

DELEGATION OF THE COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES  
DELEGATION DE LA COMMISSION DES COMMUNAUTES EUROPEENNES  
PRESS AND INFORMATION SERVICE

PRESS RELEASE

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY - EFTA  
FREE TRADE AREA FROM JULY 1

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OVER 300 MILLION CITIZENS TO BENEFIT

Extract from a statement by Wilhelm Haferkamp, Vice-President of the Commission of the European Communities.

Under the free trade agreements that entered into force in 1973 for most industrial products, the last tariff barriers between the European Community and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) states (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Switzerland, Austria, and Portugal) will be removed on July 1, 1977. After a transitional period of 4 1/2 years, West Europe will have in practice an internal trading area with a population of over 300 million, the successful culmination of a variety of efforts that date back to the fifties and sixties. The EFTA states are the Community's largest trading partner and in 1976 took almost one-quarter of all Community exports.

The free trade agreements which the Community concluded with each of the EFTA states after the accession of Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom have functioned well. However, free trade must be further extended and secured, since, as duties and quantitative restrictions are abolished, other trade barriers increase in importance. Such barriers must be eliminated or, preferably, prevented from arising in the first place. These questions have to be examined in detail with all the parties involved.

The EFTA area is not just of commercial importance for the Community, however, for the increasing interdependence between ourselves and our neighbours makes it necessary to continue and extend the existing cooperation on a pragmatic basis, if necessary outside the framework of the free trade agreements.

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