

European Community



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PRESS RELEASE

EUROPE TO BUILD FIRST ELECTRICITY-PRODUCING SOLAR POWER STATION

EC Commission to Share Cost

The Commission of the European Community on 15 November signed a contract with a consortium for the construction of Europe's first electricity-producing solar power station.

The experimental one-megawatt power station will be built in southern Italy at a cost of about \$8.4 million. Half the money will come from the EC Commission's energy budget, while Italy, Germany and France, the project's main participants, will pay the other half.

If the project goes according to schedule, electricity produced by the hot Italian sun should surge into Italy's grid system by early 1981.

The station will consist of a ring of mirrors with a total surface area of about 7,000 square metres, which will focus the sun's rays on to a central tower 50 metres high. Heat-absorption equipment in the tower will convert water into steam and drive conventional generators.

The station will not produce electricity at prices competitive with coal or oil-fired power stations, because it will be too small and essentially experimental.

Its maximum output will be enough for only about 1,000 electric heaters. But it is regarded as an important step on the road to commercial exploitation of solar energy.

It will be built on a site chosen by the Italian national electricity company, Enel, one of the partners in the consortium.

The others are the Italian firm Ansaldo, Germany's Messerschmidt-Bölkow-Blohm, and the French combine Cethel, grouping Renault, St. Gobain and Heurtey.