



# INFO-C

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## Enlargement

At the time of writing this editorial it is only a week since the European Parliament voted overwhelmingly in favour of enlarging the European Union with Austria, Finland, Norway, and Sweden.

Without attempting to prejudge the referenda by which the peoples of the four candidate countries will have the final say on membership, the Editors of **INFO-C** have embarked upon a project of presentations on the ways and means of making consumer policy in these countries. We began in the first issue this year with a presentation of the consumer policy approach adopted by the Norwegian Consumer Council. In this number we continue with Austria, but this time covering the activities of both government as well as private consumer bodies. The draft of a similar article on the situation in Finland is already in the wordprocessor - but we would appreciate a contribution on Sweden!

The reason for this project of presentation is not only a matter of courtesy. It is rather that all four candidate countries have long and strong traditions for taking good care of their consumers. If these countries become members the consumer movement in the Union will receive a most valuable boost.

Enlargement may come in the future. We also bow to the past in this issue by interviewing Mr Barlebo-Larsen, the recently retired first Director-General of the Consumer Policy Service. As for the present the Consumer Council held on 17 May gets the usual extensive coverage.

Speaking of dates: the date of the European Consumer Forum mentioned in the most recent issue has now been fixed at 4 October 1994; the Forum will take place in Brussels and on the agenda will be the two Green Papers on access to justice and on guarantees and after-sales services, cfr. the Special Edition of **INFO-C** published in March this year.

### INFO-C

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### OF SPECIAL INTEREST

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## CONSUMER COUNCIL: CO-DECISION PROCEDURE AND CONCILIATION COMMITTEE

The results of the Consumer Council<sup>1</sup> which took place on 17 May 1994, under the Greek Presidency, are as follows:

### DISTANCE CONTRACTS

With regard to distance contracts the Council has not quite reached a common position necessary under the 'co-decision' procedure introduced by the Maastricht Treaty but, following a detailed discussion, was able to agree on points which could constitute the basis of an overall agreement on a common position on the proposal for a directive on the protection of consumers in respect of distance contracts.

The progress thus made should enable the Council to adopt its common position in the near future, following examination of all the issues still outstanding by the Permanent Representatives Committee.

### SYSTEM OF INFORMATION ON HOME ACCIDENTS (EHLASS)

The Council reached agreement, with the German and French delegations opposed, on the common position on the Decision introducing a Community system of information on home and leisure accidents (EHLASS) for the period 1994-1997.

The purpose of this system, introduced for the period 1994-1997, is to collect data on home and leisure accidents with a view to promoting accident prevention, improving the safety of consumer products and informing and educating consumers so that they make better use of products, at both national and Community level.

It should ensure the continuation of the system established, after an experimental period, for a year (1993) by a Council Decision in October 1993.

The system will apply to home and leisure accidents which are followed by medical attention and which take place in the home or its immediate surroundings.

Once it has been formally adopted after finalization of the texts, the common position will be forwarded to

the European Parliament under the co-decision procedure.

### GREEN PAPERS ON

#### - THE ACCESS OF CONSUMERS TO JUSTICE AND THE SETTLEMENT OF CONSUMER DISPUTES IN THE SINGLE MARKET

#### - GUARANTEES FOR CONSUMER GOODS AND AFTER-SALES SERVICES CONCLUSIONS OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

#### *SUMMARY OF THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION*

"The Council of the European Union (...) **WELCOMES** with interest these Green Papers and the Resolution adopted by the European Parliament on 22 April 1994 concerning the Green Paper on the access of consumers to justice and the settlement of consumer disputes in the single market;

**RECALLS** that, in its Resolution of 25 June 1987 on consumer redress, the Council requested the Commission to continue studying the role of consumer organizations "as intermediaries or as direct agents in consumer redress and to examine whether an initiative at Community level would be suitable in this area";

(.....) **STRESSES** that, since certain unlawful commercial practices have a transfrontier dimension, it may be necessary to develop initiatives at Community level in order to eliminate them;

**REQUESTS** the Commission to intensify as soon as possible the examination it has begun of measures which can be taken by public authorities and/or consumer organizations as well as by professional bodies to prevent unlawful commercial practices;

As regards guarantees for consumer goods and after-sales services, the Council:

<sup>1</sup> Consumers Council of 17 May 1994 - Council of the European Union Press Release - 6884/94 (Press 89)

**NOTES** both differences and common points in national laws on legal guarantees and **TAKES NOTE** of the Commission's suggestions for possible approximation of such laws;

**TAKES NOTE** of the questions recorded in the Green Paper as regards the way commercial guarantees operate and the questions of definition and precision in the legal rules which form the framework for such guarantees;

**NOTES** that certain matters have not been addressed in the Green Paper, particularly the case of payable "guarantees" which are sometimes added to or replace the original guarantee and the case of aftersales service, of which the only aspect dealt with is the availability of spare parts;

**REQUESTS** the Commission to inform it of the conclusions it draws from the consultations initiated by these two Green Papers."

### USE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES ON A TIMESHARE BASIS

The Council took note of the progress of the procedure concerning the proposal for a Directive on the protection of purchasers in respect of certain aspects of contracts relating to the purchase of the right to use immovable properties on a timeshare basis and will take the necessary decisions at the appropriate time, taking into account the Opinion delivered on second reading by the Parliament.

The Parliament had in fact previously accepted the common position but wished to introduce four amendments to which the Council had not been able to give its agreement. The matter has therefore been referred to the Conciliation Committee, as provided for under the co-decision procedure. This is therefore the first consumer dossier to be referred to the Committee which will not, in any event, be able to meet to discuss this matter until after the constitution of the new Parliament.

## FAREWELL INTERVIEW WITH KAJ BARLEBO-LARSEN

Kaj BARLEBO-LARSEN retired as Director-General of the Consumer Policy Service on 31 January 1994. The Editorial staff of **INFO-C** had asked for an interview before his departure; this turned out to be impossible due to the many events that a departing DG has to attend. But now we have the answers to our questions, so here is the 'political testament' of KBL:

*What do you consider the greatest achievement in consumer policy during the five years you have been in charge - and what has been your greatest disappointment?*

I would suggest that the CPS is its own greatest achievement. From a fairly modest beginning the CPS has in a few years - and both inside and outside our own institution - acquired a distinct reputation for competence in the subject matters, tenacity in pursuit of its main objective and pragmatic realism in its policy evaluations. This has, in an otherwise difficult environment, led to significant progress in the Community's consumer policy over a very broad area: from consumer information to legislation, from consumer representation to cross-frontier cooperation, etc.

Under these circumstances you will understand that I have had no great disappointments, although I would - like all of us - have liked to see more progress overall.

*Which factors played a role in achieving the successes - apart from the quality of the work done by the CPS, of course?*

Apart from your very obvious presumption, the main reasons are, in my view, the new possibilities presented by the Single Act and the determination of the Commissioners responsible for Consumer Policy - first Karel VAN MIERT and then Christiane SCRIVENER, with the support of the European Parliament and several Member States, to use these new possibilities.

