
Editorial

European Economic Area

The talks on the establishment of an European Economic Area progress apace and political commitment to the rapid conclusion of an agreement on an EEA based on equality was reaffirmed by ministers at the joint EEC-EFTA ministerial meeting in Brussels last December.

Whilst various matters remain to be agreed there has been a strong convergence on issues such as the identification of the relevant *acquis communautaire* which would be integrated into the EEA agreement as a common legal basis for the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital. Throughout the EEA it will also be necessary to ensure equal conditions of competition and to this end it is intended to base the EEA competition rules on the relevant Articles of the EEC Treaty so that their application should lead to the same results throughout the territory of the

EEA. The current working hypothesis is that an independent EFTA structure be established to apply the competition rules and that this structure would have similar powers and functions to those of the Commission. The details of co-operation between the Commission and the new structure, of judicial control and of the roles of the new bodies are matters presently under discussion.

More generally the institutional framework of the EEA will also have to be finalised. Ministerial conclusions so far consist of general identification of certain functions of an EEA Council and an EEA joint body responsible for the implementation and operation of the agreement. The joint body would take decisions by consensus of the European Communities on the one side and the EFTA countries speaking with one voice on the other. Many problems remain, however, not least those of ensuring that the European Parliament's role in the preparation of Community legislation is not rendered futile by political agreement within the context of the

EEA. Adequate judicial control will also need to be guaranteed. In view of these problems the goal of concluding the negotiations and signing the agreement before the summer is ambitious although not impossible.

Laurence Gormley

President of Ireland

We are sorry to record that President Robinson has resigned from the Editorial Advisory Board for her term of office as President of Ireland. We regret that this is necessary, but understand her position and thank her for her support during the early months of planning and production of the Review.

Susan Nicholas