



Beyond the single market for transport: for an infrastructure policy

■ by Karel Van Miert, Member of the European Commission

At a time when the entire range of measures leading to the single market (including measures in the transport field) are being feverishly drafted, must Europe limit its ambitions because of a lack of a suitable transport infrastructure?

Roads, ports, airports, railways and canals in effect make up the Community's circulatory system. They make possible the regular flow of passengers and goods between the Member States. Just as a blood clot threatens a person whose arteries clog up or die, paralysis threatens States whose transport infrastructure cannot meet their transport needs. Clearly we have not yet reached that stage in Europe; but certain harbingers should alert us and stimulate the public authorities to take action. A report on a recent survey by an independent group of experts carried out on behalf of the Commission, Transport Group 2000 Plus, illustrates these weaknesses.

- The current level of investments is inadequate to deal with the problems raised by the growth in traffic.
- Each year 50 000 people die on Community roads while some 1.5 million are injured.
- Transport accounts for one-third of the Community's energy consumption and is responsible for more than half the emissions of several gases into the atmosphere.
- The skies are overcrowded, with increasing delays to aircraft.

At the same time we note that goods traffic by rail and waterways has been stagnating since 1970; the Community's merchant shipping is in decline and there is a surplus of barges.

And yet, traffic continues to grow: passenger traffic rose by 70 % and goods traffic by 50 % between 1970 and 1988. The advent of the single market and the opening-up of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe can only contribute to a yet more rapid growth in trade. It is therefore time to act accordingly. For several years now the Commission and Council have been seriously engaged in this task, advocating a series of measures, such as:

- an incentive to develop the combined transport of goods, which makes use of several forms of transportation (road, river...) over the same distance;
- the development of a European infrastructure network. The Council adopted a recent report on the high-speed rail network and the Commission will submit, this year, a report on the European rail network for combined transport;
- better use of the existing infrastructure (development of cabotage, international road transport, air traffic control...);
- the financing of transport infrastructure by those who use it (a Commission proposal on excise duties, on fuel and on road tax for the transport of goods by road);
- the adoption for the first time, in 1990, by the Council of a three-year programme of Community financing of infrastructure projects of Community interest. This programme will make it possible to concentrate both means and effort on a limited number of priorities; as a result, it should be possible to integrate better the transport systems of the Member States and to attain certain priority objectives of Community transport policy, such as the promotion of combined transport, the servicing of regions on the periphery, the realization of the first international high-speed links and the improvement of Alpine crossings. Although insufficient, the sums available from the budget will rise sharply — from ECU 60 million in 1990 to nearly ECU 150 million in 1992.

One is thus moving towards a genuine common infrastructure policy for the period after 1992.

The Community can and must play an important coordinating role, through both encouragement and by filling the gaps. But the main responsibility will continue to rest with the Member States, the regions and local communities, who must make an important effort in the fields of research, planning and investment. It is only in this way that the Community can hope to enjoy, in the year 2000, the effective, reliable and rapid transport of passengers and goods, and thus contribute to the success of the single market.

DECISIONS

■ NOW — a helping hand for women

The European Commission launched NOW (New opportunities for women) on 31 January, to run until the end of 1993. With a budget of ECU 120 million (ECU 1 = UK £ 0.70 or IR £ 0.77) provided by the Community, NOW will encourage women to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the single market, on equal terms with men. It will finance three main types of activities: (1) help for women going into business for themselves; (2) guidance and vocational training for women who have been unemployed for a long time, whether voluntarily or not, and for young women with no qualifications; and (3) the creation of nurseries, especially in industrial areas, and improvements to the training of people entrusted with the care of children.

■ Free movement of sheep and fish

From 1 January 1993 the free movement of sheep and goats, as well as fish and shellfish, will be guaranteed from one end of the European Community to the other — on the condition that producers comply with the sanitary rules adopted by the EC Council of Ministers on 28 January. Under these rules the system of checks to be carried out on departure and at the place of destination applies to sheep and goats, on the one hand, and to the products of fish farming on (see *Target 92*, No 8-1990.) This procedure makes possible the elimination of checks at the Community's internal borders, and is based on that already adopted for cattle and pigs. In the case of imports from third countries, the mechanism introduced on 28 January also institutes common rules for the European Community as a whole.

