

## Get your facts straight

Most of us rely on our national newspapers, television and radio news to find out about what is going on in the EU. Unfortunately, amongst the clear and informative reports lie a large number of stories based on twisted facts or even lies. The stories can make entertaining reading, but many people believe them and often come away with a picture of the EU as a bunch of mad 'eurocrats'. These pages take some of those stories and set the record straight – sadly, we cannot keep track of them all.

### New flag for Europe

**The Press:** Down with EU stars, run up stripes

"The rather sombre European Union flag could be replaced by a radical new design taking colours from the banners of all the Member States. If it's run up the flagpole, will anyone salute it? If the European Union accepts as many as 10 new countries to the already 15-strong club, it is feared the organisation's flag will become a confusing clutter of stars – the symbol currently used to depict Member States on the blue banner. The current version dating from 1986 is already flagging – as it were – boasting only 12 stars..."  
(BBC News Online, 8 May 2002)

**In the wind**

"EU president Romano Prodi thinks we might be persuaded to fly an EU flag that looks like a cross between a deckchair and British Airways tailfin..."  
(The Sun, 9 May 2002)

**The Facts:** Although a recent design by prestigious architect Rem Koolhaas provoked much hilarity, this reporting was in fact wide of the mark. The design was included in an independent report which aimed to underline the unique status of Brussels as the capital of both the EU and of Belgium. The familiar EU emblem with its gold stars and blue background is here to stay.

The BBC suggested that the EU is being forced to redesign its emblem as a result of its forthcoming enlargement. This is untrue: the number of stars on the EU emblem has never been representative of the number of Member States. There are 12 stars on the emblem and, currently, 15 Member States. The number of stars is fixed at 12 because this is a number that traditionally symbolises perfection and completeness.

The new design will not feature on signs, stationery or number plates as some reports implied and it was never conceived as a replacement for the current EU emblem.

### 300 vitamin treatments face ban in EU purge

**The Press:** EU threatens to ban vitamin supplements

"Some of the most popular vitamin and mineral pills are likely to be banned after a vote in the European Parliament this week. The vote, on Tuesday, is expected to put the finishing touches to a new EU law designed to crack down on the sale of the pills. Critics say that the law ... will plunge countless people into distress, and put hundreds of health food shops out of business..."  
(The Independent on Sunday, 10 March 2002)

**300 vitamin treatments face ban in Euro purge**

"Ninety per cent of multivitamin and mineral preparations and many other supplements are likely to be removed from the shelves of British health shops and chemists if a European directive becomes law..."  
(The Daily Telegraph, 11 March 2002)

**The Facts:** The aim of this directive is to ensure that vitamin and mineral pills on the market are safe to be consumed as supplements to a normal diet. The legislation will put public safety and informed consumer choice first, and should help to solve the problems manufacturers currently face in marketing their products due to diverging national rules. Consumers across Europe will have a wide range of safe products to choose from, which is currently not the case in several Member States.

Manufacturers will be obliged to provide detailed labelling giving clear information to the consumer. Bottles of vitamin pills will have to include clear instructions about daily dosage, a warning about the possible health risks from excess use and a statement that the pills should not be used as a substitute for a balanced diet. Claims that the product can prevent, treat or cure illnesses will be prohibited and it must be made clear that a balanced diet remains the best approach to achieving good health.

Manufacturers will have to submit safety dossiers and make a good case for the efficacy of their product. The UK is, at present, among the more liberal countries in allowing doses far higher than the official recommended daily allowances (RDAs) compared with other EU Member States where over-the-counter supplements may contain only the official RDA. Anything higher must be prescribed on clear medical grounds. The new rules will mean all supplements will be assessed for safety on the basis of scientific guidelines to determine what the maximum levels of vitamins and minerals in food supplements should be.

The claim that extra costs will push health food stores out of business is untrue. If the food supplements contain natural ingredients and pose no health risk, there is nothing to fear from the new safeguards.

### A European Corporate Income Tax ?

**The Press:** Brown to veto EU's tax move  
"Chancellor Gordon Brown is heading for a bruising clash in Europe ... He will veto plans for harmonisation of corporation tax ... Among the proposals that will be blocked is a single 'European Corporate Income Tax', some of the proceeds of which would go straight to the Commission ..."  
(Financial Mail on Sunday, 10 March 2002)

**The Facts:** The Commission has not proposed EU tax harmonisation and does not believe it is necessary to fix a minimum corporate tax rate. Member States are free to choose the tax systems they consider most appropriate, provided they respect EU rules. The level of taxation in the EU is a matter for individual Member States to decide. However, the Commission considers that the reform of company taxation in the EU is crucial to achieving the goal of making the Union the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010. In the longer term, companies must be allowed a consolidated corporate tax base for their EU-wide activities to avoid the current costly inefficiencies of 15 separate sets of tax rules.

### EC demands standardised CV

**The Press:** Bosses blast plan for a Europe-wide CV  
"Eurocrats want to force all jobseekers to use a standardised CV. ... The European Commission wants every applicant for every job in the EU to set out this (sic) or her education and work experience in identical format...Brussels warned that those seeking jobs in other member states could be discriminated against if their CVs were in the wrong format."  
(Daily Mail, 21 February 2002)

**The Facts:** There is no question of anyone being forced to use a common European CV. The option of a common format would help people across Europe to present their qualifications more effectively, thereby improving access to training or employment opportunities in the EU. It is hoped that a common CV will make it easier for employers to compare the status of qualifications awarded in different countries. If people choose to use the common format, it should help to remove some obstacles in the path of those looking for work abroad. However the choice is theirs!

### EU bans noise in pubs and at football matches

**The Press:** Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> off limits in EU noise plan  
"Musicians are fighting to be exempted from a European Union directive to reduce workplace noise levels which will require hundreds of pieces of classical music to be played more quietly or not at all..."

(The Times, 12 February 2002)

Barmy EU plans pub noise ban

"Potty EU bureaucrats want to ban music and loud chatter from pubs and clubs – by bringing in a strict noise ban..."

(The Sun, 11 February 2002)

EU're not singing...

"Pubs showing England's World Cup games this summer could be forced to keep the noise down under crazy new European rules. A killjoy EU directive has set a maximum of 87 decibels. It is meant to protect workers but pub bosses are worried it will ruin the atmosphere in their boozers..."

(Sunday People, 20 January 2002)

Work behind a bar? You have to wear earmuffs

"Bar staff should wear earmuffs, according to an extraordinary proposal by a Euro-MP..."

(Daily Mail, 24 January 2002)

Brussels clobbers clubbers

"Barmy Eurocrats are bringing in new laws which mean night-clubbers will have to wear earplugs – to protect them against dance music! Bouncers and bar staff will have to be ready to hand out protectors and tell punters to put them in if DJs spin noisy tracks..."

