



INFO-C

Information from the Consumer Policy Service of the European Commission - Quarterly n°5

A Community Close to Its Citizens.

Since our last issue was published, the European Communities have gone through turbulent times: the referendum on the Maastricht Treaty in France revealed a deeply split population, as did the Danish referendum in June; the European Monetary System came under great strain; and, as a consequence of these two events, an extraordinary European Council was held in Birmingham on October 16.

The Birmingham Declaration, entitled "A Community Close to Its Citizens", underlines among other points the need to demonstrate to the citizens of Europe the benefits of increased European cooperation; but also the need to make the Community more open so that the public debate on the activities of the Communities becomes better informed.

In all modesty, we believe that **Info-C** contributes to these objectives. In this issue we report on the Council of Ministers on Consumer Affairs, held on

November 3, which made substantial progress on a number of issues. A topical article covers Community data bases of interest to consumers: what they contain, how to interrogate them. Notes on cross border shopping and on Community-wide testing of products are also in the same vein.

Furthermore, with this issue the **German version of Info-C** is born. In a letter sent to us recently, the German authorities requested that "in the interest of the nearly 80 million German-speaking consumers" a German version be also issued.

It was a great pleasure to confirm that such a version was already underway - although the number of copies foreseen, 700, reflect the target groups of **Info-C**, i.e. the relay of information multipliers, not the individual consumers. And if present experiences with the French and English versions are anything to go by, the content of even such a modest number of issues will travel far and wide.

"The Internal Market After 1992: Meeting the Challenge"!

The "High Level Group on the Operation of the Internal Market" set up by Messrs Bangemann and Van Miert has published its report under this title. **Chaired by Peter Sutherland**, a former member of the Commission, the HLG draws i.a. the conclusion that the expectations and anxieties of consumers must be taken more strongly into account: without confidence of consumers in the new rules of the game the Single Internal Market will not work properly.

Our readers are encouraged to read the report. It can be obtained from the Commission offices in memberstates.

INFO-C

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OF SPECIAL INTEREST

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CEE: XXIV/14

**Press Release Council Meeting
Consumer Protection and Information
Brussels, 3 November 1992**

President : Baroness DENTON OF WAKEFIELD,
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Department of Trade and Industry
(Consumer Affairs), United Kingdom

COSMETICS

The Council agreed to the substance of a common position on the Directive amending for the sixth time Council Directive 76/768/EEC on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to cosmetic products.

The new Directive is designed to improve and harmonize information for consumers and supervisory authorities on cosmetic products marketed in the Community and thereby to eliminate the last remaining risks of barriers to the free movement of such products in the single market. It also deals with the banning of animal experiments in the cosmetics industry.

In the area of information, the common position provides specifically for the compiling of an inventory of ingredients used in cosmetic products with a view in particular to establishing a common nomenclature for such ingredients. The text also provides for an obligation on producers to indicate the ingredients on the packaging of cosmetic products. In addition, it lays down criteria for the form and content of the information which the manufacturer must keep available for the supervisory authorities, in particular on the identity, quality, efficacy and safety of the product.

With regard to the testing of cosmetics on animals, the common position provides that the Member States shall ban the marketing of cosmetic products containing ingredients or combinations of ingredients tested on animals as from January 1998.

However, in cases where, because of insufficient progress in developing alternatives to animal testing, there are no scientifically validated alternative methods offering an equivalent level of consumer protection, the date of application of the ban will be deferred by decision of

the Commission assisted by a committee composed of representatives of the Member States.

The common position will be formally adopted by the Council as soon as possible, after finalization of the texts.

TIMESHARING

Pending receipt of the European Parliament's Opinion, the Council held a policy debate on the proposal for a Directive designed to afford consumers greater protection in the single market when concluding contracts relating to the utilization of immovable property on a timeshare basis.

The debate, which showed that most delegations were interested in an instrument of this kind, covered a number of key issues relating in particular to the scope of the Directive, the level of information to be provided by vendors and the opportunities for withdrawal offered to purchasers.

The Council instructed the Permanent Representatives Committee to continue examining the proposal on the basis of the Council's debate and in the light of the European Parliament's Opinion.

DISTANCE SELLING

The Council discussed the proposal for a Directive designed to establish a minimum basis for the protection of consumers in respect of contracts negotiated at a distance (distance selling).

Delegations expressed their views on whether Community legislation in this field was desirable and on certain major aspects of the proposal, namely the types of

contract covered by the Directive, the information to be provided by suppliers and arrangements for credit card payments.

The Council instructed the Permanent Representatives Committee to continue examining the proposal, with particular reference to the Opinion of the European Parliament.

