DIRETTIVE COMUNITARIE ADOTTATE

Direttiva	Del/della	Adozione	Oggetto	Settore	G.U.C.E.	Scadenza
97/0073/CE	Commisione	15/12/97	Iscrizione di una sostanza attiva (Imazalil) nell'Allegato I della direttiva 91/414/CEE del Consiglio sull'immissione in commercio dei prodotti fitosanitari	Agricoltura	n. L/353 del 24.12.1997	30/06/99
97/0072/CE	Commissione	15/12/97	Modifica della direttiva 70/524/CEE relativa agli additivi nell'alimentazione degli animali	Agricoltura	n. L/351 del 23.12.1997	31/03/98

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PAGINA BIANCA

RELAZIONE SEMESTRALE

ALLEGATI

"PROGRAMMA DI LAVORO DELLA PRESIDENZA DI TURNO DEL PRIMO SEMESTRE 1998"

UK PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, JANUARY-JUNE 1998

WORK PROGRAMME

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INTRODUCTION

The European Union is entering a period of far-reaching change. As Europe approaches the next century, the implementation of the Amsterdam Treaty, the move to a single currency, the process of enlargement and the internal reforms which need to accompany it will change the nature of the Union as radically over the next ten years as at any time since the 1950s.

The UK Presidency also falls at a time when the Union needs, more than ever, to show that it can respond to the needs of its people. The UK will seek opportunities to show the people of Europe that the Union is working for them in practical ways; showing that the Union is fighting unemployment and crime; and contributing to a healthier environment and a better quality of life.

I ECONOMIC AND MONETARY UNION

The work of ECOFIN will be dominated by EMU. The UK Presidency will take forward preparations for the introduction of the Euro. The UK Presidency will play a full and constructive part in making the launch of EMU a success, in particular the Council at the level of Heads of State and Government - to be held over the first weekend of May - which will decide which Member States will adopt the single currency.

II FOLLOW-UP TO THE JOBS SUMMIT

The Special European Council on Jobs has set a clear direction for work at the Union level in the context of the promotion of four key concepts:-

- Employability
- Adaptability
- Entrepreneurship
- Equal opportunities

Member States agreed demanding guidelines which will shape their national employment policies and committed themselves to producing national employment action plans to show what they are doing to implement them.

The Presidency will promote vigourously this agenda through co-ordinated action in a number of Councils. The key priority is to ensure that all Member States produce their national action plans in time for analysis leading to a discussion and assessment at the Cardiff European Council in June. We will also be giving a further impetus to the exchange of

information and best practice, including our proposals for demonstration projects. In the overall context of follow up to the Jobs Summit, the Presidency will also seek to develop the theme of economic reform, to bring excluded groups into the labour market, and to reduce barriers to employment.

III AGENDA 2000

The last six months have seen extensive debate on the Commission's Agenda 2000 package of reform proposals. The UK Presidency will take this work forward on the basis of the conclusions reached by European leaders at the Luxembourg European Council. Once the Commission's legislative proposal issue on CAP reform and on the Structural and Cohesion Funds, we will make a start on negotiations. On agricultural reform the UK Presidency will be guided by the orientations from the Agriculture Council on 17-18 November 1997. The demands of enlargement on the Union's regional policy mean we have to find a careful balance between fair distribution of available resources and targeting those areas in Europe which most need assistance. The issues will be considered by Regional Affair Ministers at their informal meeting in Glasgow. The UK Presidency also expects to begin detailed work on the post-1999 financing arrangements for the EU. The Cardiff European Council will take stock of progress on the Agenda 2000 package.

IV ENLARGEMENT: TOWARDS A CLOSER UNION AMONG THE PEOPLES OF A WIDER EUROPE

A successful launch of accession negotiations next spring wit Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Slovenia and Cyprus will be a key Presidency objective. The Presidency will seek agreement to a statement of the Union's opening position for the negotiations.

In line with the decisions reached at the Luxembourg European Council, the UK Presidency will launch the European Conferenc at a Heads of Government meeting in London in March.

The UK Presidency will also aim to obtain the Council's agreement to the 10 proposed Accession Partnerships between the EU and the candidate states, to allow the Partnerships to be agreed by 15 March.

