Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Order 363 (1977)[1]

Direct satellite transmission and subliminal techniques

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Having regard to its debates of 17 September 1976 and of 27 January 1977, on the outcome of the Conference on the Development of Democratic Institutions in Europe held in Strasbourg from 21 to 23 April 1976 ;

2. Recalling Recommendation 789 (1976), on the outcome of the 4th Parliamentary and Scientific Conference held in Florence from 12 to 14 November 1975, and its presentation to the Conference on the Development of Democratic Institutions in Europe ;

3. Believing that the growing disparity in Europe between the formal constitutional functions of parliaments and their real capacities for controlling the executive presents one of the gravest dangers to democratic institutions ;

4. Recalling Resolution 633 (1976), proposing the establishment for parliaments in Europe and for European parliamentary assemblies of technology assessment instruments comprising modern information and analytical systems ;

5. Convinced that the exercise of political rights by the individual citizens depends on their awareness of the technological complexities of present-day society, and that policies for recurrent education focusing on science and technology are a pre-condition for the survival of democratic institutions ;

6. Recalling Opinion No. 74, of January 1976, proposing that the impact of technologies on social and cultural development of our societies should be included in the work programme of the Council for Cultural Co-operation ;

7. Concerned at the way in which new technologies, notably in the mass media, may lead to patterns of individual, social and institutional behaviour, which in the end betray the purposes for which these new technologies were introduced ;

8. Noting that the Conference on the Development of Democratic Institutions in Europe did not consider the dangers inherent in technologies for direct satellite-to-receiver television transmission, and in the use of and effect of subliminal television techniques ;

9. Calling attention to the fact that satellite-to-receiver transmissions may lead to the voluntary or involuntary exposure of the citizens of any country to the broadcasts of foreign powers, and that subliminal techniques used by any government present a far greater potential danger for democracy ;

10. Noting, moreover, that both kinds of technology may be perceived as detrimental to the preservation and strengthening of the ideals of European democracy ;

11. Considering that, whether for this reason or for their being thought detrimental to the attainment of national policy objectives, governments may feel it necessary to take protective measures against foreign satellite transmissions ;

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1. Assembly debate on 27 January 1977 (26th Sitting) (see Doc. 3930, draft order presented by the Committee on Science and Technology). Text adopted by the Assembly on 27 January 1977 (26th Sitting).

12. Aware, however, that such measures might in themselves be detrimental to traditional freedoms and, thereby, harm the functioning of democratic institutions ;

13. Believing that the application of subliminal techniques should be forbidden by law, and that the enforcement of the law should be actively and continuously supervised by independent bodies of citizens ;

14. Convinced that an assessment of these various risks must be based on prior assessment of the existing state, character and development prospects of the technologies from which they emanate,

15. Requests its Committee on Science and Technology, pursuant to Order No. 360 (1976), on the exercise in scientific co-operation,

a. to invite the European Joint Committee on Scientific Co-operation :

to explore the possibility of arranging for evaluations to be made :

a. of the existing state, character and development prospects of technologies for direct satellite-to-receiver television transmission ;

b. of the existing use and effects of subliminal film and television techniques ;

to arrange for evaluations to be conducted, if this seems feasible ;

to transmit these evaluations and its own appraisals thereof to the Committee on Science and Technology ;

b. to draw up, in the light of the reports received from the European Joint Committee for Scientific Co-operation, proposals for further action on the part of the Parliamentary Assembly and member governments.