



INFO-C

Information from the Consumer Policy Service of the European Commission - Quarterly n°6

1993 : A Year of Change

1993 has already been an eventful year for Consumer Policy.

First of all, on January 1st, the Single Internal Market came into force. The news media coverage of the opening of the Single Market has been generally positive, focussing on the customs changes and the modest new freedoms which seem to be concrete enough to many consumers. Progressively over the next few years, the situation should improve further as legislation is transposed into national law and becomes operational for consumers. Initial consumer reaction has been more positive than their own organisations would have suggested. The challenge must be to tackle the outstanding issues, so that consumers' aspirations can be met in full. In this issue of **INFO-C** we have covered a number of areas where progress was made right up to the magic deadline. More will follow in coming issues as more progress is made.

Secondly, Mme Scrivener has taken over the responsibility for Consumer Policy in the new Commission. Apart from her general human and professional qualities, she brings with her unique experience as a former minister responsible for consumer affairs. The Consumer Policy Service will thus be in very capable hands in the coming years. As a symbol of its importance for the functioning of the Internal Market, and in order to strengthen its possibilities for carrying out its task as guardian of consumer interests, the Consumer Policy Service has been confirmed as an independent service in the framework of Commission decisions on organisational matters reflecting the coming into force of the Internal Market and the decisions of the Edinburgh Council.

Now, "all" that is outstanding to make 1993 a really momentous year is the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty so that Consumer Policy can be built on a new and stronger basis.

INFO-C

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THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL IN EDINBURGH, DECEMBER 11 AND 12, 1992.

It would be wrong to say that consumer affairs had a top priority at the Edinburgh Summit in December last year. However, a number of the important themes discussed are also of interest to the consumer world. These are Subsidiarity, Openness and Transparency, and the Internal Market.

Subsidiarity.

The wording of Article 3(b), the subsidiarity Article in the Maastricht Treaty, is the following:

"The Community shall act within the limits of the powers conferred upon it by this Treaty and of the objectives assigned to it therein.

In areas which do not fall within its exclusive competence, the Community shall take action, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, only if and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States and can therefore, by reason of the scale or effects of the proposed action, be better achieved by the Community.

Any action by the Community shall not go beyond what is necessary to achieve the objectives of this Treaty."

The European Council, i.e. the summit, invited the Council, i.e. foreign ministers, to seek an inter-institutional agreement on the effective application of this Article. It also received a report on the first fruits of the Commission's review of existing and proposed legislation in the light of the subsidiarity principle. The Commission signalled its intention to withdraw or amend certain proposals and to make proposals for the amendment of items of existing legislation. A final report on the review of existing legislation will be made by the Commission to the European Council in December 1993.

In an annex to the general conclusions, the overall Council approach to the application of the subsidiarity

principle is spelled out. It is emphasised that this is not an instrument of subversion: the powers conferred to the Community, the *acquis communautaire*, the institutional balance, etc. cannot be undercut by referring to subsidiarity. The guidelines all respect this point of departure.

The **first paragraph of Article 3(b)** establishes the principle that national powers are the rule and Community powers the exception: to legislate at Community level, the objective to be achieved must relate to an objective of the Treaty and there must be a legal basis.

The **second paragraph** sets out the conditions to be met for Community action (outside the areas where the competence of the Community is exclusive): the objectives pursued cannot be met by Member State actions only and they can therefore better be achieved by Community action. Central points to be examined to see if proposed legislation meets these conditions should be whether so-called transnational aspects are involved and whether clear benefits of scale and effect are likely to be gained.

The **third paragraph** deals with the intensity of Community actions. The key words to use when reviewing these are:

- the burdens on citizens, businesses and administrations, financial and otherwise, must be proportionate to the objective pursued;
- there must be maximum scope for national decision and respect for national arrangements and legal systems; alternative ways of achieving the objectives should be provided wherever possible;
- if standards must be set at Community level, these should as often as possible be minimum standards, allowing for higher national standards where possible.

The **Commission review** of existing and pending legislation has led to:

- withdrawal of, inter alia, a proposal concerning compulsory indication of nutritional values on the packaging of foodstuffs;
- overhaul of proposals concerning, inter alia, comparative advertising, the liability of service suppliers and labelling of shoes, in order that they establish general principles rather than prescribe the details;
- streamlining of certain directives with detailed technical specifications, in the main relating to foodstuffs, or replacing them by minimum standards necessary for free circulation;
- abandoning certain proposals in the pipeline, e.g. concerning dietary foods and structures/equipment for funfairs/theme parks.

In general, the Commission will exercise its privilege to take initiatives by declining to accept invitations (for example by the Council) to do so and reject amendments to its proposals from Council and Parliament that go against the proportionality rule (see above) or complicate directives or recommendations that are needed under the need-for-action rule (*idem*).

Openness and Transparency.

The **Council** adopted a number of specific measures:

- ◆ On access to the work of the Council:
 - open orientation debates (as opposed to negotiations on legislation, to be decided on a case by case basis) on Presidency work programmes and major legislative initiatives;
 - publication of voting records;.
- ◆ On the rôle of the Council:
 - fuller descriptions of the conclusions reached and the A-points adopted;
 - background material to be made available before decisions and in all languages;
 - systematic press briefings before meetings;
 - publication of the so-called "common positions" under Art. 189 b and c of the Treaty, i.e. the initial

Council decision on a proposal before the Parliament has given its opinion.

- ◆ On reinforced efforts to improve the quality of legislation:
 - simplification and clarification;
 - making access to and understanding of, legislation easier by consolidation, i.e. editorial assembling of scattered legislation without legal effect, as well as by codification, i.e. adopting a formal legal act through the normal procedures which repeals and replaces the previous legislation.

In general the information activities will be strengthened, both by the Council itself and through coordination with other institutions and national administrations. A concrete proposal is to improve CELEX, the data base on Community legislation, cfr. our article in **INFO-C** no. 5.

The keyword in so far as the **Commission's rôle** is concerned is consultation preceding proposals, for instance through the circulation of "Green Papers".

The Internal Market.

The European Council welcomed the Commission's reply to the Sutherland Report on achieving the Internal Market, to which we referred our readers on the cover of **INFO-C** no. 5; this point is dealt with in the next article.

Concluding this brief overview, the **declarations** made by the European Council in the special section of the conclusions dealing with **Denmark and the Treaty on European Union** should be noted. The European Council declares that the Maastricht Treaty does not prevent any Member State from maintaining or introducing more stringent protection measures compatible with the EC Treaty, in order to attain a high level of consumer protection (Article 129A (3) of the Treaty).

INFO-C will keep its readers informed on the practical and concrete consequences and implications for consumer policy that will flow from the decisions made at Edinburgh.

THE INTERNAL MARKET AFTER 1992 MEETING THE CHALLENGE

As indicated on the cover of our last issue, a high level group presided by former commissioner Peter Sutherland has reported to the Commission on how to make the Internal Market work effectively, now that it has actually been achieved.

