Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

**Recommendation 1122 (1990)**[1]

# Revival of the countryside by means of information technology

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly considers that new information and communication technologies offer new opportunities for the strengthening and revival of rural regions across Europe. The achievement of a new harmony between urban centres and the countryside through the application of such technologies would not only meet the aspirations of an increasing number of Europeans to improve the quality of their life and environment by living and working in the countryside, but would also benefit family life, and reduce the strain on transport systems and the environment, easing life in the cities. One successful implementation model for the achievement of such changes is the Swedish ‘‘telecottage" project.

2. The Assembly notes with satisfaction the important contributions that the Council of Europe has made to the preservation and development of rural Europe and its environmental and cultural diversity, in particular through the European Campaign for the Countryside organised in 1987 and 1988, and by work in the environmental field. The Council of Europe should continue its work in favour of rural regions, inter alia by promoting the application of new information and communication technologies.

3. Consequently, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers invite the governments of member states, the European Community, the European Space Agency and OECD :

*a.* to work out strategies for the application of new information and communication technology in rural areas, within the framework of a general development plan which gives special emphasis to rural development and to decentralisation in the fields of work and economy ;

*b.* to establish policies for the telecommunication sector in line with rural development objectives and the specific needs of the countryside. This should specifically apply to price policies for telecommunication services, policies for telecommunication infrastructures, equipment and availability ;

*c.* to provide for the testing of and experimentation with different models (infrastructure, equipment and user programmes), to satisfy the specific needs of existing and future clients and operators in rural communities. The Swedish ‘‘telecottage" model, which has also been tested in other European countries, as well as other experiences, should serve as a source of inspiration for this work ;

*d.* to create and strengthen well-adapted training and education on the use of new information and communication technologies in rural regions, in particular for rural youth ;

*e.* to give special attention to the problem of helping existing small and medium-sized enterprises in all sectors to make rapid use of these new technologies for the improvement of their performance and competitiveness ;

*f.* to design development policies which will facilitate the creation of new employment opportunities and new enterprises in the information and communication technology sector in rural regions. This could include the decentralisation of public and private service institutions and companies, and of public administrations ;

*g.* to implement employment policies which will favour part-time work in rural areas through the use of telecommunication technologies where complete decentralisation of workplaces may not be possible.

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1. Assembly debate on 2 February 1990 (29th Sitting) (see Doc. 6160Doc. 6160, report of the Committee on Agriculture, Rapporteur : Mr Lanner). Text adopted by the Assembly on 2 February 1990 (29th Sitting).

4. Bearing in mind its Recommendation 1110 (1989) on distance teaching, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers include in the intergovernmental programme of activities a project designed to assist member states in introducing the aforesaid policies.