators and users;
- the Commission's role is to provide useful tools for authorities, operators and user groups, and to establish the right policy framework for sustainable mobility.

The Communication describes the Commission's three year work programme designed to support the role of local and regional passenger transport in contributing to economic development and employment, reducing congestion, using less energy, producing fewer pollutants, making less noise, reducing social exclusion and improving quality of life. Achieving these objectives means making more use of environmentally friendly forms of transport like clean and efficient public and private transport, cycling and walking. It requires an integrated approach.

The work programme covers information exchange, benchmarking, establishing the right policy framework, and the use of Community financial instruments. In line with the principle of subsidiarity, the European Commission will act mainly as supporter or catalyst.

Gist of the opinion

The Committee welcomes the fact that, by submitting the present communication, the Commission reinforces the importance of the Green Paper on the Citizens' Network and thereby helps to bring about the further development of public passenger transport and boost the scope for intermodal links. The Committee supports the aims of the proposed programme and highlights the need to respect the principle of subsidiarity.

The Committee would, however, point out that the term "the citizens' network" has not yet become an established concept to large sections of the population and a number of experts.

The Committee hopes that the Commission will take concrete steps towards the creation of such a citizens' network. With this aim in view, there is a need to set out qualitative and quantitative objectives (such as changing the *modal split*), backed up by practical action which may be taken to achieve these objections.

When such action is carried out however, account should be taken of the fact that, in accordance with the subsidiarity principle, public regional and local passenger transport is primarily the responsibility of regional and local authorities and comes under the legal responsibility of the Member States.

The projects in the fields of information, research and cooperation launched by the EU Commission are furthering the development of a citizens' network. The Committee attaches particular importance in this context to the development of quality criteria and projects such as benchmarking in respect of transport systems. The projects should therefore focus, in particular, on qualitative criteria in respect of the provision of services, in addition to economic criteria, and also consider the interaction between the various transport modes. Other means of promoting public mobility, such as systems of cycle-paths or car-sharing, should also be covered. With these aims in view, all forms of mobility which are not damaging to the environment should be coordinated and assisted as part of an environmental alliance.

Effective mobility management should be linked to consultations on mobility; parties such as user-groups and the social partners, should be involved in decision-making here.

Too little attention is, however, paid in the Commission's communication to the possibilities as regards urban planning, opened up by the organization of transport, and the complex nature of this issue. The same criticism could be levelled as regards spatial planning: mobility and equal opportunities for people living in rural areas should be improved by promoting local public transport, rather than by relying exclusively on private cars.

The provision of an adequate measure of local public transport is a public service requirement. In

the case of local public transport, the goal of promoting competition - which is broadly endorsed - must continue to be subordinated to the prime objective of providing essential public services.

In cases where exclusive rights in respect of local public passenger transport are allocated on the basis of tenders, the local authorities should - with due regard to the planned liberalization drive - be entitled to apply criteria to the tender procedure which are in line with local needs and which may, perhaps, also include acceptance of particular tasks or commitments, including, in particular, transport policy, environmental, economic and social considerations and a responsible employment policy.

Public and private transport undertakings should be placed on an equal footing for the purposes of the provisions governing essential public services and the granting of exclusive rights.

4. PORT FACILITIES - WASTE

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the Proposal for a Council Directive on port reception facilities for ship-generated waste and cargo residues

(COM(1998) 452 final - 98/0249 SYN)

(CES 325/99 - 98/0249 SYN)

Rapporteur: Eduardo CHAGAS (Portugal - Workers)

Gist of the Commission document

This proposal underpins the EU commitment to reducing marine pollution by taking measures to ensure that international rules and standards governing the discharge of ship-generated wastes and cargo residues at sea are fully implemented.

The proposal aims to ensure a major reduction in marine pollution by the provision of adequate waste reception facilities in all EU ports including recreational ports and marinas. In addition it requires all ships, fishing vessels and recreational craft visiting these ports to make use of the facilities provided.

More specifically, the proposal:

- requires all ports and marinas to provide adequate reception facilities for ship-generated waste and cargo residues;
- requires a waste-management plan to be developed for each port which is monitored and approved by Member States;
- ensures that fee systems adopted by ports will encourage vessels to use the facilities rather than discharge their wastes at sea;
- obliges every visiting vessel to deliver all wastes and residues to the reception facilities unless the master can prove that there is sufficient storage space for the proposed voyage;
- requires ships to notify their intention to use facilities and quantities of waste on board before arriving in port;
- requires Member States to monitor compliance with the Directive and apply sanctions, detaining the vessel when deemed to be necessary;
- requires authorities to forward information on non-compliance to other EU ports which such ships may intend to visit.

In making this proposal, the Commission hopes to considerably reduce marine pollution and the resulting damage to ecosystems and to greatly enhance coastal amenity values within the EU.

Gist of the opinion

The Committee endorses the proposed directive as an integral part of the Community's waste management policy. The Committee considers that implementation of the directive could significantly improve conditions in the EU's ports. The scheme should be extended to other maritime regions of the world, so as to establish uniform conditions in all ports and high marine-pollution control standards.

