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A civil society for a united Europe

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Although the term 'civil society' is being used increasingly, it conveys a suggestion of vagueness and woolliness, as if it lends itself to a variety of uses. It is all the more necessary, therefore, to redefine properly the relations between the political and administrative institutions of the European Union (EU) and the people who are not a part of them but form, rather, civil society.

The 'intermediate bodies'

The Economic and Social Committee (ESC), set up by the Treaties of Rome, is a body whose 222 members represent the life blood of the Member States. It is an integral part of the European institutional system, and rightly sees itself as the channel for the demands of organised civil society, to the extent that it is made up of the representatives of socioeconomic and professional bodies to which European citizens belong, and which are known as 'intermediate bodies'.

There has been an increase, in all EU Member States, of associations of citizens that meet, organise and act in order to reach a common goal.

Some 170 years ago, in his well-known study, *Democracy in America,* Alexis de Tocqueville maintained that the strength and legitimacy of American democracy lay in the numerous associations which emerged and developed, thanks to the determination of individuals from the most diverse sectors and working for the most varied of ends. For de Tocqueville, there is nothing that the will of man cannot achieve when acting freely through the collective power of the citizenry. An association founded on a clear idea can count on its members, committing them to the realisation of a goal which it has chosen, uniting their efforts, despite their occasional disagreements, and guiding them towards this goal.

A civil dialogue

Economic, social and professional associations, as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and trade unions, are the pillars of civil society in Europe. This means that the numerous actors in the market place want to play a part in the decision-making process which, in an accomplished democracy, must involve the whole of society. It is important, therefore, that the Commission take up the question of establishing a civil dialogue, thus completing the social dialogue.

In addition, it will be necessary to try hard, in the framework of the civil dialogue, to consult the largest possible number of representative European organisations and associations, that are active at the socioeconomic level. The justification for such a step is not the selfish and corporatist defence of special interests; rather, it is because the link between legitimate interests, rights and duties is the basis of the universality of democracy, which privileges the civic and collective conscience of citizens. Civil society does not exist in the absence of freedom, because it can only be the voluntary coming together, on the basis of positive values, of citizens who are responsible and equal in freedom.

On 15 October, Jacques Delors will open in Brussels, at the headquarters of the Economic and Social Committee, the first European civil society convention. It will be the occasion for defining the role and contribution that civil society can have, by and large, in building a united Europe.

DECISIONS

Regional and social aid in 2000–06 ...

The new system of European regional and social aid is now largely in place. It covers the period 2000–06, for a total amount of EUR 213 billion (EUR 1 = GBP 0.65 or IEP 0.79). Altogether, the average annual amount, for the European Union as a whole, will come to EUR 26.2 billion, at 1999 prices, as against EUR 24.1 billion over the period 1994–99. The EU Council of Ministers adopted on 21 June the nine regulations which form the overall financial framework of this aid and make up the ground rules for its allocation. It was within this framework that the European Commission established, on 1 July, the specific budgets as well as the list of Objective 1 regions, which account for 23 % of the EU's population, and which will receive the most aid — EUR 127.5 billion. The regions in question are eastern Germany (except the former East Berlin), all of Greece, 10 Spanish regions, France's overseas departments, the west of Ireland and the Border Midlands, the Italian Mezzogiorno (with the exception of Molise), and the Austrian Burgenland. The Objective 1 regions also take in Portugal (with the exception of Lisbon and the Tagus Valley), six thinly populated regions of Finland and Sweden, and four areas in the UK: Cornwall and the Scilly Isles, Merseyside, South Yorkshire and the west and valleys of Wales. Special transitional support, amounting to EUR 8.4 billion, has been provided for the regions which are currently covered by Objective 1, but will be excluded from it in 2000.

... and from one objective to another

The second category of regions entitled to aid are those undergoing change or redevelopment, and accounting for 18 % of the EU's population. The Commission has set the population ceilings for the 12 beneficiary countries — the 15 minus Greece, Ireland and Portugal. The total regional development aid allocated to Objective 2 will amount to EUR 19.7 billion. The funds allocated for training, in order to combat unemployment and social exclusion in the same 12 countries, will amount to EUR 24 billion. The Commission has also decided on the budgets for the four 'Community initiatives', or specialised programmes in support of projects which can serve as a model for the EU as a whole. The Interreg initiative in favour of cross-border regional cooperation will receive EUR 4.875 billion. EQUAL, which promotes equality of opportunity in employment, will receive EUR 2.85 billion, while Leader, which fosters urban development, will receive EUR 2.02 billion. The fourth initiative is URBAN, which encourages urban regeneration, and it will receive EUR 700 million.