Although it was not in the mandate of the group to cover the specific development of consumer policy in this context, the Sutherland Report is concerned with the situation of consumers in the market. What follows is a brief overview of these concerns, the proposals of the group to meet them, and the reply of the Commission.

The success of the Internal Market depends on making Community law as natural to citizens, consumers or businessmen, as national laws are today. To reach this stage, mutual confidence must be established and developed; this requires:

- communication: what are these new rules, why are they necessary, why are they shaped and built the way they are, how will they affect citizens, what to do if things go wrong?
- legal procedures that make the law accessible;
- intensive cooperation, partnership, between national and Community administrations.

The Sutherland Report makes 38 concrete recommendations under these headings, 13 of which are entitled "Reassuring Consumers and Business"; the gist of these are:

- although the Commission should develop a communications strategy that involves everybody - institutions, Member States, NGO's - it is normally the responsibility of Member States to keep their citizens informed;
- transparency in the legislative process must be improved both in Member States and at Community level; concerning the latter the themes emphasised are: consultation prior to legislation, coordination to avoid contradictions in the laws proposed, and consolidation of Community law, cfr. the decisions of the European Council recorded in the previous article.

The key recommendations that relate directly to consumers are nos. 21, 22, and 23:

- (21) *"The Community needs to review the way in which the rights of individuals to obtain redress for breaches of Community law are provided across the Community.*
- (22) *Doubts about the effective protection of consumers' rights need to be overcome. The issues should be given rapid consideration by the Community.*
- (23) *An urgent examination is required of the difficulties faced by those who - despite the provisions of the Brussels Convention of 1968 - wish to execute, in one jurisdiction, a civil order which has been made in another."*

The Sutherland Report was received by the Commission on October 26. A provisional reply was made on December 2, in order that the Edinburgh summit could take it into account; the views of the Commission on the matters of subsidiarity and transparency have already been summarised in the previous article.

In general the Commission welcomes the recommendations made. The central message of the report is the shared responsibility of the Commission and Member States; for its part, the Commission is determined to assume all its responsibilities and to exercise its prerogatives.

The direct reply to the three recommendations quoted are:

The ability to seek redress before national courts for breaches of Community law is essential; however, the differences in legal systems make the practical implementation quite difficult, and further analysis of the problem - which of course goes beyond the Internal Market - is necessary.

The Commission believes that the provision of information to individuals on ways of seeking redress is a matter primarily for Member States; it acknowledges however that the uncertainties regarding the effective protection of

consumers' rights must be removed, although no concrete proposals are made in this document.

Effectiveness of the Brussels Convention of 1968 on the Mutual Recognition of Judgements is an essential condition for seeking redress in cross-border disputes. The Commission is more optimistic about this than the Report; nevertheless the Commission is prepared to look into ways of improving it, in cooperation with Member States. In practical terms this could be done on the basis of a questionnaire on cooperation in civil matters which has already been drawn up within the framework of European Political Cooperation.

References:

The Internal Market After 1992: Meeting the Challenge (available in Commission Offices in Member States);

Document SEC (92) 2277 Final
of 2 December 1992

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THE DANISH PRESIDENCY - CONSUMER POLICY

A meeting of the Council of Ministers for Consumer Affairs is scheduled for 2 March 1993.

Currently the agenda prepared by the Danish presidency covers:

- the proposal for a directive on unfair terms in consumer contracts;
- the proposal for a directive on comparative advertising;
- the proposal for a directive on contracts negotiated at a distance;

- the proposal for a directive on time-sharing;
- the proposal for a decision on the EHLASS system (European home and leisure accident surveillance system);
- the proposal for a directive on the liability of suppliers of services.

The results of the Council will be published in **INFO-C** No 7 at the beginning of May 1993.

1993 BUDGET

The European Parliament adopted the 1993 budget on 17 December.

The lines devoted to consumer policy total 16 million Ecus broken down as follows (in Ecus):

	Budget 92	Budget 93
Consumer policy initiatives and consumer redress	2.100.000	2.100.000
Representation	2.100.000	2.400.000
Consumer information and comparative tests	6.425.000	6.000.000
Consumer durables	—	1.000.000
Product safety	3.500.000	3.500.000
Child safety	1.000.000	p.m.
Food inspectorate	1.000.000	1.000.000
	16.125.000	16.000.000

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EUROPEAN CONSUMER INFORMATION CENTRES:

The last of the 10 pilot projects are launched

The model projects for European Consumer Information Centres in frontier areas already presented in **INFO-C** (**INFO-C** No 3 of July 1992) are gradually taking shape and at the beginning of 1993 the last four of the 10 projects got under way. The Commission intends to draw its first interim conclusions in the course of this year. It is becoming increasingly clear that such institutions are filling a "gap in the market", at least in those regions where cross-border shopping is most widespread.

Since autumn 1992 the project "EUROKON - Transfrontier Consumer Advice" has been operating in the German-Belgian-Netherlands frontier area. This is a joint initiative of the newly established Verbraucherschutzzentrale Ostbelgien and the Verbraucher-Zentrale Nordrhein-Westfalen. There are information centres in Aachen, St Vith and, as of January, in Eupen. Further centres are planned for Alsdorf (Germany) and Maastricht or Heerlen (Netherlands).

Likewise, a project supported by the Portuguese Instituto Nacional de Defesa do Consumidor has been launched in Vale do Ave. Close cooperation has already been agreed with the institutions responsible for consumer affairs in neighbouring Galicia (Spain).

The pilot project on the French-Italian border is also under way. Several organisations on the French side (Region Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur) and in Piedmont have joined forces to establish a transfrontier union ("Consommateurs sans Frontières"), which will have offices both in Marseilles and Turin.

Finally, the information centres in Flensburg (under the aegis of the Verbraucherzentrale Schleswig-Holstein and Forbrugerrådet Denmark), Kehl (Verbraucherzentrale Baden-Württemberg and Chambre de Consommation d'Alsace) and in the Spanish Basque Country (Dirección de Consumo) will also start work at the beginning of the year.

Information centres were already launched in 1991 in Luxembourg, Barcelona, Gronau (Germany Netherlands) and Lille (northern France). Recently the Lille centre has begun to work with a consumer office in Kortrijk (Belgium).

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The addresses of the information centres that are being set up will be published in the next **INFO-C**. For projects already under way, see **INFO-C** No 3.

FAMILIARISING CONSUMERS WITH THEIR RIGHTS

Recognised consumers' associations exist in the various Member States and can provide interesting information concerning:

- the legislation of the country in which they are located
- Community and national case law
- Community legislation
- other existing national or regional rules.

Some of these centres already have this information in electronic form which consumers can access via national networks.

Other centres are currently being computerised.

The objective is to familiarise people with consumers' rights so that these rights can be applied in practice, in particular those resulting from Community measures.

It is important that people should be familiar with these rights. This means that people must be able to access the texts in force both Community law and national texts transposing such law (it goes without saying that people should also have access to all rules taken at national level in the absence of Community law. Such a measure is of interest both to consumers and their representatives and to the authorities or institutions responsible for

applying the law and will also enhance the measures of the European Community).

