

Editorial

Euro To You Too?

The choice at the Madrid European Council of the name "Euro" for the new single currency reflects compromise at its most evident. It used to be said in Brussels that the ultimate threat was "If you don't climb down, I'll compromise." Yet it is a compromise which leave no one charmed, and seems destined to uninspire confidence, affection and acceptance on the part of the people. Unlike the Florin or other older names, it has no real resonance anywhere. A Monnet, a Schuman – or even a Delors – would have been perhaps too personalised; a mark or a franc too close to existing currencies; a dollar too much like currencies in use elsewhere. The Ecu was also scarcely an inspiring name. So Euro represented the line of least resistance, but following that line is hardly calculated to sell the concept to a somewhat jaded and sceptical public.

At least at Madrid the leaders reaffirmed their commitment to 1999 as the starting date for the single currency, but as the backsliding on the Cypriot and Maltese accession questions shows, no matter how firm the commitment in the communiqué, few matters are sacred when left to the hands of cynical politicians whose interest in saving their own skins is greater than their interest in fulfilling their promises.

From the point of view of business and of travellers, the prospect of a single currency offers enormous attractions; from the point of view of bankers' profits, it offers less appealing prospects. The success of the Euro will in part depend on public acceptability, but to a great extent depend on what conversion rate is applied for the participating countries. Entry at the wrong level may lead to considerable economic consequences for certain countries: indeed the prospect of reforms designed to meet the convergence criteria has taken its toll in France very recently. As the results of the Russian elections also show, if economic reform threatens all the vested interests at the same time, the temptation to vote for what are perceived to be the good old safe days proves greater than the temptation of better times to come. Rightly or wrongly, too many people are not yet convinced that the single currency has any real prospect of meeting the 1999 target date. For many people the price is unacceptable; for others no price is ever worth paying. Yet it would be

unwise to write off the Euro before it starts. So beware the posturing of politicians seeking to shore up miserable majorities. Whatever the efforts of politicians to keep the issue of a single currency off the agendas of national elections, it is an issue which is so vital to the economic well-being of all the Member States, not just those who may be ready to start using the Euro in 1999, that it is unlikely to go away. Nor should it, as in a Union of States and peoples, it is appropriate that for once the peoples should have their say.

Laurence Gormely

New Year's Resolution

As we come to the end of 1995 we should like to thank all the contributors for their excellent material and their patience. We have experienced some problems during the changes which have taken place at the publishers in 1995. These have meant that contributors have had to wait for copies of the journal containing their material for much longer than should be the case. Hopefully, 1996 will see a great improvement on this and both the production team and the editor will do their very best to avoid unnecessary delays.

Graham and Trotman has now become part of a reorganised division of Wolters Kluwer, **Kluwer Law International**, based in London and the Hague. However, it is only the name that has changed. The London office is still at Sterling House and the editorial team is the same.

Please keep sending us articles for publication and suggestions for areas on which we should be publishing. It is always nice to hear from readers and to know that someone is out there reading the journal which takes a lot of time and effort from the team to put together.

In 1996 we shall be arranging a conference connected with the journal - watch this space for further news on date, topics and speakers.

May we wish all our readers a very happy and successful 1996.

Susan Nicholas