



Opinion 98 (1980)¹

Second medium-term plan (1981-86)

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Having regard to the communication from the Committee of Ministers, transmitting the draft second medium-term plan (1981-86) to the Assembly ([Doc. 4461](#));
2. Having regard to the report of its Committee on the Budget and the Intergovernmental Work Programme, and the opinions of various operational Assembly committees ([Doc. 4507](#));
3. Recognising the heavy time schedule facing the Committee of Ministers in the preparation of the plan, but regretting nevertheless that the Assembly has been given so little time to formulate its opinion that it has not been able to study and discuss the draft plan in sufficient depth;
4. Reserving, therefore, the right to submit a supplementary opinion, containing the points of view of those committees which have not as yet had the time to prepare their contributions;
5. Recalling the important part the Assembly played in introducing medium-term planning in the Council of Europe, notably through its [Opinion No. 61 \(1972\)](#), its [Recommendation 704 \(1973\)](#) and its [Opinion No. 74 \(1976\)](#);
6. Regretting the circumstances which, as in 1976, delayed submission for an opinion to the Assembly of the sectors dealing with education and culture, themselves among the Council's most important activities;
7. Welcoming the fact that a general introduction of considerable substance has been included in the draft second medium-term plan, meeting in its essential points the request, made by the Assembly in its [Opinion No. 74 \(1976\)](#), regarding the first medium-term plan, for a "general policy statement setting out an overall strategy for the next five years",
8. Stresses the pre-eminent role of the Assembly in ensuring that, in the words of the introduction to the draft plan, the Council of Europe may "promote the position of the individual in a pluralist democratic society in general and securing human rights in particular";
9. Considers that every sector in the plan should have political relevance for the protection and reinforcement of democracy, the rule of law, human rights, social justice, cultural development and the correction of disequilibria in Europe;
10. Considers that greater attention should be paid to the potential role of the Council of Europe in studying certain economic matters not taken up in other international fora and presenting a particular interest to the family of Council of Europe member states;
11. Expresses itself in favour of the Secretary General's idea of "reinforcing the role of expert committees in following up... conventions and recommendations,... by providing the machinery for a continuous review", and suggests that efforts should be made to ensure co-ordination with the Assembly Committee on Parliamentary and Public Relations which, for a number of years already, has been pursuing this goal actively;

1. *Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 17 March 1980. See [Doc. 4507](#), report of the Committee on the Budget and the Intergovernmental Work Programme.*



