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Order 427 (1985)[1]

Follow-up to the 6th Parliamentary and Scientific Conference (Tokyo-Tsukuba, 3-6 June 1985)

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Having regard to its Resolution 850 (1985) in reply to the report on the activities of OECD in 1984;

2. Welcoming the renewed collaboration between its Committee on Science and Technology and the OECD Secretariat in the organisation of the 6th Parliamentary and Scientific Conference (Tokyo-Tsukuba, 3-6 June 1985) ;

3. Having regard to the conclusions of the conference (see appendix), and in particular to the following propositions :

3.1. science and technology are having an ever more pervasive and at times destabilising impact on our lives, values, communities and societies ;

3.2. the character of scientific understanding of nature has greatly changed in the last sixty years ;

3.3. the "scientification" of technology has introduced new kinds of uncertainty into the judgments which have to be made on technological development ;

3.4. current procedures for preparing and taking decisions on issues with a high scientific or technological content do not adequately reflect the great change in the last sixty years in the character of scientific understanding, nor the nature of "provisional consensus" which characterises scientific and technological judgments ;

3.5. decision procedures on such issues should accordingly be reviewed :

a. parliaments should play a stronger role in the preparatory phase, as well as taking the ultimate decisions, since beyond a first approximation such issues are not amenable to quasi-judicial forms of evaluation and inquiry under ministerial authority ;

b. parliaments must have the information capabilities and resources to play this role, at a time when information technology is opening up new prospects for interaction between the elected parliamentarian and his or her electors, for more open government and for a new balance between representative and direct democracy ;

4. Considering the work which has been performed, in the field of parliamentary decision preparation at European level, by its series of parliamentary and scientific conferences and its "Exercise in Scientific Cooperation" (through which scientific and technical expertise has been mobilised and made available to several Assembly committees through public parliamentary hearings) ;

5. Welcoming the studies which are undertaken in the European Parliament in furtherance of the setting-up of a "parliamentary office for the assessment of scientific and technological choices", and trusting that the concerns and interests of the whole of democratic Europe will be provided for in its design ;

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1. Assembly debate on 1 October 1985 (17th Sitting) (see Doc. 5457, motion for an order, and Doc. 5450, opinion of the Committee on Science and Technology). Text adopted by the Assembly on 1 October 1985 (17th Sitting).

6. Aware of the need to provide for more effective continuity of thought and action between successive parliamentary and scientific conferences&mdash ; not least in regard to establishing links with the Strasbourg conferences on democracy and to exploring other means of developing exchanges with Japan and the Japanese Diet in the field of medium-term policies for science and technology,

7. Instructs its Committee on Science and Technology :

7.1. to maintain its contribution to the improvement of parliamentary decision-taking on scientific and technological issues at European level, and to lend its support to all other initiatives in this direction ;

7.2. to make approaches, through the appropriate channels, to the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology of the European Parliament with a view to the Parliament's representation on the "Joint Committee for Scientific Co-operation" ;

7.3. to approach the European Science Foundation with a view to strengthening the scientific component of the Joint Committee's membership ; iv. to rationalise the development of the resources of the Assembly in support of the parliamentary and scientific conferences and the "Exercise in Scientific Co-operation" by, for example :

a. a. reviewing the composition and functioning of the "Joint Committee for Scientific Co-operation" ;

b. securing the regular presentation of the analytical and policy perspectives developed by the OECD Secretariat, the Commission of the European Communities and the European Science Foundation at the Joint Committee's meetings ;

c. constituting a science policy Sub-committee with the dual functions of organising and ensuring continuity between the parliamentary and scientific conferences, and of forming the main parliamentary component of the Joint Committee's membership.

Appendix

Conclusions - of the 6th Parliamentary and Scientific Conference (Tokyo. Tsukuba, 3- 6 June 1985)

The 6th Parliamentary and Scientific Conference,

Convened by the Council of Europe in Tokyo and Tsukuba, 3-6 June 1985, at the invitation of the National Diet of Japan ;

Following statements by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Mr Sakata; by Prime Minister Nakasone, Chairman of the Council for Science and Technology of Japan ; by Cabinet Ministers responsible for Science and Technology, International Trade and Industry, Posts and Telecommunications, and Foreign Affairs; and by the President of the House of Councillors, Mr Kimura ;

Following a visit to the International Exhibition of Science and Technology at Tsukuba (5 June 1985) ;

Having taken note of the scientific and technological achievements of Japan and of Japanese structures for scientific and technological policy-making ;

After three days' intensive discussion :

— on science and democracy, on their shared attachment to freedom of speech and to concepts of rational discussion, and their place in our respective civilisations ;

— on technological innovation, on scientific co-operation, and on changing patterns of scientific and technological leadership ;

— on biological advances and human rights, with special stress on new and prospective understandings of the human nervous system and the human brain ;

— on the nature of scientific understanding, on the character of the uncertainty of scientific and technological judgments and on implications to be drawn therefrom for decision procedures on issues arising from impacts of science and technology on our lives, our values and our communities ;

— on the desirability for building stronger scientific and technological relations between Western Europe and Japan,

Agrees on the following perceptions, trends and principles :