We will also launch the Accession Process, involving the EU 15, 10 Central Europeans and Cyprus, at Foreign Minister level on 30 March.

V TAKING EU POLICY FORWARD

a) within the Union

A more effective Single Market

The Commission's Action Plan for the Single Market and the conclusions of the Amsterdam and Luxembourg European Council are the basis of the Luxembourg, UK and Austrian Presidencies' work. The three Presidencies are co-operating closely in taking forward a rolling programme to achieve a more effective Single Market.

The UK Presidency is determined to help the Commission achieve better implementation and enforcement of Single Market rules and simplification. Progress on the Simpler Legislation for the Internal Market (SLIM) initiative will be one of the central tasks for the Internal Market Council. The UK Presidency will also work hard to improve the functioning of the single market in areas where it is weak (such as public procurement, mutual recognition, standards) and to take forward legislation to remove remaining barriers to trade. This work will cover foodstuffs; the European Company Statute; intellectual property; motor vehicle type approval (for lorries, buses and coaches); classification and labelling of dangerous substances; pharmaceuticals; occupational pensions; and the mutual recognition of professional qualifications.

The UK aims to finalise discussions on the draft Directive to harmonise the main provisions of export credit insurance for medium and long term cover.

Citizens need to know their rights under the Single Market. Too often they do not. The UK Presidency plans to help the Commission promote the next phase of the Citizens First programme which will provide information on travelling within the EU, equal opportunities in the workplace and buying goods and services. Another practical measure for the citizen, and an important task for the Consumer Council, will be progress on the Consumer Guarantees Directive, which will provide better protection when buying consumer goods in another Member State.

A more competitive Europe

The Union will only create jobs and achieve sustainable growth if it is competitive. Work in several Councils will contribute to improving competitiveness; the Internal Market Council for work on a more effective Single Market, Research for funding innovation, Telecommunications for promoting high-tech industries and greater liberalisation, Energy for more open markets, Transport for better infrastructure;

ECOFIN and the Social Affairs Council will follow up the Jobs Summit. The UK Presidency will emphasise the importance of competitiveness, including by developing a dialogue between Industry Ministers and industry, and holding a full debate on competitiveness in the Industry Council. The focus will be on key factors to encourage growth of companies, in particular, finance for innovation. Helping the Commission make the rules on state aids work better will also be a priority, as will reaching agreement on the regime for aid to shipbuilding. The UK Presidency will also consider the proposal to help SMEs with late payments.

Economic and financial reform

The UK Presidency will pursue in ECOFIN opportunities for furthering economic and financial reform which the Union is undertaking to move towards a Europe which combines economic efficiency with social cohesion. It will consider improvements to labour markets through its discussion of employment action plans, and to product and services markets through the extension of the single market in areas under its competence. For example, on financial services, the Presidency aims to reach final agreement on a number of directives and to begin discussion of new proposals from the Single Market Action Plan. The Presidency also hope to look at the way community policies impinge on product markets more generally. On taxation, the UK expects to take forward proposals on work arising from the tax package agreed under the Luxembourg Presidency.

The UK Presidency will give continuing priority to the fight against fraud and waste and ensure effective follow-up and implementation of the Commission's Sound and Efficient Management (SEM 2000) initiative, designed to improve management of Community finances. The Presidency will also pursue how best to maintain budget discipline.

Social affairs, education and youth

The UK Presidency will bring together the work of the Social Affairs and Education Councils to focus on a common employability agenda. The UK will hold joint informal and formal Councils of Social Affairs and Education Ministers to focus on ways of developing the employability of all our people and of providing the skilled and adaptable workforce which businesses need to remain competitive. The Presidency will open discussions on the next generation of education, training and youth programmes so that they can be shaped specifically to support lifelong learning and will aim to organise early discussion of how to strengthen the European Social Fund's focus on employability. The UK intends to take forward initiatives designed to facilitate mobility and increase European skills levels. It will also make progress

on a number of legislative measures designed to set fair minimum standards at work, particularly on health and safety. And an effort will be made to resolve long standing difficulties on the European Company Statute and to update the transfer of undertakings directive.

