



Resolution 502 (1971)¹

Role of the Council of Europe in the near future

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Recalling its [Recommendation 516](#) and its Opinions Nos. [50](#), [51](#) and [54](#) on the function and future of the Council of Europe ;
2. Believing that the Council of Europe – in the first instance, its Assembly – ought to consider the effects of the enlargement of the Communities on the European continent's future structures and on the role of each European organisation ;
3. Believing that the Council of Europe should make a medium-term study of the following two questions :
 - the future functions of the Consultative Assembly in relation to those of the European Parliament ;
 - the intergovernmental activities of the Council of Europe in relation to those of other European organisations, particularly the European Communities ;
4. Believing that, against the background of the inevitable rationalisation of the European institutions after the enlargement of the Communities, "exchanges between the WEU Assembly and the European Parliament with a view to an actual merger" can be seen as a reasonable prospect ;
5. Noting that the European Parliament, in its efforts to increase its real powers, is keeping to its role as the parliamentary organ of the Communities in as much as its debates relate essentially to matters within the competence of the Communities and only representatives of the Communities' organs take part in them ;
6. Recognising that the Consultative Assembly, whose powers are limited, has seen a considerable increase in its standing and influence, both within and outside the boundaries of its member States, and that its role, as it has developed, now goes far beyond what was envisaged in the Council of Europe's Statute ;
7. Noting that, in addition to its purely statutory activities such as indicating guidelines for the action of the Committee of Ministers, preparing legislative measures, adopting recommendations and playing an active role in the drafting of conventions, the Consultative Assembly fulfils an important function by :
 - a. helping to define Western Europe's position and responsibilities in respect both of European non-member countries and of other countries in the world, and by initiating a dialogue with them ;
 - b. acting as a forum for parliamentary debates on the activities of other intergovernmental organisations ;
8. Believing that, through its action in these fields, the Consultative Assembly fills an obvious gap in European political life,

A. At parliamentary level

9. Believes that the European Parliament and the Consultative Assembly differ not so much in their composition as in their interests and the nature of their debates ;

1. *Assembly debate* on 7 October 1971 (13th Sitting) (see [Doc. 3004](#), report of the Political Affairs Committee). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 7 October 1971 (13th Sitting).



10. Believes that the major topics of interest to the Consultative Assembly continue to be : the general pattern of European policy in the various sectors ; relations between the enlarged Community and the Council of Europe member States which will not adhere to the Community ; the contribution of each intergovernmental organisation towards European co-operation ; and Western Europe's relations with the rest of the world, particularly European non-member countries ;

11. Remains ready to invite parliamentarians or members of governments from non-member countries to some of its debates, as it has already done in the past, without departing from the principles embodied in the Statute of the Council of Europe ;

12. Wishes to strengthen its links with intergovernmental organisations operating in Europe which have no parliamentary body of their own ;

B. At intergovernmental level

13. Believes that the Council of Europe should accentuate the originality of its activities as compared with those of other intergovernmental organisations, particularly the Communities, and accordingly considers :

- a. that, in comparison with the Communities, one of whose chief concerns is to raise "living standards" in their member States, the Council of Europe should apply itself mainly to improving "the quality of life" of each European, that is to say, his natural and urban environment, the laws which regulate his life, his fundamental rights and freedoms, his social situation, his leisure, his education and his health ;
- b. that, alongside the "Europe of the Nations" that is at present being constructed within the Communities, the Council of Europe should become the champion of the "Europe of the Regions" by helping the regions to establish transfrontier links with partners which have the same interests and are faced with similar problems, thus facilitating the creation of a European unity that would be all the stronger for being based on local realities ;

14. Maintains that the Council of Europe should continue to act as a forum for political discussions and consultations amongst its member governments and that it provides a useful instrument for intergovernmental co-operation with non-member States ;

15. Reaffirms the need for rationalisation of intergovernmental co-operation in Europe, and advocates the creation of a preparatory committee to organise a conference of governments such as it proposed in its [Opinion No. 54](#) ;

16. Instructs the Secretary General to produce for it a detailed report showing what part the Council of Europe could usefully play in each of its sectors of activity in the light of the functions of other intergovernmental organisations and the enlargement of the Communities, it being understood that the report should bring out the complementary nature of the Council of Europe's activities in relation to those of other organisations and their financial implications.