Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
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Opinion 127 (1986)[1]

Third draft medium-term plan (1987-91) of the Council of Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Having regard to the communication from the Committee of Ministers submitting for the Assembly's attention the draft third medium-term plan (1987-91) presented by the Secretary General (Doc. 5516 revised) ;

2. Having regard to the report of its Committee on the Budget and the Intergovernmental Work Programme (Doc. 5587), reflecting the opinions expressed by the relevant committees of theAssembly ;

3. Congratulating the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on presenting a draft plan which is more compact and more politically oriented, and which offers a general picture of the Council of Europe's future as an institution of multilateral co-operation, and its role in a multiinstitutional Europe ;

4. Emphasising that the draft plan is not a mere list of proposed specific actions, but a reference framework indicating the main directions to be followed in the Council of Europe's annual programmes of intergovernmental activities over the next five years ;

5. Noting with satisfaction that the temptation to extend indefinitely the Council of Europe's field of operations has been resisted, and that the emphasis is on a restricted number of activities in areas where the Council of Europe has staked a claim that is beyond question, and indeed not questioned ;

6. Supporting the wish expressed in the draft plan for closer co-operation with the European Communities, for example through mutually co-ordinated activities or, if appropriate, joint projects ;

7. Noting with satisfaction that the draft plan takes full account of the report of the Colombo Commission, and considering that the plan should also take full account of the final version of this report ;

8. Recognising the effort made by the Committee of Ministers to consult the Assembly on the draft plan at an appropriate stage,

9. In connection with the introduction to the draft plan, the multidisciplinary objectives and appendices :

a. suggests adding to the introduction of the draft plan the following paragraph : ‘‘Europe's historical and cultural links extend beyond its political partitions, so that it is in the Council of Europe's interests to develop contacts and to co-operate with European non-member states in fields concerning Europe as a whole, such as culture, education, the environment and sport" ;

b. considers that the section ‘‘Challenges" of the introduction to the draft plan should include areference to unemployment and to the changes in qualification requirements ;

c. endorses the Secretary General's proposal for the development of an effective informationpolicy, to be harnessed to the intergovernmental activities, and recalls the notable contributionthat can be made by Assembly members to enhancing the influence of the Organisation ;

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1. See Doc. 5516, draft third medium-term plan, and Doc. 5587, report of the Committee on the Budget and the Intergovernmental Work Programme. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 3 July 1986.

d. considers that the third multidisciplinary objective, ‘‘Unfolding of a European culturalidentity", should state clearly that cultural diversity will be respected ;

e. proposes that reference should be made to violence associated with sport and the media underthe fourth multidisciplinary objective, ‘‘Community and solidarity in European society" ;

f. hopes that in the fifth objective, ‘‘New technologies", reference will be made not only to the threats, but also to the promises held out by science and technology for the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and that the introduction to this objective will include a reference to the full use of the achievements and the potential of European science ;

g. proposes that a further multidisciplinary objective should be included in the draft plan, as follows : ‘‘The quality of life, especially in the countryside" ;

h. urges that the plan include, as a special objective, a study of the strategic economic, social and environmental choices facing Europe's crisis-ridden agriculture—as highlighted forexample at the Assembly's recent Conference ‘‘European Agriculture 2000", and as theyconcern all Council of Europe member countries ;

i. considers that the appendices to the draft plan describing the partial agreements in operation within the Council of Europe should indicate future activities in greater detail ;

j. hopes that the Secretary General will see to it that the intergovernmental activities of the Council of Europe are better co-ordinated with those carried out in the framework of the partial agreements ;