(News of the World, 3 March 2002)

Speak up ref, I've got ear plugs on me head - Euro MP in barmy bid to protect footballers from crowd noise

"Football players could soon be ordered to wear ear plugs to protect them from the roar of the crowd. And guess who is considering this momentous decision? Why those lovers of straight bananas, the European Parliament, of course. The idea raises the prospect of David Beckham and team-mates playing marathon matches due to not hearing the final whistle. And cries like "On me head son" will go unheard. ... Noise at big football games can top 110 [decibels]..."

(Daily Express, 13 March 2002)

**The Facts:** The proposals in question are designed to reduce exposure to noise at work in places such as factories and airports where employees already have to wear ear protection. Deafness is the most common occupational disease in the EU.

If agreed, the proposal would set certain limits on the amount of noise that workers would have to put up with in their place of work (basically 87 decibels for 8 hours). In bottling plants, for example, the noise level can easily reach and stay at over 100 decibels.

These rules will only apply to workers, not people enjoying themselves in pubs, clubs or at football matches. It is purely for those who have no choice but to work in noisy conditions. Staff have to be given the option of ear protection by their employers and it is proposed that the employer shall be responsible for enforcing the wearing of hearing protectors and checking their effectiveness.

As for musicians, the European Parliament has proposed that the directive should only apply to the music and entertainment industry five years after it comes into force, with the Commission analysing the implications of the legislation for these sectors within two years of its implementation. On the basis of this report, the Commission would be requested to present a proposal, the aim of which may be either to exclude the music and entertainment activities from the scope of this directive or to regulate those activities by different means.

### The euro can make you sick

**The Press:** Watch out, the euro can make you sick

"It has been accused of crushing national identity, pushing up prices and being the best friend of fraudsters and drug barons. But now the euro – Europe's new single currency – faces its toughest criticism: it can make you ill. After years of anticipation, the coins and notes will be

launched in 12 countries on Tuesday. But millions of people who eagerly grab their new coins could see their hands turn into a scaly, diseased mass after minutes. ... Medical researchers have conducted tests showing the coins can make far more people sick than the currencies they replace..."  
(The Observer, 30 December 2001)

Is the euro a rash move?

Guardian Unlimited, 14 December 2001

"Never mind the supposed constitutional problems involved in joining the euro – the coins themselves could turn out to be bad for your health. ... Eurosceptics would have you believe that the euro is a potentially fatal step towards a European superstate but according to new scientific research the single currency could be a hazard for human health too..."

**The Facts:** Reports of allergies caused by the nickel used in the one and two euro coins made for a classic scare story, particularly in the final days before the introduction of the new currency. However the use of nickel in coins is not a recent development. Apart from the one and two pence pieces, all UK coins currently in circulation contain nickel. Nickel is used in the US five-cent piece and was widely used in national coins across the EU before the euro was introduced. In fact, all 12 euro-zone members had coins that contained the same level of nickel as the one and two euro coins.

Ministers from each of the 15 EU Member States agreed on the metal composition of euro coins in 1998. The European Commission raised the issue of potential allergies from nickel at the time and two scientific studies were carried out. It was decided to use nickel only in the one and two euro coins, which demand a very high level of security. As a result, 92% of euro coins in circulation are nickel-free, as opposed to 25% of national coins. In addition, the nickel used in one and two euro coins is essentially contained inside the alloy and not on the surface, thus limiting skin contact.

**The Press:** The euro made me impotent... (and it's not doing much for inflation, either)  
"So far, it's hardly led to virile economies. In the countries that have adopted it, the euro's performance has been flaccid, to put it mildly. But now a German man claims the switch to the single currency has had a similar dire impact on his personal life – robbing him of his manhood."  
(Daily Mail, 2 March 2002, page 23)  
Euros left me flop in sack  
"A bus driver claims chemicals in the new ten euro note have left him a flop in the bedroom. Wolfgang Fritz, 55, says he hasn't managed to get an erection since he started handling the cash and is suing the German government."  
(The Sun, 2 March 2002, page 10)

**The Facts:** The source of these stories is a German Greenpeace article and a test carried out by a German laboratory with one 10 euro banknote on behalf of the magazine 'Ökotest'. Before the launch of the euro notes, the European Central Bank (ECB) tested all seven denominations against the most stringent European health and safety regulations which confirmed they do not cause any health problems in normal use. The laboratory working for 'Ökotest' has confirmed that traces of the stabiliser TBT found in a 10 euro banknote are in no way large enough to impact on the health of the users of euro notes (TBT is used as stabiliser in food packaging, textiles, wood preservatives, disinfectants). In order to reach the recommended Tolerable Daily Intake of TBT, the average person would need to eat more than 2,500 euro notes per day over a significant period of time!

### Ambulances must turn yellow for Europe

**The Press:** Euro yellow, the new colour for our ambulances – White paint becomes a casualty of conformity  
Traditional white British ambulances are to be repainted yellow to bring them into line with Europe. The new colour will be adopted across the continent to make the emergency vehicles uniformly recognisable in every country. ... The ambulance repainting is the latest European attempt to change elements of the traditional British way of life to fall in line with the rest of Europe. In the past, European Commissioners famously infuriated fruiterers and grocers when they deemed that our cucumbers were to (sic) curvy and our bananas too bendy..."  
(Daily Mail, 6 March 2002)

**The Facts:** There is no EU legislation that advocates the use of particular colours on emergency vehicles. The independent European Committee for Standardisation, which promotes voluntary technical harmonisation in Europe, issued the report referred to in these articles.

European standards are developed on the basis of voluntary agreement between individual countries and other interested parties. The committee is made up of national standards bodies, not countries. The representative from the UK is the British Standards Institution.

### Model railways under threat from EU

**The Press:** Model Railways under threat from EU  
Thousands of model railway fans are facing a threat to their innocent hobby – from Brussels bureaucrats. EU rules will come into force at the end of this month aimed at improving the safety of industrial boilers.. The European Pressure Equipment Regulations, which are backed by Whitehall, will hit the handful of manufacturers who make the copper boilers for model steam engines and larger ride-on engines at theme parks. The makers claim the extra red tape will cost them thousands of pounds and will put them out of business.  
(The Mail on Sunday, 19 May 2002)

Generations of fun enjoyed by miniature railway fans is set to run out of steam. European Union rules come into effect at the end of this month aimed at improving the safety of industrial boilers. Western (Daily Press, 20 May 2002)

**The Facts:** The Pressure Equipment Directive (PED) improves the system of safety checks on a range of items such as fire extinguishers and diving bottles, not just on boilers in steam trains. It also applies to power plants, air conditioning and refrigeration systems and oil refineries to name but a few examples. The directive actually cuts red tape because products will need to be inspected by only one national body, reflecting the fact that such products are sold in more than one EU country. There is a strong case for the stringent verification provided for by the PED. Faulty pressure equipment can indeed kill. Under the new directive miniature railway fans are safeguarded via boiler checks, factory workers are better protected and manufacturers now have genuine access to the market, properly regulated to ensure safety.