*Consumer policy has been developed chiefly within the framework of internal market policy in general, as this was where the legal base was found. Do you think that a more distinct status, as a flanking policy, like research and development or competition policy, would have been preferable?*

The Commission had, realistically speaking, no alternative but to develop its consumer policy in conjunction with the internal market. This was a legal and political constraint and - let's face it - it was also sufficient to stretch the capacity of the CPS to the limit.

*What do you see as our main challenges, having Article 129A of the Treaty of the European Union as a legal basis?*

The entry into force of the Maastricht Treaty, and its Article 129A in particular, obviously opens up new possibilities. The Commission's new three-year programme, as well as the two recent Green Papers, contain good illustrations of the kind of foreseeable developments.

*Some people fear that consumer policy is now under threat because of 'subsidiarity'. Do you agree there is a danger?*

To strike a balance between the need for Community action and subsidiarity will be a major and constant challenge - although in my view not a danger for a Community consumer policy.

*One of the potential technological evolutions of our society is decreased mobility in the sense that working, shopping, communication etc. can be done from home (teleworking, distance selling, interactive media, etc.). How do you see the long-term consequences for Community consumer information and education policy in this perspective?*

I am afraid this question could deserve at least one major thesis, so don't expect me to give you the answer. However, my experience is that new technologies are

very quickly mastered by the younger and even the youngest generation, so I would suggest that Community policy, including consumer information and education should recognise this, the sooner the better.

*How do you see the future of the CPS as an administrative entity? Should we aim to grow into a fully-fledged Directorate General or should we be satisfied with being integrated into another DG, within the context of a general reorganization of the Commission services?*

These questions will undoubtedly be the subject of most serious reflection and examination in the much broader context of preparations for the next Commission. And here the views of a former Director-General are unlikely to attract any interest.

For what it is worth, however, I happen to believe - as I have said on a recent occasion - that 'small is not just beautiful, but can also be effective'. The CPS is, in my view, an excellent example of how the establishment of a small, independent unit can be conducive to motivation, dedication, responsibility and efficiency. In the private sector most big corporations now realise this and restructure accordingly. It would be a pity if the Community's consumer policy were to lose this advantage.

*How do you think enlargement of the European Union will affect consumer policy?*

Definitely positively.

*And finally, how would you like our information and education policy to develop in future?*

Keep going!

## AUSTRIA

# CONSUMER POLICY AND CONSUMER PROTECTION AT THE FEDERAL MINISTRY FOR HEALTH, SPORT AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

### ORGANISATION

The Austrian Federal Ministry for Health, Sport and Consumer Protection (BMGSK) is responsible *inter alia* for consumer policy, including consumer protection. A total of 21 staff work in this area.

### SCOPE

Consumer protection includes both handling day-to-day consumer problems through personal advice and correspondence and - drawing on the experience gained in this connection - the preparation of draft laws, regulations and recommendations for the BMGSK and other Federal Ministries.

Further activities include consumer education and the publication of information bulletins and specialist literature.

Brochures on the following aspects of consumer affairs may be had free of charge from the BMGSK: Consumer Guide (also available in English, Serbocroat, Slovenian and Turkish), the Consumer and the Courts, Building a House, Travel, Motorcars, Insurance, Cosmetic Products, Medicaments, Accommodation, Money - Credit.

The institute "*Sicher Leben*" and the BMGSK have published the following brochures relating to safety in the home and at leisure: "Growing up Safely", "PutzArt", "Safety at Home" (specially for elderly people) and "Careful!" (safety for do-it-yourselfers).

Specialist articles are published in the series "Consumer Law and Consumer Policy", initiated by the BMGSK in 1986. This series include publications on consumer policy issues (such as, recently, "Reform of Guarantee Law") and, every two years, publication of the Consumer Policy Yearbook, containing contributions from persons

involved in consumer policy as well as scientists and researchers. This Yearbook surveys recent statutory changes and important trends in case law. It is on sale in bookshops and is intended as an impetus for the discussion of policy.

### CONSUMER POLICY - TARGETS AND TRENDS

For a long time consumer policy mainly meant regulating the market, primarily by influencing prices in the interest of consumers. Consumer advice endeavoured to provide value-for-money comparisons to help consumers choose, mainly with a view to protecting them from overcharging. The ever-expanding product range was leading to distortions in competition and made it increasingly difficult to make real comparisons of products. To rectify this situation - unsatisfactory for both suppliers and consumers - a large number of labelling regulations were introduced.

Despite all these measures, it was not until the next stage that the tide was turned in favour of consumers, with the 1979 Consumer Protection Act containing numerous provisions designed to redress the balance. These protective provisions were supplemented by a number of consumer-friendly implementing rules applicable to a number of critical sectors.

### THE OUTLOOK FOR CONSUMER POLICY

In recent years consumer policy has increasingly focused on new areas that extend the horizons of traditional consumer policy, such as product safety, the environment, social affairs and health. Highlights include the Product Safety Act of 1983, the 1988 Product Liability Act, the creation of an Austrian environmental mark in 1990, the reform of private debt arrangements (1993 Act reforming the bankruptcy law), and endeavours to improve patients' rights.

While traditional consumer policy mainly involved disseminating information and improving the legal status of consumers, i.e. reacting to market developments, the future tasks of consumer policy must be designed to influence the design and planning of the market for products and services.

### CONSUMER POLICY INSTRUMENTS

#### I. The Consumer Policy Council

The Consumer Policy Council is attached to the BMGSK. Its members represent the four social partners (Federal Chamber of Industry, Federal Chamber of Labour, Austrian Trade Union Confederation, Conference of the Presidents of the Agricultural Chambers), the Consumer Association and various ministries responsible for regulating consumer policy. The Council is involved in drafting legislation (e.g. reform of the Motor Vehicles Act) and regulations (e.g. Textiles Identification Order) in the field of consumer policy and in preparing agreements between the social partners in the form of voluntary controls in certain branches (e.g. General Travel Conditions 1979/1992, "positive list" for insurance policy advertising, requirements concerning the transparency of gas and electricity bills, etc.).

#### II. The Product Safety Council

The Product Safety Council, which includes representatives of the four social partners, was established under the terms of the Product Safety Act.

Its main task is to advise the Minister on measures concerning dangerous products. Such measures include the obligation to include or improve usage instructions, prohibitions and other rules concerning advertising, or even banning sale of the product.

#### III. The Consumer Council of the Austrian Standards Institute

The Consumer Council's activities correspond to those set out in the Decision of the EFTA consumer ministers of October 1991. Tasks include observing the work of national and international standardisation bodies. In this connection the Council coordinates representation on specialist committees at national and international level through consumer representatives and sees to their training and further training.

#### IV. The Codex Commission

Just as the WHO/FAO's Codex Alimentarius lays down scientific standards at international level for assessing foodstuffs quality, the Austrian Codex Commission, established under the terms of the Austrian Foodstuffs Act of 1895, is responsible for the Austrian Foodstuffs Register, which contains requirements concerning the manufacture and composition and hence the quality of foodstuffs, with a breakdown by product groups.