■ A loan for two satellites

Thanks to a loan of ECU 200 million, announced on 23 January by the European Investment Bank (EIB), the European organization Eutelsat will be able to place in orbit two additional second-generation satellites between now and 1993. These telecommunication satellites will be in addition to the four already planned. They will strengthen the European telecommunications network, and make it easier to integrate all the enterprises within the same grouping. In addition, they

will both enable the Community's peripheral regions to enjoy all modern telecommunication services and make it easier for the television programmes of the Twelve to be picked up throughout the 12-nation Community and beyond. Some 26 countries of western and southern Europe, including the 12 EC countries, belong to Eutelsat.

■ Information in border areas

Individuals and companies located near the European Community's internal borders need a great deal of information if they are to take full advantage of the 1992 single market. Two pilot projects which the European Commission adopted on 10 January will enable them to know more about their neighbours across the border. The projects are to receive ECU 377 000, divided equally between them, in grants from the Community. One of the projects is being implemented by Eurochambers, which groups European Chambers of Commerce. The aim is to help businesses established in border areas resolve their problems by profiting from the experience of others; studies and information visits dealing with the differences between national systems in such key areas as VAT, excise duties on alcohol, tobacco and petrol, social security, education and vocational training and even public equipment. The other project is of interest to workers' representatives; it is being implemented by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), to which most trade unions in the Community belong. It seeks to encourage the setting-up of inter-regional trade union committees, whose members include organizations from neighbouring regions of different Member States. The second project will also help keep existing committees better informed of the specific problems of workers living in border regions.

■ Dutch electricity is more 'European'

Private Dutch companies which use electricity will be able to buy it from, and sell it to, other European Community countries without restrictions. Similarly, Dutch public utilities will be able to export electricity freely. The European Commission in effect decided on 18 January to ban the agreements which bind the four Dutch electrical utilities to each other and to their joint company, SEP. Under these agreements the four reserve for themselves the exclusive right to import and export electricity. The European Commission regards such behaviour as contrary to the Community's competition rules. It is the first time the Commission has banned an agreement between companies in the electrical sector. As it announced last May (see *Target 92*, No 7-1990), the Commission is more strict now in applying the competition rules in the field of energy, particularly in order to put an end to import and export monopolies. It is looking at the situation in this connection in all EC countries.

'THE SINGLE MARKET IS ALREADY A REALITY'

More than 200 of the 282 measures needed for the completion of the single market had been adopted by the beginning of this year. At the same time some important 'European laws' have already come into force, such as the law on the equivalence of higher education diplomas, in force since the beginning of January. 'The single market is already a reality', the European Commission President, Jacques Delors, concluded in his address to the European Parliament on the Commission's programme for 1991, which he delivered in Strasbourg on 23 January. All the Commission's proposals for legislation dealing with the introduction of the single market are now on the table. The EC Council of Ministers must adopt some 80 Directives ('European laws') this year, so that the Member States can transpose them into national legislation during 1992. That this is an ambitious target was emphasized by Mr Delors, given the difficulties which exist in several areas, including the freedom of movement for individuals between the 12 Member States and checks at the Community's external borders; the approximation of VAT rates and excise duties; the harmonization of animal and plant health regulations; transport policy and the single energy market. The Commission President also noted that the Community had not reached its goals as regards the 'social dimension' of the border-free area; here, too, 1991 will prove decisive.

INITIATIVES

● A more European tax

The European Commission proposed on 13 February the basis for approximating excise duties on petrol and diesel fuel, so as to make it possible to eliminate the European Community's internal frontiers on 1 January 1993. The Commission has reworked its earlier proposal, which set binding minimum rates, the rate for unleaded petrol being lower than the rate for leaded petrol by ECU 50 per 1 000 litres. The Commission has also put forward optional 'target rates', which are much higher. For diesel fuel the Commission envisages a band of rates, adapting its earlier proposals in order to secure unanimity among the Twelve, essential on tax matters. Differences in the level of excise duties are substantial at present. They are in the ratio of 1 to 2 in the case of petrol and 1 to 5 in that of diesel fuel.

EUROPE WITHOUT FRONTIERS AND THE LANGUAGE CHALLENGE

by Eduard Brackeniers, Director-General of the Translation Service
of the Commission of the European Communities

The European Community today is a Community of 12 nations all heading in the same direction: more than 340 million people moving towards a common future. Its languages, at once foreign and familiar, are of its essence; they have evolved over the centuries and reflect the rich variety of its peoples' way of life and thought, their customs and values. Today's Community, founded in the aftermath of war, is based on a simple idea: uniting the member nations while fully respecting their cultural and linguistic diversity. The Old World is blazing a new trail with what is indeed a bold venture — to place the official languages of all the Member States on an equal footing. Multilingualism is one of the corner-stones of the European Community and serves to highlight its respect for democracy, transparency and the law.