The UK Presidency will also carry forward work on the fight against racism and xenophobia, which will include convening a seminar on race relations, as a follow-up to the European Year Against Racism.

The fight against crime

The UK Presidency sees co-operation between EU Ministers responsible for Home Affairs and Justice as offering important opportunities to show people what the EU can do for the citizen. The Presidency will continue implementation of the Action Plan on Organised Crime. It will promote practical police and customs co-operation, particularly in the fight against fraud, corruption, trafficking in women, the sexual exploitation of children and drugs trafficking. The Presidency hopes to finish the preparations for the establishment of Europol and will pursue the Caribbean and Central Asian Drugs Initiatives.

A major task will be ensuring a consistency of approach on these issues in different international fora, in particular G8 (of which the UK will also be President) and at the UN General Assembly Special Session on Drugs, where the UK Presidency will have a co-ordinating role on behalf of the EU. This work will be supplemented by a range of special events and seminars.

The UK Presidency hopes to conclude a new convention to improve co-operation between the judicial authorities throughout the EU; and will continue practical co-operation on immigration, asylum and visa matters. It will aim to make significant progress in preparing for the incorporation of the Schengen agreements (on border controls and related questions) into the European Union.

A healthier environment

In the Environment Council, legislative action to improve air and water quality will be taken forward. The UK Presidency, building on progress under previous Presidencies, also hopes to achieve agreement on Directives covering landfill of wastes, volatile organic compounds, light van emissions and sulphur in liquid fuels. EU action to achieve proper standards of care in zoos will be promoted. The UK will also encourage agreement between the Council and the European Parliament on the 5th Environment Action Programme. The UK Presidency will also aim to give practical effect to the EU's

commitment to build environmental considerations into other EU policies. Working towards an environmentally coherent transport policy will the theme of a special joint Council of Environment and Transport Ministers in June.

The UK Presidency will ensure the EU continue to give a lead on climate change, particularly to follow up the important Kyoto environment meeting in December. The EU and the Member States will need to respond through measures to deliver reductions in greenhouse gas emissions for example through CO_2 from cars. Agreement on a CO_2 monitoring mechanism will also be a priority.

Public health

The Health Council will focus on the Commission's proposed programmes on rare diseases, injury prevention and pollution related illnesses and hold a discussion on public health action after 2001. The UK Presidency hopes it will be possible to adopt a Recommendation on blood safety and to complete work with the European Parliament on the proposed European network to monitor communicable diseases. The UK Presidency will keep under review public health issues relating to Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies and food law; and will as appropriate take forward the Tobacco Advertising Directive in light of the European Parliament's opinion on the common position reached at the Health Council on 4 December.

Giving Europe the technological edge

More than ever, Europe must equip itself with the science and technology base with which to remain competitive in world markets. EU spending programmes on R&D play an increasingly important role. The UK's aim is to reach agreement on a common position at the February Research Council on the Fifth Framework Programme (FP5) for 1999-2002; and thereafter to make substantial progress on the specific research programmes.

Transport

In the Transport Council, the UK will aim to reach agreement on measures which improve safety, notably the European Aviation Safety Authority, new arrangements in Eurocontrol for air traffic management and licences for ferry operators; offer a better deal for the consumer, notably two aviation proposals on computer reservation systems and denied boarding compensation; and contribute to environmental improvements, particularly the proposal to reduce NOx emissions from aircraft and encourage greater use of railways by freight. Working towards a greener Community transport policy will a theme running through Transport Ministers' discussions.

Telecommunications

In the Telecommunications Council, priorities include agreement on a Directive to liberalise further the market for telecoms equipment and a Directive to set a European framework for digital signatures; work to review and update the regulatory framework, notably for electronic commerce, and in particular through consideration of a possible 'International Charter for Global Communication'; debate on the convergence of broadcasting and telecoms; and facilitation of the development of the new generation of mobile phones. The UK Presidency will also concentrate on effective implementation of the new legislation to liberalise telecoms which comes into effect on 1 January 1998.