Separating telecommunications and cable networks

Further reductions in the price of telephone calls, and quicker and more reliable access to the Internet, are in the offing. This is because telecommunications companies which dominate the market in an EU country can no longer include their traditional activities as well as their cable television networks within the same company. The European Commission adopted on 23 June a directive which requires companies in this situation, such as France Télécom, Deutsche Telekom, Spain's Telefónica and Sweden's Telia, to separate their telecommunications and cable networks. Meanwhile, the others cannot, of course, bring the two together. The directive encourages competition at a time when technological convergence is making it possible to telephone, surf the Internet, go shopping and transact banking operations using a personal computer (PC) or a television set — in other words, over the telephone network, in the first case, and the cable television network, in the second. Requiring the two to compete with each other stimulates both technical progress and lower prices.

Promoting electronic data interchange

EU administrations — those of the Member States, on the one hand, and EU institutions on the other — will be able to communicate with each other more effectively, thanks to the programme for the electronic interchange of data between administrations (IDA), the second stage of which was adopted by the EU Council of Ministers on 21 June. The first IDA programme was in operation between 1995 and 1997. The second will last for five years and have a budget of EUR 71.6 million for the first three years. More than half this amount will be used to adapt the telematics networks to the EU's policy priorities, as well as to implement projects of common interest. The balance will finance work aimed at ensuring the interoperability of the networks between administrations, which are part of the trans-European telecommunications networks. The implementation of the IDA II programme will improve the operation of the European single market and the implementation of various EU policies, particularly economic and monetary union, the fight against fraud and the promotion of industrial competitiveness.

A definitive Eurovignette

The Eurovignette, the system for charging heavy goods vehicles using the EU's road network as from 1 July 2000, is in place at last. The EU Council took note on 17 June of the agreement reached with the European Parliament on a new directive, an earlier text having been annulled by the European Court of Justice in 1995 on procedural grounds. The directive introduces maximum rates for annual, monthly and weekly user charges, which are related to the level of air pollution and infrastructure damage. The maximum annual charges range from EUR 750 for the 'cleanest' vehicle with a maximum of three axles to EUR 1 550 for vehicles with a maximum of four axles and highly pollutant emissions. There is a daily user charge of EUR 8 for all categories of heavy goods vehicles. During the first two years, vehicles registered in Greece will be entitled to a 50 % reduction on road user charges. In addition, Greece, Spain, Italy and Portugal will be allowed to apply, for a two-year period, user charges which are below the minimum established by the directive.

IN BRIEF

As from 1 January 2000, users of **telecommunications services** — telephone and access to global information networks, such as the Internet — who are established in the EU will pay VAT in the EU, even if the services in question are provided from outside it. The EU Council adopted on 17 June a directive which establishes, for telecommunications services, the principle of taxation at the place of the recipient of the services.

The **trans-European transport, energy and telecommunications networks (TENs)** will receive a total of EUR 4.6 billion in aid from the EU budget for the period 2000–06. The EU Council adopted on 7 June a regulation along these lines, and modified at the same time the rules for the allocation of such aid to the TENs. For most projects, multiannual programmes will replace annual funding. In addition, part of the EU's support will be in the form of risk capital, represented by shares.

THE EUROPEAN UNION AND WORLD TRADE (II) (1)

The importance of trade in services

Traditionally, trade involved physically moving goods and raw materials from one part of the world to another. Many people still visualise international commerce in those terms. But the reality now is very different and change is taking place at a hectic pace.

Ten years ago, no European courier company existed. Now, Europe is one of the biggest operators in an expanding worldwide sector. The services component in what people traditionally consider to be manufactured goods has become considerable. In steel mill machinery exported from Europe, for instance, this has risen from about a third to over 80 % during the past 20 years. Instead of simply shipping out parts for the finished item, such manufacturing contracts now invariably include agreements to provide maintenance, training and software.

Trade in services is one of the main contributors to the European Union's success. The sector accounts for two thirds of the Union's economy and jobs, almost a quarter of the EU's total exports and a half of all foreign investment flowing from the Union to other parts of the world. The sector is huge and growing. By services, we mean computer and information activities, travel and tourism, hotels and restaurants, finance and insurance, construction, royalties and licence fees, transport, telecommunications, distribution, educational and environmental programmes, health-related and social schemes, electronic information and even various government activities. For every one person in the Union working in manufacturing, just over two are employed in the services sector. The impact of the Internet is likely to accelerate this process even more.