Representatives of the BMGSK's consumer protection unit participate in individual subcommittees attached to the Codex Commission and so consumers' interests are also represented in this highly important area.

#### V. The Consumer Information Association (VKI)

The Consumer Information Association (VKI) dates from 1961. Members include the four social partners (Federal Chamber of Industry, Federal Chamber of Labour, Austrian Trade Union Confederation, Conference of the Presidents of the Austrian Agricultural Chambers), as regular members and (since 1975) as extraordinary member, the republic of Austria, represented by the BMGSK.

The VKI is the only private consumer organisation in Austria with wide-ranging activities in the field of consumer protection.

Its main job is to advise consumers, both in regard to technical aspects of purchasing and legal advice, and to handle complaints. The VKI also tests products and services, and the results are published in the association's magazine "*Konsument*".

The association is financed partly through own resources but mainly through members' contributions, with over 50% government funding.

The main reason for the BMGSK's financial involvement is that the VKI supports the Ministry in its consumer policy work. It also prepares an annual "Report on the Situation of Consumer Protection" for the BMGSK.

The VKI also plays a major role on behalf of the BMGSK in the development of case law through assuming court costs in certain lawsuits (test cases). It is also entitled to bring representative actions against illegal terms in general conditions of sale.

Finally, the VKI also provides an impetus to Austrian consumer policy through its membership in the BEUC (European Bureau of Consumers Union) and the IOCU (International Organisation of Consumers' Unions).

### INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The BMGSK is mainly involved in international activities at two levels, i.e. in the OECD in Paris, which has set up a Committee on Consumer Policy, and in the EFTA through membership in the Government Expert Group on Consumer Protection.

The BMGSK also established its own working group on consumer policy and consumer protection in connec-

tion with the conclusion of the EEA agreement. Its mandate was to examine the legal prerequisites for transposition.

Finally, through its EEA work and associated involvement with EC law, the BMGSK has established informal contacts with many EC services and national administrations in EC and EFTA countries as well as consumer protection organisations. Typical examples include the Trade Practices Network and PROSAFE.

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## WORLD CONSUMER RIGHTS DAY - 1994

Once a year consumers worldwide speak with one voice; once a year they find a theme that, from their different experiences, they can campaign on as consumers; once a year they join together to celebrate World Consumer Rights Day.

The World Consumer Rights Day was celebrated this year, as it is every year, on 15 March. The International Organisation of Consumers Unions (IOCU), who annually coordinates the event, chose as the theme for 1994 'Back To Basics: Consumers and Basic Services'. IOCU has 180 members in 70 countries, and in all regions of the world - from China to Cuba, Brazil to Bangladesh.

The satisfaction of basic needs is the first of the eight basic consumer rights in the UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection, which were adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 9 April 1985. They have their origins, as does World Consumer Rights Day itself, in former US President John F Kennedy's speech to the US Congress on 15 March 1962. In this he defined four basic consumer rights, namely, the right to safety, the right

to be informed, the right to choose and the right to be heard. Almost as important was the reminder Kennedy gave to Congress that, "Consumers by definition include us all. They are the largest economic group, affecting and affected by almost every public and private economic decision. Yet they are the only important group ... whose views are often not heard".

Basic Services, the theme chosen by IOCU this year, is an important area of work for many consumer organisations. Both in industrialised countries and in the developing world, the degree to which basic needs are met can depend almost entirely on the powerful industries which supply electricity, piped gas and water, public transport, sanitation, postal services and telecommunications. Because basic services are natural monopolies, users have little alternative but to rely on them as single suppliers of a basic service - even when prices are excessive, operations appalling, and services provided on a 'take it or leave it' basis. Similarly consumers know that where governments are regulators of basic service industries, they don't necessarily fulfil their duty to ensure that con-

sumers have services that are both adequate and affordable. And, far from improving the situation, privatisation can even exacerbate it.

To help local consumer organisations develop their own initiatives on the 1994 Back To Basics theme, IOCU produced a briefing kit focusing on different aspects of the issue. The IOCU World Consumer Rights Day (WCRD) kit looks, for instance, at what had happened when basic industries were privatised in three very different countries - Hungary, El Salvador and Malaysia. It found that in Hungary energy suppliers still retain the monopolies they held under previous communist governments, but with one notable difference: they must now operate with regulatory licences overseen by the national Department of Energy - the former owner of the utilities that it now regulates. From the consumer standpoint the situation leaves much to be desired and the issue is one on which the Association of Hungarian Energy Consumers (AHEC), only founded in May 1992, is already actively campaigning. The kit also examines the privatisation of the UK gas industry, and what the emergence of British Gas has meant for consumers - a mixed blessing according to the UK Gas Consumers Council, which has argued that there is no convincing evidence that the total deregulation of the gas industry will in fact benefit the majority of consumers. It looks at the experience of The Netherlands, where the telecommunications and postal monopoly shows a growing reluctance to disclose information. This has led *Consumentenbond*, the largest Dutch consumer organisation, to request the establishment of an independent watchdog for the industry.

Basic services for consumers in other parts of the world can, of course, mean something even more vital: for con-

sumers in the developing world, having fuel for cooking, clean water to drink, access to a telephone, may literally be a matter of life and death.

In Europe consumerism has a long history and WCRD is celebrated in a more restrained fashion. Nevertheless, the theme of Back to Basics was publicised from Sweden to Italy, both nationally (as in Germany, where the German consumer organisation AgV used the occasion to pursue its efforts to improve postal and telecommunications services) and locally (as in Sweden, where exhibitions, seminars and events were held in more than 50 municipalities). Italy used the occasion to publicise a theme of its own choosing, and held a World Consumer Rights Day Conference on 'Women as Consumers', while Malta's consumers enjoyed a seven-minute long message on local TV and radio from the Minister responsible for consumer affairs.

Different countries, different themes, different activities - but one message: consumers have a right to adequate basic services at prices they can afford. And, as the international consumer movement continues to grow in size and influence (IOCU opened a regional office for Africa in March this year) it is a message that governments and industry will find increasingly difficult to ignore.

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## The European Information Offices At Your Service - Continuation

### CATALONIA INFORMATION OFFICE

A European consumer information agency was established in November 1991 at the *Institut Català del Consum*, a Barcelona-based organisation in Spain's autonomous region of Catalonia.

Like all the European information offices its broad objective is to provide information about transfrontier European consumption. However, this agency is intended more for "professionals" involved in consumer affairs in the public or private sector than for private individuals. Thus it is not open to the general public, being more of an information "relay".

One highlight is the agency's range of databases on legislation, documentation and (coming soon) teaching material to supplement conventional communication systems such as the telephone, telefax and "on-line" services.

The following databases may be consulted:

- **Law database**

The law database contains juridical references on consumer affairs - laws and regulations, case law (rulings by the Court of Justice of the European Community, the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court and other tribunals), written questions and reports.