### EU harmonisation of women's clothes sizes

**The Press:** For that perfect fit try size 88 – The latest EU ruling will see British women expand beyond recognition

"British women are about to get a whole lot bigger thanks to European bureaucrats. Actress Kate Winslet, for example, is justly proud of her rather fetching 38-29-39 figure. She might be rather less pleased when it balloons to 97-74-99 under new Brussels regulations which require women's clothes sizes translated from inches to centimetres..."  
(Daily Express, 15 March 2002)

Why women will be the new Metric Martyrs – Vital statistics become fuller figures under new EU rules  
"CEN, the European standards body, hopes to come up with a uniform system for clothes sizes across the EU by next year..."  
(Daily Mail, 15 March 2002)

**The Facts:** While it is true that a standardised system of clothes sizes across Europe is being discussed, this has nothing to do with the European Commission or the EU.

The Commission is not going to make any proposals to harmonise clothes sizes. European standards are developed on the basis of voluntary agreement between members of the independent European Committee for Standardisation. The committee is made up of national standards bodies, not national governments, and includes representatives from outside the EU. The representative from the UK is the British Standards Institution.

### Corgis to be banned by EU

**The Press:** Corgis to be banned by EU  
"Certain breeds of the Queen's favourite dog could be outlawed under a controversial EU convention being considered by ministers, it emerged last night. Some corgis – along with bulldogs, cocker spaniels and King Charles spaniels – could be among 100 breeds banned, animal lovers fear..."  
(Daily Mail, 30 April 2002)

**The Facts:** This "EU convention" in fact has nothing whatsoever to do with the EU. A committee of animal protection experts drew up the European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals in 1987 under the auspices of the Council of Europe - an intergovernmental organisation based in Strasbourg and completely separate from the EU. The UK is a member but has so far declined to become a signatory to this voluntary agreement designed to improve the welfare of household pets.

### EC says pigs must be given toys

**The Press:** Why all our pigs are having a ball  
"Farmers throughout the country have 90 days to put a toy in every pigsty or face up to three months in jail. The new ruling from Brussels, which is to become law in Britain next week, is to keep pigs happy and prevent them chewing each other. Official instructions to farmers are to give pigs "environmental enrichment" by providing "manipulable material", which the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs last night defined as balls. A spokesman said: "We mean footballs and basketballs. Farmers may also need to change the balls so the pigs don't get tired with the same one. Different colour ones will do..."  
(The Times, January 29, 2003)

**The Facts:** The article concerning the welfare of pigs was entirely misleading. There is no EU legislation that requires farmers to place toys in pigsties.

Two recently adopted directives, set to be implemented into UK law, require that pigs have access to materials such as straw, hay, wood, and sawdust to improve their welfare, but there is categorically no mention of toys anywhere in the legislation. If the UK government, via its implementing measures, wishes to impose such a rule on farmers this decision remains up to them.

The directive on pig welfare, which was adopted in 2001 and comes into force in January 2003, does foresee that pigs should have access to rooting material. This is based on scientific advice, showing that boredom in pigs could lead them to harm themselves and other pigs. The implementing directive states that pigs must have permanent access to a sufficient quantity of material to enable proper investigation and manipulation activities. This material could include straw, hay, wood, sawdust, mushroom compost, peat or a mixture of these. There is no mention of toys.

### Brussels wishes to make UK impose VAT on food

**The Press:** VAT on Food  
"Brussels is trying to lock Member States including the UK into imposing VAT on food within seven years. The small print of the Maltese accession treaty gives a formal commitment that all EU Member States should levy VAT on food and medicines by the start of 2010..."  
(Sunday Telegraph, 26 January 2003)

**The Facts:** Transitional arrangements allow Malta to apply a zero VAT rate on food until the end of 2009. The transitional measure concerns Malta alone and has no influence on the transitional provisions already applicable in other Member States such as the UK. Malta should, from a legal perspective, revert to applying a rate of not less than 5% from 1 January, 2010.

On 23 July 2003 the Commission presented a proposal for simplifying the rules on reduced rates of VAT. The proposal would afford Member States equal opportunity to apply reduced rates in certain fields (e.g. restaurants, housing, domestic care services and the supply of gas

and electricity) and rationalise the numerous derogations currently applying in some Member States. The aim is to improve the functioning of the internal market by ensuring a more uniform application of VAT, thus avoiding potential distortions of competition which have given rise to numerous complaints from traders. As part of the proposal the Commission is proposing that the zero and super-reduced rates (i.e. rates less than 5%) currently authorised to those Member States that applied such rates at 1 January 1991 should be allowed to continue for those goods and services listed in Annex H of the Sixth VAT Directive - essentially goods and services of a social and cultural nature. This would mean that Member States could continue to apply a zero or super-reduced rate of VAT to food, inter alia, so it is not true that Brussels is "trying to lock Member States including the UK into imposing VAT on food within seven years".

#### EC to harmonise flying times

The Press: Advertisement placed by pilots' organisations in Politiken, 21 January 2003  
"The European Commission intends to harmonise working hours/flying time for pilots..."

The Facts: The Commission has not yet decided whether it will accept a flying time amendment, proposed by the European Parliament, to the so-called JAR-OPS specifications. These are technical specifications applying to air transport. Any decision would in any case have to be adopted by the Council of Ministers as well.

#### EU says eggs must carry details of the hen that laid them

The Press: "The European Union says that every egg sold in the EU will soon have to be stamped with the method of production, country of origin, who produced and packed it, a "best before" date and details about the specific hen that laid it..."  
(Daily Telegraph, 7 February 2003)

The Facts: EU legislation providing for optional marking of eggs was originally adopted in 1990. Eggs stamped with information such as "best before" dates have long been familiar to Europeans. The latest regulation for the labelling of eggs was adopted to address demands for clear and unambiguous labelling to allow EU consumers to make informed choices. The mandatory information required is limited to "a code designating the producer's distinguishing number and permitting the farming method to be identified".

#### EU tells Africa US GM food is unsafe

The Press: The European Union is immoral because it is "bullying Africa into refusing to accept American food aid" which includes genetically modified products, and making economic aid contingent on whether or not countries prohibit biotech crops.  
(Wall Street Journal Europe editorial, quoting USTR Robert Zoellick, 13 January 2003)

The Facts: The EU has never suggested to African governments that GM foods are unsafe - in fact, we made available to them our scientific research for the GM varieties we have approved. Neither has it said that GM should not be allowed into their countries. As a matter of fact authorised GMOs are freely traded in the EU.