Culture and audio-visual

The Culture and Audio-visual Council will aim to agree a framework for self-regulation to protect people, especially children, from unsuitable material on new audio-visual services such as the Internet. The Presidency will host a ministerial seminar in the UK on the culture industries, and a major audio-visual conference; and will work to develop the employment potential of culture. The UK hopes to reach a common position on the Cities of Culture programme for 2002 onwards and to designate a city in 2001. It will also promote consideration of a proposal from the Commission on the future of EU cultural action.

Energy

The three main priorities for the Energy Council will be responding to climate change, continuing work on energy liberalisation and reaching agreement on a proposal to draw EU energy programmes together into an Energy Framework Programme. The UK plans an open debate at the May Council to enable Energy Ministers to identify practical means, including through greater use of renewables and energy efficiency, to help meet the post-Kyoto challenge of further reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Agriculture

The principal work of the Agriculture Council will be to take forward the Commission's proposals, once they appear, on reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. The Presidency will also want to make significant progress on adapting the banana import arrangements to respond to the recent World Trade Organisation (WTO) ruling. The annual round of negotiations to set the prices for agricultural products under the CAP will be completed in the first half of the year.

Animal welfare will be another important focus. The UK

Presidency hopes, subject to the availability of Commission proposals, to take forward a number of measures, including the welfare of battery hens and the welfare of animals at the time of slaughter.

Fisheries

The Fisheries Council will be working on improved EC-wide enforcement of the Common Fisheries Policy. Environmental issues will be addressed through measures to phase out drift nets used for tuna fishing and a review of action taken to implement the Bergen Inter-Ministerial meeting on sustainable fishing in the North Sea. A debate on the marketing regime is planned; and the Council will also consider plans for handling the 2002 review of the Common Fisheries Policy and a report on the closer involvement of fisherman in fisheries management through regional meetings.

Openness and transparency

If people are to be convinced that EU action addresses their concerns and brings practical benefits, the EU's work must be understandable and accessible. The UK Presidency intends to improve transparency and openness, and prepare for the implementation of the new transparency provisions agreed at Amsterdam. The Presidency hopes to improve public access to Council documents, including the establishment of a public register; hold better, and more widely accessible, Council open debates, and make cooperation between EU Justice and Home Affairs Ministers more transparent. The Presidency will also take forward, with the Institutions, work on producing useful guidelines for improving the quality of Community legislation as called for at Amsterdam.

V Taking EU Policy Forward

b) with the rest of the world

The UK will build on the commitment in the Amsterdam Treaty to a more coherent and effective common foreign policy.

The UK Presidency will work on establishing the Planning and Early Warning Unit and discussion of how to implement the other measures agreed at Amsterdam to improve the operation of CFSP.

Asia and Europe

The UK will host the second Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM 2) in London in April, attended by 25 Heads of State and Government, and the President of the European Commission. This will be a means to forge stronger economic, political and cultural ties between two economic power-houses which between them account

for 50% of world GDP. There will be an EU/Japan Summit in Tokyo in January; and the UK Presidency will also look to continue and develop constructive dialogue with China on a full range of issues, including political and security interests; human rights; international trade and investment; and global challenges such as the environment.

Europe in the global market place

The EU needs to develop further a leading role in the world trading system, particularly in laying the groundwork for wide-ranging World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiations at the turn of the century. Preparations for the second WTO Ministerial Conference in Geneva in May will be an important preoccupation in this context. All EU summits with third countries will have a major trade and economic component. The UK Presidency aims to reach agreement on amendments to the General System of Preferences (GSP).

Transatlantic relations

The UK Presidency will host a summit with the US in May which will be an opportunity to underline the importance of the transatlantic relationship in all areas. There will also be a summit with Canada, building on a joint action plan agreed in 1996.

ACP/EU and development issues

The UK Presidency aims to agree the EU mandate for the negotiations with the 71 countries of Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific on a successor to the Lome Convention. The main emphasis will be on measurable progress towards the elimination of poverty. There will be an EU/ACP Council in May.

The priority in work on aid and development will be moving towards a clear commitment to international development targets, with the goal of eliminating world poverty.

Arms exports: towards higher common standards

The UK Presidency proposes to work on an EU code of conduct setting high common standards to govern arms exports from all Member States.