SUTHERLAND REPORT

The Council heard a brief presentation by Commissioner VAN MIERT of the report drawn up by the High-level Group on the Operation of the Internal Market (Sutherland Group).

ENFORCEMENT OF CONSUMER PROTECTION LAW

On the basis of a Presidency note the Council discussed closer co-operation between authorities responsible for enforcing consumer protection law in the Community.

Following that discussion, the Presidency noted that delegations were interested in such co-operation, particularly if based on existing structures.

COMMUNITY SYSTEM OF INFORMATION ON ACCIDENTS INVOLVING CONSUMER PRODUCTS (EHLASS)

The Council discussed the EHLASS project (European home and leisure accidents surveillance system).

The aim of EHLASS, which was set up in 1986 as a five-year demonstration project, is to collect information at Member State level on home and leisure accidents involving consumer products, in order to take preventive action in the Community.

The debate showed that there was broad agreement in the Council in favour of continued Community financing for the project.

COMMUNITY SYSTEM FOR THE RAPID EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION

The Council noted the progress made at the Commission in preparing an initiative to ensure the rapid exchange of information with regard to certain products likely to endanger the health and safety of consumers in the period before entry into force, on 29 June 1994 at the latest, of the rapid exchange system provided for the Directive on general product safety.

Databases of the Commission

How can you find out about what is happening in the European Communities?

In Info-C No 3 we already published information on the Consumer Euroguichets network, which is of particular interest to consumers. This time we thought you might appreciate a brief overview of the Commission's online databases. Although there are no databases designed exclusively for consumers, all the general databases are of potential interest to those working in the consumer domain.

Some of the Commission's databases are accessible to the general public. Access is normally online and users are charged for the service. Access contracts can be concluded

- either directly with the Commission through the Office for Official Publications of the European Communi-

ties (OPOCE), Eurobases or Echo (addresses at the end of this article);

- or with a national host (as listed in OPOCE's "Directory of public databases").

Below we provide a brief survey of the bases listed in the alphabetical order of their names or acronyms:

- **ABEL** ("Amtsblatt elektronisch") is a bibliographical database for searching, selecting and ordering documents published in the Official Journal of the European Communities. The documents are entered on the day of publication in the OJ. They are kept for 90 days. The data are available in the nine Community languages.

Consumer Protection

Access is online, after conclusion of a contract with the OPOCE or the national hosts.

- **CATEL** (OPOCE's electronic catalogue) is also a bibliographical database, consisting of two parts:
 - * Catel, for searching, selecting and ordering publications and documents by the Community institutions, and
 - * J.O., for same operations on documents published in the L series of the Official Journal. This base also permits access to documents by the Court of Justice which are contained in the C series of the OJ (only these documents can be consulted in the C series!).

This database is updated once a month (without "rolling data" as is the case with ABEL). It is available in the nine languages.

Access to the database is free of charge. Naturally, you have to pay for any publications you order!

- **CELEX** ("Communitatis Europae Lex") is the inter-institutional computerised documentation system for Community law. It covers
 - * Community legislation - treaties, secondary legislation and supplementary legislation, and agreements resulting from external relations
 - * Case law: judgments and other decisions of the Court of Justice and the Court of First Instance, opinions of the Advocate-General;
 - * Preparatory acts: Commission proposals; communications, reports, programmes, European Parliament resolutions; opinions of the Economic and Social Committee and the Court of Auditors;
 - * Parliamentary questions, oral and written, addressed to the Commission and the Council
 - * National provisions implementing directives: references to national provisions adopted by each Member State to comply with the Community directives.

CELEX is available in all Community languages except Spanish and Portuguese, which are currently being integrated. It is closely linked with the "Directory of Community Legislation in Force" which is updated every six months and published by the OPOCE in the nine Community languages.

The database is accessible:

- * online, on a fee-paying basis, on Eurobases and numerous national hosts;
- * on CD-ROM, from hosts located exclusively in Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom.
- **ECLAS** ("European Commission Library Automated System") is the database of the Commission's Central Library. It contains bibliographical references on European integration - monographs, periodical articles of lasting interest, publications and non-legislative Community documents, publications by other international organisations, and university theses. The database was created in 1978 and now holds approximately 100 000 records. It is growing by approximately 7 000 records per year. It is updated several times per month. Associated with this database is a monthly bibliography on the Communities, a cumulative annual catalogue of Community publications and listings/bibliographies generated on request. These publications can be purchased from the OPOCE.

The databases are accessible online, on a fee-paying basis, on Eurobases and the national hosts.