Greater familiarity with consumers' rights should have a threefold effect in the short term:

- * it should facilitate the settlement of intra-national consumer disputes, where consumers are still very unaware of the possibilities;
- * it should lead those affected - consumers, businessmen who consider themselves victims of unfair practices, or their representatives - to insist on a more consistent application of the national laws and, wherever the national authorities fail them, to seek redress under Community law in the courts of the land;
- * to significantly improve the settlement of transfrontier consumer disputes. In practice - even where there is no legal gap - solutions are very time-consuming and costs are disproportionately high. We cannot simply shrug this off-hence the necessity to improve the exchange of information on rights, procedures and case law.

The Commission would like an alignment of the initiatives already under way and is launching a network feasibility study.

The Consumer Policy Service, like the other Commission departments, is responsible for monitoring compliance with Community law.

This monitoring task also includes the dissemination of legal information so as to inform consumers of their rights, in order to ensure that these rights are better respected, and thus to boost confidence among economic operators.

In the context of its "after 1992" measures, the Commission hopes to bring about improvements by identifying the barriers to the harmonious functioning of the internal market, by improving confidence amongst operators on the lines of the mandate for the Sutherland Report (cf. the section on "Consumer Protection").

The Council also shares these concerns.

The objective is to give the citizen on-line access to the national centres so that he can obtain national information, but also information available in centres in other countries. Thus, the citizen will have direct access to Community, national and regional information.

To achieve this objective an infrastructure linking the different national centres has to be created to provide the citizen with the most consistent possible interface.

The first phase of this study is to be launched in the first half of 1993.

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IDENTIFICATION OF DANGEROUS PRODUCTS AT EXTERNAL FRONTIERS

On 23 November 1992 the Commission adopted a Recommendation⁽¹⁾ calling upon Member States to set up the infrastructures needed to ensure monitoring of external frontiers in respect of dangerous products. The Recommendation suggests that the Member States should take certain measures to identify, in connection with formalities for release for free circulation, products of non-Community origin which present a serious and immediate risk and which have been notified via the Community System for the Rapid Exchange of Information (Council Decision 89/45/EEC).

Although this Recommendation is not legally binding, its objective is to fill a gap in the current administrative structure in most Member States so as to ensure a high level of consumer protection, pending the application, at the end of June 1994, of Directive 92/59/EEC on general product safety. Pursuant to this Directive it is up to the 12 Member States to establish appropriate monitoring infrastructures to ensure compliance with the general safety obligation.

RAPID EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION

On 23 November 1992 a proposal for a Decision concerning the institution of a Community system for the exchange of information in respect of certain products

(1) Commission Recommendation calling upon the Member States to set up the infrastructures needed to identify dangerous products at the external frontiers.

which may jeopardise consumers' health and safety was transmitted to the Council. This is a response to a major political problem, since it is a measure that accompanies the removal of technical controls at the internal frontiers and is designed to compensate for the absence of information on certain products which are hazardous **but which do not constitute a serious and immediate danger** (in respect of which a specific alarm procedure already exists).

The purpose of this proposal is to anticipate the implementation of the "exchange of information" aspect of Article 7 of Directive 92/59/EEC on general product safety, by setting up a Community system for the exchange of information applying to certain consumer products which do not conform to national or Community rules that apply to them. In this way the Member States will from now on be informed of the presence, within the Community, of certain hazardous products which do not come under another Community notification system. This information will help them in their work of market surveillance.

The adoption of this proposal by the Council, which is part of a bundle of measures connected with the abolition of internal frontier controls, is a particularly urgent matter.

References: COM(92) 429 final

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INDUSTRIAL COMPETITIVENESS AND PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONNEMENT :

The Consumer Policy Angle

On 4 November, 1992 the Commission adopted a Communication on the above subject which was transmitted to the Council and to the European Parliament. The stated aim of the Communication is to develop a Community approach towards :

- industry's fulfilment of its responsibilities towards protection of the environment; and

- the potential of environment policy as a stimulus to the competitiveness of industry.

The Communication examines the basic relationship between industrial competitiveness and protection of the environment. It suggests that environmental considerations can promote and improve competitiveness by way of "first mover" advantages at the time of the creation of substantial markets for environmental protection technologies, goods and services or for ecologically sound consumer products or through improvements to the organisation and management of the productive systems, in particular as a result of the introduction of clean technologies. The paper promotes the notion that the employment of environmental protection measures should be viewed by industry as constituting an advantage rather than a handicap : "what is good for the environment can also be good for business".

The sharing of responsibilities for the protection of the environment between the main actors, identified as industry, consumers and public authorities, is deemed necessary if this positive competitive effect is to be achieved.

It is recognised that the main responsibility rests with industry itself. However, consumers are seen as the key which can transform environmental protection from a cost into a source of profit for industry by incorporating environmental concerns in their purchasing requirement. Consumer power can equally cause the opposite effect if there is poor environmental performance by industry.

In this context it is also recognised that environmental claims must have a sound verifiable basis and that products in respect of which such claims are made must live up to the performance expectations of consumers. It is accepted that the market for green products, though growing, is as yet relatively undeveloped as is the level of consumer awareness of the causes of the problem and of the action that they themselves can take. To assist them in performing their role, consumers must be actively involved in and adequately informed of relevant developments. The prime responsibility of public authorities in this area should be the putting in place of the required framework for environmental issues. This framework must be predictable, demanding and implemented in a flexible manner so that industry can both plan ahead and respond in the most effective way.

Finally, the Communication considers the implications for a Community approach. It concludes that it should be based around three axes, namely,

- a qualitative improvement in the degree of integration of environment and industrial policies in order to derive positive benefits for both
- constructive dialogue with industry to improve the effectiveness of environment policy
- the maintenance of the integrity of the Internal Market while promoting protection of the environment at a high level.

The emphasis should be switched from curative solutions to preventive ones, based around the adoption of clean technologies and the development of markets for environmentally sound products. The document goes on to develop in further detail elements of the approach to be taken to achieve the desired results under a number of headings, including consumer policy.

With regard to consumer policy, specific measures to ensure the transparency of markets and sufficient public awareness of new environment policy instruments would include :

- adequate market research on differences in perception with regard to environmental issues and the means to resolve them
- a series of specific consumer awareness campaigns designed to move people quickly from general awareness of environmental issues to specific causes and solutions
- ensuring that consumers are fully consulted with regard to proposed measures
- provision of adequate information on the characteristics of marketed products so as to enable consumers to make rational purchasing decisions.

The Council of Industry Ministers at its meeting on 24 November, 1992 adopted a resolution welcoming the Communication and agreeing with the general thrust of the Commission's approach. The Council invited the Commission and Member States to take a series of relevant actions and declared its intention to consider the issues further in the first half of 1993.

