



The crisis in European politics

■ by Sir Leon Brittan, Vice-President of the European Commission

The Danish and French referendum results and the reactions elsewhere, notably in Britain and Germany, suggest widespread confusion and disillusion about the European process. Anxiety, often imprecise and ill-informed, threatens to destroy rational debate and the mutual trust on which the Community is built. This is most dangerous during this period of economic and monetary difficulty.

No need for scapegoats. It is time to stop mutual recrimination and abandon the search for scapegoats. The common interest is too important for such futilities. Let us be clear about our roles. The Commission proposes; the Council of Ministers — the directly elected members of European governments — decides. In addition, the Commission performs the executive task of ensuring that Community policy is carried out correctly. The Commission has to bring forward proposals that are very detailed, and seem heavily constraining on businesses across Europe. There is no other way of creating the single market. Nationally differing rules will not be abandoned unless common European ones are put in their place, or at least carefully designed systems of mutual recognition are established. But, very often, proposals are made even more 'interfering' by the Council of Ministers as they seek to ensure fair treatment right across the Community. This is not the fault of the Council either, for fairness and simplicity often conflict.

We must respond. None the less, we must all respond to current concerns. The climate today means that all of us — Commission, Council, European Parliament and all those who seek to influence this process — must ensure that we enact the minimum legislation necessary to achieve our objective. And if, in examining a proposal, we find it becomes excessive in relation to its objective, we must have the courage to stop and rethink. Each institution, each player, must take its responsibilities seriously. It is simply no good, indeed actively damaging to Europe, when governments claim all credit for Community policies that suit them, but seek to blame the Commission or 'Brussels' for those aspects of agreed policies which are less welcome. This inevitably leaves only a distorted, confusing image in the mind of the public of what really goes on.

As governments, and European politicians, we cannot blame the people if we think they don't understand. It is our responsibility to explain as often and as carefully and as thoroughly as we can. We also have to listen to the response. If there is protest about legislation, we have to be able to react. It remains our duty to answer all criticism.

Avoid Eurosclerosis. Above all, we must act quickly to ensure that 'Eurosclerosis' does not take hold again. The recent gains — in economic cooperation, through the single market, and in foreign policy — must be guarded and extended. We must not forget, in our 'domestic' quarrels, the wider international context, and Europe's grave responsibility to act in the best interests of the world.

This cannot be achieved if we allow antipathy — between Member States and the Community, between governments and the Commission — to become the rule. The Commission has a major role to play. The economic and industrial vigour of the Community will require us to continue to bring forward proposals that inevitably will threaten the comfortable life of protected sectors and monopolistic industries for the benefit of Europe's consumers and citizens as a whole. And we must, of course, continue to see that Community law is properly applied. To abandon this task would be to betray Europe's businesses and Europe's consumers. Most of all it would be of no help to Europe's governments who, inevitably in times of difficulty, are themselves tempted to retreat into narrow nationalistic concerns.

The coherence of the European Community is at stake. Leadership as well as self-examination is required not only from governments, but also from the Commission.

9
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DECISIONS

■ EC exchange programme for civil servants

With the completion of the single market, some national civil servants will be working as much for the European Community as for their own country. In order to help them better understand the European dimension of their work, 1 900 of them will spend at least two months working alongside their colleagues in another EC country between 1993 and 1997. EC ministers adopted definitively on 22 September an action plan which provides for exchanges between those national civil servants who have the task of implementing the EC's single market legislation. The Community will contribute ECU 17.3 million (ECU 1 = UKL 0.78 or IRL 0.75) towards the cost of the plan, with the Member States meeting the balance. These exchanges should ensure that EC legislation is uniformly implemented throughout the 12-nation Community.

■ Food fit for the most health conscious

The doors of the single market will be firmly closed to food which has become contaminated with toxic substances at any point along the path from manufacture to the supermarket. The Twelve will be able to ban the sale of such foodstuffs if toxicity levels are such as to make them unfit for human consumption. On 22 September EC ministers adopted a regulation ('European law') which provides for such a ban: the toxicity level of suspect items will be evaluated in all 12 EC countries, according to procedures harmonized at the Community level. To this end the European Commission and experts from the 12 countries will have to set, for the various harmful substances, the toxicity levels at which a particular item of food will have to be withdrawn from sale. To carry out this task and, more generally, answer all the scientific questions relating to foodstuffs in the run-up to the single market, the Commission needs the assistance of the competent ministries and specialized bodies of the 12 member countries. Another piece of European legislation adopted on 22 September sets out the conditions under which these bodies will help the Commission. These two 'European laws' on foodstuffs have still to come before the European Parliament.