The EU is by far the world's largest exporter of commercial services. In 1996, it was responsible for 26 % of total global services' transactions (a figure which rises to 43 % if trade between EU Member States is included), while the United States' share was 17 % and Japan's just 5.2 %.

Given this predominance, it is not surprising that the Union has taken the lead in trying to remove barriers to a truly global market and has helped to establish the concepts and structure on which existing multilateral rules are based.

A significant step was taken with the implementation three years ago of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), which is one of the pillars of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) system. It represented a first concerted effort to tackle the services sector which in many countries is represented either by public monopolies or is highly regulated.

Despite its undoubted contribution towards liberalising the services sector, the GATS agreement was incomplete. As a result, governments continued their negotiations after the Uruguay Round was formally brought to an end. They achieved an EUR 1 000 billion breakthrough in the related fields of basic telecommunications services and information technology goods in 1997. The telecommunications deal, which covers well over 90 % of global international traffic and world telecommunications revenues, provides for the elimination of tariffs by 2000.

Later that year, another landmark was reached with a multilateral agreement to open up the financial services sector worth trillions of euro. In future, the WTO's rules will apply to over 95 % of global trade in banking, insurance, securities and financial information.

Given the solid foundation of a domestic services market which is one of the most integrated and lightly regulated in the world, the Union is well placed to argue the benefits of such policies on a global scale. But to marshal the strongest possible case, European Commission negotiators are also keen to increase the input from the business community so that they can work in partnership to respond to the sector's particular priorities.

The Commission has established a business-driven European services network. For more information, please consult the EU website (http://gats-info.eu.int/).

Investment: the need for clear multilateral rules

For international companies, deciding where to invest is an integral part of their overall strategy. Just as trade is now global, so too is investment and there is a growing need to create a coherent set of international rules to deal with this. At the moment, the treatment of foreign investment, whether it be the settlement of disputes or a policy of limiting investment to certain sectors of the economy, is mainly regulated by extensive network of over 1 500 bilateral governmental treaties.

But increasingly, this situation is being seen as cumbersome and insufficient to provide the stable, clear and transparent rules required by all investors in order to be able to plan ahead. At the same time, foreign direct investment is seen as an engine of economic growth and prosperity and has grown sevenfold from 1980 to 1996. These financial flows complement trade as the two main pillars of the international economy.

In other words, the cost of capital rises in those countries which deny market access and national treatment to foreign firms. The funds arrive more slowly and the much-needed investment takes longer to provide the desired benefits. On the other hand, more competition brings both cheaper finance and stimulates innovation.

(1) The first part of this article appeared in issue No 6/7-1999.

The European Union is keen to encourage and protect these flows and to ensure that their impact on home and host countries is carefully monitored. For these reasons, the Union is in the vanguard of moves to ensure a level playing field by ensuring clear, international rules. The ideal forum for such a framework is the World Trade Organisation and a working group has been established to examine the relationship between trade and investment. The Union would like the next set of WTO negotiations to tackle the question of investment, since it believes that this is a major gap in the current set of international rules.

WTO rules must still allow countries to pursue their domestic policies in areas such as public health and the environment, and even to exclude certain sectors of their economy from an investment agreement if there are important policy reasons to do so. Safeguard clauses should also be introduced to allow countries to take measures which they consider necessary to protect their national security, to ensure the integrity and stability of their financial system or to react to balance-of-payments crises.

The need to agree on an international framework of competition rules

World trade rules, incorporated in the WTO, were substantially strengthened by the successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round in 1994. Governments have, through successive GATT negotiating Rounds, been made subject to increasing disciplines guaranteeing transparency, non-discrimination and access to each other's national markets. This has led to the explosive growth of trade and global welfare that the world has witnessed over the last 50 years.

All the same, the WTO still has a 'missing pillar': there are no international disciplines on the conduct of commercial enterprises. Yet the number and size of transnational firms have been steadily increasing, and business activities and production methods have become truly international. It is important to ensure that the advantages of trade liberalisation are not nullified by anticompetitive private practices that have a similar effect: dividing markets, engaging in illegal cartels, abusing monopoly positions, etc.

Competition law is a basic feature of our market economies and legal systems. When applied effectively, it supports the competitiveness of our industries, protects the individual right to compete in a sound and fair manner, and maximises consumer welfare. It also keeps economies open.

The competition policies of countries have had, until recently, a clear domestic focus. Today, they must keep pace with the further openness of economies and internationalisation of business behaviour. This means that competition authorities must be equipped with the instruments necessary to enable them to assess, and, if necessary, address, anticompetitive practices with an international dimension.

