Resolution 717 (1980)[1]

Effects on employment of large-scale use of microprocessors

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Having taken note of the report on the effects on employment of large-scale use of microprocessors, presented by its Committee on Economic Affairs and Development (Doc. 4466);

2. Considering that the increasing sale and widespread use of computer facilities, resulting from the dramatic fall in the price of electronic components (microprocessors), constitute a technological advance of the first magnitude, which is bound to have a determining effect on the economy of the industrial countries and on employment;

3. Noting that numerous operations hitherto performed by man will in future be handled through increased reliance on computers and programmed equipment ;

4. Fearing that the progressive replacement of man by machines, while relieving the former of tasks which are tiring or repetitive, may result in the loss of a large number of jobs ;

5. Realising, nonetheless, that technical progress is essential if European economies are to maintain their productivity and international competitivity ;

6. Considering that the rapidly expanding computer industry will probably create new jobs, both in the production of equipment and components and in the data-processing sector, but that current estimates predict, firstly, that less jobs will be created than lost as a result of the large-scale use of microprocessors in industry and, secondly, that partially compensatory trends will only intervene at a later stage ;

7. Considering that very positive results may be expected from the large-scale use of microprocessors, resulting in the creation of new highly skilled jobs and a reduction in the consumption of energy, thus providing a significant contribution towards qualitative economic growth,

8. Declares unacceptable both the rapid loss, without compensation, of a large number of jobs, especially at a time when unemployment is already high, and the rejection of technical progress, which would affect the productivity of European economies vis-a-vis their competitors and thus, very rapidly, employment as well ;

9. Invites the governments of the Council of Europe member states :

   9.1. to implement programmes for mastering the social consequences of technical progress, and especially the large-scale introduction of microprocessors ;

   9.2. to launch dynamic vocational retraining schemes for workers who lose their jobs following computerisation of their tasks ;

   9.3. to rapidly adapt the nature and content of school curricula to the new economic and social situation, by including an introduction to applied computer science at all levels of education ;

   9.4. to provide greater opportunities for early training in services, industries and other activities outside the scope of advanced technology ;

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1. Assembly debate on 30 January 1980 (23rd Sitting) (see Doc. 4466, report of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development). Text adopted by the Assembly on 30 January 1980 (23rd Sitting).

9.5. to foster the creation of jobs in connection with the social, cultural and recreation sectors, and with industrial and commercial applications of new techniques ;

9.6. to study the possibility of distributing the available work more fairly by implementing the various proposals contained in paragraph 14.iii of Assembly Resolution 710 (1979) (part-time jobs, flexible retirement schemes, concertation among industrial countries on the reduction of working hours), while keeping a watchful eye on the possible impact of such measures on the financial equilibrium of social welfare systems ;

9.7. to promote a powerful European computer industry, following the guidelines laid down in its Recommendation 619 (1971) ;

10. Instructs its Committee on Economic Affairs and Development and its Committee on Science and Technology to investigate these questions further, and to submit specific action proposals to the Committee of Ministers, with particular reference to the findings of the International Colloquium on the Economic Effects of Space and Other Advanced Technologies (28-30 April 1980).