■ Thirty customs 'laws' in one code

As of 1 January 1993 European Community companies which sell outside the single market will carry out the necessary customs formalities at the customs post nearest to them. As a result, companies will find it easier to choose the point of export. This is one of the innovations introduced by the code which EC ministers adopted definitively on 12 October. The code as a whole will not come into force until 1 January 1994, and this includes its innovations, such as the introduction of the right of recourse against decisions of the customs authorities. The code brings together, in complete form and in a single volume, 30 pieces of Community customs legislation. It will allow all those concerned to have a better grasp of Community regulations and serve as a model of codification for other sectors.

■ No unfair clauses in contracts

As of 31 December 1994 at the latest, consumers throughout the European Community will be able to view with greater confidence the standard preprinted contracts presented to them by shops, businesses and public bodies. The fact is that unfair clauses contained in such contracts will no longer be valid, under the terms of a directive ('European law') adopted by EC ministers on 22 September. In practice these are the clauses in which the balance of advantages is very clearly in favour of the seller or other body, and not the consumer. However, 'negotia-

ted' contracts, which add provisions to the standard contract or modify it in some way, are excluded from the scope of the directive, contrary to the European Commission's wishes. Even so, each of the Member States can implement stricter national rules. The directive now goes before the European Parliament, which could try to improve on it.

■ Labelling of household appliances

In the 1993 single market, consumers will be able to compare more easily the efficiency of different models of washing-machines, heaters and other household appliances. Under the terms of a directive which EC ministers adopted definitively on 22 September, all these appliances will have to show just how much energy, water or other resources they consume. Labels fixed to the appliances will have to provide this information, on the basis of identical criteria for the entire European Community.

□ BRIEFLY

EC ministers adopted definitively on 22 September two directives which seek to approximate the various national measures regarding **homeopathic medicines**, whether for human or animal consumption. As a result, these medicines will be able to move freely within the single market.

INITIATIVES

● Computers against traffickers

Some 150 computers, distributed throughout the 12-nation European Community, are at the heart of the Customs Information System (CIS) introduced this October by the European Commission in cooperation with the national customs authorities. In the single market the CIS will play a key role in the surveillance of the Community's external borders. It will enable a small number of customs officers, based at these external borders and at EC ports and airports, to exchange rapidly coded information on cases of fraud and on known or suspected cases of trafficking. Thus a customs officer based in Lisbon will be able to provide a colleague with information which will enable customs officers in London to catch drug traffickers red-handed. The CIS is an extension of Scent, the computerized system set up in 1987 to fight customs fraud. Next year the CIS should have another 200 computer terminals.

● The EC fights the Mafia

Before next spring EC interior and justice ministers will have before them a report on the Mafia and other international crime syndicates. This should enable them to intensify their fight against organized crime in the single market. Commissioned by EC ministers on 18 September, the report will be drawn up by an experienced group of magistrates and police officials. The Twelve are also counting on other instruments in the fight against organized crime: the CIS, mentioned above; better training for the police; and the introduction, as from next January, of a European drug information unit within the framework of Europol, the future 'European police'. At their meeting on 18 September ministers asked their civil servants to press ahead more quickly with this task.

● Cross-border training for customs officers

Since the end of 1989, 1 875 customs officers from the European Community have been able to spend several weeks in another EC country, working at the same job as back home. They will be followed by 430 of their colleagues in 1993. The aim is to give customs officers a 'European' training, so that they are better equipped to carry out their new task, which is the protection of the border-free European area. The exchanges are taking place within the framework of the Matthaues programme,

1992 EUROPEAN YEAR OF SAFETY, HYGIENE AND HEALTH PROTECTION AT WORK

**Health and safety at work:
new Community legislation**

With the decision taken by the Twelve to set up a single frontier-free market in 1993, the need to give tangible form to the Community's social dimension at the same time as to its economic dimension was at last acknowledged. On the one hand, employers were aware of the need to harmonize rules at the European level; on the other, the trade unions and workers realized that, without harmonization, the establishment of the single internal market could result in stagnation of their rights, and even erode them in the most advanced countries.