The Europe of Twelve addresses all its citizens in their own language, thus reaching not only the specialists (lawyers, business managers, etc.) but also the layman. Europe's solution guarantees the cultural independence of all of us and, with it, respect for each of us. If Europe had artificially restricted the number of Community languages, it would have compromised its ability to express itself. It would have not simplified the dialogue between countries but restricted it. This is the thinking behind the decision of the signatories to the Rome Treaties to treat the official languages of the Member States as equals.

The first act in this spirit was to translate the Treaties into all the official languages of the founder countries. The rules governing the use of languages in the European Community institutions are based on Article 217 of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community and Article 190 of the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community. On 15 April 1958 the Council adopted Regulation No 1, under which Dutch, French, German and Italian were declared to be the official languages and working languages of the six-nation Community. The languages of the new Member States were added after each accession, so that Danish, English, Greek, Spanish and Portuguese have joined the family. There are also official Irish texts of the Treaties.

This first Council Regulation laid down rules governing the use of official languages and on the languages to be used in documents exchanged between the Community institutions and the Member States, in legislation and in the Official Journal. It also empowered each institution to determine practical arrangements in their rules of procedure. The Community thus differs from other international organizations, such as the UN or the Council of Europe, which use only a limited number of languages for communication between their member States. The Community is radically different in nature: UN resolutions are addressed only to governments, whereas decisions taken by the Community institutions very often directly affect citizens and

firms in the Member States; for the Community is generating a body of law which is directly applicable in the Member States.

Without translation, it would be impossible for all those concerned to be involved in preparing Community decisions or for all the citizens of the Member States to understand legislation which is directly applicable to them. Translation is therefore an essential link in the decision-making chain. The translators are fully involved in the exercise of public authority, since the regulations they translate have the same force of law in all nine language versions. Without translation, then, the Community machine would simply grind to a halt.

In the Communities, the Commission has the role of ensuring compliance with the Treaties, promoting new policies and carrying out a whole range of executive functions with direct economic and social impact. For this purpose it is in permanent dialogue with the Council and the European Parliament, with the regular involvement of the Economic and Social Committee, which speaks for both sides of industry, consumers and so on. The dialogue proceeds in a wide range of committees and working parties whose members have different mother tongues; language barriers must not be allowed to impede it, though the means are not always available to provide a totally perfect solution.

Language services in the European Commission

The large internal market will soon be a reality. The European Community will then be an open area where citizens can move freely, goods and capital can be traded unhindered and services can be obtained anywhere in Europe without protectionist barriers getting in the way. The borders between our Member States will gradually disappear. The task will then be to see that this large internal market really works, and this means ensuring that language barriers do not operate as a new obstacle to the free movement of goods and persons.

As a result of successive enlargements, the number of official languages has risen from four to nine, giving 72 possible combinations. On 1 January 1991 the Commission's Translation Service had 1 080 translators and revisers (941 of them in actual translating units) and 487 assistants and secretaries, representing 12% of the total staff complement of 12 978. It is easily the largest translation service anywhere in the world, and in 1990 it produced nearly a million translated pages.

Translation raises terminology problems; their complexity varies with the types of text being translated. Consequently a team of terminology specialists works on producing equivalent expressions in the nine official languages before or

while translations are in progress. The Eurodicautom database was created in 1973 to help translators and other officials search for terms. It currently contains about 500 000 concepts and 150 000 abbreviations. It is accessible to the general public.

There are those who wonder what all this costs. Well, it is not possible to live without multilingualism if information and knowledge are to be transmitted and, with them, ideas are to circulate freely. The very viability and effectiveness of the Community are at stake. Multilingualism is not extravagant, for languages are no mere luxury. The price that has to be paid is the price of freedom, democracy and human dignity. And given the service rendered to the Community as a whole, the price is quite reasonable at only around 2% of the total Community budget and a third of the Commission's administrative expenditure.