1. science provides the foundations of advanced education and technological performance in our societies : similarly, through instrumentation, technology provides the infrastructure for scientific advance ;
2. co-operation and competition&mdash within countries and internationally&mdash are equally essential to the vitality of science : competition in science, in some circumstances, can only be sustained by apparent but nonetheless essential duplication of effort: competitiveness is a prerequisite for scientific cooperation ;
3. the free flow of scientists, knowledge and information between countries is the most effective route to scientific progress: this flow is disproportionately limited between Japan and Western Europe: funding mechanisms should be devised by governments to offset the cost, to the research councils and scientific academies of Japan and Western Europe, of measures to intensify exchanges, and to ensure they are of mutual benefit ;
4. scientific advances increasingly make necessary choices which involve ethical judgments on novel, difficult and important issues: there is a risk that legislation, by its nature, is more likely to be restrictive than encouraging ;
5. the ethical issues raised by rapid developments in technology and natural sciences underline the need to devote resources to the humanities so as to deepen our knowledge of the interaction between the natural sciences and the humanities ;
6. the character of scientific understanding of nature has greatly changed in the last sixty years: not all sectors of society in Western Europe have followed this change: this is prejudicial to our understanding of the issues which arise from the ever more pervasive and faster changing impacts of science and technology on our societies: parliaments must take the ultimate decisions on these issues: they must have adequate information capabilities and resources to prepare these decisions, which beyond a first approximation are not amenable to quasi-judicial procedures of evaluation and inquiry ;

7. in times of rapid scientific and technological change, as much knowledge flows into the academic world from industry and commerce as in the reverse direction: the two worlds must develop stronger links: industry and commerce will increasingly be looking for flexibility and commitment among the qualities and attitudes of the people it will recruit: our education systems must correspondingly adapt: this will contribute to alleviating the most serious problem of unemployment from which Western European countries so greatly suffer ;

8. today, as the "scientification" of technology proceeds in industry, new avenues of scientific research are opened up: Japan has experience to offer from which the governments of Western Europe could benefit in refraining research and higher education policies accordingly, and similarly closer linkages will be of benefit to Japan ;

9. the future contribution of industrialised countries to the world economy will lie increasingly in the intellectual sphere: in the fast-growing information technology sector, software production has by far the highest growth rate&mdashtogether with high job-creation potential for people with the appropriate flexibility and sense of commitment to their work: application software in particular can benefit the employment market in each of our countries ;

10. new information technologies can make citizen's participation more effective: they can help towards more open government and a reasonable balance between representative and direct democracy ;

11. current trade imbalances between Western Europe and Japan in manufactured products should be reduced so that they do not unduly obscure perceptions of common interests between Western Europe and Japan, nor interfere with the setting-up of arrangements for intensified scientific and technological cooperation ;

12. the fragmentation of Western Europe (regulations, tax obstacles, industrial organisation) greatly inhibits the ability to turn knowledge into marketable products&mdashand thus contribute to reducing unemployment: major new initiatives will accelerate progress in certain areas and strengthen the need for Western Europe to turn into a true "technological community" ;

13. political and economic costs of technology embargoes &mdashparticularly in electronic products&mdashmay be unrealistically high, given rapid rates of technological obsolescence ;

14. scientific research and the new technologies must take into account the widespread desire for peace and the need to face the deep problems of developing countries ;

Recognises the occasion of its meeting&mdashas parliamentary democracy in Japan plays host to parliamentary democracy in Europe&mdashas an expression of shared ideals and values ;

Interprets Japan's outstanding contribution to the success of the conference as a clear signal of readiness to improve exchanges in science, culture and technology&mdash a signal to which Europe must respond ;

Endorses the following proposals set forth at its closing session by the General Rapporteur :

a. in all countries of the Council of Europe, action should be taken :

   1. to ensure that the manifold and serious problems&mdash whether ethical, economic or political&mdash generated through the widening of human choices arising from scientific and technological advances, are examined and decided in a coherent and effective manner at the highest level ;

   2. to follow the signal so clearly given by Japan to ensure that scientific and technological links with Japan are strengthened, and inform the Council of Europe accordingly ;

   3. to make fullest use of the European Science Foundation so that, in addition to its important work of co-ordinating basic science in Europe, it can ensure the availability of scientists respected throughout Europe to provide advice on policy issues in science and technology to European parliamentary assemblies ;

b. the European Parliament should take account of the concerns and interests of the whole of democratic Europe in action which might and should be taken to improve arrangements for integrating scientific and technological advice into parliamentary decision-making throughout Europe ;

c. the Council of Europe should, if necessary by reallocation of resources :

1. broaden its work so as to be able to discuss issues of general importance arising from the new possibilities opened up by scientific and technological advances&mdash whether in the field of biology (new knowledge of the human brain), in property rights (information derived from satellite remote sensing) or elsewhere ;

2. respond to the need for projecting a more realistic image of the nature of science in the public mind, through concerted action by its steering committees for cultural cooperation and the mass media ;

3. establish a formal link between the "Parliamentary and Scientific Conferences" and the "Strasbourg Conferences on Parliamentary Demoracy", given the far-reaching implications of the changes now being induced in our societies by scientific advance and technological innovation ;

4. prepare for opportunities which may arise as a result of the 6th conference for deepening relationships with Japan-by establishing, as an initial step, means for sustained reflection on the relevant medium-term scientific and technological policy issues, in liaison with the Committee on Science and Technology of the Parliamentary Assembly and the parliamentary and scientific conferences, together with OECD and the European Science Foundation.