By its very nature, marine pollution has transnational implications. Preventive action in this field will therefore be more effective if it is taken at EU level, since the contracting parties are not in a position to take appropriate effective measures individually. It should also be stressed that a strict delivery regime such as the one being proposed

requires considerable cooperation on information and monitoring procedures between neighbouring states, not only within the EU but also with third countries. The directive can only be competition-neutral if its application is generalized.

The Committee therefore suggests that funding for similar projects be envisaged under programmes such as Meda, Phare or Tacis, or the Lomé Convention.

Lastly, the Committee considers that approval of the proposed directive must address various considerations regarding the need to clarify the equipping of waste-reception facilities in ports, the calculation of the fees to be applied, and a guarantee of resources to enforce the provisions. The Committee makes the following specific points:

- the obligations placed on ports need clarifying, and cooperation between neighbouring ports should be encouraged with a view to rationalizing costs;
- notwithstanding the obligation to deliver all ship-generated waste (Article 7), provision should be made for cases where the port is not equipped to receive the waste;
- when the operation of a particular waste reception and treatment facility is unprofitable, the Member State should have the option of dispensing with it, thereby exempting it from payment of the operating fee;
- cargo owners should be responsible for the cost of delivering cargo residues;
- effective inspections are vital to the proper implementation of the directive, and the Committee doubts whether the current framework for Port State Control in the EU can guarantee this.

5. WORKING TIME / EXCLUDED SECTORS

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the *Proposals for Council Directives:*

- *amending Directive 93/104/EC of 23 November 1993, concerning certain aspects of the organization of working time to cover sectors and activities excluded from that Directive*

- *concerning the organisation of working time for mobile workers performing road transport activities and for self-employed drivers*
- *concerning the agreement on the organisation of working time of seafarers concluded by the European Community Shipowners' Association (ECSA) and the Federation of Transport Workers' Unions in the European Union (FST)*
- *concerning the enforcement of seafarers' hours of work on board ships using Community ports* (COM(1998) 662 final - 98/0318 SYN - 98/0319 SYN - 98/0321 SYN)

(CES 322/99 - 98/018 SYN - 98/0319 SYN - 98/0321 SYN)

Rapporteur: Joseph KONZ (Luxembourg - Workers)
Co-rapporteur: Carlos RIBEIRO (Portugal - Various Interests)

Gist of Commission document

The general provisions covering working time are laid down in Directive 93/104/EC. Certain sectors and activities are excluded from the scope of the Directive. These are air, sea, rail, road, inland waterway and lake transport, sea fishing, other work at sea and the activities of doctors in training.

In view of this the Commission has committed itself on a number of occasions to introducing measures in respect of the sectors and activities excluded from the Directive.

On 15 July 1997, the Commission adopted a White Paper on the sectors and activities excluded from the Working Time Directive; this white paper was regarded as the first round of the consultation in respect of working time in the sectors and activities excluded from the Directive. The white paper examined the nature and extent of the exclusion, the size of the problem, the legal and contractual situation in the Member States and the initiatives taken. It provided a sector-by-sector analysis and assessment of the specific features and problems of each sector and activity.

On 31 March 1998, the Commission launched a second phase consultation process on the content of its envisaged proposal, following the responses to the white paper. The Commission also continued to support the "differentiated approach".

Following the consultation process, discussions between the social partners were stepped up in most of the joint committees concerned. In some cases the discussions lead to formal agreements, in other cases (such as the road-transport sector) no agreement was reached.

The communication under review, which takes full account of the agreements reached between the social partners, explains the Commission's plans to protect workers not currently covered by the Working Time Directive (93/104/EC) against adverse effects on their health and safety and the safety of others caused by working excessively long hours, having inadequate rest or irregular working patterns.

The Commission proposes the following measures:

- **Horizontal measures**

- Communication on the organization of working time in the excluded sectors
- Proposal for a Directive amending Directive 93/104/EC

Under the proposal the scope of the Directive is to be extended to cover all non-mobile workers, including doctors in training. It will also apply to seafarers and mobile railway workers. A number of provisions are to be introduced with regard to other mobile workers.

- **Sectoral measures**

- a) **A proposal for a Directive covering the road transport sector**

- Proposal for a Directive setting out specific measures in respect of working time in the road transport sector

This proposal for a Directive has three key objectives: to guarantee a level of social protection equivalent to that currently applied in the other sectors; to protect the health and safety of all road-users; and to remove unfair competition in the single market.

The proposal for a Directive provides for :

- working time more broadly defined than in existing rules on driving time;
- 48 hours maximum average working week over a 4 months reference period and maximum weekly working time of 60 hours (compared to 78 in the general working time directive);
- break of at least 30 minutes after between 6 and 9 hours work and at least 45 minutes after more than 9 hours;
- daily rest of at least 11 hours. It may be reduced to 10 hours provided there is compensatory rest of at least 12 hours within the next 4 weeks;
- weekly rest of 35 hours per week;
- night workers may only work 8 hours "per day"; this is extendable up to 10 hours as long as an average of 8 hours is not exceeded over a 2-month reference period;
- a tighter definition of "night work" than in the general working time directive.