Human rights

The UK Presidency will adopt a practical approach designed to make existing policy more effective. On a practical level, this will include helping countries implement universal standards through co-operation and support, work on the new Development Regulations on Democracy and Human Rights and the

new trade incentives under the GSP.

The Mediterranean and South East Europe

Cyprus is working hard to prepare itself for the opening of accession negotiations with the EU. The UK Presidency will make every effort to find a way to make this process involve both communities on the island in a manner acceptable to both. The Presidency is of the opinion that work on accession which involved both communities would contribute significantly to the successful resumption and conduct of UN talks on a comprehensive settlement.

An informal meeting of the Euro-Med Foreign Ministers will be held during the UK Presidency. A conference on Capital Markets, designed to encourage the development of Mediterranean capital markets and promote opportunities for EU involvement will be held in London in March; and a Euro-Med Energy Ministerial meeting will take place in the margins of the May Energy Council.

We want to see real progress in negotiations with Egypt, Algeria, Lebanon and Syria to accompany the agreements already reached with Morocco, Tunisia, Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority. We also look forward to a successful Association Council with Malta which points the way for the future relationship.

Former Yugoslavia and Albania

The UK Presidency will continue the work to develop relations with the countries of the region (Bosnia, Croatia, FRY, FYROM and Albania) in the framework of the EU's regional approach. The EU will fully support the activities of Carlos Westendorp, the High Representative, in carrying forward the Peace Implementation Council mandate. The Presidency will aim to ensure that the EU plays an effective and useful role in achieving full implementation of the peace agreements in Bosnia; to this end its aims include agreement on improvements to the EC assistance effort. The Presidency will also aim to use EU influence to secure greater progress towards democracy in the FRY and a solution to the issue of Kosovo. Under the UK Presidency, the EU will continue to play an active part in supporting Albania's efforts to recover from its economic and political crisis.

Latin America and the Caribbean

A principal focus of the Presidency will be Ministerial meetings between the EU and the San Jose and Rio Group countries in February. Agreement on negotiating directives for trade liberalisation with Mexico and consideration of next steps in the relationships with Mercosur and Chile are also

priorities. Preparation of the EU/Latin America/Caribbean Summit for 1999 will be taken forward. Evaluation of the EU Common Position on Cuba will also take place during the latter part of the Presidency.

Eastern Europe

The EU/Russia Summit in March will provide an opportunity for a wide discussion on key international issues, and to build on the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA). We also hope to bring into force the EU/Ukraine PCA, and to pursue initiatives under the EU/Ukraine Action Plan.

Middle East and MEPP

In April, the Presidency will hold an EU/GCC Ministerial meeting in London, to help strengthen the political dialogue between the two regions. The UK Presidency will also seek to maintain the pressure on the parties to the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) to make progress, working closely alongside the EU Special Envoy Moratinos. We will use our influence within the Middle East, in Israel and in Washington to try to make sure that the current talks under US auspices make real progress. Close coordination will be needed to make sure that EU and US efforts reinforce and complement each other.

Africa

The UK Presidency will promote coherent action on democracy and good government in Africa, particularly in the Great Lakes Region, working closely with the EU's Special Envoy Ajello, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. We will also promote cooperation on conflict prevention, particularly with the OAU, and carry forward initiatives on EU/OAU and sub-regional dialogue. The UK Presidency will work for agreement on the EU/South Africa Free Trade Agreement during its tenure; and will arrange an EU/SADC Seminar on Trade Liberalisation.

Terrorism

The UK Presidency will give continuing priority to monitoring terrorist threats within the EU and seeking a common response. It will also promote further discussion of the growing problem of terrorist funding.

Non-Proliferation and Disarmament

The UK Presidency will work to strengthen the non-proliferation regimes, in particular by promoting early agreement on a verification and compliance Protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention, and of agreements to implement strengthened nuclear safeguards.

UN Reform

Under the UK Presidency, the EU will continue to lead in supporting UN institutional reform, in particular early implementation of the Secretary-General's reform package. We will also work for a solution to the UN's financial crisis, based on full payment of dues and reform of the scales of assessment based on capacity to pay.