Reference: Document SEC (92) 1986 final of 4 November 1992

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FREE MOVEMENT OF MEDICINAL PRODUCTS

The European medicines evaluation agency

The criteria and procedures for approval of human and veterinary medicines, together with several other important aspects of pharmaceutical legislation, have been extensively harmonized within the European Community. Community pharmaceutical legislation now covers all industrially manufactured medicines, including vaccines, blood products, radiopharmaceuticals and homeopathic medicines. These texts are brought together in a series of several volumes entitled "The rules governing medicinal products in the European Communities", published by the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

In spite of the extent of harmonization, differences in the evaluation of medicines are shown in the decisions taken by national competent authorities following the assessment of the benefits and risk of individual medicinal products.

For this reason, and in the light of more than 20 years experience of cooperation on pharmaceutical matters at the Community level, the Council of Ministers has now agreed that this harmonization work should be completed by the establishment of new Community procedures governing the authorization of medicinal products for use on humans or animals.

Thus, from 1995 onwards, three procedures will be available:

- a centralized Community registration procedure, reserved for innovatory medicinal products, and leading to a single Community-wide authorization, valid for all 12 Member States;

- a decentralized procedure which will apply to the substantial majority of medicinal products, based upon the principle of mutual recognition, and covering a variable number of Member States, with binding arbitration at the Community level in the event of disagreement between the Member States;
- a national procedure, limited in principle to applications of local interest concerning a single Member State.

The evaluation of applications will be undertaken by the Committee for Proprietary Medicinal Products and the Committee for Veterinary Medicinal products, within the new European Agency for the Evaluation of Medicinal Products. The Agency will have a full time administrative and technical secretariat of about 150 persons, whose main role will be to coordinate the activities of the 2.000 - 3.000 national officials who are involved in the regulation of medicinal products within the Member States. Thus, in addition to coordinating the evaluation of applications for new products, the staff of the Agency will also be responsible for the coordination of national activities in respect of post-marketing surveillance (pharmacovigilance), inspection and laboratory controls, to ensure the safety of medicinal products circulating within the Community.

Once fully operational, the new procedures will pool the resources available to Member States, thus improving the quality of the scientific evaluation of new products while avoiding the current duplication of effort resulting from each Member State undertaking an independent evaluation of new products. In addition, the new procedures should help reduce the excessively long delays in the authorization of new products.

However, a number of matters must still be resolved before the future system can become operational. First, the European Parliament must approve the compromise texts agreed by the Council in December 1992. Secondly, a decision must be reached on the location of the new Agency. In principle, this decision has to be taken by the European Council. Finally, a decision must be reached on the financial arrangements for the future system, and in particular the proportion of its costs to be provided from the Community budget and the proportion to be covered by fees from the pharmaceutical industry. However, it should be possible for these matters to be completed by the end of 1993, so that the Agency can take up its responsibilities on 1 January 1995, as planned.

References: O.J. n° C 330, 31.12.1990, p.1
O.J. n° C 310, 30.11.1991, p.7

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COSMETIC PRODUCTS

The Council has expressed its political agreement in principle with a common position on a Directive amending for the sixth time Directive 76/768 on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to cosmetic products.

This new Directive aims to improve and harmonise information provided to consumers and monitoring authorities on cosmetic products marketed in the Community, thus abolishing the last remaining potential barriers to the free movement of these products in the Single Market. It also concerns the prohibition of animal experiments in the cosmetics industry.

As regards information, the common position specifically provides for the establishment of an inventory of ingredients used in cosmetic products, particularly with a view to establishing a common nomenclature of these ingredients. Moreover the text makes it mandatory for producers to indicate on the packaging of cosmetic products the ingredients they contain. It also lays down criteria concerning the form and content of the information which the manufacturer must make available to the monitoring authorities, in particular elements relating to the identity, quality, effects and safety of the product.

As regards animal experiments for cosmetic purposes, the common position provides that the Member States shall ban as of January 1998 the placing on the market of cosmetic products containing ingredients or combinations of ingredients that have been tested on animals.

However, whenever as a result of insufficient progress in developing methods to substitute animal testing, alternative methods cannot be scientifically shown to offer the consumer an equivalent degree of protection, the date of application of this ban may be deferred by decision of the Commission, which will be assisted by a committee consisting of representatives of the Member States.

The common position was formally adopted by the Council after finalisation of the texts on 17 December 1992.

Reference: Council press release 9415/52 (Presse 188-G).

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HOMEOPATHIC MEDICINAL PRODUCTS

Consumer choice and safety

On 22 September 1992 the Council of the European Communities adopted a Directive on homeopathic medicinal products. The aim of this Directive is to harmonise the legislation of the different Member States with a view to permitting the free movement of these products while guaranteeing that they are safe and of good quality.

Currently, homeopathic medicine is officially recognised in certain Member States while it is only tolerated in others. However, these medicaments are prescribed and used in all the Member States. Accordingly, the Council considered it necessary to allow patients to have safe access to the medicaments of their choice.

Thus, the Directive lays down conditions for manufacture, control, inspection and placing on the market (in particular as regards a special simplified registration procedure and labelling) in this domain.

The Member States must transpose this Directive by 31 December 1993 at the latest.

The Commission of the European Communities must present a report on its application to the European Parliament and the Council by 31 December 1995 at the latest.

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THE EC COMMISSION FOR THE FIRST TIME PUTS FORWARD A COMMUNITY-WIDE FOOD INSPECTION PROGRAMME

Completion of the Single Market means that all food-stuffs may be sold throughout the entire Community. The confidence of 340 million consumers in these foods has to be increased because it is through them that individuals will experience the Single Market every day. There can only be mutual trust when food controls are carried out in an equivalent manner in all of the Member States, thereby ensuring:

- health protection,
- protection of the consumer from being misled and
- the protection of fair trading.

The Food Control Directive 89/397/EEC harmonizes the basic requirements for official food control but at the same time recognizes that the Member States need a certain amount of freedom in order to be able to maintain traditional, established structures. The Community has no problem in accepting different national food inspection procedures as long as it is ensured that Community food legislation is properly applied. One way in which the Commission can check whether this is being done is by carrying out a Community-wide inspection programme.

As an extension of the Food Control Directive, the Commission is therefore putting forward a recommendation for a Community programme for the inspection of food-stuffs. The programme will be implemented by the Member States within the framework of their own control programmes. This is the first time that the Commission has set up such a programme, following consultation of the Member States.

The proposed programme is as follows:

Health protection means it is necessary to carry out microbiological tests on ice-cream and prepared dishes. In addition to bacteria which might be indicative of a lack of hygiene during production and processing, these foods are therefore now also to be tested for pathogens such as salmonella or listeria.

Consumers also expect a high level of protection in the baby-foods sector. Determination of the concentrations in baby foods containing vegetables of nitrate and nitrite, which are hazardous to health, has therefore obviously been included.

The inspection of orange juice for adulteration and of expensive, deep-frozen seafoods such as lobster, crab and mussels to check the accuracy of the weights indicated is intended to protect consumers from being misled. These test inspections also ensure fair trading.