The EU's own policy is to source food aid regionally, thus ensuring that the countries in need receive the foodstuffs to which they are accustomed as well as helping local economies. Milling the grains is also a means of ensuring that the concerns expressed by these countries about possible dissemination of GMOs into local crops are addressed while providing much needed food aid.

It is misleading and wrong to use as a serious argument a rumour which is wrong: that EU member states are "making economic development aid contingent on whether or not they prohibit biotech crops".

#### Selection process for the post of Director General of Eurostat being carried out behind closed doors

The Press: "The selection process for the post of Director General of Eurostat is being carried out behind

closed doors. The call for applications was made during the Christmas holidays. The job should not be given to a Brussels bureaucrat too weak to stand up to pressure from national capitals." (FT Letters, 15 January 2003)

**The Facts:** There is no question of the selection process being behind closed doors. The post was formally advertised in the Official Journal on 8 January. By 17 January, it had been advertised in at least one major national newspaper in each member state as well as internationally in The Economist. That gave applicants a minimum of three working weeks to submit their application.

Under the relevant rules and procedures, the Commission would have been entitled to hold a purely internal selection process for this post, but chose to open it to internal and external candidates – clear evidence that we are seeking the widest possible spread of high-quality candidates.

The claim that a "Brussels bureaucrat" would be too weak to stand up to pressure from national capitals is contradicted by the Commission's actions in making recommendations to the Council on member states' adherence to the Stability and Growth Pact and in putting proposals for better implementation of the pact.

### Europe says playground swings are too high

**The Press:** "A village in England has had to get rid of its playground swings because European rules say they are too high." (FT Letters, 15 January 2003)

**The Facts:** The European Standardisation Committee (CEN) is a voluntary body made up of national standards agencies and affiliated industry/consumer organisations from nineteen European countries. It has nothing to do with the EU. The EU is not involved in setting standards for swings or slides.

### Maximum 3 hours of tractor driving a day ?

**The Press:** Farm workers could be prevented from driving tractors for more than three hours a day under proposed European Union rules... (Daily Mail, 12 October 2001)

After debates about the bend in bananas, the size of Welsh farmers' leeks and cheese that almost couldn't call itself Caerphilly, Brussels has turned its attention to the tractor. Assuming its directive gets the go-ahead, from today farmers will be allowed to drive tractors for a maximum of seven hours a day. ... Last night NFU Cymru Wales described the plan, coupled to an EU directive on vibrations, as more Alice in Wonderland stuff from Brussels: "What are we to expect next – a directive telling farmers how long they can go without answering the call of nature?" (The Western Mail, 25 April 2002)

**The Facts:** Studies show that prolonged use of machinery can cause physical damage to workers. The aim of the Physical Agents (Vibration) Directive, which was unanimously agreed by Member States' ministers, is to improve health and safety by setting maximum levels of exposure in order to reduce the danger posed to workers. It will cost less to act now at the prevention stage, rather than waiting to pay compensation and sickness benefit to people unable to work having used this machinery all their lives. Although the directive must be implemented within three years, the EU recognises the special case of the agriculture industry so the rules will not apply to farmers until 2014. Furthermore, many farmers will not be affected because those self-employed will be exempt from the rules. The UK government was fully involved in the legislative process of the directive and the suggestion that it has been imposed arbitrarily by the EU is incorrect.

### Viagra

**The Press:** All male members of staff at the EU institutions can be partly reimbursed for the medical costs of six Viagra pills a month (Sondagsavisen, 25 August 2002)

**The Facts:** Some 47,000 members of staff at the EU institutions are covered by sickness insurance, to which they contribute every month. Out of these 47,000, ten get their medical expenses for six Viagra pills a month partly reimbursed - and only because impotence is a direct consequence of a very serious disease, for example cancer.

### Numberplates

**The Press:** French vehicle registration plates are to change, with the distinction made between different departements to be phased out, because of a European directive.  
(France Inter radio, 16 April, 2003)

**The Facts:** The design and features of vehicle number plates have nothing whatsoever to do with the European Union. The Commission has no intention of making anyone change their number plates. This is a matter entirely for the national authorities or standards organisations.

### Hard hats

**The Press:** A tightrope walker from the Moscow State Circus is being forced by Brussels legislation to perform in the UK wearing a hard hat.  
(The Times, The Daily Mail, 23 July, 2003)

**The Facts:** The 'Working at Height' Directive was adopted by the Council on Ministers, representing EU Member States, in 2001, and has to be put into national law by 19 July, 2004. The UK has not yet drafted its implementing legislation. However, it is clear that the Directive applies to working at height in an industrial or construction context and not to circus performers. If it is being interpreted to cover circus acts, it is up to the insurance companies involved to give an explanation.

### EU wants to stop us winning big prizes

**The Press:** The EU is planning to ban competitions with prizes over €100,000 in order to boost state lotteries. Worried EU chiefs feel urgent action is needed to stem falling ticket sales, which are hitting draws across Europe. They believe many disenchanted lottery punters reckon they have a better chance of winning a big payout elsewhere. The ban has been drawn up as part of the EU regulation covering the Sales Promotion in the Internal Market.  
(Daily Mirror, 3rd May 2003)

**The Facts:** No EU proposals to ban cash competitions have ever existed. In fact, the article refers to EU proposals to remove cross-border restrictions for sales and marketing promotions in the advertising and financial services sectors. Regulations would also be imposed obliging companies to be more transparent about what marketing promotions entail.

During discussions over the proposals in the EU Council of Ministers, an amendment was tabled to state that 'Individual prizes awarded in promotional games may not exceed one hundred thousand euros.' This would only apply to 'promotional games', meaning competitions launched in order to promote a product or service, and would never have applied to large charity or television competitions. The Council later decided that this would be contrary to the idea behind the original proposals, and the amendment was removed altogether.

### EU to ban famous advertising slogans

**The Press:** The EU wants to ban these advertising slogans  
Today the EU is presenting plans for banning advertising slogans. "Anything that promises health", according to Angelika Mrohs, who heads Germany's BLL, the Association for Food Legislation, "is to be prohibited". That would be the end of the road for things like "Fruit is healthy" or "Strengthen your body's natural defences". Even advertising using "psychological" effects is to be prohibited soon if the EU plan comes about. Horst Priessnitz from the German Trademarks Association said that it would affect such slogans as "Red Bull gives you wings" or "Haribo makes children happy" these are neither nutrition nor health claims and is utter nonsense. People know exactly what is intended. The following advertising slogans could also

be banned:

- "Cats would buy Whiskas" (Cat feed)
- "The tenderest temptation since chocolate was invented (Milka)
- "Quality is the best recipe" (Oetker)
- "Melitta makes coffee really enjoyable" (coffee)
- "For the best thing in a man" (Gillette shaving foam)

Bild Zeitung (16 July 2003, page 3)

**The Facts:** Slogans for non-food products will be banned - WRONG  
Concerns have been expressed, primarily in the press, that popular advertising slogans for everything from cosmetics, medicine and pet food will be banned.