Two articles added to the EEC Treaty by the Single European Act express this determination. Article 100a provides that products moving freely in the Community will have to comply with high health and safety standards; Article 118a stipulates that 'Member States shall pay particular attention to encouraging improvements, especially in the working environment, as regards the health and safety of workers, and shall set as their objective the harmonization of conditions in this area, while maintaining the improvements made'. To avoid any lowering of safety standards in the most advanced countries, Article 118a allows any countries which so wish to impose standards more stringent than those laid down by Community law.

Lastly the Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers, adopted by all the Member States except the United Kingdom in 1989, also covers health and safety at the workplace and emphasizes a number of new initiatives.

The 1989 framework directive

The first social decision of major importance taken under the Single Act was the framework directive adopted by the Twelve in June 1989, which constitutes the cornerstone of the new Community policy. It sets out the main principles which will henceforth govern health and safety at work and will have a major impact on all national legislation.

□ It emerges first and foremost from this legal text that the directives to come will have to encompass all workers of the public and private sectors with the exception of the self-employed and domestic staff. Several Member States, such as Belgium, France, Ireland, Italy and the Netherlands, have had to, or will have to, extend their legislation to cover the public service.

□ Thanks to this text, the employer's responsibility has been increased. He is now obliged to evaluate risks at all stages of the production process, inform workers, provide them with adequate training and constantly monitor their health.

□ In more general terms, the production apparatus has to be adapted to the worker and not the reverse, especially as regards the places of work, the choice of equipment and working methods. The aim is to alleviate monotonous work and work at a predetermined work-rate. Virtually all the

Member States are having to review their legislation in these matters.

□ The directive introduces the concept of workers' obligations, which has hitherto not existed in some Member States. More precisely, workers are required to abide by the employer's instructions and draw his attention to any potential dangers they may identify at their work stations. Subject to certain conditions, the directive explicitly provides for workers to have the right to cease working in the event of imminent serious danger. Several countries will also have to introduce this provision into their laws.

□ Lastly, workers must be consulted and informed and may make proposals for the improvement of their health and safety. *Ad hoc* structures (enabling firms to implement some of these provisions already exist in nine countries of the Community, but Greece, Ireland and Spain are having to take new measures.

Under this framework directive, the Community has adopted five specific directives in less than a year. The Member States are to incorporate them into national law by 1 January 1993; they concern safety at the workplace, the design, choice and use of work equipment (machines, appliances, tools and other installations), personal equipment for workers using dangerous machinery, substances or processes, manual handling of heavy loads, and the use of display screen equipment.

Dangerous products

At the same time, the Community is continuing to expand its legislation concerning products liable to affect workers' health.

□ The 1980 directive on limits to the exposure of workers to dangerous chemical, physical and biological agents was consolidated in 1988 to enable limit values for occupational exposure to be fixed at Community level. Furthermore, the asbestos directive was revised in 1991 so as to lower workers' occupational exposure levels.

□ Furthermore, a directive introducing general and specific measures for a list of occupational carcinogens and reputedly carcinogenic processes was adopted in 1990. This list is liable to be updated as and when work on the classification and labelling of chemical substances progresses at Community level. The directive requires the employer to use non-carcinogenic substitutes. If that is technically unfeasible, he must ensure that production is carried out in a closed system and take appropriate measures to protect the workers — individual equipment, appropriate washing facilities, continuous *ad hoc* training and medical surveillance. The list of persons exposed in the firm must always be accessible to the workers themselves and/or to their representatives.

□ On occasion, the Community has decided purely and

simply to prohibit certain substances where they prove to be too dangerous and protective measures will not suffice to ensure the good health and safety of workers. The production and use of four very dangerous substances were thus prohibited by a 1988 directive, the annexes to which could be extended if the need arises.

□ The Twelve have also adopted a directive on biological agents. This relates both to those who work in laboratories and hospitals and those who are employed in manufacturing industries. The directive classes biological agents in four categories according to their intrinsic danger and defines appropriate confinement measures.

□ Occupational deafness being one of the most commonplace occupational disorders, in 1986 the Twelve adopted a directive limiting the maximum admissible level of occasional sound emissions (detonations) to 140 decibels and the average acoustic pressure over an eight-hour day to 85 decibels. Above these values, the employer is required not only to reduce the source of noise by means of collective sound-proofing measures but also to provide individual protective equipment.

Risk sectors

Among the high-risk sectors, the Commission has selected three which distinguish themselves by the number of workers concerned and by the frequency and seriousness of the accidents which arise — the construction industry, agriculture and the seafaring occupations.