Economies can be made, particularly by using data-processing facilities and by standardizing certain repetitive messages so that translation can be computerized. The Commission's translators used to translate about 30 000 invitations to tender per year, which meant 240 000 translations into the other eight languages. Automatic processing of standard texts means that the 150 or so translators who used to deal with these documents can now be set to more interesting work. Considerable savings have been made as a result.

Looking forward to future needs, the Commission has launched research projects to develop computerized translation systems: the main one among them is the Eurotra project.

In each Member State of the Community, teams are developing the software needed for an advanced machine translation concept.

Pending the arrival of Eurotra, the Commission has developed its own machine translation system — Systran — which currently covers 11 language pairs (six from English, four from French and one from German). In 1990, about 600 Commission staff used this system to produce around 25 000 pages. It can be used, for instance, when the reader wants to know what is in a document without needing a full, official translation.

Language and the citizen

In the internal market linguistic data-processing, or computational linguistics, will play a growing role to help cope with the rising — and accelerating — tide of information. Consequently, universities and firms are working on other language projects with Commission support, all with the general aim of using computers to simplify the transmission and analysis of the spoken and written word.

Cultural and linguistic diversity lies at the very foundation of citizens' Europe. The language challenge facing Europe will be all the easier to take up if citizens can speak and understand several European languages. The right to use one's mother tongue in all circumstances and the right to learn foreign languages are among the fundamental human rights.

The Community institutions live with the daily reality of the need to learn and use languages. But firms, associa-

tions, and even chambers of commerce and industry, must now aim at the same target. Knowledge of languages counts in the selection of staff and executives. Those already in jobs are encouraged to follow language courses, and this trend will intensify in the years to come. Every businessman knows that the best language to use is his customer's language. But it can take a long time to learn. In recent months the Commission launched a programme for the improvement of foreign language knowledge in the Community — Lingua programme — which aims to promote knowledge of the nine Community official languages plus Luxembourgish and Irish. In the same vein, the Erasmus programme encourages mobility of students and teachers specializing, among other things, in linguistics and translation. Lastly, the new Tempus programme to promote cooperation in education with Central and Eastern Europe has given priority to modern European languages.

Subsidiarity and linguistic pluralism

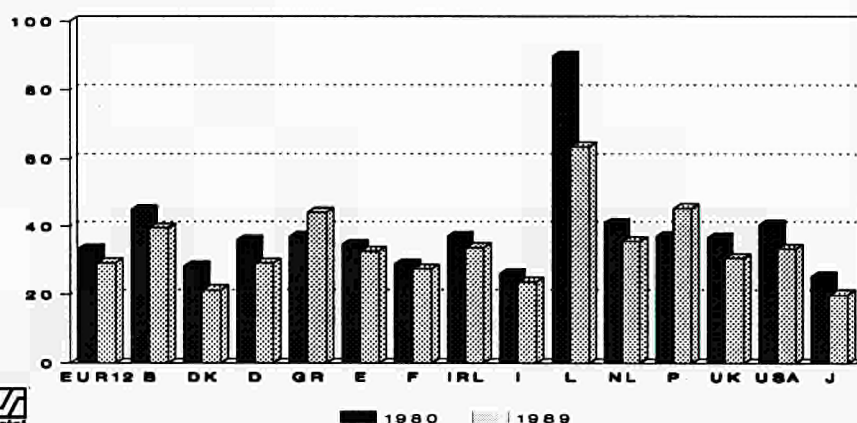
Linguistic pluralism is one of the characteristic features of Europe. It obviously requires substantial resources and efforts, but then it is an important element in Europe's heritage. The Community countries on their own can boast a good 40 languages, ranging from Catalan to Luxembourgish, Sardinian to Frisian and including a new acquisition — Sorbian — now that the former GDR has become part of the Community; these must be preserved and perpetuated. But however liberal the Community approach to multilingualism may be, these languages cannot all acquire official language status.

Europe is once again at the crossroads, for in its concern to achieve the highest degree of management dynamism and to reduce costs wherever possible, it has decided to delegate and decentralize powers in accordance with what has come to be known as the subsidiarity principle. This principle means that the Community more and more delegates powers of executive action to its Member States, retaining at Community level only those powers which for technical or legal reasons cannot be exercised at the lower level.

More and more Community action will therefore be taken by the Member States, which will more and more be called upon to issue legislation in their national and regional languages. Multilingual communication will thus become a shared concern with growing involvement of the Member States and their regions, implying growing use of these regional languages and with it an enhanced status for them.

