Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 1215 (1993)[1]

Ethics of journalism

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly recalls its work in the field of the media, and in particular its Resolution 428 (1970) containing a declaration on mass communication media and human rights and its Recommendation 963 (1983) on cultural and educational means of reducing violence.

2. Further to the criticism of the role played by the media during the Gulf war, the Committee on Culture and Education organised a parliamentary hearing on the ethics of journalism in Helsinki on 26 June 1991, at which a number of concerns were expressed.

3. Since 1970 the Parliamentary Assembly, and also other institutions such as the European Parliament (Resolution of 16 September 1992 on media concentration and diversity of opinions), have been pressing for the elaboration of ethical codes for journalism. However, existing texts dealing with the matter have insufficient international scope and their practical effectiveness therefore remains very limited.

4. European citizens from the different Council of Europe member states increasingly share the same media facilities within a common European information area.

5. The Assembly consequently recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

5.1. ask governments of member states to see that legislation guarantees effectively the organisation of the public media in such a way as to ensure neutrality of information, plurality of opinions and gender balance, as well as a comparable right of reply to any individual citizen who has been the subject of an allegation;

5.2. study, in co-operation with the competent non-governmental organisations such as the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), the prospects for setting up, within the Council of Europe, a European mechanism for information verification, taking the form of a European media ombudsman, with sufficient international representativeness where possible drawn from, and having a mode of operation and function similar to, the corresponding national self-regulatory bodies or mechanisms;

5.3. foster the setting up of citizens' media associations and encourage schools to provide media education;

5.4. adopt a declaration on the ethics of journalism along the lines of Assembly Resolution 1003 (1993) and promote the implementation of these basic principles in the member states of the Council of Europe.

1. Assembly debate on 1 July 1993 (42nd Sitting) (see Doc. 6854, report of the Committee on Culture and Education, Rapporteur: Mr Núñez Encabo). Text adopted by the Assembly on 1 July 1993 (42nd Sitting).