

# European Community

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## News Release

### BACKGROUND NOTE

A "PEOPLE'S EUROPE" ON THE EVE OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL

TO BE HELD IN THE HAGUE JUNE 26 - 27

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The 1974 E.C. Paris summit stressed the importance of man-in-the street participation in the policy-making of Community institutions. In June 1984, the European Council, held at Fontainebleau, favoured giving the Community a new dimension by bringing it closer to the hopes of the individual European. To that end it instructed an ad hoc committee to determine how the Community might respond to "the expectations of the people of Europe. It recommended adopting "measures to strengthen and promote (the Community's) identity and its image both for its citizens and the rest of the world".

To underline its interest in such endeavours, the Commission entrusted EC Commissioner Ripa di Meana in 1985 with a new portfolio relating to a "People's Europe" and appointed him to the ad hoc committee as representative of the President of the Commission.

The ad hoc committee drew up two reports which were approved by the European Councils held in Brussels in March 1985 and in Milan in June 1985 respectively. The first identifies the specific measures which would enable the individual Community citizen to take advantage of the right to freedom of movement and residence within the Community, whether as a worker or on a private basis. The second report aimed at giving the Community a new political, cultural and social dimension by proposing specific measures such as new rights for citizens, new opportunities for mobility for young people, and action to promote culture and health protection.

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### What has been achieved ?

Since 1985 a number of initiatives have been put into effect in response to these new stimuli, of which the most significant are :

- the issuing of Community passports in most of the Member States (1985-1986);
- the mutual recognition of architects' and pharmacists' diplomas (June-September 1985);
- the updating to 350 European Currency Units (Cdn. \$ 450) of the duty-free allowance for travellers within the Community (October 1985);
- equal access for young people to museums and cultural events (December 1985);
- agreement by the institutions on the use of the European flag (March-April 1986);
- abolition of the postal tax known as the customs clearing charge on small consignments (March 1986);
- several measures in the health sector, in particular the adoption of a European emergency health card, an anti-cancer campaign and a campaign in the field of toxicology (29 May 1986);
- the COMETT programme which aims at giving a Community dimension to cooperation between universities, industry and research centres (7 June 1985).

### Measures still before the Council

Despite these achievements, the end result of initiatives relating to a People's Europe remains unsatisfactory. The Council has not yet been able to adopt a number of proposals which the Commission regards as of high priority in this field.

These are, first of all, proposals relating to simplification of passport checking formalities at inter-Community frontiers (1985) and residence rights for students and non-working Community nationals (1979). Furthermore, the Council has still to act on proposals aimed at :

- promoting the mobility of students and cooperation between the universities of the Member States (Erasmus programme 1985);
- promoting exchanges of young people within the Community (YES for Europe 1986);

- setting up a general system for mutual recognition of higher education diplomas (1985);
- doing away with customs signs at the Community's internal frontiers (1985).

Finally, in the cultural sector, the proposal for a system of Community aid for television and cinema coproductions (1985) has not found acceptance within the Council. Taking account of the opinions expressed by the Council, the Commission recently proposed a new and more wide-ranging approach aimed at strengthening European audiovisual production.

#### New initiatives

The Commission is constantly endeavouring to stimulate action on measures still pending. It will present the Hague European Council with a report summarizing work done in this field and expressing its concern over delays. It will urge the Heads of State and Government to give a new political impetus to the concept of a People's Europe. While confirming the importance it attaches to these matters, the Commission intends to launch new initiatives in the next few months which will be concerned - above and beyond what is already set out in the White Paper on the Internal Market - with the following areas :

- the right to vote in local elections - report to the European Parliament;
- the coordination of actions by development volunteers profiting from the experience of France and Germany;
- increasing the clarity of Community law by codification endeavours, more effective handling of complaints and intensified information of the public;
- work by young people to restore monuments or protect the environment;
- symbolic actions (postage stamps, vehicle number plates, etc.);
- sport.

Finally, it is felt that the Community's image would be considerably strengthened if its positive attitude in the fight against terrorism were accompanied by a joint approach to making good the damage done by terrorist acts. The need for security expressed by the general public justifies moves by the Commission to concern itself with this problem.

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