It is for the above reasons that the European Union is in favour of launching negotiations in the WTO, from the year 2000 onwards, to establish an international framework of competition rules. The basic objective of such negotiations would be to ensure that all WTO members adopt domestic competition legislation and enforcement structures, and that these would, in principle, apply to all sectors of their economy. Provisions could also be elaborated to facilitate cooperation between competition agencies regarding cases with an international dimension. Furthermore, basic WTO principles, such as those relating to transparency and non-discrimination, could be made applicable to international competition policy cases. In keeping with WTO tradition, an international framework of competition rules would be intergovernmental in nature.

In the view of the EU, bringing competition policy into the WTO, which would be a gradual, step-by-step process, would reduce costs both for business and governments, increase coherence and predictability, and reduce trade friction. Furthermore, all the nations of the world would benefit from the reduction of international anticompetitive practices. After all, in a balanced and sustainable open trading system, all WTO members have a stake in the vigorous and neutral application of competition law by their trading partners.

eurostat

KEY FIGURES

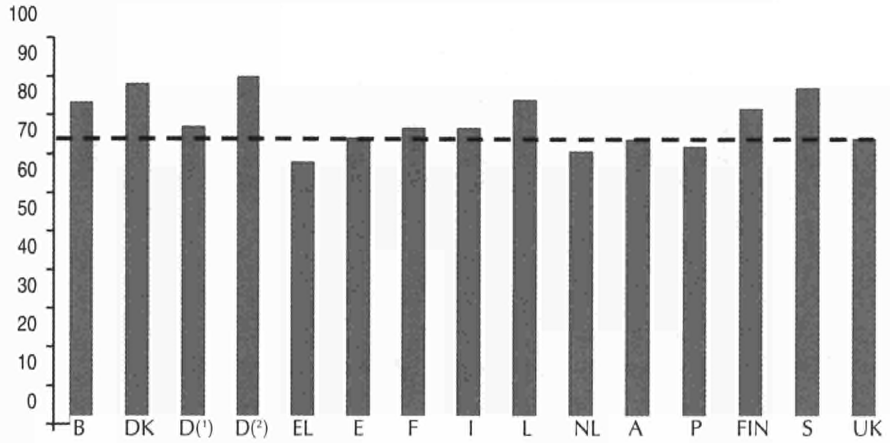
Data Shop Eurostat Luxembourg
Tel. (352) 43 35 22-51 — Fax (352) 43 35 22-221

Women's earnings a quarter less than men's

In the European Union in 1995, on average the gross hourly earnings of a woman was 76,3% of the earnings of a man

This conclusion is true in all EU Member States, even though the general situation seems more balanced than the EU average in the Eastern *Länder* of Germany (89,9%), in Denmark (88,1%), in Sweden (87%), Luxembourg and Belgium (83%), and less balanced in Greece (68%), the Netherlands (70,6%), Austria (73,6%) and Spain (74%).

Gross hourly wages of women as a % of men's, 1995



Gross hourly wages of women as a % of men's — Full-time earnings, bonuses excluded, 1995

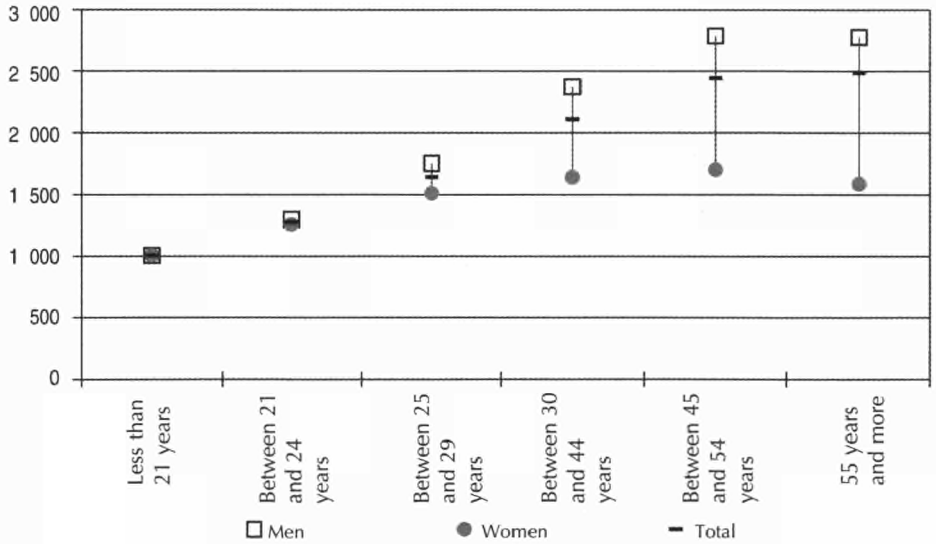
B	DK	D(1)	D(2)	EL	E	F	I	L	NL	A	P	FIN	S	UK	EU-15
83,2	88,1	76,9	89,9	68,0	74,0	76,6	76,5	83,9	70,6	73,6	71,7	81,6	87,0	73,7	76,3

(1) Federal Republic of Germany until 3 October 1990.
(2) New *Länder* of Germany.