The Commission also proposes that :

- derogations from the maximum average working week, rest periods and night work may be made by national rules or through collective agreements or other agreements between the social partners, but only if the workers are provided with equivalent periods of compensatory rest;
 - the reference period for the average maximum weekly working time of 48 hours may not exceed 6 months, unless the average weekly working time is reduced to 39 hours and 35 hours respectively.
- b) **Two proposals for Directives and a Recommendation on the maritime sector**
 - Proposal for a Directive concerning the agreement on the organisation of working

time of seafarers concluded by the European Community Shipowners' Association (ECSA) and the Federation of Transport Workers in the European Union (FST).

- Proposal for a Directive concerning the enforcement of seafarers' hours of work on board ships using Community ports.
- Recommendation on ratification of ILO Convention No. 180 (1996).

The three above-mentioned documents are mainly based on (a) the conclusions of the agreement of 30 September 1998 between the social partners and (b) international standards in respect of working time.

Gist of the opinion

In general the Economic and Social Committee reaffirms the positions expressed in its earlier opinions on the same subject. It supports the Commission's initiative and calls upon the Council to legislate as soon as possible.

Today the ESC has to note that formal agreements between the social partners have been signed only in the rail transport and maritime transport sectors. It is a matter of great regret to the ESC that, despite the intensive negotiations held in the Joint Committee on Road Transport, the social partners did not manage to reach agreement at the last meeting on 30 September 1998, although many areas of convergence were found. The ESC nevertheless has to congratulate the Commission on its efficiency and on its clear, relevant and well-balanced proposals, which by and large match the conditions outlined earlier by the ESC.

On the more specific aspects of the proposals, the ESC has the following particular comments to make:

- **road transport:** minimum requirements on working time are necessary to protect the health and safety of *self-employed drivers*, when they are driving a bus, coach or heavy goods vehicle. This is also necessary for reasons of road safety and to eliminate possible distortions of competition which might impede the proper functioning of the single transport market;
- **road and rail transport:** any *extension of the reference period beyond six months* could have detrimental effects on firms which, towards the end of the year, might be unable to make use of a number of staff who had already completed their quota of working hours;
- **maritime transport:** it is of utmost importance that *ships flying the flags of states which have not ratified ILO Convention 180* or which are not members of the ILO should also be subject to verification and enforcement of compliance with the MWT Directive;
- **air transport:** while awaiting the Commission proposals on a Community regulatory scheme limiting flying time on the basis of operational safety considerations, it is necessary to establish a complementary and parallel approach between the said draft regulation and appropriate arrangements to protect the *health and safety of aircrews*.

Finally, with regard to doctors in training, the Committee endorses the Commission proposals, even though some specific aspects of them could be improved upon.

Section for Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment
Francisco Vallejo, Head of Division - ☎ (32-2) 546 9396

6. OFFICIAL INSPECTIONS - ANIMAL NUTRITION

(CES 326/99 - 98/0301 COD)

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the Proposal for a European Parliament and Council Directive amending Directive 95/53/EC fixing the principles governing the organisation of official inspections in the field of animal nutrition (COM (1998) 602 final - 98/0301 COD)

Rapporteur: Sergio COLOMBO (Italy - Workers)

Gist of the Commission proposal

The proposal spells out the principles governing the organization of official inspections in the field

of animal nutrition, as laid down in Directive 95/53/EC. In particular, it specifies that the Commission and the Member States are to delegate experts to check whether Community rules are being observed.

If the protection of the environment or of human or animal health so requires, the Commission - acting on its own initiative or at the request of a Member State - has to adopt specific protective measures, as laid down in the proposal, and apply specific procedures.

In particular cases justified on human or animal health grounds, the inspections carried out by and in the Member States are to be stepped up. So as to ensure that the inspections are applied uniformly and effectively across the Community, it is proposed that the Commission should be given responsibility for laying down specific coordinated inspection programmes.

Gist of the opinion

The Committee supports the Commission's proposal. In its specific comments it proposes to extend the area of application. It states that not only imports from "all or part of the third country concerned may be suspended" but also imports from "one or more specific production plants, and, where appropriate, any third country of transit".

7. COM / SUGAR

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the Proposal for a Council Regulation (EC) on the common organization of the markets in the sugar sector

(COM(1998) 794 final - 98/0370 CNS)

(CES 327/99 - 98/0370 CNS)

Rapporteur working alone: Rudolf STRASSER (Austria - Various Interests)

Gist of the Commission proposal

The purpose of this proposal is to undertake an official legislative consolidation of Council Regulation (EEC) N° 1785/81 of 30 June 1981. The new regulation will supersede the various regulations incorporated in it and their content is fully preserved.

Gist of the opinion

The Committee welcomes the Commission proposal.

