

WEEKLY

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We have asked various organizations in the Community dealing with consumer protection to LIST THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS, in each of the nine Community countries, in MATTERS DIRECTLY AFFECTING CONSUMERS. These texts are of course published on the sole responsibility of the authors.

ANNEX I contains a text drafted by the Belgian Federation of Cooperatives.

** The use of surface water for the production of drinking water requires a detailed definition of the maximum permissible levels of pollution and nuisances consistent with standards of health and hygiene. No such definition is as yet contained in the laws and regulations of the various Member States. For this reason the European Commission recently proposed that the Council of Ministers of the Community adopt a directive laying down THE QUALITY REQUIRED FOR SURFACE WATER INTENDED TO BE ABSTRACTED FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION in the Member States.

ANNEX 2 contains a summary of this proposal.

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Further information is available from the Commission's press and information offices in the countries listed on the inside cover.

The information published in this bulletin covers the European Communities' activities in the fields of industrial development, protection of the environment and consumer welfare. It is therefore not limited to recording Commission decisions or opinions.

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** The harmonization of national laws is essential for the FREE MOVEMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES WITHIN THE COMMUNITY. Since 1970, the Council of Ministers of the Community has adopted twelve Directives on this matter and is examining further proposals from the European Commission. This special programme should be finally adopted by 1975.

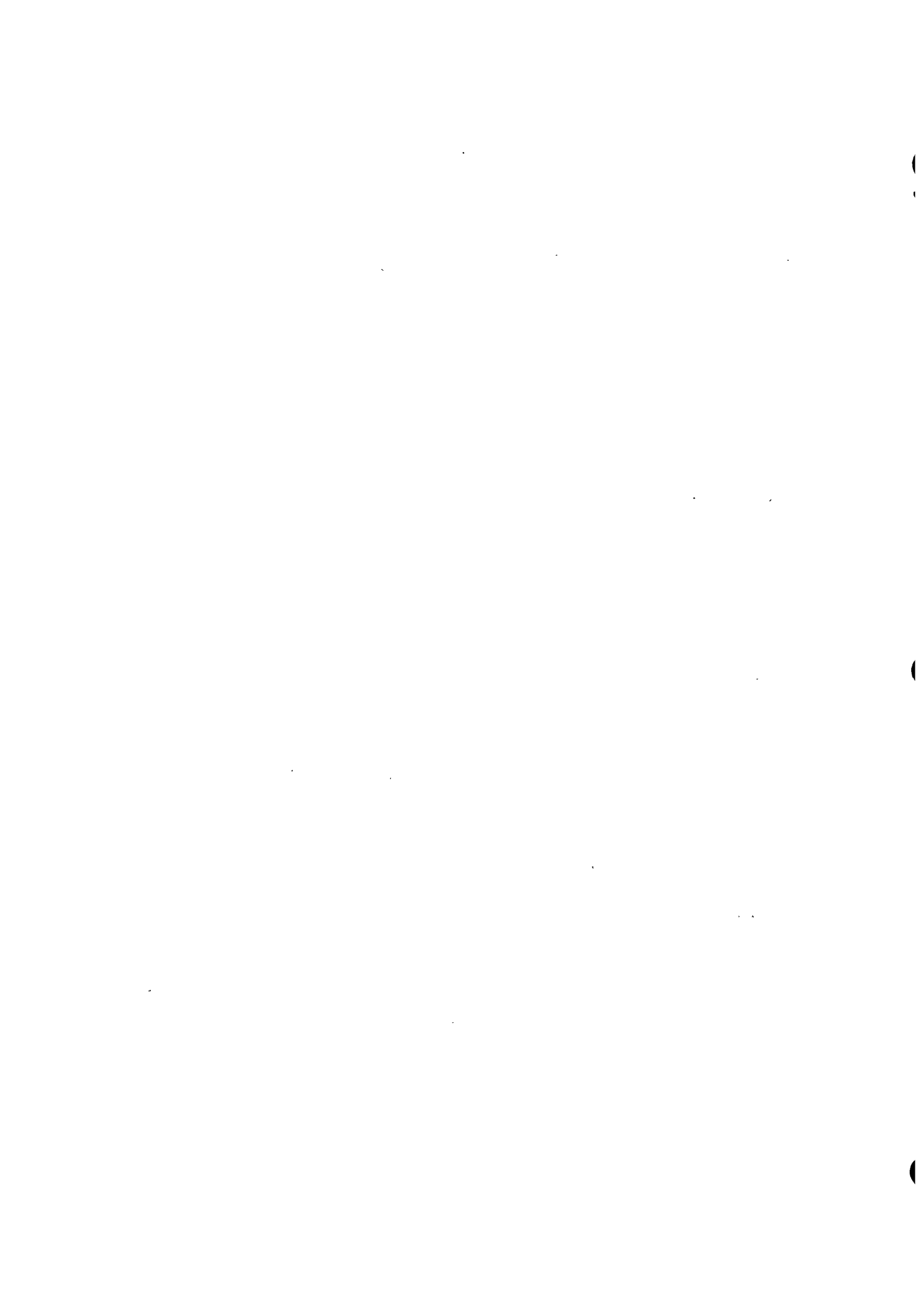
ANNEX 3 contains further information on several of these Directives.