Looking at pay differences by age shows that pay differences between women and men increase rapidly with age

Working women are on average younger: 44% are less than 30 years old compared to 32% of men. This is due to the fact that there are less of the older generation of women working and that many women stop working to raise children and may only restart after several years, if at all. The consequence is that women on average have less seniority and less opportunity to be in management positions. This makes an impact on their average salary level.

Gross monthly earnings of full-time employees
By age in ecus — EU-15,1995



Gross monthly earnings of women as a % of men's — By age, 1995

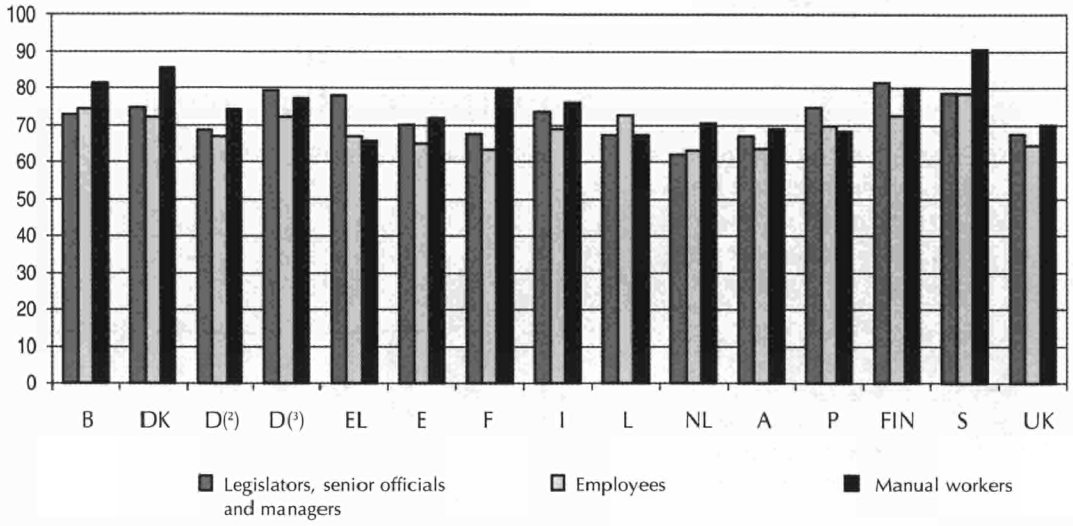
	B	DK	D(1)	D(2)	EL	E	F	I	L	NL	A	P	FIN	S	UK	EU-15
Less than 21 years	78,6	98,0	79,4	80,0	93,7	88,2	106,0	93,4	91,6	88,4	83,9	91,6	87,6	108,0	84,5	100,1
21-24 years	86,1	89,6	83,0	91,2	85,7	84,7	98,9	89,8	96,3	85,5	76,9	86,5	83,9	90,9	79,4	97,1
25-29 years	90,9	90,0	85,4	90,9	81,8	86,6	94,1	86,1	97,6	85,2	80,4	79,5	84,0	89,3	81,4	86,2
30-44 years	86,6	82,8	77,7	87,8	69,2	78,6	77,5	80,7	86,0	81,0	72,4	73,5	79,0	84,6	69,0	69,2
45-54 years	82,3	77,6	70,6	84,6	58,6	75,8	69,8	71,4	71,8	66,3	68,5	72,2	74,6	78,5	57,6	61,0
55 years and more	73,7	78,2	69,0	80,9	55,9	71,8	66,4	68,5	68,0	67,9	55,9	67,4	72,5	77,1	61,5	57,1

(1) Federal Republic of Germany until 3rd October 1990. (2) New *Länder* of Germany.

When viewing earnings by broad occupational categories there are also major differences between women and men

Women and men do not have the same jobs. In the population under review, one third of women working full-time are office clerks while only 10% of men are, whereas 47% of men are manual workers or plant operators while only 18% of women are. On average manual workers are better paid than office clerks.