8. FISHERY / CONSERVATION RESOURCES OF JUVENILES

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the Proposal for a Council Regulation (EC) amending for the second time Regulation (EC) No. 850/98 of 30 March 1998 for the conservation of fishery resources through technical measures for the protection of juveniles of marine organisms
(COM(1998) 788 final - 98/0359 CNS)

(CES 329/99 - 98/0359 CNS)

Rapporteur-general: Eduardo CHAGAS (Portugal - Workers)

Gist of the Commission proposal

The proposal is amending Regulation (EC) No. 850/98 on the conservation of fishery resources through technical measures for the protection of juveniles of marine organisms. The Annexes X and XI of this Regulation pertain to rules for the use of mesh size combination, and are for the moment "For the record". The proposal lays down provisions for the use of mesh size combinations by means of supplying texts for these Annexes. It also provides for effective control and enforcement of said provisions and addresses the long-standing issue of transboundary fisheries.

Gist of the opinion

The Committee supports the Commission proposal. It also stresses the importance of effective control, research and development and uniform application. A particular reservation is made to the applicability and practicability of a provision regarding the landing of vessels with specifically defined nets.

9. WINEGROWING / CHARENTES REGION

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the Proposal for a Council Regulation (EC) amending Regulation (EEC) No. 1442/88 on the granting, for the 1988/89 to 1998/99 wine years,

of permanent abandonment premiums in respect of wine-growing areas
(COM(1999) 83 final - 99/0053 CNS)

(CES 358/99 - 99/0053 CNS)

Rapporteur-general: Jean-Claude SABIN (France - Various Interests)

Gist of the Commission proposal

The purpose of this proposal is to facilitate application of the Community scheme for the permanent abandonment of wine-growing land in the specific case of the Charentes region, which is undergoing an over-production crisis. The derogation was also applied throughout the Member States in the 1996/97 and 1997/98 wine years.

Gist of the opinion

The Economic and Social Committee endorses the Commission proposal.

10. AMBIENT AIR-LIMIT VALVES FOR BENZENE AND CARBON MONOXIDE

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the proposal for a Council Directive relating to limit valves for benzene and carbon monoxide in ambient air

(COM(1998) 591 final - 98/0333 SYN)

(CES 333/99 - 98/0333 SYN)

Rapporteur:

Ignacio GAFO FERNÁNDEZ (Spain - Employers)

Co-rapporteurs:

Franco CHIRIACO (Italy - Workers)

Ann DAVISON (United Kingdom - Various Interests)

Gist of the Commission proposal

Council Directive 96/62/EC on ambient air-quality assessment and management provides the framework for future EC legislation on air quality. The four objectives of the Directive are to:

- define and establish objectives for ambient air pollution in the Community designed to avoid, prevent and reduce harmful effects on human health and the environment as a whole;

- assess ambient air quality in Member States on the basis of common methods and criteria;
- obtain adequate information on ambient air quality and ensure that it is made available to the public *inter alia* by means of alert thresholds;
- maintain ambient air quality where it is good and improve it in other cases.

The proposed Directive is only part of an integrated package of measures designed to combat problems of air pollution, which also need to be considered in the framework of the ongoing revision of Community policies relating to urban development and the Structural Funds. Annex I of the Air Quality Framework Directive lists atmospheric pollutants to be taken into consideration in the assessment and management of ambient air quality. Benzene and carbon monoxide are listed in Annex I of the Air-Quality Framework Directive among "other air pollutants". This proposal fixes limit values including attainment dates for these two pollutants, gives requirements for assessment of concentrations, and provides for the dissemination of information about pollutants to the public. Further proposals will be made in the future for other air pollutants.

Article 4 of the Air-Quality Framework Directive requires that daughter legislation on benzene and carbon monoxide should include provisions:

- setting limit values, including the attainment dates by which they should be met;
- setting any temporary margins of tolerance during the period between the coming into force of the directive and the attainment date for the limit value;
- setting alert thresholds if appropriate and listing details to be supplied to the public if an alert threshold is exceeded;
- setting out criteria and techniques for measurement;
- setting out criteria for the use of other techniques for assessing ambient air quality, particularly modelling;
- defining upper and lower assessment thresholds for the determination of the assessment requirements applicable in an agglomeration or other zone.

As required by Directive 96/62/EC, the proposal has been based on technical and scientific grounds. Accordingly a technical working group was set up

for each pollutant, consisting of experts from Member States, industry, NGOs, EEA, WHO and other representatives of international scientific groups and the Commission. There has also been a cost-benefit analysis of the proposed measures, to determine whether additional action would be needed beyond that already planned in order to meet the proposed limit values and if so, to estimate the costs using the most cost effective solutions and to assess the additional benefits which could be expected from meeting the limit value. A separate study entitled "Economic evaluation of air quality targets for carbon monoxide and benzene" was undertaken by consultants to the Commission.

The study took as its baseline the measures already agreed under the Auto-Oil programme for the year 2000, and the first daughter Directive on SO₂, NO_x particulate matter and lead. Its purpose was to determine what additional action would be needed in

order to meet limit values for CO and benzene, and to estimate the additional costs and the likely benefits.

