



## Recommendation 1264 (1995)<sup>1</sup>

# Social sciences and the challenge of transition

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly is aware that the transition from totalitarian communist regimes to democracy in the countries of central and eastern Europe is a situation unprecedented in history. This transition cannot take place purely on the basis of existing western theories and methodologies.

2. The social sciences represent a strategic point of convergence in the transformation process, as they are concerned with the study of the behaviour of individuals and groups, the economy, civil society, the state and its institutions. Although they may appear to be less exact and deductive than the natural sciences, the social sciences must be based on quantifiable data and methodology involving other disciplines. By the same token, the exact sciences have an increasing need for the human sciences in order to base their choices on the needs of the population and the development of the planet.

3. The importance of this global approach to the social sciences is becoming increasingly clear in the context of the major political upheavals and scientific and technological breakthroughs now occurring worldwide, which are profoundly changing the traditional notions of how society is organised. Consequently, countries in transition and western countries alike need to co-operate closely in developing research and training in social sciences, in order to meet the challenges of globalisation.

4. The challenge of social marginalisation caused primarily by widespread unemployment, the rapid changes in employment structures and the profound crisis in the social security system are depriving many people of their sense of security and generating serious social discontent and an accompanying political crisis. The impact of this phenomenon is much more severe in the countries in transition. The Assembly is therefore concerned by the fact that the possibilities for the social sciences in countries in transition to carry out work corresponding to the needs of society are currently limited by insufficient infrastructure and human and financial resources.

5. Consequently, the Assembly requests the Committee of Ministers to invite the governments of the member states, where applicable:

5.1. to acknowledge that it is dubious to build a society based on democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights without the active participation of the social sciences;

5.2. to promote the social sciences, from a theoretical, methodological and institutional point of view, with the aim of creating a society better geared to the needs of its citizens;

5.3. to provide the necessary infrastructure and resources, bearing in mind that the results of this research will not be felt immediately;

5.4. to encourage the revival of a civil culture, in order to restore to individuals freedom of thought and freedom to criticise, by enhancing the status of the social sciences in secondary and higher education, and in particular in educating society's senior managers and leaders;

5.5. to promote the decompartmentalisation of universities, in a spirit of pluralism and interdisciplinarity, so that they become the centre of intellectual life once more. New courses better suited to the socio-economic realities should be introduced in order to prepare young people more

---

1. Assembly debate on 25 April 1995 (11th Sitting) (see [Doc. 7269](#), report of the Committee on Science and Technology, rapporteur: Mr Berger). Text adopted by the Assembly on 25 April 1995 (11th Sitting).



effectively for the market economy. At the same time, foundations need to be laid for a modern civil service adapted to these new requirements, by reinforcing the administrative and legal training of future executive officials;

5.6. to safeguard the role of the social sciences as a means for guaranteeing the social rights and social needs of the population and creating machinery to protect democracy. To this end, government policy needs to be reshaped to enable the sciences to function in an autonomous, independent and democratic fashion;

5.7. to ensure that there is no manipulation of the social sciences and that the roles of government and the sciences are clearly distinct and autonomous: the information furnished by the social sciences for policy-making purposes must be reliable but responsibility for making decisions belongs to political decision-makers;

5.8. to stimulate, for this purpose, comparative research based on statistical data and to perfect the techniques used for surveys and analyses, in order to create the necessary conditions for a more objective analysis of social phenomena;

5.9. to develop close collaboration with industry and the services sector in a spirit of openmindedness to all humanist, ethical, social and ecological problems raised by modern society;

5.10. to facilitate the integration of scientists from countries in transition into the international scientific community by helping them to become members of organisations such as the European Science Foundation;

5.11. to maintain an ongoing, constructive dialogue between the political decision-makers and the scientific community in order to be able to determine research priorities and take full advantage of the opportunities for international collaboration in this field, such as Unesco's Most (Management of Social Transformations) programme;

5.12. to encourage different international or national organisations to contribute to the development of programmes in the field of social sciences.

6. The Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

6.1. promote, through its intergovernmental and interparliamentary co-operation programmes, and in the framework of the Council of Europe's Demosthenes and Demosthenes-B programmes and of the programmes of other international institutions, the development of projects enabling maximum exchange between the social scientists of member states. Joint projects, colloquies and symposia, co-operation between universities, and the mobility of researchers and students are key elements in this strategy for co-operation and mutual enrichment;

6.2. continue and extend, in this connection, the Legislative Reform Programme for Higher Education which has been implemented in several countries, so that it encompasses the restructuring of scientific institutions which do not belong to university systems, such as academies and independent research institutes;

6.3. examine more closely the problem of brain drain, following the main lines of Recommendation No. R (95) 7 of the Committee of Ministers on brain drain in the sectors of higher education and research, which constitutes an excellent working basis, with a view to drawing up an international convention.