Gross hourly wages of women as a % of men's
By occupational categories (1), 1995



Gross hourly wages of women as a % of men's — By occupational categories (1), 1995

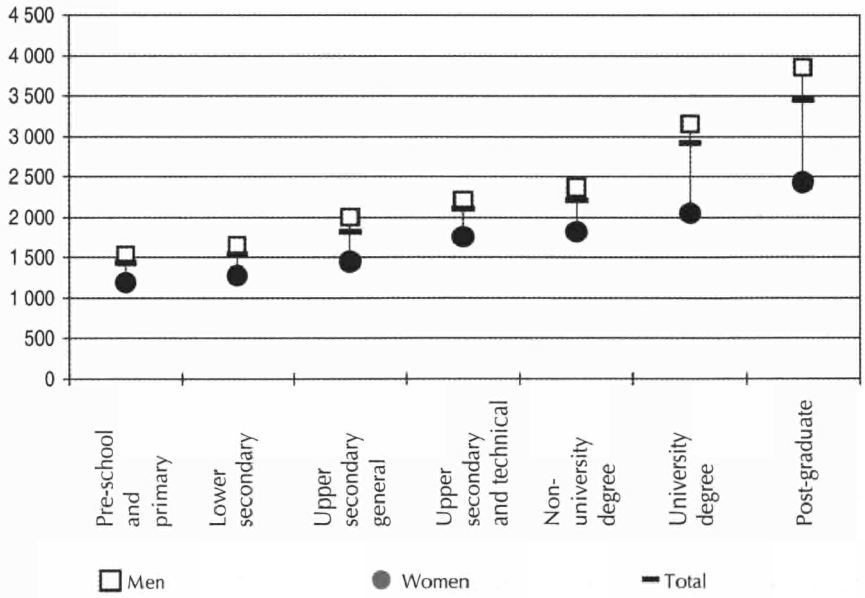
	B	DK	D(2)	D(3)	EL	E	F	I	L	NL	A	P	FIN	S	UK
A	73,0	74,9	68,7	79,2	77,9	70,2	67,6	73,8	67,3	62,0	67,1	74,9	81,4	78,5	67,5
B	74,6	72,3	66,9	72,3	67,0	65,0	63,3	69,0	72,8	63,1	63,6	69,8	72,6	78,4	64,4
C	81,3	85,5	74,4	77,2	65,8	72,0	79,7	76,2	67,3	70,6	69,0	68,3	79,9	90,6	70,1

A = Legislators, senior officials and managers B = Employees C = Manual workers
(1) For some significant professional categories
(2) Federal Republic of Germany until 3 October 1990. (3) New *Länder* of Germany.

When comparing earnings of women and men according to their level of education, it appears that pay differences increase with the education level

The differences are approximately 20% for the lowest levels of education and standing at approximately 35% for university graduates and postgraduates. For these persons the generational effect is strong: female degree holders are on average much younger than male and in these categories seniority can mean very high salaries.

Gross monthly earnings of full-time employees
By level of education, in ecus — EU-15, 1995



Gross monthly earnings of women as a % of men's — By level of education, 1995

	B	DK	D(1)	D(2)	EL	E	F	I	L	NL	A	P	FIN	S	UK
Lower secondary or less	81,2	86,7	78,9	82,8	63,0	73,7	77,5	78,0	81,6	73,4	71,5	70,8	80,9	85,0	71,0
Secondary education	82,9	86,7	78,2	89,1	69,9	74,4	81,6	73,6	80,8	68,7	74,5	73,0	81,6	84,2	70,7
Tertiary education	71,5	76,1	78,4	84,3	67,1	65,3	68,1	60,3	74,5	60,9	60,3	73,0	82,7	77,9	71,3

(1) Federal Republic of Germany until 3 October 1990. (2) New *Länder* of Germany.

● The employment pact and SMEs

In order to enable businesses, particularly SMEs, to create more jobs, the EU will make additional resources available to them through increased loan facilities. This is the financial aspect of the European employment pact, adopted by the Cologne European Council on 3 June. It calls on the European Investment Bank (EIB) to provide two sets of funds. The first will be provided by releasing EUR 500 million from the current risk capital budget; it will double the resources for the European Technology Facility, an instrument used by the European Investment Fund (EIF) to invest in risk capital funds. The latter can thus finance and advise fast-growing SMEs which are banking on the new technologies. The second set of funds, amounting to EUR 1 billion, will supplement the resources which the EIB puts at the disposal of SMEs, via the EIF, for the risk capital funding of high-technology investments over the period 2000–03. The European Council has also asked the EIB to extend more loans to sectors which generate large numbers of jobs. They include urban renewal, environmental protection, renewable energy promotion, education and health. The EIB will also grant loans to the areas that will no longer qualify for EU aid after the year 2000 (see page 2).