- **General database on consumer affairs**

The general database contains practical information which can be relayed directly to consumers to help them choose products and services and show them how to submit claims or sue for damages. This database may be consulted via the Ibertex network (Spain's national videotext) by dialling 031 and entering the keyword "CONSUM". It has a "suggestion box" for pooling information on an ongoing basis.

- **Mediascan database**

The mediascan database contains all information on consumer affairs published in the press since

1990, with daily summaries of news, reports, views and articles compiled from 125 newspapers, reviews and other local, national and Community publications.

- **Bibliographical database**

The bibliographical database is managed by the *Institut Català del Consum's* documentation centre. Entry classifications include monographs, publications, newspapers and audio-visual material.

- **Database on teaching aids**

The teaching aids database provides information on teaching aids - computerised and otherwise - available for educating consumers. This base is under development and will be operative as of 1995.

- **"Coline" database**

The Coline database is a comparative database on consumer legislation established at the initiative of the Drafting and Implementation of Legislation Unit at the European Commission's Consumer Policy Service and is currently located in five Member States. It is a Community information pooling network and will soon be extended to include other databases.

- **Information database on industrial products**

The industrial products database is currently at the design stage. It will concern labelling, technical rules and other features of industrial products such as household appliances, telephones, etc.

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## TRANSFRONTIER PAYMENTS CHARTER

"Adapting banking services to consumer needs" - such was the "slogan" of Christiane SCRIVENER, Commissioner responsible for consumer affairs at the European Commission, at an address in Paris<sup>1</sup> at which she relaunched the idea of a "Transfrontier Payment Services Charter", heralded in a Communication of 9 December, 1993<sup>2</sup>. In this Communication Christiane SCRIVENER, together with Raniero VANNI d'ARCHIRAFI, Commissioner responsible for financial services, highlighted the lack of transparency and the poor quality in the performance of transfrontier payments, notwithstanding some minimal improvements.

The problem is far from new. In 1988 the European Office of Consumer Unions (BEUC) conducted a survey on problems encountered in transferring payments between different countries and warned the Commission that the situation was disastrous for the consumer. In response, in February 1990<sup>3</sup> (See **INFO-C** No 1) the Commission published a recommendation on the transparency of banking conditions relating to cross-border financial transactions. Two advisory committees were subsequently created, one on technical issues and one on users. In March 1992 they came up with "guidelines" for improving the information provided to the client, to be implemented by 31 December 1992. Unfortunately, a study conducted in 1993 concluded that progress was virtually nil, as mentioned subsequently in the December communication. This is why the Commission has emphasised the need for urgent measures to assist consumers and has already drawn up a draft directive with a view to tightening control over the banking sector. However, this draft is not yet a formal proposal and the Commission has decided to re-examine the situation as of this summer. Hence the banking community has one last chance to tidy up its act on its own initiative. Christiane SCRIVENER wants to use all possible forms of concertation before the final deadline and in this context "dialogue" will be writ large.

This is also the spirit informing the idea of a charter designed to represent "public commitment by professionals after discussion with consumer representatives", as the Commissioner mentioned at the Paris conference.

This will be more than just another recommendation or set of vague statements of intent. Rather, it will involve about ten precise commitments. The charter will be signed by representatives of the banks, consumers and the Commission and will be made public to emphasise its binding nature.

Currently, the Commission is open to suggestions and is keen to learn how the initiative will be received.

The full text of Christiane SCRIVENER's Paris address can also be had from Mr Jean ALLIX.

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## TAXATION: THE EU GIVES LOVERS A TREAT

This year 14 February, traditionally lovers' day in many Member States, was also a big day for lovers of art and second-hand goods and, also, of tax-free purchases. Two Directives in this domain were adopted on that date. One of them supplements the common system of value added tax and amends Directive 77/388/EEC on special arrangements applicable to second-hand goods, works of art, collectors' items and antiques (Council Directive 94/5/EC<sup>4</sup>) while the other amends Directives 69/169/EEC and 77/388/EEC and increases the level of allowances for travellers from third countries and the limits on tax-free purchases in intra-Community travel (Council Directive 94/4/EC<sup>5</sup>).

- 1 Colloquium "Transfrontier payments. Opportunities and constraints in the context of the Single Market", organised by the "Analyses et Synthèses" Society on 1 and 2 March 1994 in Paris.
- 2 Communication from Raniero VANNI d'ARCHIRAFI and Christiane SCRIVENER "Transparency and quality of implementation of transfrontier payments", SEC(93) 1968.
- 3 Recommendation 90/109/EEC, JO No L 67, 15.3.1990, p. 39.
- 4 OJ No L 60, 3.3.1994, p. 17.
- 5 OJ No L 60, 3.3.1994, p. 15.

## The market for works of art and second hand goods

The 'Ecofin' (Economy/Finance) Council unanimously adopted the formal text of this seventh VAT directive establishing in the European Union a common system of taxation for second-hand goods, works of art, collectors' items and antiques, as well as for importations of works of art into the Community. This instrument crowns over 15 years of work at Community level and will enter into effect on 1 January 1995.

In the words of Christiane SCRIVENER, Commissioner responsible for taxation, customs and consumer policy "this directive is essential for the smooth functioning of the single market. It establishes in these sectors of activity the final VAT system without frontiers. It also protects consumers' interests because it eliminates the existing risks of paying VAT (at least!) twice on a single item, whether it be an antique or a second-hand car. In addition to opening up the market for professionals, this instrument also gives consumers greater security".

### The principle of taxation

1. First and foremost the seventh directive confirms that sales between private individuals are not subject to VAT and apply throughout the Union without any formalities (freedom of purchase under a specific system: the price is paid once and for all at the place of purchase).
2. For professionals, the taxation principle upheld in the seventh directive is that of VAT on the profit margin.

Most second-hand goods and works of art or antiques have already had VAT paid when first sold as new goods or during an earlier sale. To tax them again on their full value, as is the case in most Member States<sup>6</sup> when they are up for sale again, imposes a double burden.

As of 1 January 1995 the seventh directive establishes the principle of taxation in the country of origin (the principle of the definitive VAT system without frontiers),

which means that the goods can move freely without any formalities.

Notably, a special system has been established for sales by public auction, allowing the application of the principle of taxation on the profit margin, while confirming, at Community level, the legal and professional status of auctioneers. VAT will be applied on the value of the commission paid to the auctioneer and not on the total value of the object<sup>7</sup>.

### Imports of works of art, antiques, etc.

The Directive also lays down common procedures for taxing imported works of art, collectors' items and antiques in the European Union. It was this aspect that proved to be one of the main stumbling blocks. Hence Member States will be free to apply to imports a reduced rate of 5% or less instead of the normal VAT rate, or a reduced tax base so that the tax will be equal at least to that resulting from application of the reduced rate to the total tax base. Exports from the Union will be exempt from VAT.

Finally, the temporary importation period for works of art destined to be re-exported should be extended. These works of art could circulate anywhere in the Community without payment of customs duties or taxes for up to two years, rather than six months as at present. The current time limit is very short and makes things difficult for professionals, while its extension will give an additional impetus to the art market.

The directive does not affect VAT exemption schemes for works of art imported by museums.

