



*European Communities
Commission
Press Release*

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Weekly Timetable of Community Activities No 6/75

COUNCIL MEETING APPROACHES SUMMIT

Ministers Agree Farm Prices

On Monday next, Monday, February 17, there will be a Council of Ministers of Economics and Finance in Brussels.

The next Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs will be in Brussels on Monday and Tuesday, March 3 and 4. This meeting is expected to achieve final agreement on the working of the Regional Development Fund. It will also be the last Council of Foreign Ministers before Head of State and of Government meet as the Community's supreme Council in Dublin on March 10 and 11.

On Tuesday, March 4, there will be a Council of Ministers of Agriculture in Brussels.

Economics and Finance Ministers are scheduled to meet again on March 18 and Agriculture Ministers again on March 19 and 20. During March the Community is committed to a debate in depth on the stocktaking of the common agricultural policy which the Commission is preparing.

FLASHBACK

The Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs meeting in Brussels last Monday and Tuesday approved a mandate for the Commission to take part in the multilateral trade talks in the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade).

The Council also made substantial progress towards final agreement on the operation of the Regional Development Fund; for example, there was a consensus that the Fund could contribute up to 20 per cent - against the Commission's original proposal of 15 per cent - towards a private investment, provided that the grant does not exceed 50 per cent of public expenditure. It also agreed that the Fund should operate only in conjunction with existing regional aid programmes, including Britain's aid system. The only outstanding item which will require some legal polishing in the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER) is Britain's reluctance to accept criteria on the number of jobs created by grants from the Fund and the amount of money spent per job created.

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The Council of Agricultural Ministers, after a marathon session, agreed on a 9 per cent average rise in farm prices. These increases will have scarcely any effect on consumer prices because they are floor prices.

A major innovation is a new beef system for a trial year which incorporates much of Britain's request for an alternative to the Community's intervention scheme. The intervention system of support buying is to be complemented by direct payments to producers which will give farmers a fairer return in times of falling prices while allowing consumers to take advantage of the cheaper meat.

The Commission approved a draft directive, now sent to the Council of Ministers, which would eliminate all legal and administrative measures which discriminate against women on the basis of sex.

The Council of Ministers of Health approved the freedom of medical practitioners born in the Community to practise anywhere in the Community from 18 months hence.

The Council of Health Ministers also approved a directive which will clear the way for the free circulation of Community pharmaceutical products. This should make marketing easier and, given normal competition, bring down prices. For at least five years, however, a Member State can ban a drug of which it does not approve. There is to be a new special management committee to supervise the working of the new drugs directive.

The political committee of the Nine met in Dublin today to discuss European security and foreign affairs.

Last weekend, before being elected Leader of the Opposition in Britain, Mrs Margaret Thatcher confirmed her commitment to Britain's membership of the Community.

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