● Knowing about mutual recognition

As a rule, all products legally made or put on sale in one Member State can be marketed in the rest of the EU. This is also true of services. This is the principle of mutual recognition. A Member State can refuse a product or service of another Member State only in a limited number of cases — on grounds of health, public safety or environmental protection. Also, the country in question must notify the European Commission of its decision. In practice, problems remain. Over the period 1996–98, Member States have refused to apply the mutual recognition principle in 228 cases. In order to improve its application, the European Commission announced four initiatives in a document published on 16 June. They include the launch of an information campaign on the theme of mutual recognition, with the publication of a practical handbook and sectoral guides aimed at businesses, and more rapid handling of the cases in which this principle is breached. Each Member State would also have to draw up an annual report listing difficulties in the application of the mutual recognition principle. Finally, each Member State would have to alert its administration, at national or federal, regional and local level, to mutual recognition. At the same time, EU countries must work together more closely.

● Flexible protection for inventions

A proposal which the European Commission modified on 30 June, to take into account amendments by the European Parliament, seeks to extend to all EU countries the protection of inventions through utility models, and to make it subject to common rules, in order to offer SMEs a system that is both flexible and relatively inexpensive as compared with patents. The proposal provides for the extension of this system to the three EU countries where it is unknown — Luxembourg, Sweden and the UK. It covers products as well as manufacturing processes, except in the chemical and pharmaceutical sectors, and excludes biological material. The proposal is of particular interest as regards inventions having limited inventiveness or a relatively short period of utilisation. The protection would be for a maximum of 10 years. The text of the proposal is on the Internet (*).

SINGLE MARKET: PROGRESS AND PROBLEMS ...

The implementation of the European single market is improving, but a good many problems remain to be resolved if citizens and businesses are to benefit fully from it. What is more, EU Member States must continue their efforts, which have slackened a little since the beginning of the year. These are among the findings of the fourth 'Single market scoreboard', published by the European Commission on 16 June. The proportion of EU directives which had not yet been implemented in all EU countries had fallen to 12.8 % by the end of May, as compared with 18.2 % a year ago. Finland, the EU's star performer in this area, had a mere 1.3 % of directives still waiting to be embodied into the country's national legislation. Portugal, the EU's laggard, still had 5.7 % of EU directives to transpose. Even so, the situation is a cause for concern in certain sectors of activity. In telecommunications and transport, for example, over half the directives have yet to be transposed in at least one Member State. The text of the 'Single market scoreboard' can be found on the Internet (*).

... AND THE MEANS TO RESOLVE THEM ...

Certain EU countries have set up contact points for citizens and businesses in order to speed up the elimination of those obstacles to the operation of the single market which depend on national administrations. There are more than 200 of them, and the full list can be found on the Internet site, 'Dialogue with business' (http://europa.eu.int/business). The site also provides information and free advice to businesses, particularly SMEs, and allows access to numerous European and national sources of information. The site can be consulted in the EU's 11 official languages, and was the subject of a seminar organised by the European Commission on 8 June. The site receives over 11 000 requests daily, the subjects most frequently raised being technical standards, EU loans and assistance, intellectual property rights and public procurement. Thanks to this site, a company was able to recover expenses which it incurred unduly in another EU country, and an SME to take part in tenders outside its own country. EU Member States have set up coordination centres to ensure a link between their administrations as well as with the European Commission. Since they were set up in October 1997, these centres have received 368 complaints from businesses and private individuals, 88 of which could be settled between the Member States concerned, while another 46 were forwarded to the Commission.

... FOR CITIZENS AS WELL

There are freephone numbers which you can call in order to find out more about your rights as a European citizen. The number for the UK is 0800 58 15 91 and for Ireland it is 1 800 55 31 88. You can use them to put your own problems to the Citizens' Signpost Service, which has received more than 20 000 enquiries from all over the EU since it was launched at the end of 1996. The most frequently asked question is about the possibility of working in another EU country; it accounted for 35 % of all enquiries until March of this year. You can also visit the following Internet site: http://europa.eu.int/citizens.