### Definition of second-hand cars

In order to agree on the scope of this Directive, the Twelve have also agreed on a new definition of new cars, which now covers vehicles less than six months old or vehicles that have clocked up less than 6 000 km (instead of three months/3 000 km previously).

6 Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands.

7 For further details, not mentioned in this article, the reader should consult the full text of the Directive (see OJ).

**Contact:**

Luc VERGEYLEN  
European Commission  
DG XXI  
rue de la Loi 200  
MDB 5/10  
B-1049 Bruxelles  
Tel.: +32/2/295.18.96  
Fax: +32/2/296.19.31

### ALLOWANCES

While raising the tax-free allowances for travellers from third countries from 45 ecus to 175 ecus, the Council has also raised the tax-free allowance to 90 ecus for intra-Community travellers. Moreover, the age-based distinction (under 15) which still exists for citizens of third countries, has been abandoned in the latter case.

Normally, the smooth functioning of the internal market would rule out such allowances for intra-Community travellers. However, Member States had to be given a breathing space so that the operators concerned (mainly airports and ferries) could gradually adjust to the new situation. Hence they are finally to disappear on 30 June 1999. The new ceilings for tax-free allowances took effect on 1 April 1994. May the consumer benefit....

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Fax: +32/2/296.19.31

### FOOTWEAR LABELLING DIRECTIVE ADOPTED

For those who have been following the saga of the proposed directive on footwear labelling, we can now announce that it has made its way onto the statute book. Following its placing on the infamous "Edinburgh list" (see **INFO-C** No 6) the proposal was revised to allow for

the manufacturers of footwear to choose between the use of pictograms or text to indicate the main material components of the product. A common position was reached at the Council in November of 1993, and the European Parliament gave its agreement, under the new Co-decision procedure, and without tabling any amendments, on 9 March. At its meeting of 23 March 1994, the ECOFIN (economy/finance) Council formally adopted the new law, and set a deadline for implementation of 23 March 1996<sup>8</sup>.

**Contact:**

P. O'RIORDAN  
European Commission  
DG III  
rue de la Loi 200  
N9 6/Z6a  
B-1049 Bruxelles  
Tel. +32/2/296.09.03  
Fax: +32/2/295.92.97

### TRANSPARENCY OF LABELLING

As its meeting of 2 March 1993, the Council adopted a resolution on future action on the labelling of products in the interest of the consumer (Council Resolution of 5 April 1993, OJ EC 93/C 110/01), calling for further measures in the areas of **transparency** and **information** so that consumers will be free to choose among a variety of goods and services - see also **INFO-C** No 7, p. 3.

In this resolution the Commission is invited, in consultation with the Member States and with the interested parties (consumer, industry and commerce organisations) to examine the needs and merits of a Community-wide solution and, on that basis, to study the possibility of a Community framework for labelling requirements. These proposals must be presented at the latest before June 1994. In this context a pilot project has been launched concerning the labelling of photographic appliances, products which are well known to consumers where prices differ considerably and in respect of which no Community legislation exists.

<sup>8</sup> European Parliament and Council Directive 94/11/EC of 23 March 1994 on the approximation of the laws (...) relating to labelling of materials used in the main components of footwear for sale to the consumer: OJ No L 100, 19.4.1994, p. 37.

In order to encourage a self-regulatory system the Commission has invited the parties concerned to participate in this pilot project.

**Contact:**

Bodil RUBERG  
European Commission  
Consumer Policy Service  
rue de la Loi 200  
J70 7/6  
B-1049 Bruxelles  
Tel.: +32/2/295.45.52  
Fax: +32/2/296.32.79

### TRANSPARENCY OF INFORMATION - THE COMMISSION FORGES AHEAD

On 8 February 1994 the Commission adopted a decision on public access to Commission documents which took effect on 15 February 1994<sup>9</sup>. This decision adopts measures for giving effect to the code of conduct on public access to documents concluded jointly by the Commission and the Council of Ministers.

Since the article published in **INFO-C** No 7 of May 1993 on the adoption of a Communication on 2 December 1992 on increased transparency in the work of the Commission<sup>10</sup> the idea has been making headway. This communication came just before the European Council at Edinburgh, which included a discussion on how to make the activities of the European institutions more accessible. The declaration on the right of access to information annexed to the Final Act of the Treaty on European Union reflects the "pre-Maastricht" spirit in this field.

The way is now open for a better flow of information.

In executing its mission the Consumer Policy Service has always been keen to maintain the closest possible contacts with "multiplier organisations" involved in consumer affairs and with all professionals in this field. Hence, transmission of reliable information is essential.

The editors of **INFO-C** are particularly interested in this problem of transparency. This is why we have taken the

opportunity to inform readers of the Commission's continuing progress in facilitating the practical implementation of its policy.

The CPS has set an example with the publication of its two Green Papers<sup>11</sup> - consultation documents which allow all parties concerned to communicate their views, something the Commission has always wanted.

In the same spirit, the Commission is currently developing a database on all non-profit-making organisations with a European dimension. A call will be published in the Official Journal sometime in May, asking the organisations to come forward. Naturally, the database will be open to the public.

Further information may be had from the following address (requests to be submitted *in writing*):

**Contact:**

European Commission  
Secretariat-General  
BREY 7/236  
rue de la Loi 200  
B-1049 Bruxelles

### EUROPEAN CINEMA AND TELEVISION PROGRAMMES: CONSUMER CHOICE

One of the objectives of the Green Paper on audiovisual policy is to maintain the diversity of national and regional cultures and hence to guarantee a real choice for the consumer. Entitled *Strategy options for strengthening the European programme industry in the context of the audiovisual policy of the European Union*<sup>12</sup>, this paper was formally adopted by the Commission on 7 April 1994, at the initiative of Commissioner João de Deus Pinheiro, responsible for audiovisual media and culture.

<sup>9</sup> OJ No L 46, 18.2.1994, p. 58.

<sup>10</sup> OJ No C 63, 5.3.1993, p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> Guarantees of Consumers Goods and After-Sales Services, COM(93) 509 of 15 November 1993 and Access of Consumers to Justice and the Settlement of Consumer Disputes in the Single Market, COM(93) 576 of 16 November 1993.

<sup>12</sup> COM(94) 96 final of 6 April 1994.

The Green Paper provides food for thought and confirms the need for a broad debate both in regard to the spectator's freedom of choice, technological advances in this domain, the creation of jobs in this high-growth industrial sector, and the inevitable liberalisation of the sector at international level which the European Union must take into account in developing its audiovisual policy.

The focus is on a specific aspect of the audiovisual sector - the development of the European cinema and television programme industry.

The Commission considers that this exercise is necessary to take into account two characteristics of the programme industry:

- firstly, cinema and television programmes are not products just like any other; as privileged vectors for transmitting cultural values they remain unique among the growing range of audiovisual products. As living testimony to each country's traditions and identity they deserve to be encouraged;

- secondly, the programme industry is an increasingly important strategic component in the development of the

audiovisual sector; as recent developments show, the world's leading operators (manufacturers of equipment and cable and telecommunications companies) are endeavouring to control the most important programme catalogues.