The Member States decided what the inspections would focus on and will carry out the programme using their own food control authorities, the Commission playing a coordinating role. The Community Food Control Programme is therefore a good example of the principle of subsidiarity.

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COMMISSION TO DRAFT CONSULTATIVE DOCUMENT ON COMMERCIAL COMMUNICATION

At the European Parliament's Hearing on "Consumers, Advertising and the Internal Market" on November 25, 1992, the Commission announced that DG III, in consultation with other services, is preparing a consultative document on commercial communication within the European Community.

Mr. Mogg, Deputy Director General of DG III, said the document has two main objectives. Firstly, it aims to improve transparency of decision-making by establishing a central contact point for interested parties outside of the Commission. Secondly, it aims to improve co-ordination of initiatives in this field within the Commission.

The consultative document seeks to maintain full coherence in the Commission's approach towards a sector which is crucial to the development of the Single Market : this would take place on the basis of substantive guidelines as to how Community principles should be applied. It will also allow for on-going monitoring of developments in this sector thus facilitating a rapid response to any problems at Community level.

Several Community objectives impact upon the Commercial Communication sector and therefore there is a need to find an appropriate equilibrium. Firstly, commercial communication is a service in itself and should be guaranteed free circulation under Article 59 of the EEC

Treaty. Secondly, the free circulation of goods and services which depends critically on commercial communication must be guaranteed in accordance with Articles 30 and 59 of the EEC Treaty. Finally, the same freedom is to be safeguarded for the media which are largely financed by advertising revenues. However, Member States can take measures to protect fundamental human rights, recognized as mandatory requirements, notably those relating to health, the protection of minors and consumer protection.

Where such initiatives by Member States lead to restrictions which may require Community action, sound information is required to ensure that any resulting measure is proportionate to the combination of underlying objectives - the consultative document aims to provide this information. First, a thorough economic analysis of the functioning of this sector will permit the proper application of the principle of proportionality and second, a comprehensive review of the existing legal frameworks in the Member States, including self-regulation, will allow the application of the principle of subsidiarity. A responsive and flexible approach by the Commission in the field of commercial communication will help ensure that the benefits of the Internal Market are maximised for European consumers, producers and citizens.

Contact:

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DG III

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Fax.: +32/2/295.02.81

CONSUMERS' DOSSIER AND TOBACCO

During 1992 the European Community continued its initiatives to combat tobacco addiction.

These actions - undertaken in the context of the "Europe against Cancer" programme (1) led to the adoption of the following texts:

18 July 1989: Resolution of the Council and the Ministers for Health of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 18 July 1989, on banning smoking in places open to the public (2).

13 November 1989: Council Directive concerning the labelling of tobacco products (3) which provides for a general warning on the health risks resulting from the consumption of tobacco products and also specific

warnings and indication of tar and nicotine yield in the case of cigarettes.

17 May 1990: Council Directive concerning the maximum tar yield of tobacco (4), which lays down maximum limits for tar yield in cigarettes: 15 mg as of 1 January 1993, 12 mg as of 1 January 1998.

In 1992 there were further important developments as regards the labelling of tobacco products, passive smoking and tax on tobacco products.

Specifically:

On 15 May 1992 the Council adopted a Directive amending the 1989 Directive on the labelling of tobacco products (5). The specific information provided to consumers on the health risks associated with tobacco products will no longer be confined to cigarettes, but will cover all tobacco products (pipe tobacco, cigars, cigarillos, rolling tobacco, chewing tobacco, etc.).

Moreover the marketing of all new tobacco products for oral use, except those intended to be smoked or chewed, is prohibited in the EC.

On 30 October 1992 the Commission presented an interim report on the response to the Council Resolution on banning smoking in places open to the public. This report describes the general situation in the European Community and has an annex containing an overview of the rules that apply in the different Member States.

On 19 October 1992, the Council adopted three Directives on taxes relating to tobacco products (6).

These Directives define the basic structure of the taxes applying to cigarettes and lay down minimum tax rates for different tobacco products. In the case of cigarettes, taxes, with the exception of VAT, must make up at least 57% of the retail sale price for the most popular categories.

Moreover, the debate on the advertising of tobacco products continues. The Commission's proposal for a total ban on tobacco advertising, with the exception of advertising within points of sale, got a favourable opinion from the European Parliament in 1992. The Commission also amended its proposal in order to take into account certain amendments set out in Parliament's vote. However, within the Council the debates have not led to a common position and there is a blocking minority of four Member States which has prevented the adoption of a final

agreement on this text. Gradually the positive effects of banning advertising of tobacco products on consumption of these products are emerging in countries where such a ban has been applied, such as Canada, New Zealand, Norway and Finland. The debate also concerns the technical details of application (in particular as regards publications originating in third countries) or the possibility of relying on voluntary agreements to restrict such publicity, as well as basic problems concerning the justification of this activity at Community level, and the compatibility of this ban with certain fundamental rights that are normally constitutionally enshrined.

On numerous occasions the Commission has stressed the desirability and legal justification of its initiative. It has pointed to precedents and provided guarantees as regards compatibility with fundamental rights existing both at national and international level. It has also explained its position as regards the general criteria for applying Community law, which exclude in principle the acceptance of voluntary agreements. Voluntary agreements which are not based on legal rules cannot be considered as acceptable instruments for transposing Directives. These very criteria prevent the application of general exemptions based on the origin of the publications.

The debate on this important measure will be continued in 1993.

Moreover, the Commission has continued to publish its surveys, focussing this time on the problems of passive smoking in public places and at the workplace, and has continued to encourage numerous initiatives to inform the general public and to train target groups, in particular doctors and teachers. It has also promoted tobacco education initiatives for schools.

Measures to inform and sensitize European consumers to the risks associated with tobacco use have been pursued on a regular basis throughout the year.

References: (1)OJ C 50, 26.02.87
(2)OJ C189, 26.07.89
(3)OJ C359, 08.12.89
(4)OJ L137, 30.05.90
(5)OJ L158, 11.06.92
(6)OJ L316, 31.10.92

Contact:

Mr SOBRINO CASTELLO I.
DG V "Europe contre le Cancer"
Tel.: +32/2/296.33.61
Fax: +32/2/296.23.93

SAFELY LAUNCHED

Not a ship this time but a "Safety Pack", the brain-child of Mrs. Alma WILLIAMS, the author of various books on educational subjects, which was nurtured by the Consumer Policy Service and presented to the world (of safety experts) by Commissioner Van Miert at a conference in London on 12 November, devoted to Product Safety and the Single Market.

Improving safety and reducing accidents requires appropriate legislation, such as the recently adopted Community General Product Safety Directive. Nevertheless, accidents can still happen with "safe" products as a result of "unsafe" behaviour and so laws need to be complemented by a raising of people's awareness of the risks of everyday living and how to avoid them. Where better to start this awareness-raising than with those in the rising generation who are at a stage of development when they can more readily absorb good safety habits.