□ The **construction industry** employs 9.5 million workers, which is less than 10% of the European working population, but it accounts for 15% of all accidents at work and 30% of fatal accidents, and the number of accidents has been rising in recent years; most of them are attributable to poor planning or organization of work on site. In 1990, the Commission therefore proposed a directive requiring the safety factor to be taken into account from the design stage of a project, obliging subcontractors to be far more attentive to the health and safety conditions of their employees and defining the respective responsibilities of project managers, contractors and subcontractors. This directive, which was adopted on 24 June 1992, provides for the project supervisor to draw up a safety plan and lays down the obligation to issue a prior notice concerning the specific risks of the project. Construction and civil engineering firms have to be persuaded that greater safety at work also means a higher output per worker, which means higher productivity.

□ **Agriculture**, which employs 10 million people, i.e. slightly more than construction, is also a high-risk sector with 3 600 fatal accidents, 18 million injuries and 100 000 cases of compensation every year. Half of accidents are reported to occur in farmyards and farm buildings themselves. To date, only one specific directive has been adopted: it concerns agricultural and forestry tractors. However, the Commission is drawing up other legislation on agricultural machinery, plant-health products, agricultural buildings (electrical equipment) and certain specific types of work.

□ With 540 serious accidents every year, the **fishing industry** which employs 300 000 seamen, is even more dangerous. The instability of vessels, slippery floors, inclement weather, night working (sometimes with only three to four hours' break) and noisy, cramped working areas all conspire to make the work particularly arduous. To begin with, the Commission has proposed minimum requirements for

medical equipment on board ship: medicine chests, rescue and survival equipment, individual protective equipment. The same text provides for improved training for seamen and better consultations by radio. A second proposal concerning work on board ships has been presented to the Council.

Other industries have been the subject of recent initiatives: □ In **transport**, the Commission is drawing up a framework directive contributing to the reduction of high risks during travel and during manoeuvres.

□ The **extraction industries** have long been the subject of a large body of legislation, partly based on the basis of the Coal and Steel Treaty. However, the accident at the Piper Alpha platform in the North Sea in 1988, when 167 lost their lives, and the recent explosion in the German Stozenbacht mine, which caused 51 deaths, illustrate the continuing need for legislation adapted to the development of industries. The Commission has already presented a proposal for a directive on open-cast mines and quarries, a common position on which was reached by the Council on 24 June 1992.

Working conditions and environments

Several directives concerning the protection of categories of workers at risk as well as working conditions and environments are also undergoing examination or formal adoption by the Council.

□ An important initial step has been taken with the proposal for a directive on the protection of pregnant and breast-feeding women. Employers would have to adapt working conditions so as to remove any health hazard to them. The text also contains provisions relating to night work and a minimum level of pay during maternity leave.

□ Young workers are also a high-risk category for whom specific protection arrangements must be devised. The Commission has therefore placed a proposal before the Council for a directive on the protection of young people at work.

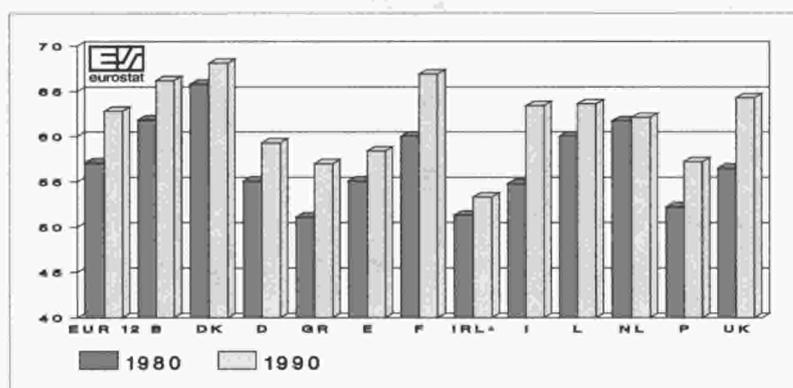
□ Three other proposals for directives are before the Council. They relate to the organization of working time (obligatory daily, weekly and annual rest periods; duration of night work and of shift work), temporary workers, who must be afforded the same health and safety protection as regular workers, and transport facilities for disabled workers on the grounds that, as the Commission points out, access to employment for the disabled is meaningless unless the disabled are provided with ways and means of travelling to and from work.

□ Directives adopted in the past also need to be constantly updated in the light of technological change. On 24 June 1992, for example, the Council adopted amendments to the 1977 and 1979 directives on the provision of safety signs in places of work. The Commission is also planning to present a new proposal for a directive on protection against vibrations and electromagnetic radiation, whose adverse effects on health become apparent only after a long period. The proposal will set out measures for reducing the risks of over-exposure, accident and illness.