Gist of the opinion

The Committee welcomes this second directive arising from Directive 96/62/EC on ambient air quality and urges the Commission to submit proposals for the remaining pollutants still requiring regulation. The Committee fully endorses the limit values proposed by the Commission for both benzene and carbon monoxide emissions. However, the Committee would have preferred references to establishing concentration limits for benzene and carbon monoxide or maintaining good air quality where it already exists to have been tied in with a parallel improvement in measurement and monitoring systems in general, and especially with the urgent identification of air quality hot spots, for which special measures need to be introduced.

Section for Economic and Monetary Union and Economic and Social Cohesion

Arie Van De Graaf, Head of Division - ☎ (032-2) 546 9227

11. FINANCING THE EUROPEAN UNION *(Own-initiative)*

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee *on Financing the European Union*

(CES 328/99)

Rapporteur: Vasco CAL (Portugal - Workers)

Gist of the Commission document

As part of the series of inter-linked policy proposals within the framework of Agenda 2000, the European Commission has published a wide ranging review of the operation of the present system of financial resources available to finance the budget of the European Union (COM(1998) 560 final). The review outlines the evolution of the different components in the past decade.

The object of the review is to better inform the debate about both the adequacy of the present system in making resources available and also the

relative merits of the different options for variations, or major changes, in the sourcing of these resources. Since major decisions are under consideration for the main expenditure items in the budget (including the Common Agriculture Policy and the Structural Funds) it is important that the revenue resources should be adequate to meet the commitments.

The Commission report on the financing of the European Union:

- reviews the merits of the present own resources system, which combines revenue from the Traditional Own Resources, an earmarked levy on VAT revenue and a contribution based on relative GNP totals;
- considers the possibility of new own resources;
- in particular, considers the possibility of a direct payment to the European Union of a VAT related resource;

- reviews the suggestions that the present structure of contributions from some member states puts an unfair burden on them whilst others receive relatively generous treatment (which includes consideration of the mechanism to provide a partial rebate to the United Kingdom).

As regards Community budget resources, the Commission arrives at the same conclusions as those reached by the ESC in its Opinion on Agenda 2000, namely that "contributions to the Community budget have become more proportionate with national wealth", leading to greater fairness (point 4.4.3 of the opinion). The Commission puts this down to the modifications introduced in 1988 and 1994, in the first and second Delors packages, which led to a greater share of GNP resource within budget contributions as a whole and a relative fall-off in the amount of traditional own resources and VAT (see Graph 1 in the report).

The Commission restates a qualification which the ESC had made in its earlier opinion and is important in any assessment of the impact of the EU on individual Member States. The ESC opinion pointed out that "the situation as regards benefits is more complex. Expenditure on economic and social cohesion benefits the neediest countries and regions, but expenditure on internal policies is distributed differently and has a regressive impact in cohesion terms. Expenditure on the CAP in particular tends to favour the countries in which this policy has applied longest, and which have a higher aid capitation, although the 1992 reform has reduced this imbalance."

The Commission acknowledges that, whilst the present own resources system generates a means of financing EU expenditure, the EU does not have genuine 'own resources' but depends mainly on transfers from the treasuries of Member States and, therefore, the relationship to citizens of the Union between contributions and benefits is even less transparent than between taxpayers and citizens within a Member State.

Whilst the Commission draws attention to the lack of genuine financial autonomy for the EU, the report does not develop the debate on whether the Commission, and the Governments of Member States, would wish to see the system of financing the Union made more dependent on revenue collection methods within the competence of the Un-

ion and less dependent on transfers from the Member States of funds from their treasuries.

The debate on the degree of financial autonomy for the Union raises critical issues of principal and operational detail. The discussion stimulated by the Commission on a possible agreement that the Commission, through the institutional procedures of the Community, should have the option to determine a (low) rate of VAT specifically earmarked directly for the Community budget, presumes that the increased degree of financial autonomy and the transparency of the arrangement would be beneficial."

Despite the technical, conceptual and accounting difficulties in measuring budgetary imbalances detailed in the report, the Commission has attempted to calculate these net balances by various methods (the operating balance method and the method used for UK correction), which, elsewhere in the report, the Commission claims has inhibited transparency in the financial relationships of the Member States and the EU budget.

As for solving these problems, if a political consensus can be reached, the Commission document sees three possible options which are not mutually exclusive: a more transparent and fairer system of financing, doing away with the correction mechanism in favour of the UK and making general use of the GNP resource; a system of expenditure where the CAP burden would be reduced by partially reimbursing direct aid payments from national budgets and a generalized correction mechanism.

The report concludes that neither the need for an increase in financial resources, nor the shortcomings of the present system, make it necessary to modify the current Own Resources Decision. This restates the view expressed in Agenda 2000.

The Commission acknowledges that options to vary the constituents or proportions of the present own resources system are available and could be considered for future implementation but none offers an ideal solution. If the question of budgetary imbalances attracted a sufficient degree of support, decisions on the best and most appropriate options would be needed.

However, with some anticipation of the impact of the enlargement of the Community, the Commission suggests that the change in the overall demands on the Community budget "would appear to

present a change of circumstances so significant as to justify such a major reform".

