Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 933 (1982)[1]

Innovation, competitivity and political decision-making (Economic and social effects of advanced technologies)

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Noting the results of the 6th European Public Parliamentary Hearing on "Innovation, competitivity and political decision-making : economic and social effects of advanced technologies" (The Hague, March 1981), and the report of its Committee on Economic Affairs and Development (Doc. 4831) :

2. Recalling its Resolution 717 (1980) on the effects on employment of the large-scale use of microprocessors ;

3. Aware of the need for Europe to give itself the means to take up in an innovative way the challenge put by advanced technologies, and concerned by the fact that this has become all the more urgent since levels of investment and innovation have recently slowed down in Europe, thus making it more difficult to achieve satisfactory rates of growth and weakening Europe's capability to respond to outside competitive processes and new consumer demands, which affects employment rapidly and seriously ;

4. Considering that a continuing process of industrial innovation is an essential condition for increasing the efficiency of productive equipment, for responding to changing demands for natural resources (notably in the energy sector) and for raising living standards ;

5. Convinced in this perspective of the need to make an effort to inform public opinion at European and national level with a view to facilitating the acceptance of innovation and preparing society better for the introduction of new technologies ;

6. Aware, however, that especially in the present economic conjuncture the introduction of certain advanced technologies poses a number of serious problems of adjustment which require special attention from governments and the international organisations concerned and their co-operation with trade unions and employers' organisations, it being understood that such adjustment problems are not only of an economic, social or educational nature, but also concern the protection of individual privacy and of the natural environment ;

7. Recalling that the introduction of advanced technologies has wide implications for the labour market and for the educational policies of the Council of Europe member states ;

8. While fully recognising that technological innovation depends to a large extent on private initiative, stresses that governments have an essential part to play in promoting research and technical innovation by implementing economic and social policies that are favourable to the introduction of new technologies, by subsidising fundamental research and by encouraging co-operation between research institutes, both at national and international level ;

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1. Assembly debate on 25 January 1982 (20th Sitting) (see Doc. 4831, report of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development). Text adopted by the Assembly on 25 January 1982 (20th Sitting).

9. Reiterating the advantage for European countries in concentrating on the development for capital-intensive and knowledge-intensive industries as well as marketable services rather than traditional labour-intensive sectors in which developing countries have become increasingly competitive, thus contributing to a more harmonious North-South relationship ;

10. Emphasising also that industrial adjustment and restructuring policies should be co-ordinated and implemented in accordance with the "General orientations" agreed by OECD's Ministerial Council in 1978, since these encourage positive adjustment to structural changes in demand and production in the world economy and thus further the objective of securing an open trading system and avoiding internal measures which have protectionist effects,

11. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers invite the governments of the member states :

11.1. to assess in detail the challenge to their societies provided by advanced technologies- notably micro-electronics, biotechnology and telecommunications- in order the better to prepare government action in the economic, social and educational fields, aiming at higher levels of employment while improving the quality of life ;

11.2. to make a substantial effort of information at national and European level, so that public opinion accepts accelerated technical progress in a positive and determined spirit, and their populations are prepared for new technologies ;

11.3. to promote innovation as an objective within the framework of their economic and social policies, while seeking to promote technological progress in the whole manufacturing and tertiary fabric, paying particular attention to the role of small and medium-sized businesses and traditional sectors ;

11.4. to improve the co-ordination of national policies with regard to fundamental research and industrial development, in particular within the framework of the European Communities, the European Space Agency and OECD ;

11.5. to implement active labour market policies- especially with regard to those groups that are suffering from particularly high levels of unemployment- designed to reduce regional and occupational disparities between new and old jobs ;

11.6. to set up for this purpose professional training and retraining programmes, in particular in high unemployment areas, to finance training centres from public funds, and to reinforce training and retraining programmes in knowledge-intensive sectors, for example, the Council of Europe programme for the development of postgraduate students ;

11.7. to support the efforts made by public and private economic agents in the peripheral countries and regions of Europe with a view to promoting technologies that are adapted to their level of economic and social development ;

11.8. to reinforce the innovation capacity of firms by taking measures designed to reduce the financial risks of high cost innovation projects, for example by granting state contributions to such projects, to encourage research and development, to offer fiscal and other incentives, and to stimulate innovation through government procurement programmes ;

11.9. to promote the introduction of advanced technologies in public, social and health services (medical services, public transport, environmental conservation, public information systems, etc.) ;

12. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers instruct the Council for Cultural Co-operation (CDCC) to implement a scheme designed, on the one hand, to develop a data-processing training system for students, teaching staff, professional groups, elected representatives, etc. and, on the other hand, to find ways of relating this system to industry, the universities, management and labour,