

Week of June 21 to 26

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A "Year of the European Coastline" may soon draw attention to all the threats to Europe's shoreline. These include pollution, urbanisation, erosion, unemployment, an exodus of young people and other problems.

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The European Court of Justice has just ruled against the Belgian state for withholding access to two young French women suspected of being prostitutes.

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More than 300 demonstration projects in the fields of energy, conservation and alternative sources of energy have enjoyed financial support from the EEC since 1978.

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The European Parliament has just appealed for a more active EEC policy to conserve and renovate Europe's architectural and archaeological heritage.

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ENVIRONMENT: European Parliament calls for coastal charter

Life in Europe's coastal regions can mean different things to different people. While visitors dream of sunny beaches and sandy dunes, people living there the year round are often faced with problems which the tourists never see.

The haphazard construction of industries and housing estates has ruined the beauty of numerous sites and the concentration of tourists during the "high season" has led to significant economic and infrastructure problems. Too much fishing, for example, can cause marine ecological problems and force local fishermen to cut back on their catches. Oil spills and other forms of pollution also led to environmental problems, threatening, for instance, the migratory patterns of birds. Other problems also exist, such as coastal erosion, underemployment and an exodus of young people.

As a result, Europe's coasts number among the EEC's least developed regions. The conference on maritime periphery regions adopted a European charter on coasts in September 1980. Drawn up in collaboration with the environmental services of the European Commission, it outlines a special project to integrate development objectives with the protection of coastal zones. Accompanying the charter is an action programme which proposes specific measures at local, regional, national and European levels.

Its proposals include the idea that all construction in coastal zones should be subject to prior authorization. Stricter security standards should be applied to maritime transport and ^{the}the pollution of the seas by waste discharges and new activities such as the exploration of sea beds and marine energy resources should be developed, it says.

European Environment Ministers are to meet in Madrid in the coming year to examine different types of coastal problems. The regional committee of the European Parliament has just indicated its support for the charter's main objectives. The committee suggested that a "year of European coasts" should be proclaimed in order to make the public aware of the problems facing the regions which form an essential part of Europe's geographical heritage.

COURT OF JUSTICE: "Prostitution sans frontieres"?

Stories related to the slave trade, and especially trade in women no longer hit the headlines. Is that because the trade has disappeared? Indications are that far from having died out, trade in women is flourishing in different corners of Europe. The free movement of workers within the Community constitutes one of the basic tenets of the EEC. This principle guarantees each EEC citizen the right to work in any Member State and to enjoy the advantages and obligations offered the country's nationals. However, article 48 of the EEC Treaty stresses that the right is given only where it does not interfere with public order, public security or public health. The conditions are general enough to provoke animated debates as illustrated by the recent conflict which pitted the Belgian government against a group of French prostitutes.

The Belgian authorities refused to grant the French ladies residential permits on the grounds that they worked as barmaids in a rather "suspicious" establishment. They promptly took the case to court in Liege, arguing that Belgian law does not ban prostitution as such, but only "related" activities, such as the exploitation of prostitutes and incitement to debauchery, in other words, soliciting.

Given these facts, could the Belgian government refuse access to people whose activities were not banned under Belgian law? Rather embarrassed by the unusual question, Liege judges decided to consult the European Court of Justice, which is responsible for interpreting European Community legislation. The Court's verdict was made public on May 18 and found against the Belgian authorities guilty both as regards the basis of the complaint (the ladies will obtain the permit if they reformulate their demand), and the form: the refusal to give the authorization must be notified in a detailed manner, giving specific reasons for the decision.

The judgment appears to be a victory for all European prostitutes, but they should be careful: the principles established by the court only apply to EEC countries which do not ban prostitution.

RESEARCH: Seven priorities for the 1980's

European scientific research is on the verge of a major turning point in its development. The European Community is preparing to integrate all its activities into a vast overall programme that will cover the period 1984-1987. It will be the first time that a general common strategy for science and technology has been adopted by the 10 member countries.

The EEC hopes by creating a common research policy, it will be able to respond to the major challenges that will confront European society in the coming decade. The total spending for scientific and technical activities at the Community level represents only about 2.7 percent of the overall EEC budget for 1983, at about £357 million, an amount the European Commission feels is insufficient and should be increased as early as 1984.

Towards the end of 1982, the European Commission will disclose the details of the new general programme to the Council of Ministers. But its seven main themes are already known. Five deal with attempts to increase the competitiveness of the Community in the fields of science, agriculture, industry, raw materials and energy resources. The two remaining areas involve the strengthening of aid to developing countries and improving the living and working conditions of Europeans. For each of the themes, the EEC Commission will specify a series of precise objectives that will lead to actions, projects, priorities and operational guidelines. Objectives will range from the precise to the broad aiming, for example, at the development of new information technologies (see Eurofocus 20/82) or biotechnological processes.