None of these slogans will be affected since the proposed Regulation only covers food products. Many of the misunderstandings can therefore be clarified right off since they concern products that are not in fact covered by the proposed Regulation. For example, the following slogans will not be affected by the Regulation:

- "Gillette, the best a man can get"
- "The power of two hearts"
- "Cats would buy Whiskas"
- "If they're too strong, you're too weak"

**My favourite advertising slogans on tasty treats will be banned - WRONG**  
Other concerns have been expressed regarding popular advertising slogans for food products, drinks and sweets (such as "Haribo makes children happy" or "Red Bull gives you wings"). Many of these concerns can also be dismissed since they refer to advertising slogans that do not make health or nutrition claims and therefore will still be allowed.

Some examples: the following will not be affected since they are neither nutrition nor health claims:

- "Haribo makes children happy"
- "Red Bull gives you wings"
- "Quality is the best recipe"
- "Melitta makes coffee really enjoyable"
- "The tenderest invention since chocolate was invented"
- "As valuable as a small steak"

### EU changes the definition of an island

**The Press:** A proposal from Brussels would modify the traditional dictionary definition of a piece of land surrounded by water, meaning that many of Europe's islands would become legally land-locked. Under the EU plan, an island is not an island if it has fewer than 50 permanent residents, is attached to the mainland by a rigid structure, is less than 1 km from the mainland, or is home to the capital of an EU state.  
(The Guardian, 21st January 2003)

**The Facts:** Not even EU law can change dictionary definitions that have existed for centuries! This article refers to an EU-commissioned study to examine the general handicaps faced by island communities. It would be impossible to look at each of the thousands of islands within the EU, so researchers used these guidelines to narrow down the field of their research. It would be ludicrous to suggest that the islands not included in the study were therefore no longer 'islands'. Neither does the study have any implications on the regional funding to any of these islands.

### Smoky bacon gets up EU's nose

<p><b>The Press:</b> The EU plans to ban smoky-bacon flavoured crisps and other smoke-flavoured foods. New rules would mean the end of artificially 'smoked' foods, from salmon to char-grilled burgers and barbecue sauce. The European Parliament has declared that the chemicals used to produce artificial smoke-flavourings, extracted from condensed woodsmoke, may contain cancer-causing agents. (The Sunday Times, Daily Mail)</p>
<p><b>The Facts:</b> The EU has no plans to ban smoke flavourings. Draft legislation from the European Commission proposes that companies manufacturing basic smoke flavourings would have to submit a dossier to the European Food Safety Authority to make sure they meet basic safety standards. This would bring legislation on smoke flavourings in line with the way other artificial food colourings, sweeteners and food additives are assessed for safety in the EU.</p> <p>Despite claiming that this would mean disaster for food manufacturers, the newspapers reporting this story could only find one MEP to comment on the issue. This is because the industry is broadly in favour of the proposals. An EU-wide directive would replace a myriad of different national rules on artificial flavourings, making it easier for the industry to market their products across the whole of the EU. And, of course, making it easier for consumers to recognise safety and quality products.</p>

<p><b>EU to rename Waterloo Station "Europe Station"</b></p>	
<p><b>The Press:</b> EU plot to rename some of Britain's leading monuments, such as Waterloo Station and Trafalgar Square, in case they upset the French. (Daily Express, 16 October 2003)</p>	
<p><b>The Facts:</b> The suggestion apparently came from European Investment Fund chief Frances Carpenter, in an article in Le Figaro, to rename Waterloo Station Europe Station and Trafalgar Square Concord Square, so as to give them a more European feel. He also apparently proposed unifying European public holidays and introducing a single European motto.</p> <p>Like any private citizen, he has the perfect right to suggest what he likes, but this does not change the fact that the EU has no interest in changing the names of any landmarks in any town anywhere in Europe, nor does it have any power to do so.</p> <p>The European Investment Fund was created in 1994. Based in Luxembourg, its main objective is to support investment financing in small and medium-sized enterprises.</p>	

<p><b>Europe hikes up the price of your holiday</b></p>	
<p><b>The Press:</b> Millions of British tourists will be forced to pay more for their holidays under new EU tax plans, as Eurocrats push to harmonise tax across Europe. EU finance ministers will consider imposing VAT on the transport part of package holidays, adding 100 pounds to the average cost of a holiday for a family of four, leading to 5,000 probable job cuts and the loss of business worth 5 billion pounds. (Daily Express, 1 October 2003)</p>	
<p><b>The Facts:</b> The Commission's proposal would extend the current rules applicable to travel agents whereby VAT is only charged on the profit rather than the full cost of a package holiday when the sales are made to individuals. The impact on consumers of the proposal would be minimal or non-existent in the short term, and ultimately positive as a result of price reductions in a more competitive market. The proposals have been on the table since February 2002, and require the unanimous agreement of all EU finance ministers to become law.</p>	

<p><b>EU regulates grandmother's recipe</b></p>	
<p><b>The Press:</b> An Austrian farmer who has sold jars of apricot marmalade made with his grandmother's recipe has been threatened with jail because, under EU regulations, marmalade may only contain citrus fruits. (Daily Telegraph, 21 October 2003)</p>	

**The Facts:** This relates purely to the way in which the Austrian government transposed EU law into national regulations, and has nothing to do with 'meddling Brussels bureaucrats'.

A directive dating back to 1979 contains an obligation that the term 'marmalade' can only apply to products made from citrus fruits. The rest shall be called 'jam'. On joining the EU in 1995, Austria chose to word its new regulations in the same way as its neighbours in Germany, where Konfitüre is the standard word for jams of all kinds, including marmalade. In southern parts of Germany and in Austria, the term Marmelade predominates instead.

Both Denmark and Greece have arrangements to deal with the fact that, in their languages, the distinction does not exist between marmalade and jam. It seems that in this case over-zealous Austrian officials have fined a businessman for using an incorrect term.

#### **New EU health card: a means to spy on us?**

**The Press:** Civil liberty groups claim the new EU health card marks the first step towards an EU-wide Identity Card, which will include intrusive information of all kinds.  
(Daily Telegraph, 21 October, 2003)

**The Facts:** The European Health Card, which is to enter into force in June 2004, is a way to reduce bureaucracy when accessing healthcare in another member state, for example when there on holiday or a business trip. It will replace the confusing number of forms currently required, and citizens will no longer need to have supplementary forms delivered by national authorities, as is the case in some Member States.