Only policies launched by the European Community, working together with the Member States and European industry, will be in a position to safeguard European languages as means of communication and vectors of culture, and thereby to preserve the principle of equal treatment for all European languages in tomorrow's Europe. The Commission of the European Communities and its Translation Service, with their 40 or so years experience, will play their full part in this enterprise, as the spur and catalyst to success.

*Energy ratio (gross domestic consumption/GDP)
1980 and 1989; US and Japan: 1980 and 1988 (%)*



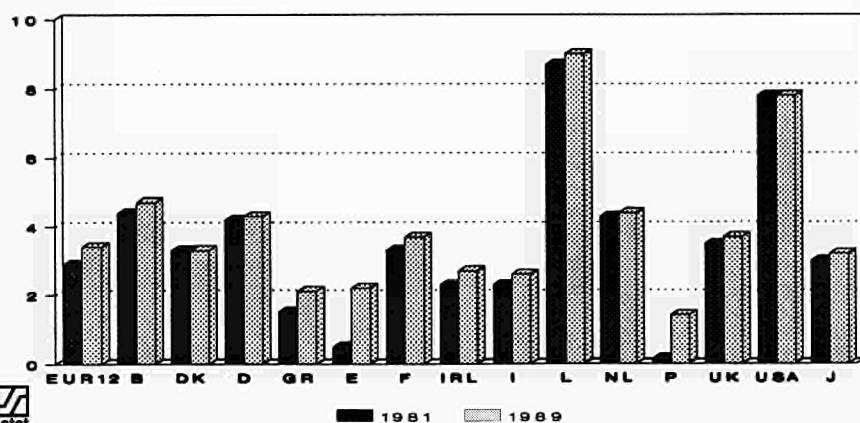
Energy in the economy

Energy continues to be one of the driving factors in all sectors of the economy. However, there is a drop in the energy ratio in almost all the countries under review. The figure for the Community has dropped from 33% to 29%.

This downward trend is due to techniques and practices which consume less energy.

It also indicates the success of energy-saving measures.

*Gross per capita domestic energy consumption, 1981 and 1989;
US and Japan: 1981 and 1988 (in toe (tonnes oil equivalent))*



Increase in energy consumption

Per capita energy consumption has increased in almost all the Member States. The greatest increase is in Spain and Portugal. Globally, the average consumption in Europe is still below that in the United States.

Luxembourg is a special case, because of the disproportionate size of the steel industry.

The proportion of oil in the total is falling, as are imports of oil.

Crude oil as a proportion of total domestic energy consumption (%)

	EUR 12	B	DK	D	GR	E	F	IRL	I	L	NL	P	UK	J	USA
1980	54.2	50.1	70.0	49.2	76.6	70.6	59.1	80.4	69.2	30.3	44.8	86.5	39.7	42.8	65.9
1989	44.8	40.1	52.9	39.7	62.1	52.5	41.8	41.4	60.9	43.3	36.7	78.8	38.6	41.0 ¹	57.5 ¹

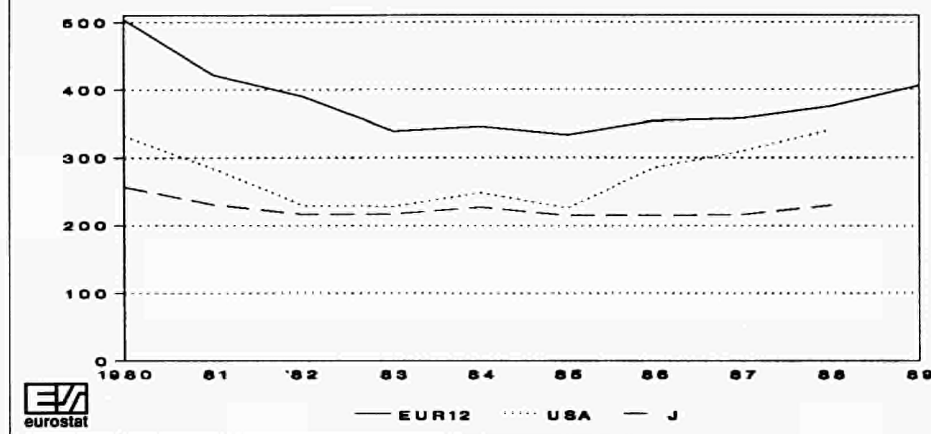
¹ 1988.