10. In connection with the different fields and objectives in the draft plan :

a. Field I : Human rights and fundamental freedoms

- *a.* supports the general thrust of the proposals in this field and the forward-looking approach adopted, clearly illustrating that Europe must not fall into the trap of complacency and selfsatisfaction regarding human rights ;
- *b.* emphasises that consolidation of the existing system of protecting human rights, however necessary, must not become a pretext for inactivity ;
- *c.* considers that the draft plan should suggest reviewing the machinery of the European Convention on Human Rights, and envisage the possibility of merging the existing organs into a single modern European tribunal on human rights, with permanent judges, advocates-general, appeals against admissibility decisions, and the possibility of preliminary rulings by the European Court of Human Rights at the request of national courts ;
- *d.* stresses that intergovernmental co-operation in the human rights field is particularlynecessary at a time when society is constantly faced with new or potential threats andchallenges to human rights in respect of which the judicial mechanisms of protection may notbe suitably adapted ;
- *e.* proposes that the following item should be reinforced under the objective ‘‘Fostering human rights in a multi-faceted society" : the responsibilities of the individual towards others in the exercise of his rights ;
- *f.* in conclusion, hopes that a full-scale Council of Europe policy on human rights will beworked out ;

b. Field I.A : Media in a democratic society

- *a.* attaches considerable importance to this field, supporting its multidisciplinary character (technical, legal, cultural and human rights aspects), and suggests that it be further strengthened by being allocated a separate field in the plan ;
- *b.* proposes the inclusion of a new objective : Development of the cultural component of themedia, albeit with respect for freedom of expression in a democratic society ;
- *c.* considers that the definition of ‘‘principles on matters such as transparency, responsibility and programme standard" should include codes of conduct relating to violence and advertising ;

c. Field II : Social and socio-economic prob lems

a. considers that due account has been taken of its main concerns in this field, and particularly welcomes the fact that the aim is to draw up a ‘‘social balance-sheet of Europe'' at periodic intervals, which would represent significant progress towards the realisation of a social area common to the Twenty-one, and calls on the Committee of Ministers to take the measures needed for this purpose at the earliest possible juncture ;

b. proposes to include in the introduction a reference to the Council of Europe's relations withmanagement and labour ;

c. underlines the importance of the protection of social rights, and feels that the Committee of Ministers should eventually decide which of the two possible approaches should be selected, although neither excludes the other : incorporating new social rights in the European Convention on Human Rights or updating the Social Charter and at the same time reshaping its supervision machinery ;

d. agrees with the importance accorded to migrants' and refugees' problems in the different fields of the draft plan ;

e. notes with satisfaction that the annual programme of intergovernmental activities for 1986 provides for an exchange of views among experts on the problems of poverty, and hopes that this will make it possible to decide on directions to be followed by the Council of Europe in its future action ;

f. hopes that the objectives laid down will make it possible to take appropriate action on the Assembly's proposals for combating unemployment, particularly among young people ;

g. proposes that the draft plan should give more importance to child protection and family problems, and in this context welcomes the replies from governments to an inquiry by the Secretary General, under Article 57 of the European Convention on Human Rights, on the implementation of the convention in respect of young persons and children placed in care, and asks that new Council of Europe activities should be prompted by the findings of this inquiry ;

h. notes with satisfaction that the examples of projects in the section ‘‘Specific solutions to problems arising at work'' include participation by workers, and hopes that realistic activities in this connection can be put in hand as soon as possible ;

d. Field III : Education, culture and sport

a. suggests that the introduction to this field should place more emphasis on the importance of the individual, and that a sub-heading be added to read : ‘‘The cultural development of the individual in the context of a common European cultural heritage and with regard also to its diversity'' ;

b. hopes that, as a result of the Council of Europe's association with the ‘‘European Community's cities of culture'' operation, a city in a member state not belonging to the Community will be selected between now and the end of the period covered by the third medium-term plan ;

c. suggests that East-West cultural co-operation should be moved into the section headed ‘‘Action to bring European peoples closer together'' ;

d. urges that any cultural co-operation between the Council of Europe and other parts of the world, such as Latin America, should involve all Council of Europe member states ;

e. proposes that a clearer reference should be made under ‘‘Educational and cultural implications of the new technologies'' to the development of strategies for the culture industries, and that suitable co-operation with the field of the media should be initiated ;

f. trusts that work on the recognition of diplomas will be linked with that conducted by the European Community ;