The card is not a social security card. It is not a first stage of a European identity card. It will not contain information on patients, if the national card on which it is based does not already do so (some Member States already have emergency information such as blood group on the card, for use in the case of an accident). It will bestow no new rights or obligations on citizens. Its aim is to simplify the process to access healthcare in another Member State, to reduce bureaucracy and to make it easier to move within the European Union.

#### **National control over energy sources threatened**

**The Press:** The draft European Union Constitutional Treaty threatens Member States' national control over energy sources.  
(Dagens Industri, 4 December, 2003)

**The Facts:** This is complete nonsense. The current text of the draft Constitutional Treaty merely simplifies and clarifies already existing arrangements under previous treaties (most recently the Treaty of Nice). This in no way affects Member States' choice of energy sources and in no way puts into question national sovereignty over energy resources.

#### **Goodbye bendy bananas, farewell curved cucumbers, so long chunky carrots**

**The Press:** EU regulations mean the end of bendy bananas, curved cucumbers and chunky carrots. Greengrocers must conform to the myriad of rules covering size, length, colour and texture of fruit and vegetables.  
(The Times, 19 December 2003)

**The Facts:** Bananas are classified according to quality and size for international trade. Individual governments and the industry have in the past had their own standards with the latter's, in particular, being very stringent. The European Commission was asked by national agriculture ministers and the industry to draft legislation in this area. Following extensive consultation with the industry, the proposed quality standards were adopted by national ministers in Council in 1994.

The diameter of the fruit is a way of measuring its maturity/development. Fruit grown organically or conventionally have to reach a certain degree of maturity in order to have a reasonable chance of satisfying the consumer. The minimum diameters laid down by standards are usually

fixed at a level at which most fruit are of a satisfactory quality for consumption. This minimum stage of development does not depend on the method of production, but more on cultivation techniques diminishing the number of fruits on the tree to allow a better development of the remaining ones. That is why there is no specific requirement for organic produce. The contrary would mean organic farmers being allowed to sell smaller produce.

Cucumbers do not have to be straight. There are grading rules, which were called for by representatives from the industry to enable buyers in one country to know what quality and quantity they would get when purchasing a box, unseen, from another country. Nothing is banned under these rules: they simply help to inform traders of particular specifications. The EU Single Market rules are identical to pre-existing standards set down both by the UN/OECD and the UK.

### Commission plots to shore up the use of French

**The Press:** The European Commission is going to spend millions of euros to prevent English becoming the de facto official language of the European Union, and to shore up the use of French. (The Times, 09 January 2004 - page 25)

**The Facts:** There is no Commission plot to shore up the use of the French language to the detriment of the rising influence of English. There are 11 official EU languages and this will rise to 20 in May 2004. Within the Commission, French, English and German are the day-to-day working languages.

While it is certainly true that the use of English is increasing and that many of the staff coming from the new Member States will speak English as their first foreign language, the Commission has always promoted the learning of foreign languages by its staff.

EU officials must work with EU citizens, businesses, organisations and interest groups of all sorts who obviously cannot be expected to carry out all of their day-to-day contacts with the EU in a language other than their own.

The budget for language training (around 4.5 million euros a year) covers all sorts of languages, both EU and non EU (including Russian and Japanese) and obviously includes language training for interpreters and translators.

This is in no way a new scheme: language training has been slowly increasing ever since the Commission came into existence.

The total language spending of all EU institutions amounts to less than 1% of the EU budget. This is a small price to pay to ensure the fundamental democratic right of EU citizens to have access to all EU legislation and be able to communicate with public servants in their mother tongue.

### EU Directive to make employers consult workers over choice of tea

**The Press:** New European rules under the Information and Consultation Directive could force British firms to consult their workers on which brand of tea bags should be used in offices, the Conservatives claim. Business leaders attacked the move. (Western Mail and Daily Post, 12 January 2004)

**The Facts:** The Directive in question states that employees' representatives should be informed and consulted on the company's activities and economic situation, the situation and future trends in employment and on decisions likely to lead to substantial changes in work organisation or in contractual relations.

The idea that workers have to be consulted on what brand of tea bags should be used is complete and utter nonsense.

## EU neglects research against HIV/AIDS

**The Press:** The European Union has no global strategy to assist researchers in their work towards finding a vaccine for HIV/AIDS. While the US pours in 750 million dollars a year, European researchers are hamstrung by the short-term nature of funding programmes, administrative hurdles and lack of flexibility. Europe seems set to kiss goodbye to any hopes of participating in the development of an anti-HIV vaccine.  
(Liberation, 12 January 2004)

**The Facts:** EU efforts to boost research and development against this epidemic form part of a wider strategy against the disease. Key to this R&D efforts are the € 400 million euros allocated between 2003 and 2006 under the 6th Research Framework Programme, which mark a significant increase in EU R&D spending.

Of this, € 200 million is allocated to the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP). The objective of this pilot R&D initiative is to accelerate the development of new medicines, vaccines and therapeutic tools against HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis tailored to the developing countries.

A further € 200 million is allocated to basic research on HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria. More than 30 projects on HIV/AIDS vaccines and drugs are currently being funded, in Europe, Africa, Asia and South-America.

Projects include development of:

- new anti-retroviral treatments to overcome growing resistance of the virus;
- new interventions for the treatment of HIV-infected infants, pregnant women and adults;
- HIV microbicides (a female controlled HIV prevention technology) to allow women that do not have the capacity to impose HIV prevention measures (safer sex through condom use) on their partners to protect themselves against HIV transmission; and
- new and promising HIV vaccine candidates not only to prevent the HIV infection, but also to treat infected people.

## Warning signs on mountains

**The Press:** Climbers may have to swap ropes for scaffolding and mountain walkers may have to negotiate warning signs telling them that snow is slippery, according to Brussels-inspired safety regulations.  
(Daily Telegraph, 26 March 2004)

**The Facts:** These claims are utter rubbish. A directive aimed at protecting the health and safety of people working at height has been agreed to by EU governments and the European Parliament. However, this does not call for warning signs on mountains; it does not require climbers to use scaffolding; and it does not apply to sport and leisure activities. The directive only specifies the conditions of use and the criteria for proper selection of the most suitable work equipment to be used for work at heights, according to the nature of the work to be performed. It aims to reduce the significant level of accidents that occur in workplaces due to falls from height by improper use and selection of work equipment. How the directive will be specifically enacted in the UK will be up to the national authorities, including the Health and Safety Executive, who are approaching the end of a consultation on this issue.

## EU vs. illegal timber

**The Press:** Despite speaking out against the trade in illicit timber, EU governments are not doing enough to stop it.  
(The Guardian, 18 March 2004)

**The Facts:** The EU is in fact at the forefront of efforts to counter illegal logging. In Indonesia alone, the Commission is providing funds to support the Illegal Logging Response Centre and is finalising a new 8 million pound programme to tackle illegal logging and its root causes. This follows more than 60 million pounds the Commission has provided over the past decade to support

sustainable management and protection of forests in Indonesia.

