



Recommendation 1566 (2002)¹

European cultural co-operation and the future role of the Assembly

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly has followed closely the development of European cultural co-operation from its start in the Council of Europe. The present recommendation follows on from others and most recently from [Recommendation 1265 \(1995\)](#) on enlargement and European cultural co-operation and [Recommendation 1299 \(1996\)](#) on European cultural co-operation: activities of the European Union and relations with the Council of Europe.

2. In this context culture is used in its broad sense to include the arts, heritage, media, science, education, youth and sport, but in no order of priority.

The new challenges

3. The Assembly wishes to recognise the central importance of European cultural co-operation and to reaffirm its own contribution to this co-operation in the Council of Europe at the present moment.

4. On the one hand the upsurge of international terrorism has led to a greater realisation of the political relevance of cultural values, intercultural dialogue, education and tolerance.

5. On the other hand globalisation, through for example mass tourism or the new information technologies, has placed new pressures on areas such as heritage or languages, or even on gastronomy, requiring new policies to integrate the cultural perspective into economic planning for sustainable development.

6. Furthermore, while the process of enlargement of the Council of Europe is nearing completion (and has already done so as regards the European Cultural Convention), the new process of enlargement of the European Union is only beginning, with the potential risk for culture of a new dividing line in Europe.

7. There is therefore a perceived need for improving cultural co-operation not only within Europe (within the greater Europe) but also between Europe and neighbouring countries, especially in geographical areas such as the Mediterranean that have historical cultural links with Europe.

8. Finally, internal changes in the Council of Europe itself, notably the dissolution this year of the Council for Cultural Co-operation (Steering Committee for Cultural Co-operation), call for a new stocktaking of European cultural co-operation in which the Assembly should play a part.

The way forward

9. Education and culture should continue to remain central to the long-term mission of the Council of Europe. The Assembly can therefore welcome the inclusion of the cultural dimension in several key declarations adopted recently by the highest authorities of the Council of Europe, notably in the two Council of Europe Summits (Vienna 1993 and Strasbourg 1997), and in the Budapest Declaration for a Greater Europe without dividing lines, adopted by the Committee of Ministers in 1999.

1. Assembly debate on 24 June 2002 (17th Sitting) (see [Doc. 9473](#), report of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education, rapporteur: Mr de Puig). Text adopted by the Assembly on 24 June 2002 (17th Sitting).



10. However the Assembly must regret that the importance of culture in the broad sense has not been reflected in the subsequent cuts in budget and personnel that have mainly affected those sectors of the Organisation's activity.

11. Culture re-emerges as the mainstay of multilateral co-operation, following readjustment with the emerging democracies in central and eastern Europe and despite the extent to which political conflict in certain areas continues to feed on cultural differences.

12. Much of proven value in the Council of Europe's earlier work should be restated and repeated. For example permanent education, language and history learning, integrated conservation, youth participation, freedom of expression, tolerance, Sport for All, etc. Quality of life should be a shared objective throughout Europe. Cultural co-operation is a means of tackling the problem of exclusion in all its forms and should be pursued to the fullest extent. Education (formal and non-formal) remains the long-term key to economic, social and political progress as well as the basis for the development of the individual.

13. Certain new priorities and new challenges have emerged. Values have to be constantly defined, whether this is to take into account new social, political and economic circumstances or resist them. Management mantras of change for the sake of change should however be avoided.

14. The impact of the work of the Organisation suffers chronically from lack of follow up. The general principles and the many related recommendations and other proposals that have been made must be more clearly articulated and presented so as to be effective locally and to be appreciated by the parliaments and governments of member states.

Activities of the Assembly within the Council of Europe

15. The Assembly believes that its own contribution to the work of the Council of Europe is essentially one of initiation, of complementarity and interactivity. It proposes:

to establish (where they do not yet exist) and to maintain active, informal working relations at all levels in the Council of Europe structures (ministerial, specialised ministry representatives, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, Ministers' Deputies' rapporteur groups, Secretariat);

to reduce in practice its own involvement in institutional activities (statutory meetings, etc.) and to replace this with regular and efficient briefing, with more politically relevant participation and with joint planning at all appropriate levels;

to concentrate its own activities on selected priorities that complement what is done elsewhere in the Organisation.

Assembly external activities

16. The Assembly has an external role to play. It will therefore aim:

to promote co-operation in the cultural field between governmental and non-governmental organisations through national parliaments;

to provide a forum for parliamentary debate on the cultural activities of those governmental organisations that do not have such a forum (Unesco and OECD);

to encourage the participation of civil society, and in particular of young people in the activities of the Council of Europe, without necessary recourse to formal structures.

Committee of Ministers and cultural co-operation activities

17. The Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers, at institutional level:

review Assembly representation in steering committees and consider in particular whether it is appropriate to maintain full membership of committees set up on the basis of the European Cultural Convention;

reintroduce, where appropriate, the practice of colloquies between parliamentarians and ministers at European conferences of specialised ministers;

reconsider the Assembly's earlier suggestion that the Committee of Ministers meet occasionally at the level of specialised ministers; and, more generally:

give a higher priority to the promotion of European cultural co-operation throughout the many fields involved (including media) and to its integration in the main policy fields of the Organisation as a whole and provide the appropriate resources and governmental co-ordination;

ensure that information on Council of Europe activities is made available for use nationally (in an appropriate form and language);

pursue actively co-operation with other governmental organisations (Unesco, OECD, etc.) and with the European Union with a view to establishing effective partnerships and a better sharing of available resources;

take the necessary steps so that the European Union becomes party to the European Cultural Convention (Council of Europe) and that the broader Europe is included in any arrangements for cultural co-operation envisaged by the European Convention (European Union);

continue to associate civil society with these activities and in particular young people.