Gist of the opinion

Bearing in the mind the wide range of arguments put forward about the subject of budgetary imbalances, the Committee is in favour of a general

regulating mechanism for establishing a framework which takes account of the future system of own resources. Such a mechanism would establish a direct link between national prosperity (expressed in terms of per capita GNP) and the budgetary balances of each Member State. The purpose should be to safeguard the overall level of own resources for enabling the European Union to maintain and extend its role.

Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship
Wolfgang Jungk, Head of Division - ☎ (32-2) 546 9227

12. ASBESTOS (Own-initiative)

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on Asbestos

(CES 330/99)

Rapporteur: Thomas ETTY (Netherlands - Workers)

Gist of the opinion

There is ever overwhelming scientific proof of the harmful, and often fatal, effects of exposure to asbestos. Existing EU legislation and enforcement do not sufficiently protect workers and the general public. It is not possible to lay down safe exposure levels for the harmful properties of asbestos. It is difficult in many cases to control exposure of workers and others who handle or use asbestos or products containing asbestos. Limit values set by EU legislation may often be exceeded. Current derogations are far too wide.

The present situation in the EU, with nine Member States now in favour of a ban on the first use of asbestos, means that there is a clear qualified majority for an EU banning policy for white asbestos.

Industry has made significant progress in the development of regulated alternatives to asbestos judged to be safer.

The Committee is pleased that the Commission has announced that it intends to prohibit the first use of white asbestos. A Directive, totally banning or stringently restricting the marketing and the use of asbestos, will be an important step into the right direction. It will not, however, touch the enormous problems created by existing asbestos in the EU, which will remain with us for several decades to come. These problems must, once again, be addressed. Furthermore, Canada, the world's biggest exporter of white asbestos, has lodged against France at the World Trade Organization (WTO) following the French decision to ban chrysotile. If Canada would succeed with its complaint, this could have highly undesirable consequences for relevant EU legislation.

ILO Convention No. 162 on Safety in the Use of Asbestos (1986) prohibits the use of blue asbestos and the spraying of all forms of asbestos. Up until now, the Convention has been ratified by 22 Member States of the ILO, among them are only five Member States This is the only specifically rele-

vant international Convention and it is of great importance that as many countries as possible will become a party to it. It is unfortunate that most EU Member States have not yet ratified it. Ratification by all EU Member States would not only contribute to the reputation of the ILO Convention as a major instrument for world-wide protection of workers' safety and health. It would also, and more importantly, eliminate the (false) argument, used by many developing countries, that the simple fact that only a few of the EU Member States are apparently capable of ratifying the Convention proves convincingly that the standards, set by this instrument, are excessively high.

As a point of principle, the Committee thinks that the EU should introduce a total ban on the first use of all asbestos. It welcomes, therefore, the Commission's intention to adapt Council Directive 76/769/EEC and strongly recommends that if the EU will allow derogations, these should be limited to the utmost in both scope and time. A total ban (or a ban with strictly limited exemption) will require an extra effort by Member States in the field of monitoring and control of compliance with legislation.

As regards demolition and maintenance, the Committee notes with concern that the occupational groups most at risk currently are those required to work with asbestos in repair, maintenance, refurbishment, demolition and removal. The Committee is not satisfied with the current implementation of the EU safety law in this regard. It requests the Commission to cooperate closely with national authorities to improve the situation and, if such cooperation does not lead to significant improvement in the near future, to come forward with proposals designed to remedy these problems.

Some Member States already have registers of buildings which contain asbestos. As a first step, the Commission could study the underlying motives and experiences of these efforts at national level and make an assessment of the practical utility and value of a register. On this basis, the Committee urges the Commission to examine the practicability of a proposal for the establishment, in each Member State, of a register of buildings

and installations which contain asbestos. There is also need for national laws to require building owners to develop a plan, in cooperation with occupiers, to identify any asbestos in their buildings which, through the use of surveys for example, would ensure that no worker has to begin work without knowing whether there is asbestos present

It is highly desirable that effective measures be developed to prevent resale and second use of asbestos containing material. The Committee would like to see the Commission take new measures for reduction of the risks to workers. Proposals should include:

- tightening of limit values for exposure; training, education and information for employers, workers and the general public (including young people);
- obligatory investigations of the presence of asbestos by the owners of buildings in case of demolition or maintenance;
- information campaigns on safer substitutes, active promotion of the use of these by various means;
- information campaigns on the risks inherent in the use of substitutes.

The Committee thinks it logical that the Commission also take a fresh look at its relevant environment policy instruments.

The Committee also wishes to draw the Commission's attention to problems related to the production of granulated rubble, large quantities of which are used for road foundation. This material often contains asbestos. The Committee hopes that the Commission will support research into the health risks involved and into the development of normalized and validated measuring methods for asbestos in demolition waste and granulated rubble. If results would demonstrate the need for European measures, the Committee expects the Commission to come forward with proposals, including rules for imported material.

Finally, with a view to the accession of new Member States to the EU, the Committee wishes to draw the Commission's attention to asbestos-related problems they are facing, and in particular to the situation in Central and Eastern European countries.

