Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 967 (1991)[1]

Renewal of the Council of Europe's Social Charter

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly welcomes the opportunity extended to it by the Committee of Ministers to contribute to discussions on renewal of the Council of Europe's Social Charter, and congratulates the Secretary General on her earlier initiatives in this field.

2. The ‘‘greater Europe" which is beginning to emerge has accepted the Council of Europe's Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms as a key statement of aims and principles for the protection and realisation of a certain number of civil and political rights.

3. Clearly, there is a need for a comparable statement of aims and principles in the field of social policy and social protection, providing (as does the Convention), first, a set of reference points and parameters with which future European Community legislation must be compatible and, secondly, realistic formulations of standards for all countries which are members and for those which are likely to become members of the Council of Europe in the coming years if trends towards liberalisation and pluralistic democracy continue.

4. The texts of Part I and Part II of the Council of Europe's Social Charter largely meet this need ; they need relatively minor adjustment for the purposes of updating and accommodating the state today of European Community legislation.

5. Verification of whether the countries of the Council of Europe are in fact applying comparable standards according to aims and principles set forth in suitably revised texts of Parts I and II of the Social Charter should no longer be based only on the periodical submission by governments of all-embracing national reports. A system of petitions and complaints must be devised, possibly with ultimate rulings to be given under an authority similar to that of the European Court of Human Rights.

6. The Parliamentary Assembly should be involved in procedures for the election or appointment of members of the committee of independent experts, one from each country. The Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee is ready to invite the Chairman of the Independent Experts' Committee and the Chairman of the Governmental Committee to a joint annual hearing in order to determine the subject of a major annual social policy debate. In order to free resources for the preparation of this debate and in order not to remain a factor of - nor alibi for - delay in completion of each cycle of supervision under current procedures, the committee proposes henceforth to communicate its views on operations under the Social Charter periodically in the light of a major social policy debate and - because of inevitable uncertainties in the programming of the Assembly's reports - no longer necessarily within the framework of particular cycles of supervision.

1. See Doc. 6440, report of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee, Rapporteurs : Mr Beix and Mr Rathbone. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 28 June 1991.