(*) http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg15

61 % OF EUROPEANS ARE FOR THE EURO

This spring, a few months after the launch of the euro, 61 % of EU citizens were in favour of the single currency. This was somewhat less than the 64 % recorded last autumn. Only 28 % were against it. This is one of the findings of the Eurobarometer poll, carried out between 12 March and 4 May, and published on 6 July as Eurobarometer, No 51. The proportion of those favouring the European currency remains higher than in the period 1993–97, when it was between 47 and 53 %. The single currency continues to be much more popular in the 11 euro-area countries, with 68 % in favour of it, than in the rest of the EU (35 % in favour). People in Luxembourg and Italy are the most supportive of the euro, with 85 and 84 %, respectively, in favour of it. There is a smaller majority in favour of it elsewhere in the EU, with the exception of three countries which have not adopted the single currency: Denmark (44 % in favour), Sweden (39 %) and the UK (28 %). On the whole, the euro enjoys greater support among men, those under 55 years of age and the more educated. This spring, 45 % of Europeans and 51 % of those living in the euro area claimed to be well informed on the subject of the European currency, as against only 34 and 38 %, respectively, six months earlier.

☐ IN BRIEF

The European Commission submitted on 22 June an amended version of a proposal for a regulation on the **protection of designs and models.** The aim is to allow for a single, inexpensive registration with the European Office for Harmonisation in the Internal Market (trade marks and designs), thus preventing piracy and counterfeiting. The proposal can be found on the Internet (*).

The **computerised systems** in use in certain sectors of activity may not be altogether ready to confront the **millennium bug**, according to a European Commission report of 2 June. The report calls on both the private and public sectors to intensify their efforts, and on EU Member States to find out the state of preparation in the energy, water, transport and telecommunications sectors.

In order to stimulate energy savings and reduce carbon dioxide emissions, the European Commission proposed on 30 June a directive setting out the energy-efficiency requirements applicable to **fluorescent lighting ballast**. This is an indispensable element in fluorescent lighting systems, which are used mainly in factories and office, school and hospital buildings.

One can do more to **reconcile the smooth operation of the single market and environmental protection**, the European Commission has stated in a communication which it published on 9 June. It suggests several ways of doing this, including better information and a programme to be drafted with European standardisation bodies. The text is on the Internet (*).

(*) http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg15

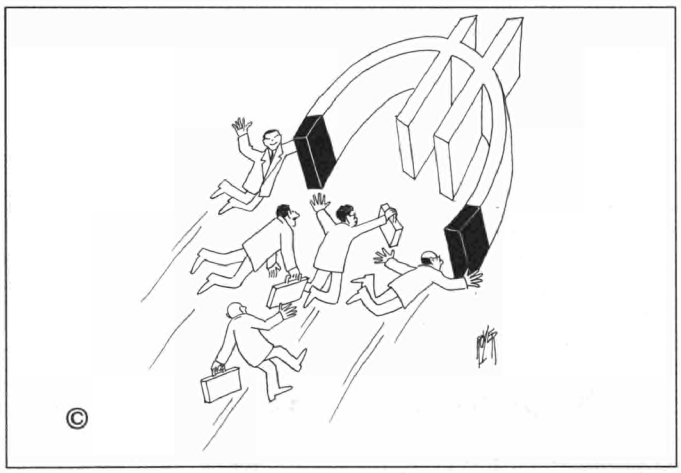
SEEN FROM ABROAD

● East European preparations

The front runners among the former Soviet bloc countries which have applied to join the EU are actively preparing for membership. Several of them described the measures they are taking, and their expectations, during the economic summit of central and east European countries, organised by the World Economic Forum in Salzburg from 30 June to 2 July. 'We have the firm intention of being ready [to join the EU] by 2002,' declared the Governor of Hungary's Central Bank, Georgy Suranyi. He felt unable, however, to set an exact date for the adoption of the euro. For Mr Suranyi, as for his Czech colleague Josef Tosovsky, a floating exchange rate in relation to the euro can make it easier for their countries to remain competitive. Their Polish counterpart, Hanna Gronkiewicz-Walz, stated that she expected the zloty, the national currency, to be replaced by the euro as from 2005. The President of the Czech Parliament and former Prime Minister, Vaclav Klaus, declared: 'The applicant countries are concentrating on becoming normal European countries. For them, this means not staying outside the European Union.'

● Russian concerns

The enlargement of the EU to its former allies and one-time republics of the former Soviet Union has not had an allergic reaction in Russia, according to the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Sergueï Stepachine. Speaking in Salzburg on 1 July, he claimed that Russia and the EU should adopt as their goal the creation of a 'single economic area', adding: 'We are concerned at the threat which this possible enlargement poses for the development of [our] trade with the countries of this region. We count on the European Union to show proof of its understanding, and open a suitable dialogue. Such consultations should begin before enlargement, and not after it.'



**A great deal of additional information on the European Union is available on the Internet.
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