Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 2033 (2014)[1]
Final version

Internet and politics: the impact of new information and communication technology on democracy

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly, referring to its Resolution 1970 (2014) on the Internet and politics: the impact of new information and communication technology on democracy, stresses the strategic importance of these technologies for the development of democracy and the major impact that the Internet is having on relations between political parties, elected representatives and citizens, as well as individuals' and social groups' perception of participation in political life.

2. The debate on democracy and the possible renewal of the system of representative democracy in the Internet age must take place at the national level, but it also requires a European dimension to ensure that each member State can benefit from the experience and expertise of the others, and that the States can work together to build up an environment conducive to a mode of Internet development consonant with a common European vision, in order to guarantee fundamental rights and the protection of private life.

3. Accordingly, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

3.1. launch without delay the preparation of a Council of Europe white paper on democracy, politics and the Internet, to serve as a major Council of Europe contribution to the global work on the subject of Internet governance;

3.2. closely associate the Parliamentary Assembly with all stages of the design and formulation of this white paper;

3.3. involve all the national parliaments and governments of the member States in the collective discussion process, as well as the political parties and, where practicable, intelligence agencies, the main Internet operators, the media – particularly public broadcasting services and national and European media associations – universities, human rights non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and associations defending Internet users' rights;

3.4. use the Internet and social media for this project in order to widely consult civil society on how to renew our systems of representative democracy via the optimum exploitation of the positive potential of the Internet;

3.5. centre the analysis in particular on the exercise of fundamental freedoms (individual and collective) and their protection on the web, and on citizen participation in the decision-making process and in public life by means of the Internet, and study, in this context:

3.5.1. how best to reconcile three fundamental requirements: preserving the openness and neutrality of the Internet; protecting rights to fundamental freedoms and particularly web-surfers' privacy; ensuring national security and effective action against crime;

3.5.2. how to use the Internet to reinforce participation of the general public in the governance of our societies;

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1. *Assembly debate* on 29 January 2014 (5th Sitting) (see Doc. 13386, report of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, rapporteur: Ms Anne Brasseur; and Doc. 13399, opinion of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, rapporteur: Mr Hans Franken). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 29 January 2014 (5th Sitting).

3.6. take into consideration in this analysis:

3.6.1. foreseeable developments, in view of the rapid technological progress in this field;

3.6.2. the relations between the State and commercial operators and between the State and citizens, and the networks of relations among social groups, between commercial companies and users and between political parties and the electorate;

3.6.3. the existing legislative framework and the gaps that need to be filled by the development of legal instruments or various modes of self-regulation, notably in order to prevent manipulation and use of the Internet for criminal purposes or with a view to destabilising a democratic regime;

3.6.4. training individuals to use the Internet responsibly in order to, among other things, protect themselves from specific dangers;

3.7. invite other partners and in particular the European Union to participate in this project and look into the expediency of involving the Internet Governance Forum.