g. suggests reinforcement of the role of the Council of Europe in the matter of inter-university co-operation, in particular in connection with the themes of : research policy, relations with universities in East Europe and other parts of the world, and science/society/culture ;

h. recommends that mention should be made of other instances of co-operation concerning education, such as private education and the question of illiteracy in Europe ;

i. advocates rewording the heading of Section 4.i as follows : ‘‘Sport in Europe : co-operation and dialogue for sports policies in the 1990s'' ;

e. Field IV : Youth

a. considers it important that the Council of Europe should have adequate resources for creating or participating in a credible system of youth exchanges and co-operation among youth organisations, in order to avoid the risk of any split developing between the young people from the different countries of Europe ;

b. proposes that more should be said about theproblems of drugs and young people ;

c. wishes to underline the role played by the European Youth Centre and Foundation, in encouraging and facilitating co-operation between youth organisations ;

f. Field V : Health

a. considers that the draft plan should contain proposals geared to a coherent response to the crisis in health structures ;

b. feels that some of the proposals in the final conclusions of the Conference of European Health Ministers held in 1985 on the situation of the mentally ill could be usefully incorporated in the draft plan ;

c. welcomes the high priority that continues to be given in the draft plan to questions of drug addiction and misuse, and proposes the establishment of new priorities for the sake of greater efficiency in combating drugs ;

d. supports the objectives concerning biomedical advances and the various components thereof ;

g. Field VI : Heritage, surroundings and en vironment

a. welcomes the importance accorded in the draft plan to the various aspects of the cultural heritage, and suggests that the different parts (Fields III and VI, item l) be brought together ;

b. notes with satisfaction that the Berne Convention on the protection of European wildlife and natural habitats occupies a considerable place in the draft plan, and suggests that urgent action be taken to ensure that the signatory states progress in putting the convention into effect ;

c. observes that concrete measures about the link between the environment and employment are absent from the plan ;

d. regrets the failure of the draft plan to refer to acid rain and the fact that the Committee of Ministers should have restricted the Council of Europe's role here to drafting an inventory of technical programmes ;

e. hopes that the modification in intergovernmental structures responsible for regional planning will not have any effect on the elaboration of a European regional planning policy within the Council of Europe ;

f. hopes that a joint Mediterranean policy will be worked out in the Council of Europe in the wake of the Conferences of Regions of the Mediterranean Basin ;

g. welcomes the holding of a European Campaign for the Countryside in 1987 and 1988, and requests that special attention be given in that campaign to the future of agriculture and forestry, as outlined during the Assembly's Conference ‘‘European Agriculture 2000", the conclusions of which will be published in the near future ;

h. Field VII : Local and regional government

a. voices its satisfaction with the importance given to transfrontier co-operation in the draft plan, and hopes that adequate funds will be set aside for it ;

b. considers that a global Council of Europe policy on regionalisation still has to be established ;

c. hopes that activities concerning urban policies can be continued, with emphasis on the urban environment - a factor of crucial importance for improving the quality of life ;

i. Field VIII : Legal co-operation

a. underlines the importance of action against terrorism, recalls the reiteration by the Committee of Ministers at its 78th Session (23 and 24 April 1986) of its ‘‘determination to put the likeminded approach of all members of the Council of Europe to greater advantage, among others by the co-ordination of the normative and juridical aspects of the combat against terrorism...", and hopes that rapid effect will be given to this policy declaration ;

b. hopes that the study of problems posed by advances in biomedical science will produce palpable results reasonably soon ;

c. hopes that efforts to combat art thefts will be continued, in particular with the co-ordination of action in the criminal and civil legal fields ;

d. hopes that efforts to combat art thefts will be continued, in particular with the co-ordination of action in the criminal and civil legal fields ;

e. emphasises the need for activities concerning refugees calculated to produce practical results, notably the harmonisation of national laws and social measures and the sharing of expenses ;

f. hopes that means will be found to resolve the present deadlock in the preparation of a European convention on the underwater cultural heritage, and to undertake further activity in this field.