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Recent Developments in the European Community

MEMO

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EC to start membership talks with Norway....on April 5, Norway will become the fourth country to actually open membership negotiations with the European Community. The other three - Austria, Finland and Sweden - formally began the process on February 1 this year. Norway's application got the go-ahead for full-fledged talks after a favorable **Commission Opinion** on Oslo's bid was issued on March 24. According to the Opinion, which is addressed to EC member state governments, Norway's accession "should not pose insuperable problems of an economic nature, and indeed would strengthen the Community in a number of ways." All four countries are negotiating on the basis that they will be joining the Maastricht Treaty's European Union, not the Community as it stands today.

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European industry goes green....the EC has just adopted a new Regulation establishing a Community-wide scheme to help industrial companies monitor and improve their environmental performance. Known as the **Eco Management and Audit Scheme**, it is based on the concept of "shared responsibility" for environmental protection, which, according to the new EC Commissioner for the Environment Ioannis Paleokrassas, "cannot work effectively without full motivation and involvement of companies top management and participation of the public." Participating companies will undergo an initial independent review on the basis of which environmental targets will be established. These will be monitored on a regular basis by neutral verifiers and the results will be made public. Although the scheme is voluntary, its public relations aspect is expected to generate great competition among companies to improve their environmental performance. The program does not replace existing national or EC environmental legislation or technical standards.

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Central and Eastern Europeans see future in Europe...a recent EC Commission public opinion survey of 18 Eastern European countries including former Soviet republics found that the EC is seen by many as the region's most important future trading partner. Of those polled last fall, a quarter of Central and Eastern Europeans see their future tied first to the Community, followed by Russia and the United States. Respondents also gave their opinion on issues including the pace of reform, the effectiveness of Western assistance, the fairness of new trading partners, the human rights situation in their country, and the development and reliability of the media as a source of information. The survey, **Central and Eastern EUROBAROMETER No. 3**, is the most comprehensive poll to date on the public perception of political and economic progress in the region. One-thousand people aged 15 years and over were interviewed face-to-face in each country in the appropriate national or minority language. Gallup UK helped with the coordination and processing of the survey.

The EC has also released a **Summary of EC Assistance to Central and Eastern European Countries for 1990-1992**. It presents, in tabular and graph form, the amounts of aid the region receives from the EC as a percentage of total world aid, country-by-country figures for the EC's program of non-reimbursable grants for political and

Office of Press and Public Affairs, EC Delegation

Washington: 2100 M Street NW 7th Floor Washington DC 20037 / Telephone (202) 862-9500 / Fax (202) 429-1766

New York: 3 Dag Hammarskjold Plaza 305 E 47th Street New York NY 10017 / Telephone (212) 371-3804 / Fax (212) 688-1013

economic restructuring (PHARE), an country-by-country overview of EC balance-of-payment loans, as well as other projects financed by the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, of which the EC is a majority shareholder.

The EC has created a new genre of cooperation agreements known as "Europe Association Agreements" to help reforming Central and Eastern European countries take their place in the new European architecture. Unlike previous trade and cooperation agreements, they include a political component and are seen as a first step to EC membership. On March 8, the EC and Bulgaria signed a Europe Association Agreement, completing a series of similar accords with Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Romania. A summary of its contents is available.

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EC strengthens ties with Central America.....over the last few years, the Community has strengthened its ties with Central America, starting in 1985 with the conclusion of an innovative cooperation agreement on political and economic relations with six Central American countries. The EC has now signed a new Framework Cooperation Agreement with the six that is broader in scope than its predecessor. Details of the areas earmarked for EC support (trade, economics and development) are described in the **Communique of the Ninth San Jose Ministerial Conference in San Salvador, where the Agreement was signed on February 23.** As usual, cooperation is conditional upon respect for human rights and democratic principles. A new element, however, is the EC undertaking to provide assistance for refugees displaced by conflicts in the region.

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The future of agriculture in the European Community....in May 1992, the European Community embarked on the most ambitious overhaul of its Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Tough measures are now in force to break the vicious cycle of overproduction and increasing farm expenditure with the aim of making EC agriculture more competitive, efficient, and environmentally sensitive. A new booklet, **Our Farming Future (Europe on the Move series)**, explains the CAP, its origins and evolution over the years, the new philosophy underlying the 1992 reforms, and their impact on farmers, production and the environment. The text is accompanied by easy-to-read color charts illustrating statistical trends in agricultural yields, intra-Community trade, agricultural employment, budgetary expenditure (1992 figures), and land use.

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Recent Speeches

The US and the EC: Facing Challenges Together in an Interdependent World, by EC Commission President Jacques Delors, at the IMDI World Leadership Conference in Washington DC, on March 18, 1993

Shaping a Framework for Global Trade: The Challenges for the European Community, by Sir Leon Brittan, EC Commissioner for External Economic Relations, on March 19, 1993 (Jean Monnet Regional Lecture).

EC NEWS Press Releases issued in March

EC COMMISSION LAUNCHES GATT CONSULTATIONS WITH U.S. ON STEEL, A.D. DUTIES, March 2, 1993
EC GIVES \$70 MILLION TO YUGOSLAV WAR VICTIMS, March 4, 1993
PRESIDENT DELORS TO MEET PRESIDENT CLINTON AND US ADMINISTRATION, March 12, 1993
CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEANS LOOK TO EC AS MAIN FUTURE PARTNER, March 23, 1993
EC COMMISSION ENVISAGES EVENTUAL FREE TRADE AREA WITH RUSSIA, March 24, 1993