** The BUSINESS COOPERATION CENTRE (see IRT No. 158) made a very strong impression in its first six months. This is seen from the first annual report on the activities of this "marriage bureau" for firms, set up in May 1973 to encourage cooperation among firms in the Community.

ANNEX 4 contains a summary of this report.

** Member States must make a monthly confidential statement to the European Commission showing the average value of their imports of crude oil and petroleum products, per country of origin and per firm. This is the proposal recently made by the Commission to the Council of Ministers of the Community. Refineries will also have to PUBLISH THEIR SELLING PRICES, NOT INCLUDING TAX, FOR A WHOLE SERIES OF PETROLEUM PRODUCTS, and also any change in these prices.

** According to the TIMETABLE for the work of the European Commission in connection with the Community action programme on the ENVIRONMENT, between now and the end of February the Commission will request the

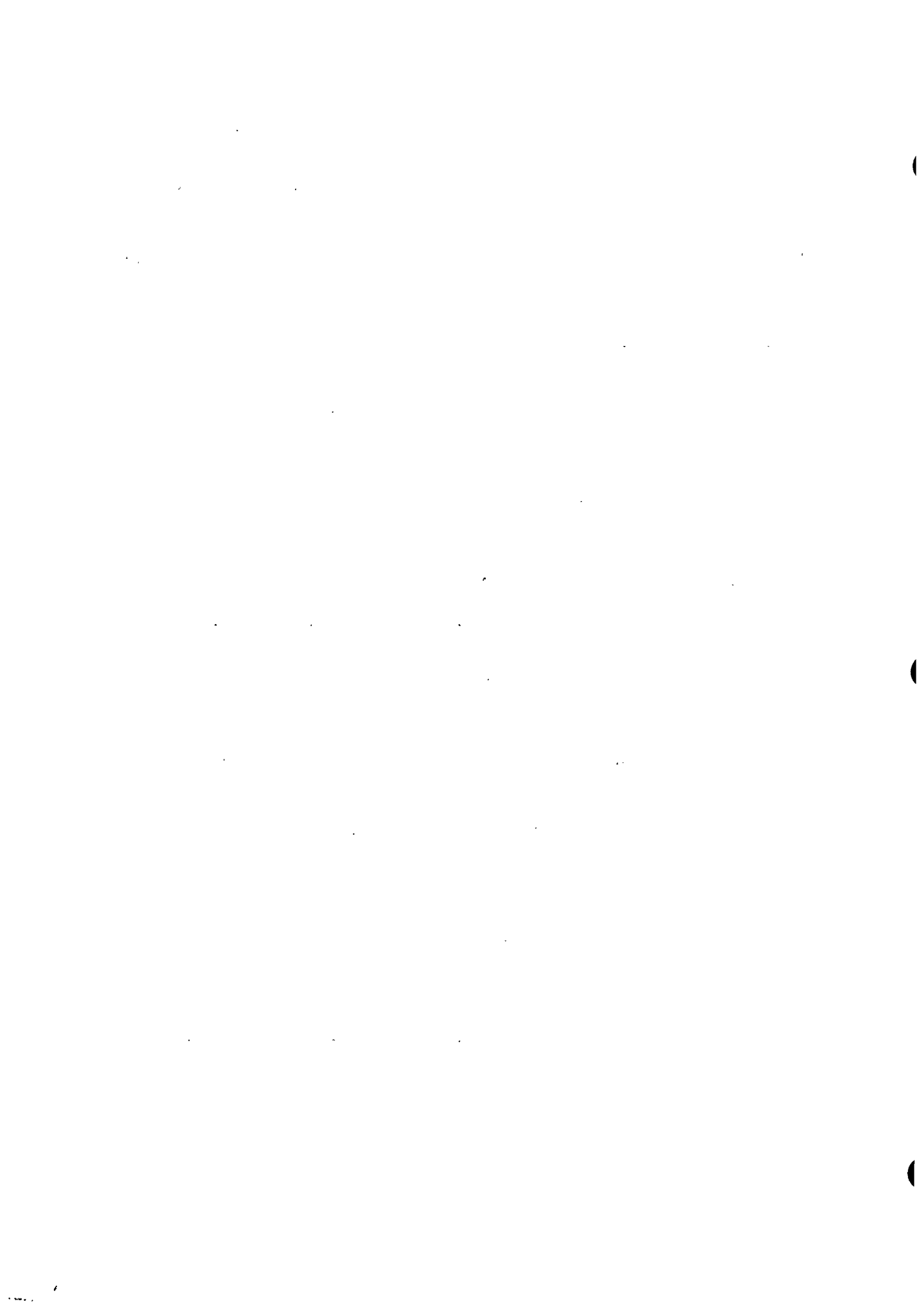


Council of Ministers of the Community to adopt the following proposals:

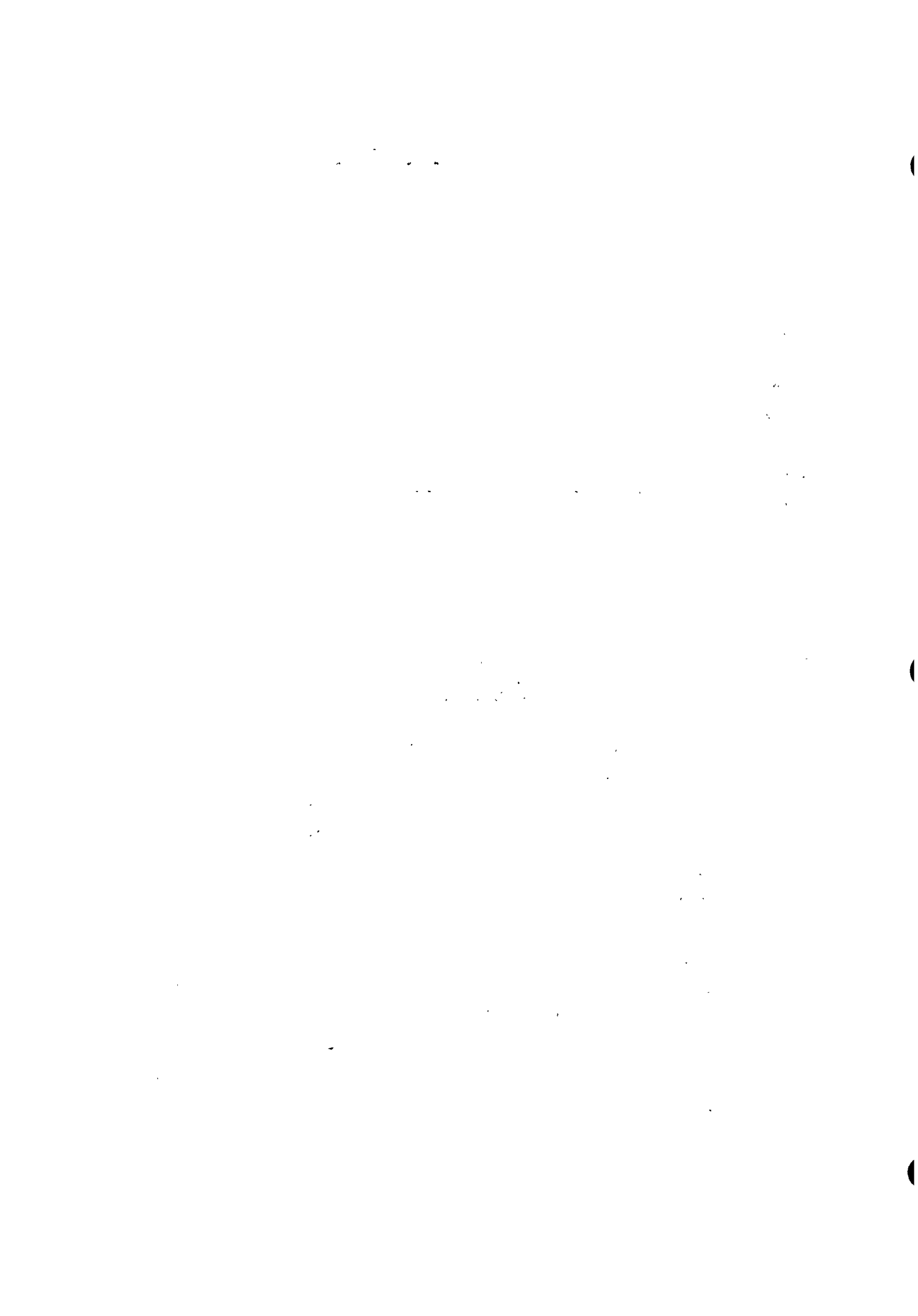
1. A draft directive on the harmonization of laws relating to the sulphur content of gas-oil.
2. A recommendation relating to the allocation of anti-pollution costs and the main outline of common rules for the application of the "polluter pays" principle.
3. A draft directive on the harmonization of laws relating to the disposal of waste oils.
4. A summary of the problems of pollution and nuisances arising from the production of energy.
5. Proposals relating to the Conference on the Law of the Sea.