Total net oil imports, including petroleum products 1980-89; US and Japan: 1980-88 (million toe)

Fall in oil imports

Following a sharp fall in the general level of oil imports after the second oil crisis, oil imports rose after 1985, reflecting the drop in prices. The 1989 level was lower than that for 1980 (except for the US).

This downward trend was offset by the development of other sources of energy, such as nuclear power and gas.



Trends in oil prices
Average cif value of crude oil supplies (1978 = 100)

1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
100	131	218	302	319	312	341	336	136	143	115	102	129 ¹

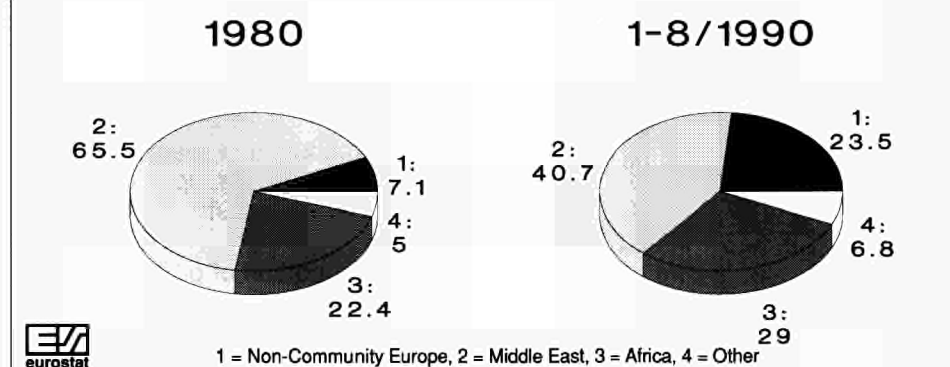
¹ Estimated for the first three quarters.

Geographical spread of extra-Community imports of crude oil, in 1980 and during the first eight months of 1990 (%)

Reduction in the Middle East share

To avoid over-dependence on a single area for its supplies, the Community increased the volume of its oil imports from areas other than the Middle East.

However, this area is still the main source of imports. The share of the various countries in this part of the world has reflected international tensions. At present no oil is imported from Iraq or Kuwait.



Breakdown of Community imports of oil from the Middle East, 1980 and 1989 (million t)

	Total	Iraq	Iran	Saudi Arabia	Kuwait	Qatar	UAE	Other
1980	319.8	56.4	16.0	177.3	23.8	9.9	29.1	7.3
1989	161.5	30.3	46.8	48.7	16.2	0.7	7.9	10.8

● New style customs for '1992'

With the elimination of the European Community's internal borders, set for 1 January 1993, customs officials in all 12 Member States will have to concentrate on trade with non-EC countries. In order to alert all those concerned — governments, the civil service, businesses — to the changes this implies, the European Commission has listed these changes in a document which it sent to the Twelve and to the European Parliament on 1 February. Governments must take two types of measures. On the one hand, they must reorganize their customs, even while promoting cooperation with customs officials of other Member States — this is the aim of the training and exchange programme baptized *Matthaeus* (see *Target 92*, No 2-91); on the other hand, they must adapt Community legislation to the new role of customs, particularly by adopting a European customs code and introducing 'European' penalties for smugglers and other offenders.

● Consumer information

The European Commissioner for Consumer Affairs, Karel Van Miert, inaugurated in Lille, northern France, on 15 January a European consumer information agency. This body, deliberately located in a border region, has the task of informing consumers of the European legislation designed to protect them, of comparative tests and of the national laws in force on either side of the border. The European Commission, which helped set up the information agency in Lille, backs the creation of similar information centres in Luxembourg, with the Luxembourg consumers' union, and at the Dutch-German border.

○ BRIEFLY

Six Spanish and French cities (Barcelona, Palma de Majorca, Valencia and Saragossa in Spain, and Montpellier and Toulouse in France) set up in Saragossa a cooperation network baptized 'C 6' on 21 January. They will exchange information and work together in the fields of transportation, the environment, university education and tourism. The six cities are located in regions with a total population of over 16 million.

The European Parliament wants **women to benefit from the single market as much as men**. In a resolution adopted on 25 January the Euro-MPs have called on the Community and the Member States to coordinate their policies in this matter. They have also asked the European Commission to draw up a list of the '1992 measures' that directly affect women, to devote more money to the NOW programme (see above) and to reserve for women half the places on the vocational training programmes supported by Community funds. The resolution also requires the Commission to carry out a comparative study of national legislation dealing with marriage, divorce and the family in general, with a view to a certain degree of harmonization.