This obviously has to be reinforced by measures to prevent illegal timber from entering the EU market. In October last year, the EU Member States endorsed the Flegt Action Plan, which sets out a new and innovative approach, linking measures to stop illegal logging in wood-producing countries with a licensing scheme to ensure only legal timber is imported.

The Commission is working closely with affected governments in developing countries to stop this trade, which robs them of 7-10 billion pounds in lost revenue every year.

### Yogurt to be banned

**The Press:** 'Ludicrous' EU officials ready to ban yogurt  
Officials at the European Commission are preparing to ban yogurt from Britain because it does not conform to their definition of a standardised Euro-pudding. Under proposed legislation that could become law next year, all yogurt sold in Britain would have to be labelled "fermented milk".  
(The Daily Telegraph, 10 November 2003, page 7)

**Yogurt gets a culture shock**  
It's a bit of a mouthful, but Brussels bureaucrats wants to replace the word "yogurt" with the label "mild alternate-culture heat-treated fermented milk". They aim to bring in a law next year to standardise the dessert across Europe.  
(Daily Express, 11 November 2003, page 19)

**The Facts:** The European Commission would like to make trading easier for yogurt manufacturers, whilst ensuring consumers are properly informed, but no official proposals have been drawn up. At present UK yogurt manufacturers cannot sell some of their products in France, which is the type of problem the commission is trying to address. Given the different types and tastes of yogurt imported and exported between EU countries, the commission believes that consumers should know exactly what type they are buying. The commission's documents suggest that additional terms such as "heat-treated" or "mild" perhaps be added to yogurt labels, but there is no suggestion the word "yogurt" would be banned. In any case, if and when the commission adopts these ideas as formal proposals, they will then need to be debated and scrutinised in the European Parliament, and ultimately voted on by the Council of Ministers.

### Sex toys must be handed in

**The Press:** Shake 'n back – EU tells women to hand in worn-out sex toys  
Red-faced women will have to hand in their clapped-out sex toys under a new EU law. They must take back old vibrators for recycling before they can buy a new one.  
(The Sun, 04 February 2004, page 22)

**The Facts:** Under the Waste Electronic and Electrical Equipment directives member states must ensure that, as from 13 August 2005, final owners of such goods may return their products to the retailer for recycling at no cost. There is no requirement for anyone to hand in old electrical goods before being allowed to purchase new ones, merely that they should be able to do so free of charge if they so wish.

### "Made in Britain" labels to be axed

**The Press:** Euro bureaucrats plan to axe 'made in Britain' label  
British manufacturers could soon be banned from using the "made in Britain" label on their goods. The European Commission wants to introduce a "Made in EU" mark that could eventually replace all indicators of national origin.  
(Evening Standard, 12 January 2004, page 2)

**EU 'to KO Made in UK label'**  
Brussels penpushers are plotting to ban 'Made in Britain' labels. They are secretly bidding to replace them with 'Made in the EU' stamps. Rolls-Royce cars, Scotch whisky, Kendal mintcake

and Savile Row suits would all carry the labels under the plan.  
(The Sun, 13 January 2004, pages 2)

**The Facts:** The European Commission recently produced a document entitled "Made in the EU Origin Marking – Working Document of the Commission Services". As the name suggests, this is not a proposal, but merely a consultative document looking at the pros and cons of products being marked with "Made in the EU". It does not contain any plans to ban "Made in Britain" labels.

### Butchers cannot give a dog a bone

**The Press:** New rules forbid dog bones  
Dogs in mid Wales have a bone to pick with officials after they ordered butchers not to give customers bones to take home for their pets. Ceredigion County Council has written to shop owners about a new European Union directive restricting the supply of bones and trimmings, which have for years been regarded as a canine treat.  
(BBC News Online, 25 May 2004)

**The Facts:** The EU Animal By-Products Regulation was adopted in 2002 to help ensure the safe and traceable disposal of animal parts not intended for human consumption, in order to reduce the risk of further agricultural crisis such as BSE and Foot-and-mouth. It does not stop a butcher supplying bones to individual dog owners for their pet's consumption, provided the bone has not already been thrown away.

### EU to get a new anthem

**The Press:** EU fanatics want you to sing this dire anthem  
Britons face having to sing a European anthem praising the EU "motherland," it was revealed last night. Europe's top bureaucrat Romano Prodi, right, has been given new words to go with the existing European hymn, Beethoven's Ode To Joy. But Austrian academic Dr Peter Roland's lyrics sparked fury with their Soviet and Nazi overtones. There are ominous echoes of Stalin's imperialist Soviet regime in the line "... freedom for its people in a bigger motherland."  
(The Sun, 3 February 2004, page 6)

**The Facts:** There are no plans for these lyrics to be used for the EU anthem. The set of lyrics referred to in the article were merely a personal gift to European Commission President Romano Prodi that, incidentally, he was given during a trip to Vienna in February 2004 to receive a humanitarian achievement award from the Rabbinical Centre of Europe.

### Home-made cakes

**The Press:** Home-made cakes must be labelled with all ingredients  
If baking for the school or church fête was not onerous enough, the Government could soon ban home-made cakes from sale unless they carry a special label declaring whether they contain nuts.  
(The Times, 9 July 2004)

**The Facts:** New EU rules will require pre-packaged food sold in, for example, supermarkets, to be properly labelled with full ingredients lists. This will enable those who suffer from allergies to avoid the often very unpleasant consequences that can ensue after eating the wrong thing. However, Directive 2003/89/EC does not force full ingredients lists on food sold in places like restaurants and fast-food vans. Food sold loose or packaged on the premises for direct sale may be exempted from these strict labelling requirements, provided the consumer or customer receives "sufficient information". How this is done is left up to individual Member States, providing legislative leeway to avoid the type of over-regulation The Times suggests will affect home-made cakes sold at school fêtes.

### Life sentence

**The Press:** Life sentences to be banned  
Judges would be barred from jailing murderers for life, under plans compiled by meddling

European bureaucrats...The agenda includes the abolition of life sentences in the European Union, which would prevent our courts from handing down a minimum tariff of 15 years. The Eurocrats also want greater harmonisation of civil and criminal law- leading to the eventual unification of all member states' legal systems.  
(Daily Express, 14 October 2004)

**The Facts:** There are no EU plans to bar judges from imposing life sentences on murderers, just a discussion paper intended to stimulate debate. In any case, the European Commission does not have the power to introduce such a ban – only the unanimous agreement of all EU Member State governments, including that of the UK, could introduce such a law. Furthermore, nobody is proposing the "eventual unification of all Member States' legal systems". However, it makes sense for EU countries to work together to tackle serious and organised crime of a cross-border nature, such as terrorism or human trafficking. Increased judicial co-operation and the recognition of court decisions across borders can play an important part in these efforts.