12. Reiterates its concern, expressed in [Opinion No. 74 \(1976\)](#), that the "plan must on no account be regarded as imposing a strait-jacket on the Council of Europe's activities", and that mechanisms must be sufficiently flexible to ensure that problems of real concern to the Assembly are properly and promptly discussed at intergovernmental level;
13. Considers that one such method might consist in having that part of the Council of Europe Secretariat which assists intergovernmental activities continuously take stock of recent Assembly proposals with a view to their integration into future medium-term plans and work programmes;
14. Commends the important preparatory work undertaken in the Committee of Ministers and by the Secretary General on the issue of intensified co-operation between countries of Northern and Southern Europe (called for, *inter alia*, in Assembly [Recommendation 861](#)), and asks that a comprehensive scheme to correct imbalances in Europe be included, after consultation of the Assembly, in the final version of the second medium-term plan, either in the form of a ninth field or by incorporating more such concerns in the existing eight fields;
15. Considers that, in order to achieve the plan's aim of increasing the "accountability of the Council of Europe to the citizen", there must be, *inter alia*, an increase in the Council's information budget, and greater resources put at the disposal of the Assembly's political groups;
16. Emphasises the noteworthy contributions that conferences of specialised ministers are able to make to policy-making in specific fields;
17. Recalls the importance attached by the Assembly to the holding of periodic parliamentary and scientific conferences on specific subjects, and expresses the wish that the conclusions reached at such conferences be embodied in the plan in so far as they relate to intergovernmental cooperation;
18. Welcomes the Secretary General's emphasis on "complementarity" in relations between the Council of Europe and in particular the Commission of the European Communities, and considers such complementarity in the general relationship with the European Communities all the more important following the direct elections to the European Parliament;
19. Expresses itself in favour of the idea, expressed in the introduction to the draft second medium-term plan, that the Council of Europe could serve as a world-wide forum for the discussion of chosen subjects of concern to the pluralist democracies of the world, and draws attention to the important stimulus the Assembly could provide to the intergovernmental side in this respect;
20. Supports the ongoing efforts to bring about closer co-operation with the United Nations and its specialised agencies, and in particular welcomes the exchanges of views held within the Committee of Ministers on certain items on the agenda of the UN General Assembly;
21. Supports the Secretary General when he states that the Council of Europe could play a role in furthering co-operation between Western and Eastern Europe in a number of technical areas, particularly those relating to the three "baskets" in the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, special emphasis being laid on co-operation in areas related to human rights;
22. Considers, nevertheless, that the above task, under present political circumstances, must be carried out with prudence and with due regard to the need for efficiency;
23. Regrets that the energy problem, which will put a severe strain on the fabric of European democracy in the 1980s, has hardly been mentioned at all in the draft plan, and hopes that the final version will take account of the many general aspects of this problem area which call for Council of Europe action;
24. Regrets, as it did in its [Opinion No. 74 \(1976\)](#), with regard to the first draft medium-term plan, that amongst the various objectives and activities set out in the draft plan no priorities have been established, so as to allow the Council of Europe to concentrate its work in the most promising directions (as recommended also in Resolutions (74) 4 and (74) 33 of the Committee of Ministers);
25. Considers, in this respect, that two fields in which current work is under way stand out as being singularly important for the future of Europe: correcting its regional imbalances, and giving a new impetus to the concept of human rights by widening its meaning and enlarging the number of rights protected;
26. Suggests that, to the extent that it is not possible to arrange fields in the plan in an order of priority, such priorities nevertheless be identified between sectors or objectives within each particular field;

27. Believes that one general question to be asked, when considering whether a certain project should be given priority, should be whether it holds particular promise, in the words of Article 1.a of the Statute, of "achieving a greater unity between the member states for the purpose of safeguarding and realising the ideals and principles which are their common heritage, and facilitating their economic and social progress";
28. Considers that, among the criteria to be derived from the above quotation, the following four deserve special mention: the European interest of the proposed activity, the non-overlapping with similar activities at the level of other international institutions, its political significance, and its prospect of producing results on which governments will be able to act;
29. Asks its committees to take more fully into account, when drafting recommendations to the Committee of Ministers, objectives in the plan, thereby making it easier for the Committee of Ministers and the Secretary General to establish priorities in annual work programmes;
30. Proposes that a general description of present and future activities of the Partial Agreements in the Social and Public Health Field, the Resettlement Fund and the European Pharmacopoeia Commission be included in the final version of the plan, so as to give a more comprehensive picture of the Council of Europe's range of intergovernmental activities;
31. Emphasises, as it did already in its [Opinion No. 74 \(1976\)](#), with regard to the first medium-term plan, that the second medium-term plan should be accompanied by at least an indication of the budgetary means governments are prepared to set aside to ensure that it is realised;
32. Urges member states to provide the Council of Europe, on the basis of a formal undertaking, with the financial resources it needs to fulfil its mission;
33. Issues the following opinion on the sectors and objectives contained in the draft second medium-term plan:

Field I: Safeguard and promotion of human rights

The Assembly considers that its major concerns have been reflected properly and with sufficient flexibility, both in the subdividing of this field into different sectors and in the formulation of objectives. It must be ensured, however, that sufficient means are made available for the carrying out of such singularly important tasks as the extension of the range of rights and fundamental freedoms guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights and other legal instruments of the Council of Europe, improving the efficiency of the control machinery established by the European Convention on Human Rights, and the defence at world level of member states' common conception of human rights.

