Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 1379 (1998)[1]

Basic education in science and technology

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe draws attention to the growing importance of basic education in science and technology (science and technology literacy) enabling people to compete at work and in everyday life in an ever-changing and globally connected world.

2. Science and technology literacy programmes in general education, as well as in vocational, higher and continued education have to take account of this. Evaluation of the state of the art, however, reveals considerable deficits and shortcomings both within and outside the educational system, to which the Parliamentary Assembly would like to draw attention.

3. The causes for this are very diverse. In many cases the lack of financial resources makes it difficult to equip educational institutions with sufficient modern technology. Often there are not enough motivated and well-trained teachers. In many cases the available software does not facilitate science and technology literacy. Sometimes also deeply rooted prejudices among teachers stand in the way of acquiring new knowledge and skills.

4. The Parliamentary Assembly recommends that parliaments of member states insist on making basic education in science and technology a key element of educational policy.

5. The aim should be to give all young people access to the new communications technologies and, in particular, to promote the interest of girls and young women in science and technology.

6. Science and technology literacy should, however, not be limited to general, vocational and higher education, but should also form an integral part of out-of-school (further) education, including vocational further training as well as educational programmes offered by the media and on the Internet. This should enable people to preserve and continue developing – up to old age – knowledge and skills previously acquired.

7. To facilitate familiarisation with the new technologies the Parliamentary Assembly recommends that every two years the Council of Europe and the European Union award a quality label to initiation programmes providing a particularly child-friendly introduction to science and technology literacy. Similarly, those companies that offer a good example of sponsoring and promoting science and technology literacy should be distinguished.

8. The Parliamentary Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

   8.1. draw the attention of all Council of Europe member states to the importance of basic education in science and technology as an important element of the culture of our society and to encourage them to develop framework school curricula in this area;

   8.2. devote a great deal of attention to the training of teachers for all types of schools;

   8.3. exert an influence on the development of pupil-friendly initiation programmes and textbooks for science and technology literacy;

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1. Assembly debate on 25 June 1998 (23rd Sitting) (see Doc. 8122, report of the Committee on Science and Technology, rapporteur: Mrs Terborg). Text adopted by the Assembly on 25 June 1998 (23rd Sitting).

8.4. pay particular attention to the promotion of science and technology literacy for girls and take special measures to arouse their interest in this kind of knowledge;

8.5. ensure that science and technology literacy forms part of practical training provided by employers and of vocational education and that it relates to more than purely job-related applications of the new communications technologies;

8.6. ask an existing European institution to develop teaching aids and model curricula for science and technology literacy for all levels of school education;

8.7. promote out-of-house further education in this area through training courses for those parts of the population who have recently come to the end of their active working life and to make sure that they can keep pace with technological developments;

8.8. support and/or organise countrywide competitions for schools and young people interested in applying their science and technology literacy;

8.9. call upon the media to disseminate basic knowledge of science and technology at regular intervals as well as to undertake systematic efforts to arouse interest in this area and to reduce prejudices against it;

8.10. promote close co-operation between general, vocational and higher education, on the one hand, and industry on the other, and to encourage companies to sponsor the improvement of technical equipment in general, vocational and higher education institutions.