

Resolution 693 (1979)¹

Direct elections to European Parliament: role of the Parliamentary Assembly of the CE (General policy CE)

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Having taken note of the report of its Political Affairs Committee on direct elections to the European Parliament and the role of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe ([Doc. 4311](#)) ;
2. Considering that the enlargement of democratic Europe subsequent to the fall of the dictatorships in Greece, Portugal and Spain has given a new dimension to the objectives of the Council of Europe and to the co-operation between the twenty-one member states ;
3. Considering that direct elections to the European Parliament represent an important stage in the process of rendering the European institutions more democratic ;
4. Being of the opinion that a directly elected European Parliament will endeavour to increase its real powers and will strive to fulfil completely its role as the parliamentary control organ of the European Community ;
5. Hoping that the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, whose consultative powers remain limited, will maintain a freedom of action which can only increase its influence, not only in its member states but also in the outside world, and that its role, as it will develop, will go beyond what was foreseen in the 1949 Statute ;
6. Noting that, apart from its strictly statutory functions, which consist, among other things, in guiding the action of the Committee of Ministers and the governments of the twenty-one member states, the Parliamentary Assembly will continue to fulfil an indispensable role :
 - a. by remaining the geographically largest European parliamentary body,
 - b. by bringing together almost all the democratic countries of Europe, which account for two-thirds of the parliamentary democracies of the world,
 - c. by contributing to the formulation of the position and responsibilities of democratic Europe in the fundamental areas of the defence of human rights and democratic institutions and the guarantee of greater economic and social justice,
 - d. by providing a valuable forum for the North-South dialogue in Europe, designed to correct the economic and social imbalances between the various European regions and so ensure political stability and the preservation of democracy,
 - e. by holding debates on European responsibility in the North-South dialogue at world level,
 - f. by analysing the effects on democratic Europe as a whole of the main political and economic events in the world,
 - g. by serving as a forum for parliamentary debates on the work of other intergovernmental organisations,

1. Assembly debate on 9 May 1979 (4th and 5th Sitings) (see [Doc. 4311](#), report of the Political Affairs Committee). Text adopted by the Assembly on 9 May 1979 (5th Sitting).



- h.* by providing a meeting place for the parliamentary representatives of the pluralist democracies of the whole world which may wish to discuss subjects of common interest ;
- 7. Noting that many future members of the European Parliament will not be coming from a national parliament and that the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe will remain the unrivalled forum for national parliamentarians who wish to engage in European politics ;
- 8. Considering that greater differentiation between the respective functions and powers of the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly should facilitate their future relations,
- 9. Is of the opinion that the two Assemblies should maintain working relations characterised by co-operation in the service of their common cause, namely the rapprochement of the European peoples and the creation of closer unity between them, and therefore suggests :
 - a.* regular meetings between the Presidents of the two Assemblies, who, after consulting their Bureaux, and subject to the approval of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and of the Parliament of the European Community, would agree on the nature of and arrangements for relations between the two Assemblies ;
 - b.* meetings of committees of the two Assemblies which would discuss subjects of common interest and the co-ordination of political and technical actions in common areas of activity ;
 - c.* greater co-operation between the political groups of the two Assemblies, with a view to promoting a "European spirit", strengthening "European policy" and introducing a "common responsibility" for Europe ;
 - d.* strengthening and diversifying the working relations between the committees of the two Assemblies, including participation in each other's conferences, round tables or specialised colloquies ;
- 10. Considers that holding periodically a part-session devoted to a dialogue between the European and non-European democratic countries should enable the Parliamentary Assembly to fulfil its role as a forum for world democracy ;
- 11. Believes furthermore that in an increasingly interdependent world, the dialogue with representatives from all non-member countries would be of mutual advantage, and considers therefore that :
 - a.* it would be very desirable to invite representatives of these countries to the conferences, round tables and specialised debates held by the Assembly, and to invite their governments to subscribe to the conventions of the Council of Europe which are open to non-member states ;
 - b.* the President and Bureau of the Assembly, after consulting the appropriate committees, should establish ad hoc working relations with these countries ;
- 12. Is of the opinion that, in the interests of efficiency :
 - a.* priorities should be established in the choice of its subjects and the agenda of its work, both in committee and public session,
 - b.* it should seek to make the work of the various international assemblies and organisations complementary,
 - c.* the work of the Committee on Parliamentary and Public Relations should be supported by all members and all national delegations of the Assembly in their national parliaments,
 - d.* the increased role of the political groups should contribute to strengthening the political influence of the Assembly,
 - e.* abandoning the search for unanimity and accepting differences of opinion on important questions should make the public debates of the Assembly more lively and give greater credibility to its work, while improving the organisation's image ;
- 13. Hopes that the Committee of Ministers will comply with the wish expressed by the Assembly in its [Recommendation 721 \(1973\)](#), to be consulted more regularly on draft European conventions and agreements drawn up in the Council of Europe before they are finally approved and opened for signature.