** The car industry at present supports, either directly or indirectly, approximately 10% of the population of Europe. Over the last ten years, it has had a growth rate of about 8%. The question is how long such a growth rate can be maintained. For this reason the European Commission has requested experts to make a study of the PROBABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CAR INDUSTRY OVER THE NEXT TEN YEARS.

** Any halt in the supply of electricity to the three main consumer sectors, namely industry, transport and domestic users, would seriously disrupt the essential economic activities of the European Community. The European Commission recently proposed, therefore, that the Council of Ministers of the Community adopt a directive obliging electricity producers to MAINTAIN FUEL RESERVES AT FOSSIL-FUELLED POWER PLANTS. These reserves should make it possible at any time to meet estimated demand for a period of 50 days.

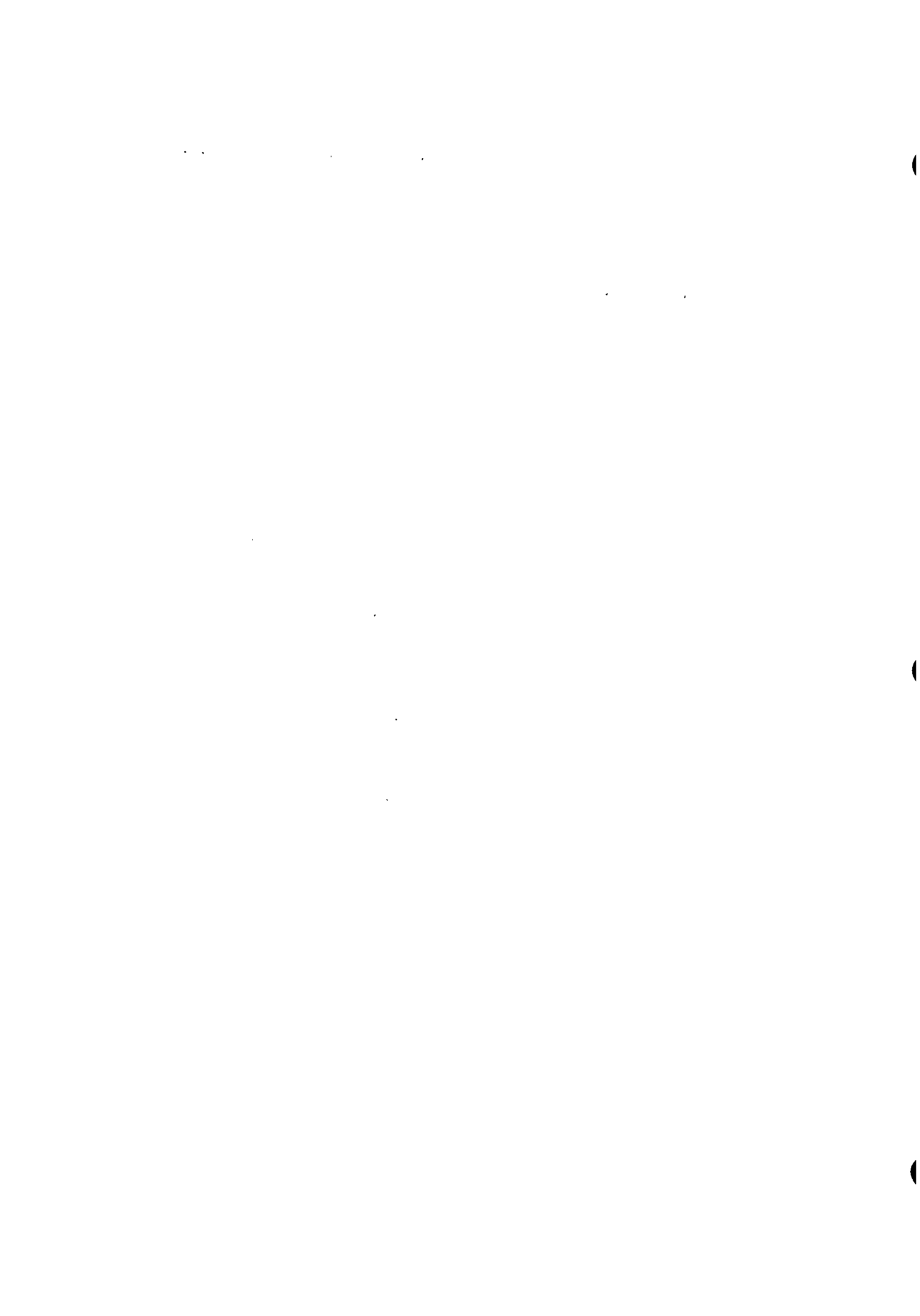


- ** At the instigation of the European Commission, the Rand GmbH Company of Frankfurt, a subsidiary of Sperry Corporation, recently abolished a series of provisions which were contrary to the rules of the Community Treaty on the MAINTENANCE OF COMPETITION, and which this company applied in its imposed-price contracts and its conditions of delivery and sale for Remington electric razors, electric clocks and ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT.
- ** An INVENTORY OF INDUSTRIAL STUDIES ON AFRICAN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (four volumes) containing some 900 brief descriptions of studies of industrial projects, realized or unrealized, in African countries, may be obtained by applying to the European Commission (DG VIII/B/1, 200 rue de la Loi, 1040 Brussels).
- ** The European Commission recently published a preliminary study on MEASURES TO COMBAT POLLUTION IN THE RHINE BASIN. This pollution seriously hinders the use of water for various purposes, including drinking, agriculture and some industrial operations. Among the measures planned or recommended, the creation of an Agency for the Rhine Basin and the stepping up of research into this Basin are of particular importance. This document is available from the Official Publications Office of the European Communities (Post Box 1003, Luxembourg).
- ** Mr Grierson, hitherto Director-General for Industrial Affairs of the European Commission has recently been appointed Adviser hors classe of the Commission. Mr Loeff will in the meantime carry out the duties of Director-General, under the political authority of Mr Spinelli, Member of the Commission with special responsibility for industrial affairs.