The Safety Pack consists of a series of 17 illustrated worksheets covering a variety of subjects from electrical safety to coping with an emergency. The Pack is intended for use in schools throughout the Community (it exists in nine language versions) and principally for pupils aged

10 - 14. It is flexible to use in that the teacher can choose those worksheets which are most suited to the class subject-matter and to the level of attainment of the children. For example, the worksheet, "Spot the dangers", is well suited to younger children in a mother-tongue class, whereas the one dealing with fire could be incorporated into a physics class for the older age-range.

To assist the teacher a set of Notes is provided, with suggestions for the use of the Safety Pack and giving helpful background information.

The Commission is providing an initial supply of both Pack and Notes for each of the Member States and these will normally be distributed under the aegis of the Ministry of Education or other appropriate body. As the Commission print was made from film, these films will be made available to the Member State authorities for a major reprint when the time comes.

For further information, contact:

Mr. D. WARRY

CPS

Tel.: +32/2/295.50.26

Fax.: +32/2/296.32.79

UNITED KINGDOM

**TESTING STANDARD
PRODUCTS FOR
PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

Consumer organisations throughout Europe regularly test products like washing machines, cookers, vacuum cleaners and toasters, and report their results on how well the different brands perform, and how easy they are to use. Generally the convenience assessments assume the user will have strong and supple fingers, good eyesight and the ability to stand and move about easily. But what of that growing number of elderly Europeans who find it increasingly difficult to turn a smooth, stiff washing machine control, or to see the pale graphics on a microwave oven, and the disabled people who have to lean precariously from their wheelchair to reach a cooker drawer that is on the floor?

The Research Institute for Consumer Affairs (RICA) - a UK charity which focuses on research to produce information of practical value to disadvantaged consumers - has developed a series of checklists to assess how easy or difficult domestic appliances are for elderly and disabled people to use. The work was carried out jointly with International Consumer Research and Testing Ltd (IT) - a network of independent consumers organisations; the Consumer Policy Service has contributed financially.

The checklists have been designed for completion by non-disabled testers. They contain guidance for the testers on how the products are likely to be used and features that help or hinder their use by disabled users. Both the questions and the guidance in the checklists are based on the results of user trials, during which people with different disabilities are observed by the Special Needs Research Unit, a research and consultancy unit in the UK.

Special needs checklists are now available from RICA for assessing:

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| - washing machines; | - irons; |
| - cookers; | - food processors; |
| - vacuum cleaners; | - hand-held food mixers; |
| - microwave ovens; | - table food mixers; |
| - electric kettles; | - hand-held blenders; |
| - toasters; | - table blenders. |

Some of the checklists are already used regularly by Consumers' Association in Britain, and the results published in Which? magazine. The information benefits elderly and disabled consumers because it specifically addresses their needs, it compares a wide range of different brands, it concerns standard products available in shops, and it is regularly updated. In the longer term, these assessments should lead to design improvements - consumer magazines are influential in that manufacturers take note of their criticisms. And improvements for disabled people are often improvements for everyone - a feature that is impossible to use for someone with stiff, painful joints, is likely to be difficult or inconvenient to use for anyone else.

RICA has also made contact, through International Testing, with other organisations in the EC and hopes to encourage them to apply the checklists.

Contact:

RICA
Ms. Lindsey ETCHELL
2 Marylebone Road
GB - London NW1 4DX
Tel.: +44/71/935.24.60
Fax.: +44/71/935.16.06

ITALY

CONCILIATION COMMITTEES FOR TELEPHONE SUBSCRIBERS

On 24 July 1989, 12 Italian consumers' associations and the Italian Telephone Company - SIP - signed an agreement concerning a conciliation and arbitration procedure for telephone subscribers. The purpose of this procedure is to find the most equitable solution whenever a consumer has suffered as a result of problems of a technical nature arising from the SIP's services. Various difficulties may arise, in certain cases, in connection with installation of phones, change of telephone number, or the telephone bill, for example.

To this end the SIP has provided a general phone number "187" which consumers may ring to explain their problems. If they are still unsatisfied, they can ring a second number, "177", as a second stage in the procedure. Finally, if the user still fails to find satisfaction, he can bring his case to a "Conciliation Committee" which will examine his complaint free of charge.

The stages of the procedure are as follows:

The Committee, consisting of a representative of the consumers' association and a representative of the SIP, proposes a solution.

If the consumer is not happy with this solution, he may request that the issue be decided through arbitration. The procedure is no longer free and costs approximately 500.000 Lira (292 Ecus). The arbiter (a neutral third party) then tries to determine who will be the losing party, because it is the loser who must pay the above-mentioned costs. If the arbiter believes that the damages will be split, the expenses will also be divided.

In practice, most of the complaints concern telephone charges. The point is that the bill sent to the consumer contains no details, and this may give rise to many complaints! The solution is to invest in digitalisation, so that the bill can be broken down and the consumer given sufficient information. This procedure is currently being introduced in Italy but is not yet available in all regions. This is why the Committees compensate for lack of proof by emphasising equity.

The Commission of the European Community's Consumer Policy Service has helped finance the training of the consumers' representatives in the "Conciliation Committees". The experimental phase covered Sicily and Lombardy. The Committees are now present in six regions (as of 1 January 1993) and will continue to expand until each Italian region has its own Committee.

Source:

SIP

Responsabile Rapporti con l'Utenza
Via E. Gianturco, 2
I - 00196 Roma
Tel.: +39/6/36.88.24.21
Fax.: +39/6/36.88.22.07

THE CCU: A NEW ORGANISATION IS BORN !

The "Confederazione Consumatori ed Utenti" (CCU), is a federation which has just been set up in Milan.

The CCU comprises consumer organisations which are independent of all parties and trade unions. Its main objective is to coordinate the activities of its members at national, European and international level, to promote consumers' interests and to participate actively in the country's economic and social policies, to guarantee the presence of its representatives in all public and private organisations, national or international, whenever this

presence is necessary, to promote the fundamental interests of consumers in the Community, etc.

For further information, apply to the secretariat of the CCU, which will in its first year have the following address:

Comitato Difesa Consumatori

Viale della Liberazione, 18
I - 20124 Milano
Tel.: +39/2/66.72.01
Fax.: +39/2/670.63.80

CONSUMER REDRESS

In November 1992, the second service of the pilot project "Consumer Redress" was launched at Forli (Northern Italy). The services, which are financed by the Commission of the European Communities and managed by the Italian consumers' association "Comitato Difesa Consumatori" provides free legal assistance and advice to consumers.

The pilot project's first service was opened in early 1991 in Milan. Its main objectives are to inform consumers of their rights and to help them in all disputes with tradespeople, artisans, producers and suppliers of services and all professionals, either via conciliation or through the magistrates' courts.

For further information consult:

Milan: Comitato Difesa Consumatori

C. so Garibaldi 75
Milano
Tel.: +39/2/29.01.03.79-81
Fax.: +39/2/29.01.03.81

Forli: Comitato Difesa Consumatori

Via delle Torri, 14
Forli
Tel.: +39/543/31.623
Fax.: +39/543/29.655

SEMINAR IN GENOA

On 3 December 1992, the Italian association "Circolo Culturale Progetto Europa", in collaboration with the Commission of the European Communities, organised a one-day seminar on "Community Consumer Protection Policy".