- **EPOQUE** (European Parliament Online Query System) is the European Parliament's documentary database. It contains
 - * references (but no texts or abstracts except for written questions) on all documents prepared or examined by the EP and studies produced by the EP and national parliaments;
 - * catalogue of the EP library
 - legislative procedures: references and state of progress.

The database was created in 1987 but covers session documents since July 1979. It is in full development: for example, it is planned to integrate data on petitions addressed to the Parliament.

The database is updated on a daily basis and is accessible online, TTY and the EP videotex system OVIDE.

- **EURISTOTE** (Database of theses and university research on European integration) contains two types of entries: professors (approximately 5 900) and studies (13 400). The objectives of this data base are:
 - * to give a comprehensive view of existing and ongoing research in hand in the field of European integration
 - * to encourage the exchange of information between researchers

- * to develop cooperation between researchers with a view to setting up an interactive dialogue via ECHO;
- * to create an inter-university communication network on the study of European integration.

Titles are in the original language, sometimes with translation into one of the official languages. An abstract is prepared in an official language with descriptors in English, German and French.

The database is accessible online, TTY and videotex, free of charge on ECHO host.

- INFO 92 (Information on the single market) covers:
- * completion of the internal market:
 - news items;
 - implementation of the White Paper;
 - national implementing measures

The news items include data on the state of progress of the work of the institutions and the dates of entry into force of the directives.

- * the social dimension of the internal market, i.e. the implementation of the Community Charter on the basic social rights of workers.

The data are consulted via a hierarchical menu - for example, the data on the completion of the internal market have the same arborescent structure as the White Paper.

The database is available online in nine languages, on a fee-paying basis, on Eurobases and the national hosts.

- **RAPID** (Spokesman's service of the Commission) contains the full text of all spokesman's service documents:
- * press releases
- * notes/summaries of Commission proposals and reports
- * "background information" memos
- * speeches by members of the Commission
- * key documents such as European Council conclusions and the Economic Summit communiqués

The base is trilingual - English, German, French. It is updated daily two hours after hardcopy publication.

Access: same as INFO 92.

- **SCAD** ("Community system for accessing documentation") is a news database comprising:

- * references to Community acts, including history of their procedure
- * references to publications of the European Institutions
- * references to articles from periodicals selected because of their Community relevance
- * references to position statements by the two sides of industry.

The languages used are:

- * English and French for the acts, etc.
- * English, German and French for official publications
- * language original for articles, provided it is an official language of the Community;
- * language original for position statements (i.e. English, German or French).

Currently, the database contains approximately 125 000 references. It is growing by approximately 15 000 records each year. There is also a weekly SCAD bulletin and regular SCAD bibliographies.

Access: same as CELEX.

The Commission is currently considering integrating certain private databases which might be of particular interest to consumer organisations (comparative tests, for example). We will keep you briefed.

Office des Publications Officielles des Communautés Européennes

2 rue Mercier
L-2985 Luxembourg
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Fax: +352/48.85.73

Eurobases

Rue de la Loi, 200
B-1049 Bruxelles
Tél: +32/2/295.00.01/03
Fax: +32/2/296.06.24

ECHO

Airport Centre
Rue Höhenhof
Luxembourg
Tél: +352/34.98.11
Fax: +352/34.98.12.34

SANTANDER Film Festival

The second cinema/television festival on consumer goods and the quality of life was held on 4-9 October 1992 in Santander (Cantabria - Spain).

A NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES WERE ORGANISED FOR THE FESTIVAL:

1. THE OFFICIAL COMPETITION (FOUR SECTIONS):

A) Short and full-length films

Full-length films:

- * First prize:
La Côte d'Adam (Adam's Rib / French-Soviet film directed by V. Krishtofovi), for the sensitivity and balance with which this film dealt with inter-generation solidarity and respect for the individual.
- * Second prize:
Il portaborse (The Briefcase Carrier / Italian film directed by D. Luchetti), for its vivid presentation of the problem of political honesty in a society in which consumer goods have such an important role.
- * Third prize:
Im Westen alles nach Plan (All goes well in the West/ German film directed by H. Clashen and F. Huse), for providing an opportunity for men and women to describe a society which does not always have the means to guarantee all its citizens the same basic rights.

The following films were also given a special mention for their good cinematographic quality:

- * *La Lanterne rouge* (The Red Lantern / Chinese film by Zhang Yimou)
- * *Vacas* (The Cows / Spanish film by Julio Meden)

Short films

- * First prize:
La Hiedra (The Ivy / directed by A. Conesa).

- * Second prize:
Entretiempo (The Off-season / directed by S. Garcia de Leaniz).
- * Third prize:
La última respuesta (The Last Reply / directed by M. Olid Suero).