- ** In a large special issue of the Belgian magazine, "Reflets et perspectives", dealing with the SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION, Mr Carpentier, Director of the Environment and Consumer Protection Service of the European Commission, summarizes the Community action programme on the environment (see IRT No. 185).
- ** A typing error having occurred in statistics published in No. 2/74 of "Industry and Society", we wish to state that the degree of ENERGY DEPENDENCE OF THE COMMUNITY COUNTRIES (i.e., the ratio between net imports, minus bunkers, and primary energy consumption) in 1972, according to the Statistical Office of the European Communities, was as follows:

Denmark	99.6%
Luxembourg	99.5%
Belgium	82.8%
Italy	81.0%
France	75.0%
FR Germany	53.1%
United Kingdom	49.7%
Netherlands	15.6%
Community of Nine	60.8%



RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN CONSUMER PROTECTION IN BELGIUM

We asked various organizations interested in consumer protection in the Community to review for us the most recent developments in each of the nine Community countries in matters of direct concern to consumers. The opinions expressed, of course, are those of the authors. The text below is by the Belgian Federation of Cooperatives.

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In this last quarter of 1973, consumers can chalk up two definite successes, one concerning representations to the public authorities (on the quality of meat) and the other concerning their credibility and the hearing they obtain among the general public (Consumers' Committee on Belgian Radio and Television).

With regard to the quality of meat, the point of departure is a veal boycott initiated at the beginning of the year on the radio by a consumers' organization. The success exceeded expectations: sales of veal dropped by 60%.

A press campaign, a debate in the National Consumers' Council and questions to the Minister did the rest: the consumers obtained what they wanted, efficient inspection of meat quality, particularly with regard to certain substances such as oestrogen and androgen which will in future be detected by the histological method (consumers will have to remain vigilant to ensure that this new regulation is applied).

The Consumers' Advisory Committee is a delegation of the Consumers' Council (including therefore representatives of producers, distributors, and also the middle classes) which gives its opinion to the various journalists on radio and television who specialize in consumer questions.