Papers included such topics as achievements and perspectives in the field of consumer policy, the importance

of consumers' organisations' right to legal remedy and a contribution from Mrs M. Manfredi Magillo of the European Commission's Milan office emphasising the importance of the "Sutherland Report" (cf. the heading "Consumer Protection" in this issue).

Note: two Genoese lawyers, Mr G. Conte and Mr G. Michele Giacommi, called on Italian lawyers to show more initiative in bringing actions before the Court of Justice of the European Communities. The Francovich-Bonifaci judgment (cf. INFO-C n°3, p.8), which they mentioned on several occasions, remains for them a model of what consumers can achieve in this manner.

Further information:
Circolo Culturale Progetto Europa
Via XXV Aprile, 10/1
I - Genova
Tel.: +39/10/20.04.70
Fax.: +39/10/29.67.56

SPAIN - FRANCE - GERMANY - BELGIUM

TRANSFRONTIER COOPERATION IN CONSUMER REDRESS AND THE SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES

The pilot project on "Transfrontier cooperation in consumer redress and the settlement of disputes", coordinated by the Alsatian Chamber of Commerce and financed by

the Consumer Policy Service of the Commission of the European Communities, is now one year old.

The partners in this project (Institut Catala del Consum, Barcelona (Spain), Centre Technique Régional de la Consommation, Montpellier, Chambre de Consommation d'Alsace, Centre Régional de La Consommation, Lille (France), Verbraucherzentrale Baden Württemberg (Germany), Centre de Recherche et d'Information des Organisations de Consommateurs (Belgium), have drawn up a first series of "legal notes" intended for consumers.

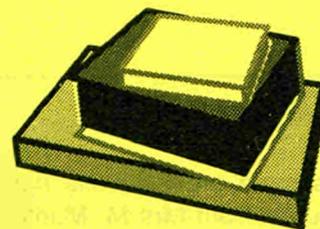
Each note is the result of cooperation between lawyers in the frontier regions concerned; the choice of subjects was preceded by an analysis explaining the problems which are most often encountered in everyday life by consumers at each frontier site.

The legal notes already published concern:

- (1) distance selling in Belgium;
- (2) purchasing vehicles in Spain;
- (3) distance selling in Spain;
- (4) purchasing cars in France;
- (5) purchasing furniture in Belgium;
- (6) distance selling in France.

Contact:
Chambre de Consommation d'Alsace
Rue de la Brigade Alsace-Lorraine, 7
F - 67000 Strasbourg
Tel.: +33/88.25.05.76
Fax.: +33/88.35.56.63

PUBLICATIONS AND AUDIOVISUALS



* In INFO-C No 4, we published an article on the progress of the Directive on general product safety.

The author of this article, Mr R. Gielisse of the Consumer Policy Service, has now published a more in-depth analysis of this Directive in No 3/1992 of the quarterly publication on European economic law, "**Revue du Marché Unique européen**", which is edited by Mr Alfonso Mattera, head of division in the Commission's Directorate-General III (Internal Market & Industrial Affairs).

For further information and subscription details, please contact the publisher:

**Clément Juglar, Editions Juridiques
et Economiques**
Avenue de Suffren, 62
F - 75015 Paris

* Two surveys on the subject of money have recently been carried out by the European Bureau of Consumers' Unions (BEUC) at the request of the Commission of the European Communities. The first of these, conducted in February 1992 and dealing with cross-border financial transfers, focussed on bank transfers and Eurocheques. A hundred and sixty transfers were carried out between 11 Member States. Sums transferred were in the region of ECU 130, with the average cost of each operation amounting to ECU 24, i.e. more than 18% of the sum transferred.

In the light of this survey, Mr Van Miert, the then Member of the Commission with responsibility in this field, wished to ensure that means of payment within the single market are improved considerably for the benefit of consumers. Lack of transparency is the main reason for the high cost of cross-border transactions. What confidence can the consumer have in the Single Market if more than 20% of purchasing power is lost in making a cross-border payment?

Referring to the Liaison Committee for payment system users, comprising representatives of professionals and consumers, Mr Van Miert has stated:

"This Committee has succeeded in drawing up guidelines for improving the provision of information to consumers. Banks have undertaken to apply these guidelines by the end of the year. This is an important aspect, since transparency is the key to lowering costs".

The Commission will therefore conduct another survey at the beginning of 1993 to check whether these guidelines are being applied. Mr Van Miert has pointed out that an identical study was carried out in 1988 and that the Commission responded by publishing a recommendation on 14 February 1990 concerning the transparency of banking conditions relating to cross-border financial transactions.

"It is regrettable that the sector concerned needs so much time to implement a recommendation. If rapid progress is not made, the Commission might have to introduce legislative provisions to safeguard the interests of consumers".

The survey report is available, in English only, at the price of FB 700.

* The second survey, conducted jointly by the BEUC and the British Consumers' Association, highlights the inadequacy of legal protection in recently introduced "**home banking**" systems. Although various systems are now springing up within the European Community, costs vary considerably from one country to another and there are few safeguards for users. The survey therefore points to the need for effective measures to be taken at Community level in connection with this type of service which is linked to the new technologies.

This document is available in English at the price of FB 850.

For further information and to obtain the survey reports, please contact:

BEUC
Avenue de Tervueren, 36 bte 4
B - 1040 Brussels
Tel.: +32/2/735.31.10
Fax.: +32/2/735.74.55

* The success of medical treatment depends to some extent on a positive and confident dialogue between doctor and patient. An essential element of such dialogue is a good balance between the levels of knowledge on either side.

A non-profit-making organisation of medical expertise, the European Formulary Group, located in Ghent, Belgium, and run by a Steering Committee of 10 physi-

cians from a number of European countries, has been established to develop a database on medicines for use by professionals.

Question Santé, a Belgian non-profit-making medical information organisation, has been connected with this project to develop the corresponding guides on medicinal products for the general public, focussing largely on those who are the heaviest users of these products: (parents of) young children and people over the age of 50.

With consumers in mind, the Commission has subsidised the development of the database and the production of a limited number of the first of these guides: "**Vaincre la douleur - Médicaments et traitements**" (= Conquering pain: medicines and treatment), written by Dr N. Boulanger. Body-part by body-part this guide covers the most common types of pain and their treatment, with the accent on medicines. Indications, side-effects and counterindications are quoted for all the products listed; the guide also includes a complete index. Data on quantities offered and prices on the Belgian market are included.

Further information on this guide and plans for future guides may be obtained from:

Question Santé
Rue du Viaduc, 72
B - 1050 Brussels
Tel.: +32/2/512.41.74
Fax.: +32/2/512.54.36

* The Consumer Policy Review is published quarterly by the British Consumers' Association (CA). It provides a forum for the publication of research and discussion papers on matters relevant to consumer interests.