13. SAFETY AND HEALTH OF WORKERS / EQUIPMENT

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee
on the proposal for a Council Directive amending
for the second time Directive 89/655/EEC con-
cerning the minimum safety and health require-
ments for the use of work equipment by workers at
work (2nd individual directive within the meaning
of Article 16 of Directive 89/391/EEC)
(COM(1998) 678 final - 98/0327 SYN)

(CES 331/99 - 98/0327 SYN)

Rapporteur working without a study group:
Renata POLVERINI (Italy - Workers)

Gist of the Commission proposal

The aim of this proposal for a Directive, which is based on Article 118a of the Treaty, is to contribute to a substantial reduction in the number of falls from a height, which are one of the most common causes of serious accidents at work.

Community legislation has not yet dealt adequately with the problem of falls from a height, although Directive 92/57/EEC partly addresses the issue in the building industry. It is therefore necessary to adopt measures for application to all sectors of activity. Moreover, Directive 92/57/EEC itself provides that certain minimum requirements concerning on-site outdoor workstations will be laid down at a later stage by an amendment to Directive 89/655/EEC. This proposal is thus a response to this obligation to adopt supplementary measures provided for in Directive 92/57/EEC.

The proposal, in the form of an amendment to an existing directive, Directive 89/655/EEC, belongs in the context of Directive 89/391/EEC on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work. It stipulates the specific minimum requirements for the use by workers of work equipment permitting access to and presence at working places at a height, laying down a number of key precautions which must be observed.

Firstly, it establishes the principles for selecting suitable work equipment whenever an employer intends to carry out temporary work at a height,

the choice of certain work equipment being linked to specific conditions. It also contains "rules for use", in the strict sense of the term, for ladders and scaffolding, and stipulates that certain tasks that are particularly sensitive in terms of occupational safety and health may be performed only by persons who have received specific training.

In view of the distribution of accidents across industry, the proposal applies to all sectors of activity.

Gist of the opinion

The Economic and Social Committee endorses the Commission proposal and its declared intention to protect workers who use equipment for temporary work at a height, given the seriousness of the problem of falls.

However, the ESC has a number of suggestions to make with a view to improving the terminology, which in some instances is imprecise. The chief aim of the proposals remains however that of ensuring proper worker protection, by means of higher safety standards in work planning, on the basis of specific technical requirements for the equipment used and of safe working procedures.

To that end, the Committee maintains that to cut the number of accidents drastic action must be taken with regard to work planning, first and foremost by establishing more precise "written working procedures" giving specific equipment requirements (portable ladders and scaffolding) and mandatory instructions for use.

In this context, and echoing Directive 89/391/EEC on improvements in the safety and health of workers at work, the Committee would stress that only workers who have received proper training should be employed to use equipment that presents a specific risk, such as that used for work at a height (scaffolding, etc.).

The ESC also recommends that the Commission urge the Member States to prepare an incentive scheme to help small and medium-sized firms to implement health protection measures effectively, with a special focus on training staff to use work equipment.

II. FUTURE WORK

FOR INFORMATION

- Technical requirements in the field of civil aviation (**TEN-APRIL**)
COM(1998) 759 final - 98/0349 SYN
- Farm prices 1999/2000 (**NAT-APRIL**)
COM(1999) 38 final - 99/0025 CNS-99/0039 CNS
- COM/Fisheries-aquaculture (**NAT-JULY**)
COM(1999) 55 final - 99/0047 CNS
- The environmental dimension in the development process of developing countries (**REX-JULY**)
COM(1999) 36 final - 99/0020 SYN
- The conservation and sustainable management of tropical forests in developing countries (**REX-MAY**)
COM(1999) 41 final - 99/0015 SYN

FOR DECISION

- White Paper on Commerce (Communication) (**INT-JULY**)
COM(1999) 6 final

IN ANTICIPATION

- Instruments of measurement (**INT-JULY**)
COM(1999) 49 final
- European audiovisual observatory (**TEN-JULY**)
COM(1999) 111 final - 99/0066 CNS
- Atmospheric pollutants - national ozone ceilings (**NAT-TO BE DECIDED**)
COM(1999) 125 final
- Limit on veterinary medicines in foodstuffs of animal origin (**NAT-TO BE DECIDED**)
COM(1999) 130 final

OWN-INITIATIVE WORK

- Action framework for sustainable urban development in the European Union (**ECO**)

III. PRESENCE AND INFLUENCE OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

Activities of the ESC presidency

Mrs Rangoni Machiavelli, ESC president, met Mrs Annemie Neyts, Belgian Member of the European Parliament, on 25 February. She met Mr Joachim Miranda, MEP, on 3 March. On the same day the Committee president also met Commissioner Bangemann.

On 4 March Mrs Rangoni Machiavelli spoke at the International Liberal Congress. On 15 March she met Mr Enrico Letta, Italian Minister for European Union affairs; later the same month the Committee president met Mr Edo Ronchi, Italian Minister for Environmental Affairs (in Rome on 16 March).

Mrs Rangoni Machiavelli also addressed the European Consumers Day conference that the ESC organized jointly with the European Commission on 15 March. For more information on this event, see *Other News*, below.