An in-depth consultation procedure involving professional and institutional circles will take place notably on the occasion of the Commission's "European Audiovisual Conference" which will take place from 30 June to 2 July 1994 in Brussels. Following this conference the Commission may present a series of proposals for concrete measures to the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers.

**Contact:**

Gregory PAULGER  
European Commission  
DG X  
rue de la Loi 200  
T120 3/9  
B-1049 Bruxelles  
Tel.: +32/2/299.94.34  
Fax: +32/2/299.92.01



## BELGIUM

### Belgian holiday-makers want protection

Sign your travel contracts in full confidence - it should soon be possible to provide this assurance to every Belgian tourist who has concluded an agreement with a travel agency or tour operator. The European Directive of 13 June 1990 on package travel, package holidays and package tours has just been transposed into Belgian law. This Directive protects consumers who have concluded contracts concerning these types of packages. For example, the Directive mandates organisers to provide certain information to their clients, and also deals with the problem of liability in the case of dissatisfaction, irregularities in transport or overbooking of hotels (for more complete information, consult the full text published in the Official Journal of the European Communities<sup>1</sup>).

The Belgian Act of 16 February 1994 supercedes the old law dating from 1973. However, the new act will not enter into effect until 4 October 1994, because the old instrument was based on an international convention comprising a renunciation procedure of approximately one year. This transposition represents a victory for all organisations which up to now had been putting pressure on the Belgian Government.

The deadline for transposing the Directive into national law was in fact 31 December 1992. But by this date nothing had yet been done. It was this that motivated the consumer organisation "Test-Achats" - "Test-Aankoop" to prepare a standard order form for reserving package holidays in 1993. Among many advantages, consumers using this order form also have better protection at law because the tour operator has to accept arbitration by the "Commission de Litiges Voyages", established by this organisation. However, the problem pending the entry into effect of the national law is that the tour

operator's participation is still optional (for more information, see **INFO-C** No 8). If the tour operator refuses to sign, the traveller has no guarantee. Hence transposition of the Directive will offer the minimum guarantee consumers want.

The new Belgian Act goes beyond the Directive, because it is not confined to package trips but also provides for "intermediary travel contracts" which protect the traveller even if he is offered only a single service.

A colloquium on this topic organised by the "Commission de Litiges Voyages" was held on 28 April 1994 in Brussels. Participants had the opportunity to learn more about the general travel conditions which will apply in Belgium but also about the situation in the other Member States. However, at the time of going to press, six Member States had not yet transposed the Directive - Germany, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Spain, Italy, Ireland and Greece.

#### Contact:

Hans DE CONINCK  
Commission de Litiges Voyages  
rue J. A. De Mot 24-26  
B-1040 Bruxelles  
Tel.: +32/2/542.34.04  
Fax: +32/2/542.32.50

## THE SOUTH OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

### Tourism - not always *la dolce vita*

Still on the topic of tourist protection, Italy, which has not yet transposed the European Package Tours Directive (see article on Belgium), set up in 1993 a "tourist assistance programme" spearheaded by the Milan-based organisation *Comitato Difesa Consumatori* (see **INFO-C** No 8).

<sup>1</sup> OJ No L 158, 23.6.1990, pp. 59-63.

## Member States

This service, called the *Pronto Soccorso Vacanze*, proved a rapid success. Other countries have since followed suit, such as Spain, represented by the organisations CECU and OCU, Portugal (DECO) and Greece (EKPIZO).

This programme, created with the backing of the European Commission, is designed to inform consumers on their rights as tourists and to help them in the event of problems relating to hotels, camping sites, travel agencies, etc.

Hence holiday-makers have access to offices where they can consult an English- or French-speaking lawyer for help on specific problems.

Unfortunately we cannot provide all the addresses of these tourist assistance offices. However, here are those of the head offices in the capitals of the different countries participating in the programme.

### Portugal:

DECO  
Av. Defensores De Chaves 22  
P-Lisbon  
Tel.: +351/1/573927  
Fax: +351/1/577851

### Greece:

EKPIZO  
Valtersiou 43-45  
GR-Athens  
Tel.: +30/1/3300673

### Spain:

CECU  
Campomanes 6, 1 Planta  
E-Madrid  
Tel.: +34/91/5422700

### OCU

Vilafranca 22 bajo  
E-Madrid  
Tel.: +34/91/3558205

### Italy:

CDC  
Viale della Liberazione 18  
I-20124 Milan  
Tel.: +39/2/667.20501  
Fax: +39/2/670.6380  
Via Bargo San Lazzaro 17  
I-00136 Rome  
Tel.: +39/6/397.25765

## PORTUGAL

In our "Focus on Portugal" chapter in **INFO-C** No 9 on the visit of our editors to Portuguese organizations, we neglected to mention the two Coimbra-based organisations ACOP and APDC. Although we did not have the opportunity to meet representatives of these organizations, they later asked us to pass on information about their activities.

We take this opportunity to inform our readers of the role of these organisations in Portugal.

The *Associação Portuguesa de Direito do Consumo* (Portuguese Consumer Law Association) was born on 23 November 1989. In addition to campaigning for consumer rights, the APDC does research in this domain. It also organizes symposia, colloquia, seminars and congresses to disseminate information on the legal aspects of consumer protection.

The APDC's activities are also described on in a magazine published by the *Associação de Consumidores de Portugal* (Portuguese Consumers Association) - ACOP.

The ACOP was founded on 5 February 1993 and is linked to the APDC. Its objective is more to provide services concerning administrative tasks, training, information and consumer protection in general. The association also hears complaints from consumers and has a claims service. As for information, the ACOP participates in daily and weekly radio broadcasts in different parts of the country, and in television programmes. It also works together with the press. Finally, ACOP receives government subsidies for its various activities.

### Contact:

APDC and ACOP  
Rua Vilaça da Fonseca 5  
Vila Cortez  
Apartado 4082 (APDC) or Apartado 4444 (ACOP)  
P-30000 Coimbra  
Tel.: +351/39/40.47.33  
Fax: +351/39/40.47.38



### **COUNTRYWIDE INFORMATION AND PROTECTION**

With a view to assuring the widest possible protection of consumers throughout the country, the Portuguese Government has begun decentralising the consumer information and protection centres under the terms of Act No 29/81 of 22 August. This operation is being organised by the Lisbon-based *Instituto do Consumidor* (IC).

Various *Centro de informação autarquico ao consumidor* (CIAC) i.e. local-level information centres, have thus been created. Their functions are in brief:

- to provide information;
- to undertake local analyses (studies, inventories, etc.);

- to support consumers and associations.

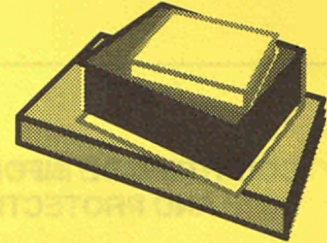
Although they are to be found in all parts of the country, most are currently located in cities near Lisbon, in the North near Porto and Guimarães, near Coimbra (all cities that have or soon will have arbitration tribunals for small consumer disputes) and in the Algarve.

