



Recommendation 1131 (1990)¹

Environment policy in Europe (1988-1989)

Parliamentary Assembly

1. As the alarming discoveries of the last few years about the rapid deterioration of our environment are confirmed, they constitute a call for ecological awareness and tough political action to protect the environment, both world-wide and Europe-wide.
2. This means that the relationship between ecology and economy must be put on a fresh footing, subordinating the latter to the former and taking account of the fact that natural habitats and the environment are production factors, which come at a price, and which must be taken into consideration urgently in the market economy.
3. It is also vitally necessary to make the population as a whole aware of what is at stake and rally them to the cause of restoring the ecological balance which is essential to mankind's health. The difficulties which some authorities still have in providing the population with regular information, in an accessible form, on the potential threats to health arising from certain environmental factors and conditions are to be deplored.
4. Pupils should gain awareness of the enhancement of the immediate environment of their school surroundings through participation in practical work increasing in complexity with age and level of schooling.
5. Educational actions cannot be isolated and confined to the school context. Co-ordination of all efforts will foster training in social behaviour in community life.
6. With regard to products for consumption, for example, it will be important on the one hand to encourage firms to market only "healthy" products and on the other to encourage consumers to choose only those products which do not present any threat to their health or to the environment.
7. At a time when relations with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are opening up, we are also discovering the scale of the assaults on the environment in these countries, assaults to which we cannot remain indifferent and which will require particular attention from Europe as a whole.
8. The work already done by the Council of Europe, particularly the Standing Committee of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Berne Convention), by other European and world-wide organisations, or under various international agreements, should be noted.
9. It is to be deplored that activities under the Berne Convention on the conservation of wildlife have unfortunately not been given adequate financial instruments and that the relevant international conventions — either at European or world level — have been neither ratified nor applied at national level, even after ratification.
10. Pollution knows no frontiers and spreads over all states of a continent, even of the world. The Assembly therefore has cause to congratulate itself on being the first international parliamentary body to have initiated European interparliamentary dialogue as far back as 1961, and also the first to have set up permanent

1. Assembly debate on 28 September 1990 (11th Sitting) (see [Doc. 6281](#), report of the Committee on the Environment, Regional Planning and Local Authorities, Rapporteur : Mr Ruffy). Text adopted by the Assembly on 28 September 1990 (11th Sitting).



structures for intergovernmental co-operation inside and even outside the Council of Europe. In the same spirit the Assembly is now preparing to establish pan-European parliamentary dialogue in order to put forward new proposals for overcoming this crucial problem of our age, at least on our continent.

11. These proposals should lead to permanent pan-European co-operation (in the environmental field) at intergovernmental and parliamentary level, recognising fully the need for close parliamentary participation in intergovernmental activities designed to improve the environment of all Europeans. The Assembly deems that in so doing it could make its contribution to the CSCE's environmental programme.

12. It is regrettable that no international surveillance authority has yet been set up, despite the seriousness of the situation and despite the work done under the aegis of OECD, UNEP and the EEC.

13. The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers invite member governments :

- a. to propose to schools and educational institutions that they include environmental education in their curricula, with special emphasis on practical training and introduction of specific behavioural activities ;
- b. to ensure that educational curricula make provision for co-ordination with the local, regional and national authorities responsible for training and environmental protection ;
- c. to give the population regular, objective information on the evolution of the environment, especially on changes in the quality of natural elements over the seasons and over the years ;
- d. to give regions and local authorities a part to play in any activity in favour of the environment ;
- e. to recognise and encourage the work done by private organisations in this field, whilst avoiding any duplication of effort ;
- f. to review international conventions pertaining to the environment ; if need be, ratify them and adapt national legislation to allow conventions and decisions taken at international level to be applied under national legislation ;
- g. to integrate environmental policy into other sectoral policies as a matter of routine, accepting both the subordination of the market economy to ecological requirements and the principle that the production of certain substances deemed to be harmful shall be abandoned immediately ;
- h. to devise, where this does not already exist, a national, ecological labelling system for products, which might later lead to a European labelling system without complaisance and, which would constitute an encouragement for manufacturers and a guarantee for consumers ;
- i. to estimate the value of the natural capital, which is made up of renewable and non-renewable resources, and take this natural capital into account generally, in the price of products and when calculating GNP ;
- j. to recognise the principle that pollution must be fought at source, owing to the vast difficulties encountered in combating pollution ;
- k. to foresee funds to ease the reintegration of employees of firms forced to close down for ecological reasons ;
- l. to envisage using taxation as a tool for achieving objectives relating to environmental protection ;
- m. to respect the principle that the polluter pays ;
- n. to seek close co-operation with the European Environment Agency set up by the Twelve in order to implement a common strategy, recognised throughout Europe, having a monitoring organisation and a data bank fed with standardised information and capable of producing regular up-dates of the situation ;
- o. to continue, within the Council of Europe, to implement the agreements on development and the environment under the CSCE's second basket ;
- p. to foster agreements between Western European countries and those of Central and Eastern Europe in the environmental field, in particular by ensuring that economic aid is dependent on the installation of environmentally friendly infrastructures and production lines ;
- q. to create a fund for protecting the environment and combating pollution, enabling urgent measures to be taken, especially in the regions of the Eastern European countries which do not have the resources to tackle this task at the moment ;
- r. to agree to the Assembly's long-standing request for the European convention for the protection of international water courses against pollution to be concluded ;

- s. to encourage the setting up of commissions for the Danube, Elbe and Oder basins, on the lines of the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine ;
- t. to prepare an outline convention on the protection of land against pollution, a convention which has often been called for, in the run-up to the 9th CEMAT which will be held in Turkey in 1991.