The Assembly, in this context, refers to its recently adopted [Recommendation 890 \(1980\)](#), on the protection of personal data, in which it "recommends that the Committee of Ministers instruct the Steering Committee for Human Rights to examine, as part of the extension of the rights in the European Convention on Human Rights, the desirability of including in the convention a provision on the protection of personal data, by amending Article 8 or 10, or by adding a new article to the convention".

Field II: Social and socio-economic problems such as those concerning migrant workers

The Assembly believes that, in the present situation of economic stagnation in member states, special attention must be given to finding ways of reducing the social conflicts and the suffering that results therefrom.

It in particular considers that:

- the European Social Charter and the European Code of Social Security should be brought up to date, and the control mechanisms strengthened, in accordance with Assembly [Recommendations 839 \(1978\)](#) and [873 \(1979\)](#);
- social policies for the proper protection of the unemployed should continue to be given priority until such time as there is an appreciable decrease in the unemployment rate in the member states;
- the plan should contain cross-references between the various sectors and objectives relating to children, with a view to the drawing up, on a multi-disciplinary basis, of a European Charter on the Rights of the Child as proposed by the Assembly in its [Recommendation 874 \(1979\)](#).

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The Assembly welcomes the importance given in Sector 9 to a number of Assembly concerns, such as the recognition in host countries of the contributions made and to be made by migrant workers, the strengthening of such workers' rights, not least in the cultural and educational field, the problems faced by second generation migrants, and the cultural integration of the families of migrant workers.

The Assembly considers, however, that two additional objectives could be added under Sector 9, namely:

- the creation of a European Centre for Documentation and Statistics on International Migration, to work in close co-operation with similar centres in member states;
- the harmonisation of the conditions for the issue, by immigration countries, of residence and work permits for young second generation migrants reaching adulthood or working age.

The Assembly draws attention to the important role that the Office of the Special Representative of the Council of Europe for National Refugees and Over-Population, if retained in the future, could play in implementing this particular part of the plan (with regard to activities in favour of refugees, see under Field VIII).

The Assembly furthermore strongly supports Objective 52 in Sector 10 (population studies), regarding the organisation of a new conference to review the overall population development in Europe up to the year 2000. Population developments will affect future policies across almost the whole range of government activities, and the knowledge that could be gathered in the course of such a conference, as well as from demographic studies in general, could be most valuable.

Turning to economic questions in the proper sense of the term, the Assembly hopes that the requisite resources, particularly in the form of staff, will be made available for the important tasks which the system of intergovernmental cooperation should undertake in the economic field.

It lays particular emphasis on the urgent need to re-establish a statistical documentation and analysis unit in the Economic Division, for providing intergovernmental and parliamentary committees with the data essential to the efficiency of their work.

The Assembly welcomes the creation, at its request, of a consumer protection sector, which has already performed an important task, and recommends that the sector's structures be reinforced by the replacement of the present ad hoc committee of experts by a steering committee.

Finally, it is proposed that provision be made for a new sector, covering "the problems of small and medium-sized businesses", where government experts could study for the Committee of Ministers the proposals which the Assembly will be making to it on the basis of its report on the future of small and medium-sized businesses in Europe.

Field III: Education, culture and sport

(The contribution under this section, still not complete, will be included in a supplementary opinion.)

Sport: Sector 16

The Assembly welcomes the inclusion in Sector 16 of matters such as sport for certain underprivileged groups, such as the handicapped (Objective 93), the combating of doping in sport, the social protection of sportsmen and the problem of sponsorship (Objective 94).

It considers, however, that the study of ways of lessening political and nationalistic influences in international sport (Objective 94) should take into consideration the standpoints of various Council of Europe member states with regard to the holding of the 1980 Moscow Olympics.

Finally, the Assembly wishes to see greater emphasis laid on such questions as commerce in sport, violence in sport, and the career and status of sport instructors.