**Contact:**

Instituto do Consumidor  
Praça Duque de Saldanha 31  
P-1000 Lisbon  
Tel.: +351/1/54.40.25  
Fax: + 351/1/52.24.10

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# PUBLICATIONS AND AUDIOVISUAL



- \* The *Centre Régional de la Consommation* of Lille (France) has just published a technical study "**Crédit, un ami dangereux**" (Credit, a dangerous friend). The study covers various aspects including statistics illustrating the level of debts in Nord-Pas de Calais households - and the reasons for this, the different types of credit available to private individuals, the use of credit cards, information on consumer protection when signing a credit contract, and alternative forms of credit.

A pamphlet with the same title, aimed at the general public, can be had free of charge from the address below.

**Further information from:**

Christiane DHAINAUT  
Centre Régional de la Consommation  
47bis rue Barthélémy Delespaul  
F-59000 Lille  
Tel: +33/20.54.44.44  
Fax: +33/20.54.73.72

- \* The Nord-Pas-de-Calais branch of the *Centre Local d'Information sur les Prix* (CLIP) has published a series of studies on exchange rates practised at borders between France, Belgium and the United Kingdom. To make this study researchers visited various banks and department stores offering exchange facilities in border regions, including Valenciennes and Calais in France, Mons in Belgium and Dover in the United Kingdom. Results of the study can be obtained in French via Minitel 36.14 code CRC - type 'CLIP', or in French and Dutch from the addresses below.

**Further information from:**

Centre Régional de la Consommation  
47bis rue Barthélémy Delespaul  
F-59000 Lille  
Tel: +33/20.54.44.44  
Fax: +33/20.42.09.31

or  
Euroconsument  
Wijngaardstraat 48  
B-8500 Kortrijk  
Tel.: +32/56.23.37.03  
Fax: +32/56.23.37.50

- \* The member associations of the *Comité de Liaison des Organisations de Consommateurs* and CLIP in Calvados (France) have just produced a report on beef and veal. This report contains information on the identification of live animals and details on information monitoring procedures in abattoirs.

On the basis of a survey carried out in Caen (France), the study takes a look at procurement for butchers and the information provided to consumers, notably as regards identified meat (sold with a certified designation).

Following its presentation to the Calvados *Comité Départemental de la Consommation*, this report has triggered a debate between consumer associations and meat industry professionals, and has also been the basis of a CLIP file containing direct information for consumers on this subject.

**Further information from:**

Joël LANGLOIS  
COLOC  
12 rue Neuve Saint Jean  
F-14000 Caen  
Tel.: +33/31.50.38.50  
Fax.: +33/31.50.01.06  
Minitel: +33/31.10.10

- \* The European Environmental Bureau (EEB) has published the report of its workshop **Participatory Democracy and the Implementation of the EC Directive on Freedom of Access to Environmental Information** which was organised in Brussels in September 1993 with the support of the European Commission.

**Further information from:**

EEB  
26 rue de la Victoire  
B-1060 Brussels  
Tel: +32/2/539.00.37  
Fax: +32/2/539.09.21

- \* **The Active Citizen** is the monthly magazine of the General Consumers' Federation of Greece. To mark World Consumers Day on 15 March, the March 1994 issue contained a special supplement entitled **Consumers Rights in Europe** covering product safety, labelling, consumer credit, insurance, advertising and tourism. As well as the usual circulation, this supplement was distributed to consumer associations, banks, schools and also at motorway tolls during holiday periods.

**Further information from:**

Maria MERTZANI  
Citizens' Union of Greece  
31 Posidonos Avenue  
175 61 P Faliro  
GR-Athens  
Tel: +30/1/98.29.152  
Fax: +30/1/98.25.096

- \* Research has an important role to play in speeding up the process of producing standards for the safety of consumer products, and in ensuring that these standards are fully efficient and effective. In 1992 the European Consumer Safety Association (ECOSA), based in the Netherlands, organised a workshop on product safety research with the aim to identify research needs and explore the routes to be followed in solving the problems experienced in standardisation. The workshop resulted in a **European Programme for Product Safety Research**, which outlines essential research projects in the fields of risk assessment, injury statistics and accident mechanisms, product use, child ergonomics, adult ergonomics, injury biomechanics, fire hazards, toxicology, construction and engineering, product information, and evaluation research.

In order to get a clear picture of the state of affairs, to give new input into applied research for consumer product safety, and to strengthen links between research and standardisation, ECOSA, in cooperation with the Consumer Safety Institute in Amsterdam, organised a conference on product safety research. The proceedings of this conference, which was held in Amsterdam in November 1993, has recently been published.

Also recently published by ECOSA are the proceedings of a conference entitled **Helmets for All** which was organised in collaboration with the European Commission and the Swedish Board for Consumer Policies (*Konsumentverket*) in April 1993.



The case for wearing protective helmets while riding bicycles, or in certain sports activities, is compelling. Head injuries to children and adolescents, for instance, account for over one million casualty department visits and up to one thousand deaths in the European Union each year. Most bicycle-related hospital admissions involving children aged 14 or younger result from injuries to the skull and brain (an estimated 33 000 a year). Another 50 000 children per annum are admitted to hospital for head injuries incurred during sport or other leisure activities.

Recent research in the USA, corroborated by studies in Scandinavia, proves that in bicycle-related trauma, helmet wearing reduces the cyclist's risk of head injury by 85%. Despite this compelling evidence, in most countries within the EU cycle helmet wearing among children is less than 5% and in only a few sports is helmet wearing more widely accepted.

The *European Conference on Helmets for All* aimed at bringing together all relevant organizations in Europe that play a role in promoting helmet wearing, i.e. manufacturers and retailers, designers, standard-making bodies, government agencies, accident prevention institutes, schools, special interest groups and voluntary organisations.

### Further information from:

European Consumer Safety Organisation  
PO Box 75169  
NL-1070 AD Amsterdam  
Tel: +31/20.511.45.00  
Fax: +31/20.511.45.10

\* **A European Television Consumers' Declaration.**

This Declaration (available in English, German and French) is the product of discussions in the European Television and Film Forum Working Group 'Consumer and Viewer Interests' held in Istanbul on 4-6 November 1993, and is an attempt to formulate, in a European context, the expectations and demands of the television viewer. The Declaration is a contribution to the debate on the basic questions of the relationship between television consumers and those responsible for television programming. It is published with the aim of promoting the continuation of discussion and reflection on this matter. This Declaration is drawn up as an expression of the needs and interests of viewers as consumers of television services. The use of the term 'consumer' is designed to carry a double meaning: firstly, it signifies the user of programmes offered on television, and secondly, it means the general consumer of goods and services.

### Further information from:

Secretary to the Working Group  
'Consumer and Viewer Interests'  
Kaistrasse 13  
D-40221 Düsseldorf  
Fax: +49/211.90.10.456

\* **Television and the Viewer Interest - Exploration in the Responsiveness of European Broadcasters.**

How do television broadcasters take account of the interests and needs of viewers? What are they required to do by law and regulations? What do they do of their own initiative? How do they respond to attitudes and opinions of individual consumers and to growing pressure from viewer and consumer groups?