The setting in motion of the overall programme would mean extensive changes in existing priorities. For the moment, research into energy accounts for about 69 percent of the Community research funds, while improvement in the management of raw materials accounts for only 1 percent and research activities aimed at benefitting the Third World are currently non-existent. Some major efforts will also be undertaken to disseminate and promote the information acquired as a result of Community projects, so that future scientific advancement will benefit as many European citizens as possible.

ENERGY: EEC finance for demonstration projects

The Iranian revolution, the war between Iran and Iraq, the explosion in the price of oil and the continuing economic crisis mean that Europe's energy supplies are still vulnerable, despite intensive efforts at conservation.

The European Community has played an active role in encouraging more energy investment, contributing, since 1978, to the financing of demonstration projects in energy conservation and alternative energy sources.

The projects provide a link between the research stage and full-scale investment. They are real industrial projects which, by proving their economic viability, will persuade whether or not to invest.

When the EEC first undertook to finance similar projects, only two member states were already doing it at national level. The Community initiative had a tremendously stimulating effect.

Over a period of five years (1978-1982) the EEC selected 331 projects out of 1500 proposals submitted, at a cost of more than £134,5 million. (49 projects have yet to be finalised because of a lack of additional finance). Firms will be expected to pay back part of the EEC funding if a project is commercially successful.

Initial projects concentrated on energy conservation in construction, industry and transport. Other projects have included the exploitation of alternative energy sources ^{such} (as) geothermal, solar, liquefaction and gasification of solid fuels, biomass, wave and wind power. 17 projects are completed and in operation and about 60 are in a sufficiently advanced state for their initial results to be evaluated.

The European Commission has just published a report evaluating the programme to date showing that an impressive number of projects undertaken have surpassed their initial objectives and their impact has become widespread. EEC energy demonstration projects are likely to be expanded in years to come.

FISHING: A joint fishing policy on the horizon

After years of debate on the subject, Europe may be on the verge of a common fishing policy that reflects its status as one of the world's major fishing powers.

While difficulties still remain in the way of the agreement which up to now has eluded the EEC member states, many of the governments are now hopeful that the basis for a common programme and policy is in sight. Fishing ministers met in Luxembourg recently to resume the deadlocked discussions and agreed to meet again soon with many optimistic about the final outcome. The need for a policy has been acknowledged for some time, but was underlined as even more urgent recently. The chief aims of the proposed joint-undertaking are the safeguarding of dwindling fish stocks in Community waters and the declining state of the fishing industry in the member countries. Because of a number of factors, including the systematic overfishing of traditional waters, both the supply of fish and the number of jobs in fishing have declined. The answer is seen as systematic aids including protection for certain types of fish from overfishing and efforts to restructure and modernise the industry. Part of the discussions have revolved around national quotas for fishing in Community waters and access to waters which have traditional links with coastal nations. These discussions have been extremely complex and delicate as each state tries to preserve the interests of its own fleet. In most countries the traditional profession of fisherman has become less viable as a way of life as fish stocks have declined, which is another reason why countries want to protect their coastal fishing grounds from their neighbours. For years, the main sticking point in negotiations was Britain's desire to maintain an exclusive or preferential fishing zone around its shores, to which fleets from other EEC countries were anxious to gain access. After a long period of deadlock, the European Commission has finally worked out a compromise which is largely acceptable to most national fishing interests in the member states. But Denmark, which maintains a large fishing fleet, still feels its catch quota is too small, and this may lead to another stalemate.

HERITAGE: Rescue call

In many parts of Europe a race is underway to save mankind's legacy from destruction or disfiguration by bulldozers, pollution and indifference. In country after country some of civilisation's or pre-history's greatest treasures are endangered by encroachment of modern society. Old structures are forced aside to make way for new facilities, pollution attacks them and the financial burden needed to maintain them grows. Many people also feel that concern about our historical heritage is a frivolous and inconsequential luxury that must be sacrificed during an economic and budgetary crisis. A recent report from the European Parliament, however, points out that preservation of our architectural and archaeological heritage is not only an artistic and intellectual necessity but also a sound investment. The report by Wilhelm Hahn for the Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sports, called for a more active European Community policy of promoting such preservation and renovation.

The Parliament has given moral support to actions in Italy, Greece, the Netherlands, as has the Council of Europe and the European Investment Bank. But the Hahn report also suggested a number of concrete actions to be taken by the European Community, including the creation of a European Fund for the Conservation of the Architectural Heritage, together with the use of other Community mechanisms such as the Social and Regional Funds. It suggested that each year the Community select one site from a Community country to be the subject of a concentrated financial aid package aimed at its preservation. Other means of encouraging similar work, including altering tax laws to reduce financial burdens and training craftsmen and experts in the field, were also proposed.

Mr. Hahn not only pointed out that the annihilation of our heritage was a scandalous crime, but said that it also represented a tremendous waste of resources. Major restoration and conservation efforts could stimulate employment and maintain valuable tourist attractions that would help national and regional economies, he said.