B) TV productions

- * First prize:
Op de koop toe (Belgian (BRTN) consumer programme produced by L. Wetter and E. Bruijlandt). This programme was chosen for the direct and useful way in which it drew public attention to topics of interest to consumers.
- * Second prize:
Interpol für gefährliche Produkte (Interpol for Dangerous Goods, by B. Lepthin).
- * Third prize:
Mala Suerte (Bad Luck, produced by G. Quintana - TVE). This programme was chosen because its subject, the quality of life, was universally comprehensible thanks to its narrative technique.

C) Information and education videos

- * First prize:
Vivir en movimiento (Life and Movement / video produced by A. Mejias for the "Direccion General de Trafico").
- * Second prize:
Gente de talia menuda (Short People / video produced by E. Rodriguez Bosch for "Viavideo Television").
- * Joint third prize:
 - *Le canapé vert* (The Green Couch / video produced by E. Juillac for the "Centre technologique régional de consommation").
 - *Oficina movil de informacion al consumidor* (Mobile Information Bureau for the Consumer / produced by L. Alvarez Guerdiga for the "Diputacion de Valladolid").

The following videos received an honourable mention:

- * *Es divertido, pero no es un juego* (Amusing, but not a Game), for its realistic presentation of youthful sexuality.

- * *Una nueva mirada* (A New Look) for its suggestion that closer attention be paid to the reality of drug taking.
- * *Il Curso de la Escuela Permanente del Consumo* (The course of the permanent school for consumers) and
- * *El sueño Consumista* (The consumer dream) for the way they presented the training and education of consumers.
- * *Save the Whales*, for drawing attention to the need to protect species.

D) Spots

- * First prize:
Aburrido (Boring: spot about the Spanish railways - RENFE/produced by I. Single). The jury thus signified its approval of the general campaign undertaken by RENFE to promote rail traffic; the spot looked at the question from different points of view and can be understood in different contexts.
- * Second prize:
Sale el metro (The Tube is starting / spot produced by J. Gershfield). This spot presents, in a straightforward and humorous way, the advantages of the introduction of the underground railway for the city of Bilbao.
- * Third prize:
Droga olos (spot on drugs, produced by J. J. Diaz). This spot shows that the social rehabilitation of drug addicts is not just a problem for the individual but for society as a whole. It effectively conveys a social message thanks to its artistic quality.

Prize of the Commission of the European Communities

A panel nominated by the Commission of the European Communities awarded this prize to the audiovisual production (of whatever category) which made the greatest contribution to the promotion of the rights of European consumers.

- * EC prize: *Im Westen alles nach Plan* (German full-length film which had already won a prize in its own category). With its presentation of the everyday life of disadvantaged people this film poses the problem of the exclusion from the consumer society of certain categories of citizen.

The prizes were presented by various actors including Ursula Andres who honoured the event with her presence.

2. THE CINEMA FORUM

Four debates, with the participation of specialists, were organised in relation to films which were presented "hors concours":

- * "*My Father*": debate on third-age problems.
- * "*The General*": debate on public services.
- * "*The Accidental Tourist*": debate on tourism.
- * "*Double Indemnity*": debate on insurance.

3. A TRIBUTE TO JOSE FERNANDEZ AGUAYO

Presentation of this cameraman and screening of two films on which he worked.

- * *Tristana* by L. Buñuel
- * *La Duda* (The Doubt) by Rafael Gil

4. A TRIBUTE TO THE BBC

Presentation of the work of the BBC by Bryher Scudamore, director and programme manager of the programme "That's Life".

Screening of TV programmes, including "Watchdog" and "Crimewatch".

5. INFORMATION STANDS OF SPANISH CONSUMER ASSOCIATIONS

There was a large attendance, mainly Spanish, at the screening of the full-length films and at the closing ceremony of the festival.

EFTA CCC

At their meeting in Reykjavik on 20-21 May this year, the ministers of EFTA decided to set up a Consumer Consultative Committee, CCC, as part of the follow-up to the signing of the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA) on 2 May 1992.

This decision has now been implemented. The EFTA CCC is composed of up to three representatives from each country. They should come from the national consumer organisations and institutions or as individuals, and should be specially qualified in consumer affairs as well as independent of producer interests and government policy.

The EFTA CCC may be consulted or may give opinions on its own initiative. The Committee exchanges in-

formation and co-operates with EFTA government experts on consumer protection.

The EFTA CCC has grown out of this so-called Subcommittee (to the EFTA Consultative Committee) on Consumer Policy Affairs, which was a forum for co-operation between consumer organisations and cooperations, unions as well as producer interests.

