Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 1585 (2002)[1]

Youth policies in the Council of Europé

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly reaffirms the importance of young people for the future of Europe. The Council of Europe should therefore consider them as resources and not as a source of problems. Young people should be partners in all the Organisation's activities.

2. Since 1968 and the establishment of the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg, the Assembly has drawn attention to the importance of youth participation in institutional and political life in its reports on: group participation by young people (1975), youth co-operation in Europe (1980), participation of young people in political and institutional life (1985), youth representation at national level (1990), the European Youth Centre in Budapest (1996) and European youth co-operation and recent proposals for structural change (1998).

3. The Assembly acknowledges the major role played by youth organisations in the opening up of central and eastern Europe and the promotion of the Council of Europe's ideals, in particular in the campaign against racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and intolerance, and recalls the importance of their present involvement in the Euro-Mediterranean youth dialogue.

4. It is aware that only a small percentage of young people are organised in a traditional manner. However, not only the members of youth organisations enjoy the benefits of their work, but also large numbers of other young people. In 1980 the Assembly was already stressing the importance of also involving young people who did not belong to recognised youth organisations. In 1998 it considered that fresh efforts were needed to identify and reach a larger audience of young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, in order to involve them in the Council of Europe's activities. In 2002 it took note of the work done in this field and encouraged its continuation.

5. In general terms, the Assembly would like to see a wider range of young people associated with the Council of Europe's activities. It realises that this does not necessarily involve using traditional youth organisations as intermediaries. It confirms its active support for the Democratic Leadership Programme through its Committee on Culture, Science and Education, in co-operation with other non–governmental organisations such as the International Institute for Democracy.

6. The Assembly wishes to encourage the establishment of local youth forums or councils, with the support of local authorities and of national youth parliaments, in order to include young people in the democratic decision-making process and to prepare them for citizenship.

7. The Assembly recalls its own commitments towards young people and in particular its Orders Nos. 441 (1988) on the Assembly and young people in Europe, 454 (1990) on youth representation at national level and 523 (1996) on the situation of young people in Europe: marginalised youth. It also recalls the success of its Youth Assembly held at the seat of the Council of Europe in 1999. It wishes to increase its co-operation with the political youth organisations and the European Youth Forum.

8. It welcomes the holding in Thessaloniki, Greece, of the 6th Conference of European Ministers responsible for Youth (7-9 November 2002) on the theme of Youth Constructing Europe.

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1. Text adopted by the Standing Committee,acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 18 November 2002 (see Doc. 9617, report of the Committee on Culture,Science and Education, rapporteur: Mrs Agudo).

9. Consequently, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers establish its priorities for work in the youth field in the context of a long-term outlook on the place of young people in tomorrow's Europe and, in particular, to:

Methods

maintain the principle of co-management (specific to the Council of Europe) by involving representatives of youth organisations in the decision-making process;

consult the Advisory Council on Youth Questions on a more systematic basis and redefine its composition to leave actual decision making to young people alone; social workers, researchers and other experts working on youth issues may be consulted or invited as resource persons, but should not take part in decision making;

strengthen co-operation between the youth sector and the other sectors of the Council of Europe, without setting up intermediary bodies, in order to give the whole organisation and the values it defends the full benefit of working in partnership with youth organisations;

increase the resources of the European Youth Foundation, with emphasis on the co-financing of projects developed by youth organisations and networks;

New initiatives

concentrate intergovernmental co-operation in the youth field in Europe on the exchange of good practices and the development of youth policy concepts and content;

hold a conference with youth organisations and political parties in 2003, to analyse the causes of the low level of youth participation in political life and propose solutions;

envisage resuming language courses for members of youth organisations;

organise a new European campaign along the lines of the European Youth Campaign against Racism: All Different, All Equal, on a theme of interest to young people such as gender equality or participation in civic life;

re-launch the Euro-Arab youth dialogue;

Co-operation

encourage the setting up of national youth councils in those member states where they do not yet exist and similar bodies at regional and local levels, and envisage the introduction of a youth dimension in the work of the United Nations;

encourage the opening of regional youth centres and foster the organisation of a European network of youth centres respecting certain standards of quality and practising an intercultural approach;

strengthen co-operation with the European Union and enlarge the existing partnership agreement to include research, co-operation with the Mediterranean countries and co-operation between European Union member states, applicant states and other Council of Europe member states.