Thanks to MAP-TV (the acronym for memory-archives-programmes), cinema and television audiences throughout the 12-nation European Community, and even beyond, will be able to watch the films of yesterday. MAP-TV, which was awarded the Eureka audiovisual label on 25 January and is being helped financially by the Community's Media 92 programme (Measures to encourage the development of the audiovisual industries), will make it possible **to exploit cinema and television archives on a Europe-wide basis** through a secondary, border-free market in films.

The **Law Society of England and Wales**, with a membership of some 56 000 solicitors and legal advisers, opened an office in Brussels on 18 January. The Society sees the office as a means of defending the interests of its members in the context of the European Community and of helping those who would like to work in Brussels or have an office there. At home the Law Society has drawn up a list of '1992 lawyers'; it contains some 750 British legal firms which can advise

their clients on questions relating to the single market. The list can be had from the Law Society, 50 Chancery Lane, London WC2A 1SX. Telephone: 071 320 56 73.

The Alsatian region of France, the French national development authorities (Datar) and the two German *Länder* (states) of Baden-Württemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate, inaugurated a **common house** on 10 January. Located in the former customs-house at **Lauterbourg**, in the French department of Bas-Rhin, the 'house' will serve as both an information centre and a permanent meeting place for the leaders of the regions in question.

Press lords from a number of European Community countries, including Britain, Ireland, The Netherlands, Italy, Spain, France Belgium and Luxembourg, set up a European Council of Newspaper Editors and Proprietors in Amsterdam on 15 January. The organization will seek to convince European Community authorities that it is not in the public interest to impose restrictions on advertising within the framework of Community harmonization legislation, especially as regards alcohol and tobacco advertising.

To make it **easier for handicapped people to have access to work-places**, the European Commission proposed to the Twelve on 6 February a law requiring a minimum of suitable means of transportation. Under this law the choice of the technical solution to be implemented would be up to the national authorities: a mechanism either incorporated in the vehicle in question or on the outside of it or personal help.

The European Commission proposed to the Twelve, on 6 February, a 'European law' which would let consumers know the **composition of the beauty products** they were buying, even while offering them a wider choice; facilitate the free movement of these products in the single market, and reduce the administrative costs of the manufacturers of perfumes, soaps, toothpastes and lipstick. The projected law would modify existing European legislation.

In a resolution adopted on 23 January Euro-MPs have proposed the introduction of a **single programme of exchanges and cooperation in the field of higher education**. The programme would bring together, by extending them, existing European programmes, including Erasmus (exchanges of students and teacher), Comett (technologies), Lingua (languages) and Tempus (exchanges with Central and Eastern Europe). The European Parliament is also seeking a better distribution between regions, social groups, the sexes and types of study among the participants. In addition, the resolution calls for the creation of a European student card, the inclusion of European law as a compulsory subject in the law faculties and a much wider choice of languages for students in higher education.

SEEN FROM ABROAD

► Membership an Austrian priority

'To press ahead with our demand for membership remains our first priority', Austria's ambassador to the European Communities, Wolfgang Wolte, declared in Brussels on 10 January. Austria has another task to carry out just now: it presides over the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), which includes Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland, during the first half of this year. In this capacity Austria is playing a special role in the negotiations aimed at creating a European economic area (EEA) between now and 1 January 1993. The EEA should make it possible to establish the free movement of goods, services, capital and people throughout the 12 European Community and six EFTA countries. For Mr Wolte, the preparation of the EEA and the search for membership can be conducted in parallel, because the goal is the same. Vienna would like to sign with the Community, before June 1991, the Treaty setting up the EEA, an ambition it shares with the European Commission.

SMEs

◆ European services for SMEs in 1991

Business policy must be strengthened with the approach of 1993, given the growing demand for the services available for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). In less than a year the network of **Euro-Info-Centres** (EICs) has grown from 39 centres to 195 centres and 16 regional outposts. This well-organized network covers all the regions of the European Community, including those on its periphery. In 1991 the EIC project will experience a rapid 'qualitative' growth. The information provided SMEs will be more specialized, in order to make it more effective. The EICs will be called on increasingly to distribute selected information in the context of an active dialogue with the Commission's central body in Brussels as much as with the SMEs themselves.