For further information, please contact

EFTA
European Free Trade Association
SIRKKA POTILA
Senior Officer
Specific Integration Affairs
Rue d'Arlon 118
1040 BRUXELLES
TEL : 32/2.230.66.31
TELEFAX : 32/2.230.75.11

CROSS-BORDER SHOPPING

In the September 1992 issue of "Which?", the magazine of the British "Consumers' Association", you will find an article entitled "Buying in the EC : Your Shopping Guide". The article consists in particular of imaginary - but entirely feasible - cases of cross-border purchasing that go wrong, followed by advice on what to do in these circumstances. The article includes a list of tips for trouble-free (cross-border) shopping. Among the general policy recommendations made is a suggestion to establish a network of small-claims courts in all European Countries.

Contact :
WHICH ?
2, Marylebone Road
LONDON NW1 4DF
Tel : 44/71.486.55.44
Fax : 44/71.935.16.06

EUROPEAN CAMERA AND CAMCORDER GUIDE

November 1992 sees an International milestone for Consumer organisations with launch of the first ever jointly published magazine, the Guide to Cameras and

Camcorders which will appear in eight languages in thirteen countries.

The 112 page guide carries results on 150 cameras and camcorders all independently tested in joint tests by leading European Consumer organisations with the backing of International Testing (IT), a leading international consumer testing and research organisation.

The Guide (produced with a subsidy from the European Commission) carries detailed test results with advantages, drawbacks and verdicts on each model. A round-Europe price survey pinpoints the cheapest place in Europe to buy each camera along, with the price in the readers own country - well-timed to help consumers take advantage of the Single Market. Buying information includes a unique worldwide survey showing where to buy the Best Buys at the lowest prices further afield and what to look out for when buying mail order. Also included are tips for getting the best results from your cameras or camcorder.

Contact:

International Testing for details of where to order copies:

2, Marylebone Road
LONDON NW1 4DF
Tel : 44/71/486.55.44
Fax : 44/71/935.16.06

Languages available :

English	Italian
German	Portuguese
French	Danish
Spanish	Dutch

Available in :

England	Italy
Germany	Holland
France	Finland
Belgium	Switzerland
Spain	Austria
Portugal	Australia
Denmark	

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Barriers

There are several types of barriers which are used for improving child safety. Examples are fire-guards, baby-gates for stairs and railings around platforms of playground equipment. In order to improve the safety of these barriers a hazard-based approach seems feasible, taking into account both ergonomic data and information on the psychomotor development of children.

For this purpose information is needed on accidents; both on accidents that have happened because of the absence of barriers or because of their improper functioning. For this the Dutch Consumer Safety Institute would like to receive information on research dealing with these kinds of accidents, and on criteria to assess barrier safety.

Drownings

The Consumer Safety Institutes is performing a study on the prevention of rowing accidents. Although it is already possible to give general instructions on how to improve water safety, a number of questions remain in which the pros and cons of certain measures seem to balance out. An example of this is the use of dense, prickly bushes along the waterside. Although they may prevent children from reaching the water, they hinder supervision. The Institute would like come into contact with others working in this field to discuss this and other items. People who are interested in giving information, in some detail, about measures taken, with the pros and cons known so far, are invited to respond. Afterwards all contributors will receive copies of the information gathered.

For information, please contact

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1070 AD Amsterdam
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CENTRAL AND EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

1. Consumer Protection in Europe Agreements

The relations between the European Community and these countries are subject to expansion also in the Consumer Protection Policy area.

In the Europe Agreements with Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Roumania, one finds an article on consumer protection:

1. The parties shall cooperate with the aim of achieving full compatibility between the systems of consumer protection in Roumania and the Community.
2. To this end, the cooperation shall comprise, within existing possibilities:
 - * the exchange of information and experts,
 - * access to Community data bases,
 - * training operations and technical assistance.

For further information please contact :

Commission of the European Communities

Unit I/E/3
Rue de la loi, 200
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Tel : +32-2-295.14.74/ 295.22.48

2. The KERMI Institute of Hungary

The KERMI Institute is the Institute of Commercial Quality Control, working under the supervision of the Hungarian Ministry of Trade and Industry.

It has various laboratories at its disposal equipped for carrying out precise, objective tests on consumer products placed on the market.

Its experts play an important role in deciding on consumers' complaints, in performing control-tasks and in other activities to safeguard consumers' interests, as for example making product tests and publishing the results.

KERMI is an independently managed institution with varied interests.

It charges expenses for the tests carried out on behalf of enterprises. The tests arising from consumers' complaints are free of charge to the consumers.

For further information please contact :

KERMI

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