This recognition of the importance of consumers' organizations is accompanied by a heavy increase in the broadcasting time of programmes specifically concerning them. The programmes now include:

-- on radio:

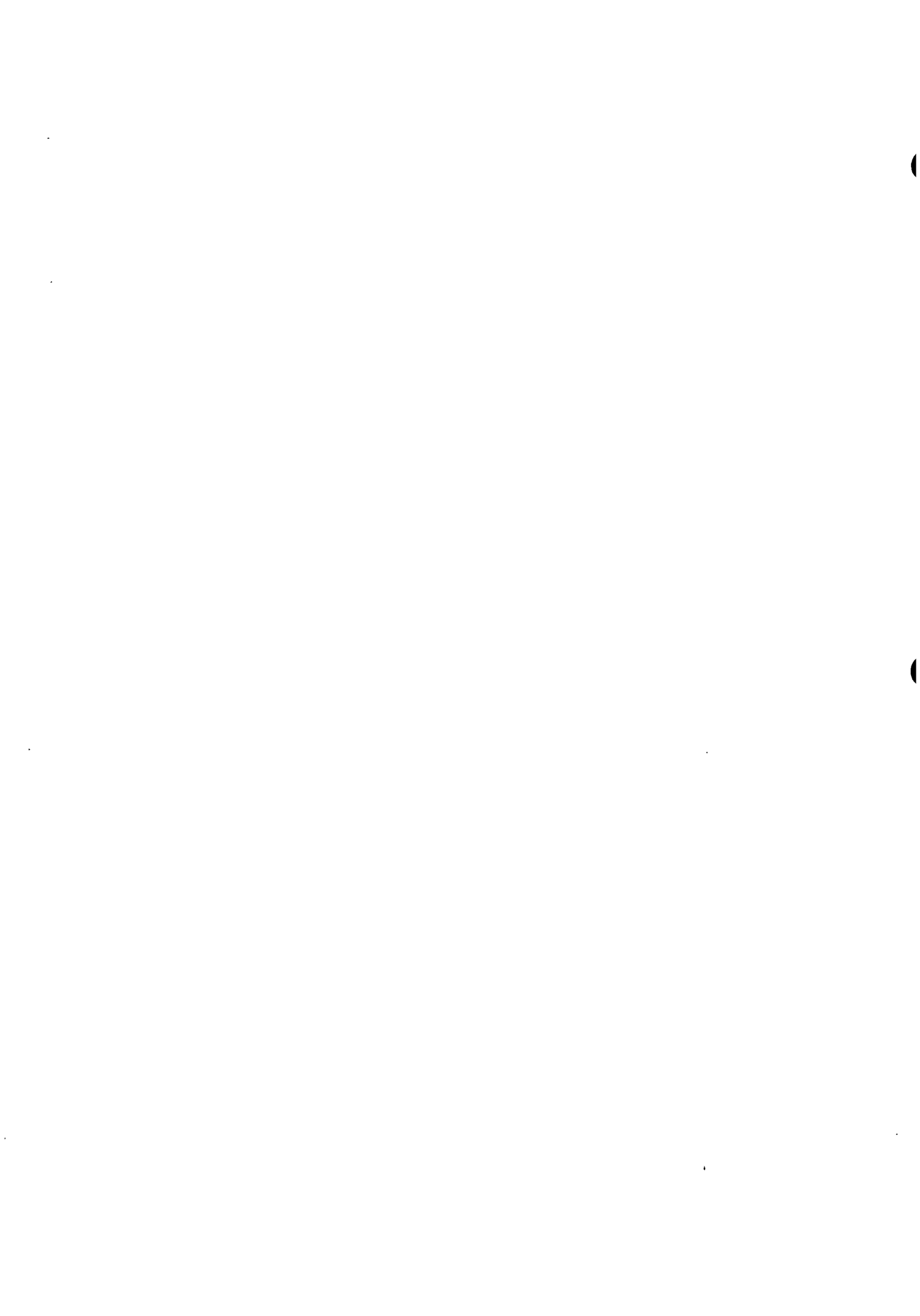
- 1 daily newsflash (in French)
- 1 bi-monthly broadcast lasting 10-15 min (in French)
- 2 daily newsflashes lasting 5 min each (in Dutch)
- 1 monthly broadcast lasting 30 min (in Dutch)

-- on TV:

- 1 daily newsflash (in French)
- 1 bi-monthly broadcast lasting 20 min (in French)
- 1 monthly broadcast lasting 30 min (in French)
- 1 monthly broadcast lasting 50 min (in French)
- 1 monthly broadcast lasting 45 min (in Dutch)

The last quarter also included a political effort at national and European level: the amendment of the proposal for a Directive on cosmetics. For two years, consumers have been demanding positive lists and a prior registration method for finished products.

Lastly, the National Consumers' Council can chalk up what is probably a "first": it has applied itself to a topical large-scale problem with world-wide implications: energy.



QUALITY REQUIRED FOR SURFACE WATERS INTENDED FOR DRINKING WATER
PRODUCTION

The use of surface waters for the production of drinking water necessitates a detailed definition of maximum pollution and nuisance levels consistent with respect for health requirements. So far, there is no such definition in the laws, regulations or administrative provisions of the various Member States. Therefore the Commission of the European Communities recently proposed to the Council of Ministers the adoption of a Directive laying down the quality required for surface waters intended for the production of drinking water in the Member States. This proposal was presented in accordance with the Programme of Action of the European Communities on the Environment (see IRT No. 185) which proposes the definition of environmental quality objectives.