Activities of sections and members

On 2-3 March Mr Malosse participated in a conference on counterfeiting organized by the European Commission in Munich, Germany. He presented the ESC opinion on the subject, which had been adopted by the Committee a week earlier in its February plenary session.

On 18-19 March the Section for Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society organized - in collaboration with the European Commission's DG VII - a hearing on the TINA (Transport Infrastructure Needs Assessment) report. The event took place at the ESC building.

Also on 19 March, Mr Colombo and Mr Braghin attended a conference organized by the European Agency for the Evaluation of Medicinal Products in London.

On 23 March, Mr Olsson, president of the Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship, met Mr Stephen Hughes, chairman of the European Parliament's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs. Their discussions centred on cooperation between the two bodies, in the light of the provisions of the Treaty of Amsterdam.

Also on 23 March, Mrs Williams attended a conference in Brussels organized by the European Federation of Spirits Manufacturers.

Other News

- European Consumers Day

The first European Consumers Day was held at the ESC building on 15 March 1999, on the initiative of the ESC president, Mrs Rangoni Machiavelli. The event was a great success, and was attended by Mrs Emma Bonino - the Commissioner responsible for Consumer policy - and many key figures in European civil society.

The conference provided the ESC with the opportunity to evaluate progress in the field of consumer protection. Participants - including representatives of many key consumer interest groups at EU and Member State level - were also able to set out their ideas for future Community-level consumer priorities. The subjects of discussion ranged from the introduction of the euro and electronic commerce, to food safety (including salmonella and GMOs).

Summing up, Mrs Bonino told the ESC president: "I would like to congratulate you for having organized this conference to mark European Consumers Day. But we must now go forward. All the EU institutions represented here today are affected by our work in favour of consumers. We should meet again in a year's time, at the beginning of the new millennium, to review what we have done and set future policy."

The ESC's Department for Information and Visits has produced a special leaflet to mark this event, which is available on request (in English, French, German and Italian).

- Regional seminar of ACP-EU economic and social interest groups, Dakar, 18-19 March 1999

The economic and social interest groups of the European Union and the ACP states held their first regional seminar under the auspices of the ACP-EU Joint Assembly, and within the framework of the WAEMU, on

18 and 19 March in Dakar. The seminar examined the practicalities of extending the ACP-EU partnership to economic and social players, with a view to involving them in the drafting and implementation of national and regional development policies.

At the formal inauguration ceremony the President of the Republic of Senegal, Mr Abou Diouf, stressed the importance *"of involving all players in the implementation of ACP-EU cooperation, in the interests of greater effectiveness"*.

During the seminar the delegation of the European Economic and Social Committee, headed by Mr Henri Malosse, President of the ACP-EU Follow-Up Committee, took oral evidence from some forty representatives of the economic and social interest groups of WAEMU countries.

- EU-Turkey Joint Consultative Committee

The seventh meeting of the EU-Turkey Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) was held in the ESC building on 9 March. The agenda included the election of the co-chairmen and a discussion on EU-Turkey relations, as well as the specific subjects of migration, and the role of women in development. JCC members also welcomed the fact that a constructive dialogue between the EU and Turkish economic and social interest groups was in operation despite serious difficulties in relations between the EU and that country.

- EEA Consultative Committee

The seventh meeting of the European Economic Area Consultative Committee was held in Brussels on 11 March. The agenda included a series of resolutions on recent developments in the EEA, together with discussion of other matters including the Single Market Action Plan, the state of preparations for EU enlargement, and environmental policy.

IV. RESIGNATIONS

At the March plenary session, the ESC president announced the resignations of:

- Mrs Anita Harriman (Group III - Sweden), who had been a Committee member since 21 September 1998; and
- Mr Ferdinand Maier (Group I - Austria), who had been a Committee member since 1 January 1995.

V. INFORMATION VISITS

The following groups visited the ESC during the period in question:

TGWU - UK
The College of Law - UK
Université Catholique de Louvain - mixed
Briefing for new EU officials - mixed
Lycée Notre Dame du Mur de Morlaix - France
Bisowe des DBB - Germany
Olof Palme International Centre - mixed
South Downs College - UK
Mercator University - Netherlands
ISPI - Italy
Delegation from the city of Irkutsk - Russia
Bundesakademie für öffentliche Verwaltung - Germany

Freie Hansestadt Bremen - Germany
Sheffield Hallam University - UK
Bisowe des DBB - Germany
AJIS - France
Fachhochschule Stralsund - Germany
University of Northumbria - UK
Ecole des Mines de Paris - France
Universidad de Las Palmas - Spain
Bisowe des DBB - Germany
Delegation of French magistrates - France
University of Kent - UK
KVH University - Netherlands
London School Economics - UK
Instituut Clingendael - Netherlands
Gewerkschaft der Privatangestellten - Austria
Bundesakademie für öffentliche Verwaltung - Germany
Kolding Handelsskole - Danmark
American University - United States
Care for Europe - UK
Finnish Pharmacists - Finland
Hoge School Haarlem - Netherlands
Karl-Arnold-Stiftung - Germany
University of Wales - UK
Slagelse Handelsskole - Danmark

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