The **Business Cooperation Network (BC-NET)**, which is entrusted with the task of promoting cooperation among SMEs through business consultants, will be extended both within the Community and outside it. Priority is being given to the EFTA countries and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, but BC-NET is also being extended to Australia, Canada and certain countries of Latin America and the Mediterranean basin. The sectors in which BC-NET is active are also being extended, especially as regards research and development, and it is to be run more efficiently.

The **Marriage Bureau** or Business Cooperation Centre (BCC), which acts as a letter-box for SMEs will soon be working more quickly. It meets a need for non-confidential transnational cooperation, for it offers businesses the possibility of looking directly for possibilities of cooperating with businesses elsewhere in the Community.

As for **Europartenariat**, the Commission's programme which puts regions facing problems in touch with other regions of the Community, for the purpose of encouraging cooperation between SMEs, it will organize two programmes this year, as against only one a year so far. The first will be held in Porto (Portugal) on 17 and 18 June, the second could be held in Leipzig (Germany), in December. The activities of Europartenariat 1992 could involve Greece and southern Italy.

A new activity, **Interprise**, seeks to encourage moves towards partnership in Europe, notably by bringing together regions which complement each other economically.

◆ Phare to finance two programmes for SMEs

The European Commission decided, at the end of January, to finance two programmes in favour of Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, in the framework of the programme of aid for the restructuring of the economies of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Phare).

Loans of ECU 20 million will make it possible to introduce a mechanism in support of private sector initiatives in the Community, aimed at creating joint ventures with Eastern and Central European partners.

SMEs will be able to take advantage of this mechanism at every stage, from their preliminary moves to the strengthening of existing joint ventures. They will also be able to make use of it at the prospection stage and in their search for capital to cover the needs of joint enterprises that are being set up, reorganized or expanded. The mechanism will be set up and managed by the Commission, in close cooperation with a network of financial institutions, acting as both intermediaries and co-investors.

A technical assistance programme, for which ECU 5 million has been earmarked, will make it possible to finance technical cooperation activities linked to the implementation of each project as well as limited programmes in the fields of training, trade promotion and investments. These funds will enable the Commission to meet urgent requests from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe for vocational training, thus strengthening their economic and trade relations with the Community.

◆ Europartners '91: an inter-regional cooperation fair at Oldenburg

In the framework of the Interprise programme, Europartners '91 will enable businesses located in several areas of the Community southern Denmark, the northern and eastern parts of The Netherlands, northern Germany and Cleveland county in north-east England to meet and prepare cooperation activities. A catalogue, published in four languages, will provide information on offers of cooperation from SMEs.

Europartners '91 will take place this year on 14 and 15 May at Oldenburg (Germany), in the Weser-Ems Halle, during the Nordküste Messe. For further information, please contact Paul Elzinga Promotions, Postbox 1596, 9701 BN Groningen (The Netherlands). Tel. 050-25 89 99; Fax 050-25 86 50. You can also contact the local Euro-Info-Centres.

◆ Green light for Prisma and Telematics

The European Commission approved, on 30 January, two programmes aimed at helping areas of the European Community which are lagging behind in economic terms. Prisma seeks to improve infrastructures and services so that businesses located in these areas can take advantage of the single market.

Prisma will provide them with technical assistance and expert advice aimed at improving their production and distribution methods. It will support efforts to develop facilities for product certification and testing, for example, and help businesses and laboratories to demonstrate the quality of their products potential customers.

Prisma will also prepare SMEs for participation in public contracts. It should be awarded a budget of ECU 100 million for the period up to 1993.

The aim of Telematics is to promote the use of advanced telecom services in the least-favoured regions. It should have a budget ECU 200 million for the period up to 1993. This Commission initiative will help businesses in these regions, and SMEs in particular, have better access to the advanced telecommunications services available elsewhere in the Community. It will also encourage them to create and develop such services themselves.

Telematics will also encourage telecommunications services in the public sector to provide specific services, aimed at facilitating the economic development of these less-favoured regions.

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Commission of the European Communities
Directorate-General Audiovisual, Information, Communication and Culture, and Directorate-General Enterprise Policy,
Distributive Trades, Tourism and Cooperatives, Rue de la Loi 200 — B-1049 Brussels



OFFICE FOR OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS
OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

L-2985 Luxembourg

Catalogue number: CC-AI-91-003-EN-C