Private drinking water requirements are assessed on average at 100 litres per person per day, whereas public service requirements are proportional to the concentration of population and may exceed 500 litres per person per day in cities of over a million inhabitants. For water supplies, use is usually made of ground water and surface water (lakes, water courses and reservoirs). Generally speaking, this system of supply requires purification facilities, particularly for river water, which is very often polluted by waste of various origins and degrees of concentration, toxicity and noxiousness.

The Commission proposes that limiting thresholds should be fixed uniformly for the entire Community defining the quality required for

surface waters used for the production of drinking water. These thresholds concern the concentration of various toxic products (mercury, lead, pesticides, etc.) and a certain number of parameters which may have harmful effects (conductivity, coloration, temperature, etc.).

The permissible levels adopted by the Commission are presented as follows:

- certain thresholds are imperative and compulsory;
- others are indicative and should be considered as guidelines;
- some, however, can be waived, particularly when there are exceptional meteorological or geographical circumstances.

These different thresholds proposed by the Commission can moreover have different values depending on the degree of purification applied.

The quality of drinking water taken as a reference for defining these standards is derived from the European standards for drinking water drawn up in 1970 by the World Health Organization. They have been adopted provisionally and will be reviewed later in the light of work and research in hand.

HARMONIZATION OF LAWS ON MOTOR VEHICLES

The Commission of the European Communities expects that the harmonization of national laws on motor vehicles will be completed in 1975.

Thus, every vehicle which satisfies the Community rules and which has been inspected by the authorities of a Member State will then be able to be sold and used throughout Community territory. Manufacturers must guarantee that every vehicle placed on the market is identical to the prototype which has received the Community type approval. The harmonization of the laws is based on the strictest regulations already in force in the Member States and will therefore result in greater safety for drivers and their passengers, and also help to reduce noise and air pollution.

New proposals

The Council of Ministers has already adopted 12 Directives on motor vehicles and 12 others are awaiting approval.

Four proposals were addressed to the Council very recently. The first lays down Community standards for the design of fog lights, the second deals with external projections on vehicles which may cause injury in the event of accidents (these include bumpers, door handles, hub caps and ornamental motifs). The third Directive concerns the design of reflex-reflectors. The last Directive, forwarded in December 1973, concerns lighting and signalling devices of motor vehicles and their trailers.

This last Directive is very important for road safety.

It concerns the fitting of the various lighting and signalling systems and specifies what is compulsory, forbidden and optional. It defines the specifications of the number, position, visibility, orientation and grouping of lighting devices and electric cabling for these systems. For instance, vehicles receiving Community type approval must be fitted at least with driving lights, passing lights, direction indicators, stop lights, rear registration plate lights, front and rear position lights, rear fog lights, non-triangular red rear reflex-reflectors and the distress signal.

The requirements concern also the colours of the various lights: only white is allowed for the reversing light, only red for the stop light, the rear position lights, the rear fog lights and the triangular or non-triangular rear reflex-reflectors, and only amber for the direction indicators and the distress signal.

The driving and passing lights may however be either white or amber, at the option of the user.

Noise level

The Commission has recently been questioned several times about the permissible noise level for motor vehicles. It stated that, at the present stage of technical development, a reduction of about three decibels was possible in the noise level of motor vehicles, without any significant modification of the vehicles. The necessary amendments to the existing Directives are in preparation.

The reduction thus obtained will be about 30 to 40%.

Amendments to Directives already adopted

The Commission proposed two amendments to Directives already adopted by the Council. The first relates to new methods of testing the engine exhaust silencer system (first Directive adopted in February 1970); technical progress now permits these to be tested under conditions almost comparable with those of actual use.

The second amendment is to the Directive on measures to be adopted against air pollution by exhaust gases from motor vehicles, which was adopted in April 1970. This amendment proposes a reduction in the carbon monoxide and unburned hydrocarbon content of the gases.

At the end of December, the special Committee responsible for amendments to the Directives turned its attention to the Directive on the braking system of certain categories of motor vehicles. The amendments concern the device for correcting braking as a function of load distribution on the axles.

Directives in preparation

In 1974, seven new Directives will be addressed to the Council for approval in 1975; these relate in particular to safety belts and tyres.