The aim is to stimulate analysis and debate; the views expressed are consequently those of the authors and are not necessarily shared by the CA. Contributors are encouraged to make proposals for public policy so that consumers' interest in decision-making is strengthened and systems of consumer protection developed.

Topics covered in the four issues published in 1992 include "**Consumers, Competition and Public Services**" (No 1), "Public Utilities" (No 2), "**Transport Policy**" (No 3) and "**Food Regulation and Retailing**" (No 4); three articles in the latter on the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, EC food regulation and

international food standards may be of particular interest to **INFO-C** readers.

No 1 of vol. 5, dated January 1993, covers "**Quality and the Consumer**", and No 2 (April 1993) will cover "**Access to Justice**", a key topic in consumer policy.

The annual subscription rate for the EC area is £ 75 (elsewhere £ 80), reduced by £ 25 for individuals if the subscription is for their strictly personal use.

Subscription enquiries and orders to:
Consumers' Associations Ltd
Subscriptions Department
2, Marylebone Road
London NWT 4DF
Tel.: +44/71.486.55.44
Fax.: +44/71.935.16.06

* The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) has just brought out a publication entitled "**Organisation and guidelines of the Trade Union movement for the defence of consumers' rights in Europe**". This brochure is not only a register of trade unions affiliated to the ETUC, which take account of the interests and needs of consumers, but is designed also to illustrate the extent and depth of their activities.

It provides insight into the commitment of these organisations in terms of the diversity of methods and approaches adopted in the various countries.

The brochure is available in French, English and German.

For further information, please contact:
European Trade Union Confederation
Consumers' Unit
Rue Montagne aux Herbes Potagères, 37
B - 1000 Brussels
Tel.: +32/2/209.24.11
Fax.: +32/2/218.35.66

* The UK Office of Fair Trading, in cooperation with BBC Radio 2, has published a leaflet entitled "**Fair Play - Helping You Become a Better Consumer**". The leaflet is structured around contributions from the presenters of Radio 2, who give advice on consumer matters of all sorts: planned versus impulse shopping, various forms of bargain buys, home shopping, legal rights, complaints procedure and many others.

The target audience, as reflected in language, style and layout, is the BBC Radio 2 audience, i.e. those over the age of 40.

The leaflet, of which 1 million copies have been printed, may be obtained free of charge from:

Office of Fair Trading

Field House, Room 306
15-25 Bream's Building 5
UK - London EC4A 1PR
Tel.: +44/71/242.28.58
Fax.: +44/71/269.88.00

This video, on sale at the price of FB 1 500, is available in French only. It may also be hired at a rate of FB 200 for one day and FB 100 for each additional day.

To obtain a copy, please contact:

Centre Vidéo Bruxelles

Mme Martine Depauw
Rue Royale Ste Marie, 113
B - 1030 Brussels
Tel.: +32/2/216.80.39
Fax.: +32/2/245.13.45

* **“La publicité, un art pour vendre?”** (= Advertising: a sales skill?) is the question posed by the title of a 26-minute video (“Spots en stock”) produced by the Centre Vidéo Bruxelles in conjunction with the Consumer Policy Service of the Commission of the European Communities, with assistance also provided in Belgium by the “Commission Communautaire Française”, the Ministry for the French-speaking community and the National Lottery.

The video examines the issues raised by this question, providing insight into the “creators” of advertisements and their working methods. How do they set about capturing our attention? To what extent are we influenced or susceptible to influence? These and many other questions are addressed by communication professionals and university specialists in order to analyse this problem.

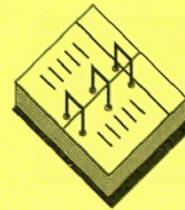
* Safety is the concern of everyone: consumers, authorities, specialists in health problems and professionals involved at all stages of the manufacture or marketing of products and services. As a supplement to its annual report, the ‘Commission française de sécurité des consommateurs’ (French Committee on consumers’ safety) has just produced a set of 57 information sheets containing all the opinions issued since 1985: skiing accidents, falls by elderly people, automatic garage doors, etc.

For further information or to place an order, please contact:

Direction des Journaux Officiels

Rue Desaix, 26
F - 75727 Paris Cedex 15

Diary



2 March 1993

"Consumer" Council of Ministers, Brussels.

For further information see the article under the heading "Consumer Protection".

4 and 5 March 1993

A Single Market in medicine : changes and needs in health care in Europe for the year 2010. A conference organized by the Kangaroo Group, a group of European Parliamentarians which is concentrating its efforts on seeing that free circulation becomes a reality in all areas of the Single Market.

Venue : Berlin

Further information from :

The Kangaroo Group
c/o National Westminster
Bank plc
4th Floor
28 Throgmorton Street
UK - London EC2N 2AN
Tél : +44/71.588.97.55
Fax : +44/71.588.97.50

26 to 28 April 1993

"Helmets for all". A European Conference on safety helmets worn during leisure and sporting activities, especially by children. The main theme of the conference is how to encourage people to wear a helmet for their own safety.

Further information from.

ECOSA
PO box 75169
NL - 1070 AD AMSTERDAM
Tel : 31/20.511.45.00
Fax : 31/20.511.45.11

16 and 17 June 1993

"Consumers left behind in a Europe without Frontiers. A Priority for Consumer Policy ?".

A conference on the problems of underprivileged consumers, with an exhibition of teaching material.

Well-known personalities from the Member States in the field of consumer affairs have been invited to take part.

Venue : "Engels", Rotterdam.

Further information from :

Planpraktijk Dynamic Assistance
Jet Cremers
Stationsweg 147
NL - 2515 Den Haag
Tel : 31/70.389.13.40
Fax : 31/70.388.97.42

PUBLICATION PLAN FOR INFO-C 1993: DATES AND DEADLINES.

1993 is the year in which a regular rhythm of publication of **INFO-C** will be achieved, after the various "teething troubles" we have had with the first five numbers.

Our level of ambition is fairly modest: turning **INFO-C** into what is already put in its subtitle: a quarterly. But we reserve the right to accelerate towards the end of the year, if our "positive feed-back loop" with readers develop as we hope it will: you find **INFO-C** a worthy channel for publishing what goes on in your world and therefore we get so much material that we must publish more often.

We do not intend to develop **INFO-C** into a newsletter in the strict sense of the word - what is news by the time we receive it is not likely to be news by the time it reaches you; our aim is to provide a medium for exchange of information of a more reflective kind - a perfect example is the article in this issue about testing standard products for disabled people.

Our planned publications schedule, set out below, takes into account translation, printing and distribution; the deadlines for contribution are set in the hope that not all material will come at the last moment so that the translation service is overwhelmed!

	Publication	Deadline for contributions
No. 7:	Week 18	April 7
No. 8:	Week 31	July 16
No. 9:	Week 44	October 15

Info-C is published in English, French and German, and contributions should preferably be sent in one of these languages to facilitate translation.

Contributions by diskettes are most welcome, but we invite you to contact us before sending any to avoid potential technical difficulties.

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