

Opinion 50 (1968)¹

Intergovernmental Work Programme of the Council of Europe 1968-1969

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly,
2. Having regard to Resolution (68) 15 whereby the Committee of Ministers adopted the Intergovernmental Work Programme of the Council of Europe for 1968-69 and invited the Consultative Assembly to express its views on the subject;
3. Recalling its opinion on the Work Programme for 1967-68 contained in [Recommendation 516 \(1968\)](#) on the function and future of the Council of Europe;
4. Having consulted its committees and referred the Work Programme for report to a special committee set up for the purpose,
5. Expresses the following opinion:

A. Procedure for consulting the Assembly on the Work Programme

6. Noting that the Work Programme for 1968-69 has been finally approved by the Committee of Ministers, that the Ministers'Deputies have been authorised to have it carried out and that accordingly it is no longer possible for the Committee of Ministers to take account of the Assembly's opinion as regards any possible amendments to the 1968-69 Work Programme;
7. Noting further that the Committee of Ministers has not as yet expressed any opinion on the Assembly's views on the 1967-68 Work Programme contained in [Recommendation 516](#);
8. Considering, consequently, that the procedure adopted hitherto does not allow of any real dialogue such as should take place in due time between the ministerial and the parliamentary organs of the Council on the general trend of the Work Programmes and the priorities to be accorded to different questions,
9. Is of the opinion:
 - a. that the present procedure, consisting in post facto consultation, which is scarcely compatible with the Assembly's idea of what a parliamentary organ should be, should be abandoned;
 - b. that the Assembly should be asked to express its views on the draft Programme before it has been finally adopted by the Committee of Ministers and at a stage which enables attention to be paid to its suggestions;
 - c. that to draw up the Programme at two-year intervals would make it possible to overcome any difficulties that the new procedure might create. The latter might henceforth be as follows:

the Secretary General submits the draft Programme to the Committee of Ministers;

the Committee of Ministers transmits the draft Programme to the Assembly for opinion;

1. Assembly debate on 26 September 1968 (17th Sitting) (see [Doc. 2463](#), report of the Special Committee on the Intergovernmental Work Programme). Text adopted by the Assembly on 26 September 1968 (17th Sitting).



the Assembly's opinion is transmitted to the Committee of Ministers;
governments examine the Secretary General's draft Programme and the Assembly's opinion;
the Committee of Ministers adopts the Work Programme;

B. Communication of information to the Assembly

10. Noting that changes are made in the Work Programme from year to year and that certain questions in which the Assembly has expressed keen interest are removed from that Programme, while at the same time certain of the Assembly's requests for new questions to be placed on the Programme are ignored without any reason or explanation being given by the Committee of Ministers;

11. Noting that this was specifically the case with regard to the removal from the Work Programme of the "Convening of a European Conference of Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs" as well as of "Measures to improve the social condition of non-wage-earning workers, especially self-employed farmers and their families", which had nevertheless been the subject of repeated recommendations by the Assembly (see Section E below, paragraphs 24 and 25),

12. Is of the opinion:

- a. that procedure for consulting the parliamentary organ on the subject of the Work Programme is conceivable only if it is accompanied by the communication to that organ of all the necessary information on the considerations and factors behind the drawing up of each new Programme;
- b. that such information could be communicated in an appendix to each new Programme submitted for the Assembly's opinion setting out the progress made with the implementation of the Work Programme from one year to the next as well as the considerations which have guided the Committee of Ministers in the selection of items, especially in cases where an item is removed from the Programme or its inclusion is refused in spite of an express request by the Assembly;
- c. that this procedure for communicating information might be merged with that of the Statutory Report on the activities of the Committee of Ministers, the communication presented at the first part of the Assembly's session being devoted to the Work Programme;
- d. that this communication might be accompanied by a message from the Secretary General situating the progress made and the activities undertaken by the Council of Europe under the Work Programme in the context of European co-operation in general;

C. Priorities

13. Noting that the relative importance of its different sections is not yet clear from the Work Programme;

14. Taking note, nevertheless, of the instructions of the Committee of Ministers to the Secretary General "when preparing the next draft Work Programme, to be guided more fully by the idea of priorities reflecting both the major preoccupations of governments and the requirements of European unification, in those fields within the province of the Council of Europe" (Resolution (68) 15 of the Committee of Ministers),

15. Is of the opinion:

- a. that the Work Programme should explain more clearly and precisely what are the "major preoccupations of governments" and the "requirements of European unification, in those fields within the province of the Council of Europe", referred to in Resolution (68) 15 of the Committee of Ministers;
- b. that it is essentially the province of the Assembly to express an opinion on such preoccupations and requirements;
- c. that as already stated by the Assembly, fundamental importance ought to be attached to the four following spheres:

man's cultural development and permanent education;

the adjustment of laws and administrative machinery to living conditions in European industrial society;

the development of social structures and the improvement of public health conditions,