This study is a comparative European analysis of the current situation and the possible future developments in the Czech and Slovak Republics, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain,

Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom. Each national chapter is written by a specialist from the country concerned and is based on replies to questionnaires sent to the government and regulative bodies, public and private television broadcasting organizations, and viewer and consumer groups.

Paperback c. 264 pages; English. Price UK£30, US\$48.

### Further information from:

Anne ENGLISH  
European Institute for the Media  
Kaistrasse 13  
D-40221 Düsseldorf  
Tel: +49/211.90.10.442  
Fax: +49/211.90.10.456  
or  
John Libbey & Company Ltd  
13 Smiths Yard  
Summerley Street  
UK-London SW18 4HR  
Tel: +44/81/947.27.77  
Fax: +44/81/947.26.64

\* **Manual dos Trabalhadores Consumidores**

(worker-consumer manual) is published by the Lisbon-based *União Geral de Consumidores* (UGC). This is a kind of guide for the heads of the organization. The idea is to tell them what they need to know in this domain to carry out their work in Portugal and in the Community context. The UGC targets the socially disadvantaged and so its personnel needs to learn how to pass on the organization's message successfully.

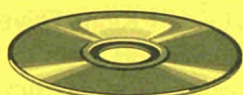
The Guide contains general information on consumer affairs and consumer attitudes as well as on the more legal aspects of consumer affairs and the fundamentals of the Single Market.

### Further information from:

Elisa DAMIÃO  
UGC  
Rua Buenos Aires 11  
P-1200 Lisbon  
Tel.: +351/60.02.47  
Fax: +351/397.46.12

- \* In Autumn 1993 publication of the new CD-ROM database **EUROCAT**, co-published by the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Chadwyck-Healey and Ellis Publications - two houses specialising in electronic publishing - was announced with a fanfare of publicity which was very well received by the publishing community and by documentation specialists.

EUROCAT on CD-ROM provides a complete catalogue of numerous publications and documents of the European Union, as well as all texts published in the L series of the Official Journal of the European Communities and notices relating to cases before the Court of Justice of the European Communities. Apart from legislation in force, EUROCAT on CD-ROM covers publications that have appeared since 1985. Within these limits EUROCAT's coverage is as wide as possible. Coverage will be extended with each new quarterly update, as the editors increasingly obtain access to other data sources.



EUROCAT creates links between the different language versions of a document. A search in any Community language (other than in Greek) allows one to display the titles and references of all available language versions of the document.

Apart from its bibliographical features, EUROCAT on CD-ROM is a major technical advance in cataloguing the literature generated by the European Union. Its friendly interface means that even the most complex searches can easily be carried out in a minimum of time.

To use one of the buzzwords of European politics, EUROCAT on CD-ROM is conceived as an instrument of transparency.

**Further information from:**

David PERRY  
 Joint Publications and Copyright Unit  
 Office for Official Publications of the EC  
 Bureau 509  
 2 rue Mercier  
 L-2985 Luxembourg  
 Tel.: +352/49928-2565  
 Fax. +352/40.62.16

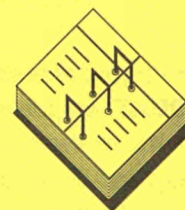
- \* Is there such a thing as a "European consumer"? In one way or another, a North-South rapprochement seems inevitable and in all European countries socio-demographic factors are having a similar impact on consumption. Although it may be too early yet to give a definitive reply, market studies would seem to reveal the emergence of a standard Euro-consumer.

In 40 years European societies have undergone similar changes: population ageing, increase in the percentage of working women, more single households, more leisure time, etc. A dossier prepared by Mireille Moutardier at the *Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques* in France (INSEE), entitled **Les modes de consommation dans la CEE** contains texts from a great variety of French and foreign sources.

**Information:**

Mireille MOUTARDIER  
 INSEE  
 18 boulevard Adolphe Pinard  
 F-92240 Malakoss  
 Tel.: +33/1/41/17.50.50  
 Fax. +33/1/41/17.66.66

# Diary



## **24 to 26 June 1994**

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*Public Service Broadcasting: The Price of Choice* - a week-end conference organised by Voice of the Listener and Viewer (VLV) at The Royal Society of Arts, London. The Chairman will be Lord Thomson of Monifieth, KT PC, former Chairman of the Independent Broadcasting Authority and Patron of VLV and the keynote speaker is Albert Scharf, President of the European Broadcasting Union.

The conference will build on the work of VLV's 1993 conference: *What Future for Public Service Broadcasting? A Global Inquiry for Viewers and Listeners* and consider the changing role of public service broadcasting, in Europe and worldwide, from a listener's and viewer's perspective.

The conference aims are to develop and consolidate the pan-European network of consumer groups with an interest in broadcasting contacted in 1993; identify common themes and concerns; consider the role of regulation in a multi-channel environment; and whether citizens' rights to receive information and ideas and a 'right of reply' can be guaranteed in future; explore the possibilities for establishing mechanisms to enable viewers and listeners to play a positive role in decision-making processes; draw up proposals to present to the European Commission and the Council of Europe prior to the meeting of European Ministers in Prague in December 1994.

The conference fee is UK£240 which includes the conference dinner on 24 June and reception at the House of Commons on 25 June.

## **Further information from:**

Events Organiser  
VLV 101 Kings Drive  
Gravesend  
UK-Kent DA12 5BQ  
Tel: +44/0474/352.835

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## **18 to 29 July 1994**

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The Law Faculty of the Catholic University of Louvain (Belgium), with the support of the European Commission, is organizing a summer programme on the theme 'European Community Consumer Law', aimed at civil servants, representatives of consumer interest organizations or professional associations, lawyers, researchers, graduate students, etc.

The session includes 66 hours of lectures and seminars, in French and English, by the most eminent experts from the European Union. The programme will allow participants to gain a solid knowledge of the mechanisms of Community law affecting consumer protection; see the legal problems they are faced with in their home countries from the perspective of Community law; obtain complete and up-to-date documentation concerning consumer protection; and meet and exchange ideas with participants from other EU and third countries.

Participants will be awarded a certificate signed by the Law Faculty authorities and the Director of the *Centre de droit de la consommation*.

The number of participants is limited to 45 and the deadline for registration is 30 June 1994.

**Further information from:**

Françoise MANIET  
Centre de Droit de la Consommation  
1 Place des Doyens  
B-1348 Louvain-La-Neuve  
Tel: +32/10.47.85.31  
Fax: +32/10.47.85.32

**10 to 12 November 1994**

*The VI<sup>e</sup> European Television and Film Forum* organised by Voice of the Listener and Viewer (VLV)

in Liège, Belgium. The subject to be discussed is "*Towards the Digital Revolution - Television and cinema between market and regulation*". The Forum will be followed by the meeting of the Working Group on 13 November.

**For further information:**

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