□ Lastly, given the disparities which exist between the Member States as regards recognition of and compensation for occupational diseases, the Commission has issued a recommendation setting out a European schedule of such diseases in which the Commission urges the Member States to adopt the same criteria for their recognition so as to ensure harmonized compensation.

Services in the Community

Share of gross value-added at market prices
accounted for by services, 1980 and 1990
(IRL: 1980 and 1989) (%)



Growth in services

Europe's economy is becoming more and more services-oriented, with their share of value-added rising from 57 to 63% between 1980 and 1990, whilst the share of agriculture fell from 3.9 to 2.9% and industry's share from 39.1 to 34.4%.

The sharpest rise in this sector was in Italy, from 55 to 64% of value-added.

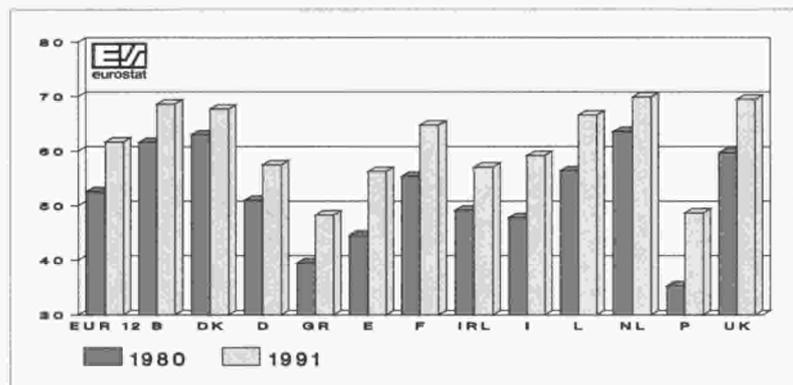
Denmark has the highest share of services (68% in 1991) followed by France with 66.9%, whilst Ireland has the lowest share of any Community country (53.3%).

Percentage of gross value-added accounted for by services

	EUR 12	B	DK	D	GR	E	F	IRL	I	L	NL	P	UK
1980	57.1	61.8	65.8	55.1	51.1	55.1	60.0	51.3	54.8	60.0	61.7	52.2	56.5
1990	62.8	66.2	68.1	59.3	57.0	58.4	66.9	53.3*	63.4	63.6	62.1	57.2	64.3

* = 1989.

Share of civilian employment accounted for
by services, 1980 and 1991 (%)



Jobs in services

In 1991, almost 62% of jobs in the Community were in services as against 53% in 1980.

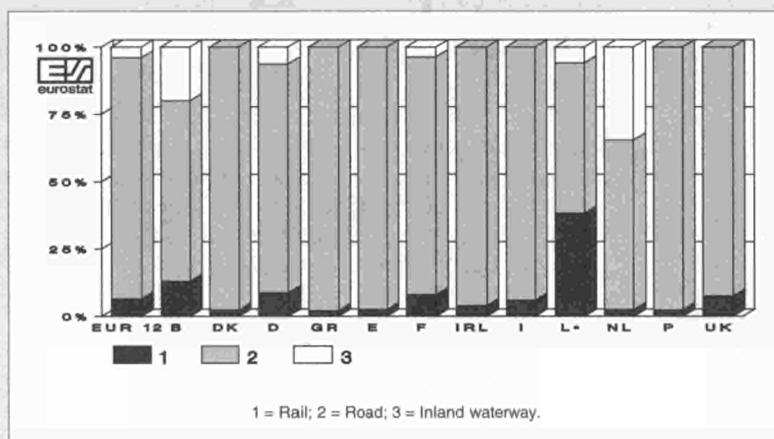
There has been an upward trend in all Member States, with the steepest rises in Portugal (35.3 to 48.7% of civilian employment) and Italy (47.8 to 59.2%).

In the Netherlands, almost 70% of jobs are in services as opposed to only 48.3% in Greece (where the proportion of jobs in agriculture – almost 24% – remains very high).

Percentage of civilian employment accounted for by services

	EUR 12	B	DK	D	GR	E	F	IRL	I	L	NL	P	UK
1980	52.6	61.6	63.0	51.0	39.5	44.6	55.4	49.2	47.8	56.4	63.6	35.3	59.7
1991	61.7	68.6	67.7	57.5	48.3	56.3	64.8	57.1	59.2	66.6	69.9	48.7	69.5

**Goods transport:
breakdown by mode of transport, 1990
(except Luxembourg: 1986) (%)**



Goods transport

At Community level, almost 89% of goods transported (nationally and internationally) are carried by road.