### EU Olympic aid

**The Press:** EU funds Athens Olympics rescue  
Almost £3billion of YOUR cash is being pumped into Athens' botched Olympic preparations – nearly £50 for every man, woman and child in Britain. Last night, with workers struggling to complete the main stadium and HALF the other projects, critics blasted the huge payments. Andrew Allum, chairman of British anti-waste group the Taxpayers' Alliance, said: "...What's worse is that UK taxpayers have contributed £2.9billion to this disaster..." The British contribution forms part of a £22.9billion package of EU Olympic aid. As well as sporting arenas and the Olympic village, air, road and rail links are being massively improved.  
(The Sun, 13 April 2004)

**The Facts:** Greece, along with the United Kingdom and all other Member States, receives EU funding to help develop and regenerate poor regions, but the country has not received a "£22.9billion package of EU Olympic aid". Between 2000-2006, £17bn of EU regional funding will be given to boost jobs and infrastructure across the whole of Greece, not just in Athens. This money would have been allocated regardless of whether Athens was hosting the Olympics. The UK receives around £10.5bn of EU regional funding for the same period.

### EU bans DIY

**The Press:** EU rules ban the DIY electricians  
Householders are to be banned from carrying out many simple electrical jobs at home. EU rules aimed at cutting down on injuries mean a registered electrician will have to carry on work in the bathroom, kitchen or garden – areas exposed to water where accidents are deemed more likely... The new regulations come into force on New Year's Day under an edict from the EU's Committee for the Normalisation of Electrotechnology.  
(Daily Mail, 29 November 2004, page 27)

**The Facts:** This "edict" is actually a set of voluntary standards adopted by the European Committee for Electrical Standardization, a non-EU body, made up of organisations from 28 European countries, including the British Standards Institution. It is a matter for national governments if they wish to legislate to enforce such standards.

### Teabags banned from being recycled

**The Press:** Tea bag ban over foot-and-mouth  
Householders have been told not to throw tea bags in waste meant for compost because it is a foot-and-mouth risk. Cardiff council said European regulations meant tea bags or vegetable peelings could not go in bins used to collect "green" waste. The rules, which affect all local councils, say kitchen waste is a danger because it may have been in contact with meat. The bins are composted and sold to the public. Until now, users have been able to include material such as coffee filters and vegetable peelings. But the authority is set to enforce EU laws designed to prevent a further outbreak of foot-and-mouth by excluding materials which may have been in contact with meat and milk...  
(BBC News Online, 7 January 2005)

**The Facts:** Under EU law the UK is fully entitled, but not obliged, to impose stringent standards on the composting of household catering waste. Following recent animal disease catastrophes, new EU rules are now in place to better control the processing and disposal of animal by-products – a major step forward in attempts to prevent another foot-and-mouth or BSE crisis. Whilst household catering waste - including teabags - falls within the scope of the EU Animal By-Products Regulation 2002, national rules may still be applied to its composting. It is also up to member states to ensure they have the treatment facilities in place to enforce their own standards.

### EU to ban Alcohol

**The Press:** EU 'bans Brits boozing' - The Sun (UK)  
Brüssel will Alkohol verbannen - Bild Am Sonntag (D)  
EU health chiefs are drawing up plans to close thousands of British off-licences, it was claimed yesterday. The proposal is said to be part of a drive to curb alcohol abuse across Europe. Other measures include a Monday to Friday ban on off-sales and huge booze price hikes through tax rises. A blueprint masterminded by EU health commissioner Markos Kyprianou also contains moves to control sales through a state-run monopoly and stricter drink-drive penalties. The plan, revealed by a German newspaper, was condemned here by the Federation of Licensed Victuallers Associations. A spokesman said: "It is another of these silly EU moves where they come up with daft proposals that benefit no one."  
(The Sun, 21 February 2005)

**The Facts:** Naturally, the EU has no plans or secret documents proposing to clamp down on off licenses by closing them or banning Monday-Friday sales. The EU does not have, nor does it seek, the power to propose such measures which are a matter for national governments. The facts are that, at the request of all EU health ministers including those of the UK and Germany, the EU is looking into ways to reduce the harm caused by excessive consumption of alcohol, particularly among young people.

The document referred to is a working paper, prepared after consultation with all Member States and the drinks industry, that collects views on possible ways to combat excessive drinking which causes much social harm in the form of violence and accidents. It contains a review of measures already in place in different Member States and suggests possible areas for action by governments, industry and the EU which could support or complement national measures.

### EU workers immune from law

**The Press:** It's potty - EU plant workers can dodge law  
Lowly EU officials in charge of PLANTS have been officially declared above the law - along with their families. The eurocrats have been granted diplomatic immunity normally reserved for high-ranking foreign envoys. Staff in charge of food, trains and translation can also escape punishment for offences committed... the concessions allow officials to escape prosecution for minor crimes like motoring offences... UKIP MEP Jeffrey Titford said: Imagine if some young thug slings a brick through your window and the police arrest him. How would you feel if they had to let him go because daddy works for the EU?  
(The Sun, 7 March 2005)

**The Facts:** This is another good one from The Sun and is of course complete garbage. If a young thug throws a brick at a window, the example MEP Jeffrey Titford uses, they can not escape punishment "because daddy works for the EU". Or even if mummy works for the EU, or indeed if the thug himself works for the EU. In fact, if any so-called "Eurocrat" throws a brick through a window, commits a traffic or any other offence in their private life, they are subject to the full force of the law, just like everybody else.

### Builders forced to wear a T-shirt

**The Press:** They'll force our brickies to stop stripping in sun  
Barmy EU chiefs want to ban Britain's beefy builders from whipping off their shirts when the sun comes out. They say the lads must be forced to cover up to protect them from skin cancer. It

could mean bronzed brickies are required by law to wear a T-shirt while swinging from the scaffolding. Or, building site bosses may be made to issue workers with sun block and shades - or even erect canopies over their heads. Other open-air workers like lifeguards would also be affected. But a spokesman for the Guild of Builders and Contractors rubbished the idea. He said: "Builders tend to be very muscular chaps and love to be stripped to the waist. You'll never stop that." The plan is likely to be rubber-stamped by the EU later this month.  
(The Sun, 5 April 2005)

The Facts: The EU has no plans to ban Britain's brick layers from taking off their shirts (EU Beef Ban 5 April). Ministers and MEPs (including those from the UK) will soon vote on proposals that require employers to assess the risk of eye and skin damage for builders who are in the sun all day. New rules would also protect workers, such as welders, who might be exposed to lasers and infrared radiation. But if there's no risk, there's no reason for builders and brick layers to change their ways.