Field IV: Youth questions

While welcoming the considerable attention given in the plan to youth matters, the Assembly considers that an alternative method to devoting a special field to such issues might have been to have *all* activities of the Council of Europe reflect the concerns of young people.

The Assembly nevertheless expresses its continued support in favour of the activities of the European Youth Centre and the European Youth Foundation.

Field V: Protection and promotion of public health

The Assembly welcomes the fact that the draft second medium-term plan, unlike the first, contains a number of specific objectives with regard to the promotion of public health.

It nevertheless considers:

- that more emphasis should be laid on Objective 107, regarding the development of preventive medicine, and more particulars given as to the concrete action envisaged, not least as concerns preventive dental care which is not brought up at all in the present version of the plan;
- that attention should be given to genetic research which, apart from its relevance to medicine, also raises legal and ethical questions worthy of joint European study;
- that it is becoming urgent to give a proper follow-up to Assembly [Recommendations 779 \(1976\)](#) and [818 \(1977\)](#), which deal with the rights of the sick (including the mentally ill) and dying, as well as the responsibilities of the members of the medical profession.

The Assembly also stresses the importance of work on education against drug and alcohol abuse, and considers that such activities should be carried out in close collaboration with other bodies active in this field, such as the European Communities and the World Health Organisation.

Field VI: Protection of nature and management of natural resources, the man-made environment and regional planning

(The contribution under this section, still not complete, will be included in a supplementary opinion.)

Field VII: Local authorities, matters relating to regional and municipal co-operation

(The contribution under this section, still not complete, will be included in a supplementary opinion.)

Field VIII: Co-operation in the legal field, including the harmonisation of national legislation and practice in specific legal sectors, the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders

The Assembly makes the general observation that the sectors and objectives in this field are expressed with the flexibility necessary for the incorporation, in future, of possible suggestions by the Assembly.

In addition to the matters already included in this field, many of which it considers highly important, the Assembly would propose including a sector on the Council of Europe's contribution to the development of democratic institutions in Europe.

The Assembly notes with satisfaction that Objective 159 on the protection of refugees has been included in Sector 25 of Field VIII, and stresses the need for it to be retained in the final version of the plan. Much remains to be done to help the unfortunate victims of political conflict, and the Assembly has recently demonstrated its continuous involvement in this field, *inter alia* by adopting recommendations on the plight of Nicaraguan, Chilean and South-East Asian refugees.

The Assembly appreciates the contribution made through work in this field to cultural cooperation, touching as it does on such subjects as art crimes (Sector 26) and mass media (Sector 25). More explicit mention might, however, be made in the final version of the plan to the preparation of the Convention on the Underwater Architectural Heritage as well as to questions of copyright.

Proposed Field IX: Correcting imbalances in Europe, including those between its northern and southern parts

The Assembly supports the idea of creating a ninth field, concerned with balanced European development, where closer co-operation in the economic, social and cultural spheres would be established among all Council of Europe member countries, especially between the countries of Northern and Southern Europe.

It furthermore considers that this new field should incorporate the lines of action proposed in Assembly [Recommendation 861](#), on the role of the Council of Europe in the intensification of co-operation between the countries of Northern and Southern Europe, especially:

- the co-ordination of member governments' policies within the international and European organisations and conferences to which they belong, so as to promote the economic and social development of the European countries with a Mediterranean seaboard;

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- the setting up of a technical co-operation programme, involving the supply of experts and the provision of training for managerial personnel.

The Assembly invites the Committee of Ministers to consider the possibility of directing the action of the Resettlement Fund in such a way as to associate it more closely with the priorities laid down in the programme.

The Assembly would, finally, like to recall its [Opinion No. 74 \(1976\)](#) on the draft medium-term plan 1976-80, in which it urged that the plan should include ' an activity concerning the transfer of capital and industry to emigration countries". The Assembly believes that such an activity is still called for in the plan, and that it might well be included in the proposed Field IX.