In those Member States where there are no navigable inland waterways, the figures are even higher: 98% in Greece, Spain and Portugal and 96% in Ireland.

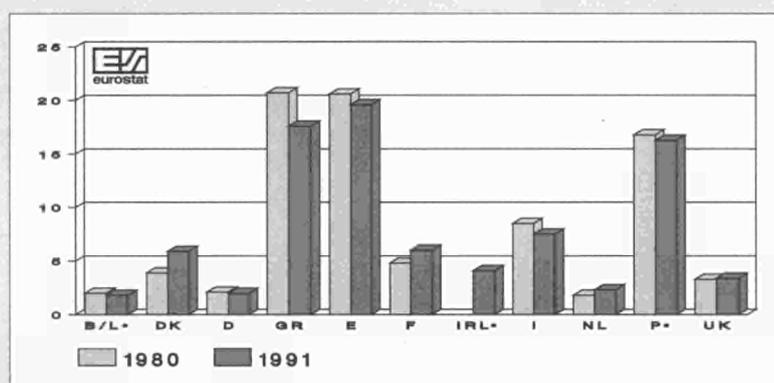
Rail transport has become marginal, with only 6.5% of goods transported in the Community now going by rail.

The Netherlands has a highly-developed inland waterway system which carries 35% of total goods traffic, with only 62.9% being moved by road.

Goods transport by mode of transport, 1990 (L: 1986) (%)

	EUR 12	B	DK	D	GR	E	F	IRL	I	L	NL	P	UK
Rail	6.5	13.0	2.4	8.7	2.1	2.5	8.0	3.9	5.9	38.2	2.5	2.4	7.5
Road	89.5	67.1	97.6	84.9	97.9	97.5	88.2	96.1	94.1	55.8	62.9	97.6	92.5
Inland waterway	4.0	20.0	0.0	6.4	0.0	0.0	3.8	0.0	0.0	6.0	34.6	0.0	0.0

**Receipts from international tourism
as a percentage of balance of payments receipts,
1980 and 1991 (except B/L, IRL and P: 1980, 1990)**



The importance of tourism

In the Community countries other than France, where the share of total balance of payments receipts accounted for by tourism has risen from 3.9 to 5.9%, tourism's share of receipts has declined-albeit to varying degrees. In three countries, tourism's contribution to total balance of payments receipts was over 15% in 1991 (E: 19.6%, GR: 17.6% and P: 16.3%).

On average, Europeans spent ECU 225 on holidays abroad in 1991, but the amount varied considerably from one Member State to another, from an average of ECU 37 for the Greeks to ECU 530 for the Danes.

Per capita expenditure on tourism, 1991 (except B/L, IRL and P: 1990) (ECU)

	B/L	DK	D	GR	E	F	IRL	I	NL	P	UK
Per capita expenditure (ECU)	415	530	312	37	94	175	260	163	425	68	246

launched by the European Commission. The programme also provides for language courses, as well as seminars, for customs officers who cannot train abroad. Thus some 200 senior customs officers and 20 of their trade union representatives met in Brussels on 8 and 9 October in order to assess the situation as regards the elimination of customs checks at the Community's internal borders set for 1 January 1993. They particularly looked at the rules of the single market, cooperation between national customs authorities and the 'European' training of customs officers. In order that a maximum number of customs officers may benefit from Matthaeus, the Commission and the Twelve will try to ensure that those taking part in the programme are as representative as possible of their profession, for it will be their task to train their colleagues on returning home.

● No new taxes on EC travellers

With the completion of the single market, people travelling from one European Community country to another should no longer be subject to VAT-related border checks; nor should they be subject to VAT where it is not levied at present. This, in substance, is the spirit of the directive ('European law') which the European Commission proposed to the Twelve on 30 September. If they adopt it, coaches and taxis will no longer be required to pay VAT at the border but rather at the point of departure. At present, the distance covered within each country is calculated at the border and VAT paid in consequence. Transport by air, boat and train within the European Community is not subject to VAT at the moment, except as regards rail travel in certain countries, being considered part of international traffic. However, air, boat and train journeys within an EC country are subject to VAT at national rates. Of course after 1 January 1993 today's 'international' journeys will be within the single market, and treated therefore as a domestic journey. Logically they would become subject to VAT. But the European Commission does not want the single market to add to people's tax burden, and it has therefore proposed that air, boat and train tickets remain exempt from VAT. Those travelling within an EC country could remain subject to VAT. Unanimity will be required for the adoption by the Twelve of this particular proposal.