DIRECTIVES ADOPTED BY THE COUNCIL

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Date</u>
1. Type approval of motor vehicles and their trailers	February 1970
2. Permissible sound level and the exhaust system of motor vehicles	February 1970
3. Location and mounting of rear registration plates of motor vehicles and their trailers	April 1970
4. Liquid fuel tanks and rear protective devices of motor vehicles and their trailers	April 1970
5. Measures to be adopted against air pollution by exhaust gases from controlled ignition engines	April 1970
6. Steering systems of motor vehicles	June 1970
7. Audible warning systems of motor vehicles	August 1970
8. Doors of motor vehicles	August 1970
9. Rear-view mirrors of motor vehicles	March 1971
10. Braking systems of certain categories of motor vehicles	September 1971
11. Suppression of radio interference of motor vehicles	July 1972
12. Measures to be adopted against pollutant emissions from Diesel engines	August 1972

PROPOSALS FOR DIRECTIVES ADDRESSED TO THE COUNCIL BUT NOT YET APPROVED

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Date sent to Council</u>
1. Direction indicators of motor vehicles	July 1965
2. Field of vision, windscreen wipers and windscreen washers of motor vehicles	August 1968
3. Electrical connections for motor vehicle trailers	August 1968

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Date sent to Council</u>
4. Devices to prevent unauthorized use of the vehicle	July 1972
5. Safety glasses of motor vehicles	September 1972
6. Interior fittings of motor vehicles (protection of the driver from the steering wheel in the event of an impact)	September 1972
7. Interior fittings of motor vehicles (resistance of seats and their attachment)	May 1973
8. Interior fittings (internal parts of the cabin or passenger space other than the internal rear-view mirror or mirrors, roof or openable roof, arrangement of controls, seat back and rear portion of seat)	May 1973
9. Installation of lighting and light signalling systems of motor vehicles and their trailers	December 1973
10. Design of fog lights of motor vehicles	December 1973
11. Exterior projections of motor vehicles	December 1973
12. Design of reflex-reflectors of motor vehicles and their trailers	January 1974



REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE BUSINESS COOPERATION CENTRE

The first report on the activities of the Business Cooperation Centre set up in May 1973 to promote cooperation between Community firms has recently been produced by the Commission of the European Communities. It shows that, in the first six months of its existence, this "marriage bureau" for firms has exerted an important influence and obtained tangible results in the various tasks assigned to it.

Information of firms

The best results were obtained by the Centre in the first task entrusted to it, i.e., the provision of firms with information on the economic, legal, fiscal and administrative aspects of international cooperation schemes and links. By the end of October, the Centre had recorded 607 requests for information. Though a good half of these were not within the Centre's scope, others did relate to cooperation problems and the Centre endeavoured to reply to them as fully as possible, sometimes by using its network of external correspondents. The questions put were mainly concerned with company law, contract law, international fiscal systems, regulations on investment and exchange control.

Introductions to firms seeking links

At the end of October, there had been 582 requests to find partners. In the first two or three months of the Centre's existence, there was a very striking difference between the Member States, with Italy and France behind Germany and Britain. An information campaign was aimed at France and Italy and there is now a certain improvement.

There are few surprises as regards the sectors: those most interested are structural and mechanical engineering, the food industry, textiles, clothing and services.

The average size of the firms was about 250 employees. Most were well within the range for which the Centre was set up: they were small or medium-sized firms which had already fairly fully exploited the possibilities of their regional and national markets, and were trying to find further opportunities through links with partners in other Community countries.

More than half the requests were for cooperation in production and marketing; about 40% were contemplating financial links, extending as far as a controlling interest or a merger.

At the beginning of October, the Centre circulated a first set of 42 offers of cooperation, of which the examination was completed (information on the characteristics of the firm seeking a link, definition of the partner's profile and the links sought, etc.). Allowing a minimum of six months' negotiations between the firms for cooperation governed by contract (mergers may take longer), the first actual links should be achieved towards the middle of 1974.

The identification of obstacles to links

In order to fulfil its third function, which is to inform the competent Community authorities of the obstacles which the firms and the Centre encounter in seeking transnational links at Community

level, the Centre will require wider experience than it yet has. Already, however, it can confirm that the proposals made by the Commission in the field of the creation of legal instruments for integration at Community level (the European cooperation "groupment", the European company) and in the field of international taxation (fiscal system relating to mergers, fiscal system relating to parent and subsidiary companies of different nationalities) correspond to real needs.

At the conclusion of this first period of activity, it may be said that the creation of the Business Cooperation Centre undoubtedly fulfils a need felt by businessmen in the Community. It is already playing the part of a catalyst, and the collaboration links which it has established with national organizations could in particular help to improve the structure of the promotion of inter-firm cooperation in the various Member States.

