Monitoring of the application of Community law. 15th annual report 1997

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OBJECTIVE: presentation of the Fifteenth Annual Report (1997) by the Commission on monitoring the application of Community law. SUBSTANCE: the Commission's report on 1997 stated that there had been several salient features of activities in that year: - statistically speaking, the year saw a sharp rise in the number of Article 169 letters (notices of failure to fulfil a Treaty obligation) addressed to the Member States (1460, as against 1168 in 1996, an increase of 23%). The number of new complaints rose by 17% (from 819 to 957). Thus the downward trend of previous years was reversed. The number of cases detected by the Commission's own investigations remained stable at 261. However, the Commission noted that the number of cases terminated was also up, while the total number of cases in progress was down; - rates of transposition of Directives had risen in 1997 for the Member States as a whole, with some impressive performances by some of them (particularly Sweden and Finland): as at 31/12/1997, Member States had notified the Commission of 94% of the necessary national measures to implement Directives; - from a procedural point of view, it was in 1997 that the Commission first made use of its power to propose to the Court that a Member State be ordered to pay a penalty for failure to comply with a judgment until such time as it complied. Eight such proposals had already been decided upon, two of which had already reached the Court; - also in 1997, following the Ombudsman's own-initiative inquiry into infringement procedures, the Commission decided to increase the information provided to complainants under these procedures; - following the Amsterdam European Council on 16 and 17/06 /1997, the Commission submitted a proposal for a Regulation establishing a new procedure to be used by the Commission to combat certain barriers to free movement of goods; - parliamentary questions and petitions were playing an increasingly important part in the detection of infringements, and led to fresh infringement proceedings every year (17 in 1997); - it was also in 1997 that the Commission submitted a proposal for a decision establishing an action programme to improve awareness of Community law for the legal professions (Robert Schuman Project). In conclusion, the Commission expressed the opinion that the rise in the number of complaints and infringement procedures showed firstly that the Community's citizens were increasingly keen to see their rights properly respected and secondly that the Commission had assumed its proper share of the responsibility for enforcing Community law.