● Motorway tax disc for lorries

In order to put heavy-duty lorries from the various EC countries on an equal footing in the single market, the European Commission proposed to the Twelve on 30 September a minimum tax system. This tax would encompass the road tax and payment for the motorways used; it would be levied on goods lorries of over 12 tonnes. The tax would amount, for example, to ECU 929 a year for a vehicle of 40 tonnes with three plus two axles. At present road taxes range from 1 in Greece to 13 in Ger-

NO HARMONIZATION AT ALL COSTS

'We are not workaholics', Martin Bangemann, the European Commission Vice-President responsible for the internal market, told the press when presenting his draft 'European law' on the technical harmonization of two-wheeled vehicles. Intervening on 23 September, after the barrage of criticism to which the Commission was subjected in the wake of the Danish and French referendums, Mr Bangemann stressed that the completion of the single market is not a bureaucratic process. Whenever there is mutual recognition of national rules, fresh Community legislation is avoided. But, more often than not, it is the Member States who want the Commission to put forward Community measures. As regards two-wheeled vehicles, EC ministers have already adopted a framework directive, a 'law' which sets out the general principles to be followed in order to ensure the free movement of these vehicles throughout the Community. However, this is a field in which each of the Twelve has specific technical regulations of its own, covering safety and environmental protection, for example, and each of the Twelve has confidence in the products of the others only if they meet very precise specifications. As a result, the Commission must propose a supplementary European regulation ...

many. The system now proposed would enable countries with very high road taxes to lower them; moreover, as in countries with toll-roads, the payment of tolls alone would allow numerous lorries to reach the equivalent of the minimum tax now proposed. A unanimous decision by the Twelve will have to be made before this system can be implemented.

○ BRIEFLY

The European Commission's **Guide to VAT in 1993**, published in May 1992, in English, French and German, is now available in all the other official languages of the European Community: Danish, Dutch, Greek, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish. It can be obtained, free of charge, by writing to the Commission of the European Communities at the following addresses: For the United Kingdom — Jean Monnet House, 8 Storey's Gate, London SW1 P3AT (Tel.: (71) 973 1992) Windsor House, 9/15 Bedford Street, Belfast BT2 7EG (Tel.: 24 07 08) 4 Cathedral Road, Cardiff CF1 9SG (Tel.: 37 16 31) 9 Alva Street, Edinburgh EH2 4PH (Tel.: 225 20 58) For the Republic of Ireland — Jean Monnet Centre, 39 Molesworth Street, Dublin 2 (Tel.: 71 22 44).

To prevent the airlines that own the **computerized reservation systems** from using them to the detriment of their competitors, the European Commission proposed changes to the current good conduct code to the Twelve on 23 September. European airlines own two such reservation systems, their American counterparts another two. The 'European law' now proposed would adopt the present code to the liberalization of air transport scheduled for 1 January 1993.

SEEN FROM ABROAD

► Swiss support for European projects

On 27 September the Swiss approved (by referendum, with 63% in favour) the construction of two railway tunnels, to be used mainly by traffic between three European Community countries — Germany, France and Italy. The tunnels will facilitate the operation of the European Economic Area, which should bring together, as from next year, the Community and the countries of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) — Switzerland, Austria, Finland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Sweden. On 23 September the upper house of the Swiss Parliament adopted the Treaty signed in this connection in May by the Community and the EFTA countries. This followed a favourable vote in the lower house. A referendum on the same subject is scheduled for 6 December. The European Economic Area will guarantee the free movement of workers, goods, services and capital, with a few exceptions, between the 19 countries concerned.

► An Austrian 'yes' to the European Economic Area

The Austrian Parliament adopted the Treaty on the European Economic Area on 22 September, with a two-thirds' majority. Fifty-one per cent of public opinion favours EC membership while 33% is opposed, according to a poll published on 28 September. However, a poll published on 12 October showed that 71% of Austrians would like the Community to be a purely economic entity, while 22% favours the political union embodied in the Maastricht Treaty. The same poll showed 47% opposed to a single European currency, with 42% in favour. Austria, like Switzerland, has already applied for European Community membership.

