Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 1498 (2006)[1]

Enhancing the visibility of the Council of Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Transparency, accountability and democratic oversight are among the core values promoted by the Council of Europe. To be consistent with these values, the Council of Europe should endeavour to become closer to the general public by devising and implementing effective instruments to enhance its visibility with a view to raising the public's awareness of the principles it upholds.

2. The prerequisite for visibility is clarity as to the Council of Europe's mandate and spheres of competence. In this respect, the Parliamentary Assembly recalls that the 3rd Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe (Warsaw, 2005) clearly identified the priorities for the Council of Europe, thus contributing to the effort of clarifying the unique role of the Organisation in the years to come.

3. The Assembly considers the development of a comprehensive communication strategy as an urgent and necessary step to bring the Council of Europe closer to its 800 million citizens while raising awareness of the Organisation's relevance and its shared values in today's Europe, and ensuring consistency in its overall message.

4. This communication strategy, whose development is the responsibility of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, assisted in his task by the Directorate of Communication, should aim at enhancing the external visibility of the Organisation by improving and rationalising the use of instruments such as the press, public relations, and audiovisual and multimedia tools; facilitating access to Council of Europe documents; implementing a strategic and coherent publication policy; and organising thematic campaigns, aimed at reinforcing the image of the Organisation and the impact of its activities. In addition, a Council of Europe communication strategy should aim at spreading a culture of communication within the Organisation, by ensuring the regular flow of information between its different departments in a spirit of mutual co-operation.

5. Such a comprehensive communication strategy devised by the Secretary General should not limit the plurality of voices, which is characteristic of the Organisation and which is at the core of its institutional balance. In particular, such a strategy should respect the autonomy of the Council of Europe's statutory organs – the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly – and that of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the European Court of Human Rights and the Commissioner for Human Rights which, because of their nature and other specificities stemming from their mandates, must be able to devise their own communication strategies and decide on the content, schedule and recipients of their communication actions. On the other hand, the Directorate of Communication should be in regular contact with the communication units of the above-mentioned bodies, making available information, databases and other tools useful to their work, while ensuring synergy with other Council of Europe activities in terms of media impact.

6. In addition, in order to increase the visibility of the Organisation as a whole, consultation and co-operation between the representatives of statutory organs, the Secretary General, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the European Court of Human Rights and the Commissioner for Human Rights should be improved, in order to realise concerted actions in terms of communication.

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1. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 29 May 2006 (see Doc. 10907, report of the Political Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mr João Bosco Mota Amaral).

7. Finally, the Assembly believes that, as a political and representative body, it can play a major role in enhancing the visibility of the Organisation as a whole, by ensuring the political and media relevance of its agenda, urging its members to make better use of their dual mandate, associating the media more closely in its activities and respecting the principle of maximum transparency in its work.

8. In light of the above, the Parliamentary Assembly:

8.1. resolves to pursue further streamlining of its political agenda by identifying priority issues around which it encourages its committees to organise visible activities and events and, where possible, the development of tailor-made media strategies;

8.2. invites its committees to make better use of the Standing Committee's meetings as an opportunity to encourage the discussion of topics which are of particular relevance for the country hosting the meeting;

8.3. urges its members to act as "multipliers" of the Assembly's activities in their national parliaments, in their constituencies and in their contacts with the national and local press;

8.4. calls on its committees to facilitate access of journalists and media representatives to their meetings and events and, when appropriate, enable them to accompany rapporteurs during fact-finding visits.

9. Moreover, the Assembly calls on the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to:

9.1. ensure that the Directorate of Communication, as well as the individual communication units, are provided with sufficient resources to carry out their mandate in a professional and efficient manner;

9.2. instruct the Directorate of Communication to:

9.2.1. devise a comprehensive communication strategy aimed at increasing the visibility of the Council of Europe while respecting the autonomy of the communication units of the Council of Europe's statutory organs, as well as those of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and of the European Court of Human Rights;

9.2.2. facilitate access to Council of Europe documents through rationalisation of the Organisation's web pages and through the creation of thematic web pages covering all the activities of Council of Europe bodies and institutions on a number of important issues;

9.2.3. rationalise the use of symbols and logos by Council of Europe's bodies and institutions in order to enhance the "corporate image" of the Organisation;

9.2.4. make strategic use of the publication policy;

9.3. enhance the media impact of the Council of Europe offices based in Paris and Brussels by creating permanent positions with a media profile.