16. as well as to the need to conduct these activities in the light of future requirements and in a forward-looking spirit;
- a. that the recent events in Europe, which have in many cases been occasioned by demands for greater participation not only in the social advantages and cultural capital of modern society but also in responsibility for the conduct of the affairs of various cultural, occupational and local groups, militate still further in favour of these priorities;

D. Structures

15. Noting with satisfaction that the convening of an ad hoc European Conference of Ministers responsible for regional planning has been approved in principle, that a Conference of Ministers responsible for family affairs has just been held in close connection with the Council of Europe and that a Conference of Ministers responsible for groups and areas of buildings of historical or artistic interest is soon to take place under the auspices of the Council of Europe;
16. Reiterating its conviction that within the intergovernmental system of cooperation periodic conferences of technical Ministers in the major fields of work are proving to be increasingly necessary in order to give guidance to the activities of European organisations and their committees of experts,
17. Wishes to stress once again that the efforts being made to rectify certain structural deficiencies in the Council of Europe cannot place in doubt the need for an instrument of political co-ordination such as that constituted by the Committee of Ministers, but rather make this need even greater;
18. Considers that it is an essential function of the Committee of Ministers to fulfil this role, which will prove to be increasingly important as the number of conferences of technical Ministers, whose resolutions have to be turned into concrete plans, continues to increase.

E. Specific sections of the Programme

Chapter I: The economic structure

19. Recalling, on the one hand, its keen desire for the greater concentration of activities and noting, on the other hand, that the items in this chapter are chiefly concerned with regulations imposed on industry and agriculture for social, public health or safety reasons,
20. Is of the opinion that the economic chapter should group all the activities relating to such regulations;

Chapter II: His legal and administrative status, human rights and the prevention of crime

21. Regrets that the following items have disappeared from the Work Programme:

Harmonisation and standardisation of the form of judgments and similar documents in civil and commercial matters;

Co-operation in the legal field with countries of other regions of the world;

"European companies": study of the establishment of rules governing non-commercial companies with activities within two or more member countries;

22. Deplores in particular the decision of the Committee of Ministers to drop the study of "Limited Liability Companies";

Chapter III: Social structure and welfare

Chapter IV: His health and hygiene

23. Is gratified to see under the heading "New work to be undertaken" the "Synchronisation and harmonisation of population censuses" and the "Pilot project for the vocational training of three hundred unskilled workers";
24. Is acutely distressed, on the contrary, at the disappearance from the Work Programme of "Measures to improve the social condition of non-wage-earning workers, particularly self-employed farmers and their families", and urges the Committee of Ministers to reverse that decision, which it considers particularly unfortunate;

25. Having noted with concern that the convening of a Conference of Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs does not appear in the 1968-69 Work Programme, draws the attention of the Committee of Ministers to the major importance it attaches to calling this conference, whose agenda should comprise the drawing up of aims for the next five or ten years in this sphere of the Council's action, and consequently reiterates its request that the conference be called;

Chapter VI: In his local community

26. Welcomes the inclusion in the Work Programme of a new chapter relating to local environment as a first step in the development of that sphere of activity, whose priority importance for the Council of Europe it stressed in the Assembly's [Recommendation 516 \(1968\)](#): "The improvement of man's physical environment in the town and in the country";

27. Welcomes the declaration of the representative of the Committee of Ministers to the Assembly on 6 May 1968 to the effect that the Ministers perfectly realise the important contribution that this sphere of activity can make to European unity, and is confident that the committee will take the final decisions required for the opening of this new chapter in European intergovernmental co-operation, foremost among them being the convening of a first European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning and the placing of the Committee on Co-operation in Municipal and Regional Matters on a permanent footing;

Chapter VII: His formal education and scientific attainments

28. Is most gratified to note the decision taken by the Ministers to set up a permanent European Youth Centre, which meets a wish it has repeatedly expressed;

F. Publicity and public participation

29. Considering that it is essential to associate the peoples of Europe with the work of European union, one of whose primary conditions is the informing of public opinion regarding the progress achieved,

30. Is of the opinion:

- a. that major importance should be attached to the publicity media to be employed in order to ensure that all sections of the population are informed of the progress of the intergovernmental activities of the Council of Europe;
- b. that the Secretariat should have available the modern publicity media essential for this basic task, especially in the field of radio and television;
- c. that it is important likewise to extend this information effort to non-member countries in order to interest them in the work of the Council of Europe;

31. Stresses once more the essential part that regional and municipal authorities can play in the dissemination and realisation of ideas, principles, studies or recommendations emanating from the Council of Europe, and the fact that the ideal instrument to this end is to hand in the European Conference of Local Authorities.