▷ BRIEFLY

'We will be as concerned as the Europeans if the movement for integration does not succeed; this is something which goes well beyond Europe's own interests,' **Israel's Foreign Minister**, Shimon Peres, told the press in Brussels on 2 October, after calling on the European Commission.

'It is very difficult to think of settling down shortly in a house which is still on the drawing board. However, we want our views taken into consideration during the preparation of the blueprint,' **Poland's Prime Minister**, Mrs Hanna Suchocka, declared during a visit to the European Commission in Brussels on 8 October.

◆ Northern France hosts Europartenariat 1993

The aims of Europartenariat include establishing direct contact between small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), developing the potential of a region which is undergoing industrial redeployment or is behind in development, and encouraging commercial, financial or technological cooperation agreements. The seventh edition will take place in Bari, Italy, on 3 and 4 December. A catalogue, which has been widely distributed throughout the European Community and in the Mediterranean basin countries, describes each of the 386 enterprises which have been selected in the Mezzogiorno.

In 1993 the eighth Europartenariat will take place in northern France, and will cover the following regions: Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Picardy, Champagne-Ardenne and Lorraine. The identification and selection of firms from these regions is now taking place. Company profiles and details of their cooperation projects will be set out in a catalogue, on the basis of Europartenariat's traditional formula. The two days of meetings between company managers will take place on 17 and 18 June in Lille, northern France.

During these two days each regional company which has been selected will be provided with a stand. Here it will receive, on the basis of a pre-established programme of meetings, its potential partners from other countries, including members of the European Community, EFTA* and Central and Eastern Europe, in order to conduct discussions and negotiations.

Judging from the results of the six previous Europartenariat meetings, more than a third of the firms from the regions in question have entered into cooperation agreements with firms from other countries.

◆ BC-NET now includes Czechoslovakia

The European Community's business cooperation network (BC-Net) is steadily bringing the countries of Central and Eastern Europe within its fold. Czechoslovakia joined Poland as a member of the network on 8 October. The national contact point for BC-Net is the Czechoslovak Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Two offices will be opened, one in Prague, the other in Bratislava.

BC-Net is a computerized network of some 600 business consultants. Through it, it is possible to identify, rapidly and confidentially, potential partners in other European Community countries or in third countries, in response to a specific cooperation proposal. Since it was launched in July 1989, BC-Net has handled more than 63 000 requests for cooperation — financ-

*European Free Trade Association (Austria, Finland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland).

ial, technical and commercial — from all sectors of industry and the services. BC-Net currently covers all EC and EFTA countries as well as numerous third countries: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, Cyprus, Israel, Malta, Mexico, Tunisia, Turkey and Uruguay. The business consultants attached to BC-Net analyse, in the framework of a codified system, offers of cooperation submitted by companies. They forward them to a central unit established in the European Commission in Brussels, which has the task of bringing them together. The consultants handle the replies sent by the central unit and, eventually, take part in the negotiations leading to cooperation agreements between companies.

◆ Preparing SMEs for the single market

In order to help SMEs get ready for the changes flowing from the completion of the single market, the European Commission launched in 1989 an experimental action programme entitled 'Preparing SMEs for the Europe of 1992'. A second, broader programme is currently under way. It includes training provided by 101 selected institutions throughout the Community. These training institutions organize seminars, prepare teaching tools and conduct both sectoral and regional impact studies. The training on offer is very varied and often targeted at a precise sector of activity or directed towards the various fields of management and marketing. They are listed in a catalogue, available in English, French and German. Copies can be obtained by writing to the following address: Commission of the European Communities, DG XXIII, ARLN, Joëlle Van der Berghe, rue de la Loi 200, B-1049 Brussels, Belgium (Fax: (32-2) 295 21 54).

◆ Information centres elsewhere in Europe

The gradual opening-up of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and the deepening political and economic relations between the Community and the EFTA countries, have been accompanied by numerous requests from these countries for permission to benefit from the services provided by the Community for its own SMEs, particularly the information centres known as Euro Info Centres. In order to answer these requests the Commission has decided to open up the network gradually and on special terms to certain European countries with 'correspondence centres'.

Interested third countries will themselves choose the body — only one per country — which will be host to the correspondence centre. These centres will have to tell their enterprises about the European Community. They will also gather domestic news of interest to Community SMEs, and forward it to the EC network of 210 Euro Info Centres.

Three correspondence centres were established in 1991, in Prague, Warsaw and Vienna. Centres were opened in Helsinki, Oslo, Stockholm and Zurich during 1992. All of them are operational.

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