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Ways and means of giving publicity to the Council of Europe in European non-Member States

Report¹

Relations with European Non-Member Countries

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1. 1952 - 4th Session - Second part



A. Draft Recommendation

The Assembly,

Recalling its Resolution of 28th August, 1950, to the effect that " the interests of European nations which are at present precluded from participating in the work of the Council of Europe shall be considered in every proposal made by the Assembly ",

Believing that Resolution to be in the interests of peace and understanding among the nations of Europe,

Considering that it is therefore desirable that the peoples of European countries not represented in the Council of Europe should be kept informed of the aims, activities and achievements of the Council of Europe,

Considering that at present broadcasts to these countries sponsored by Member States, though performing a most valuable function, give inadequate attention to the theme of closer unity among all like-minded countries of Europe and to the Council of Europe in general; and,

Considering, moreover, that it would be valuable as evidence of the unity of the Western democratic nations that publicity about the Council of Europe should be undertaken by the Council itself,

Recommends to the Committee of Ministers

- a. that approval be given to the principle that the Council of Europe should undertake the task of informing nations not represented in the Council of Europe of the aims of the Council of Europe and of its efforts to achieve a greater unity among its Members;
- b. that, in the consideration of this question, regard should be paid to the suggestions of the Assembly as outlined in the Explanatory Memorandum of the Report of the Special Committee (4th Ordinary Session, 1952 : [Doc. 36](#)),
- c. that, on the basis of this Document the necessary authority be given and appropriations made to the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe who shall annually report to the Committee of Ministers on the execution of this task.

B. Explanatory Memorandum

1. Part I

On 28th August, 1950, the Consultative Assembly :

“ Recognising that certain nations which are precluded from participating in the work of the Council of Europe nevertheless form an integral part of Europe ”,

Decided

To constitute a Special Committee whose duty it would be to ensure that the interests of these nations shall be considered in every proposal formulated by the Assembly or its Committees ”.

1. By adopting this Resolution, the Assembly reaffirmed its desire that the Council of Europe shall ultimately become a Council not merely for Western Europe but for all the nations of Europe able and willing to join, and which " accept the principles of the rule of law and of the enjoyment by all persons within its jurisdiction of human rights and fundamental freedoms ". This being so, in any agreements that the Members of the Council make between themselves, regard must be paid, as far as possible, to the interests of those nations which are not now represented at Strasbourg, for it remains our hope that, when the time comes for those nations to join us, the Council will be ready to receive them and they will find that we have viewed sympathetically their special position, their difficulties and their future. The Council of Europe was founded in May, 1949, by ten European countries. To-day the membership extends to fifteen European countries, this number being limited only by the political situation and the extent to which the European countries are able or willing to adhere to the principles embodied in the Preamble to the Statute, namely the pursuit of peace, the safeguarding of human rights and the desire for social and economic progress.

2. The Assembly deeply regrets that the activities and achievements of the Council of Europe are at present restricted to one part of Europe only and that millions of Europeans can only follow from afar the efforts made towards building the greater unity of Europe. The Council of Europe is now firmly established as an institution in the political life of Western Europe but that is not sufficient. It must also find a place in the hearts of all patriotic and peace-loving Europeans. Emphasis is placed on the words " all Europeans ", for it is not enough that only the citizens of the Member countries should be aware of its existence and its aims. It must never be forgotten that the Member States of the Council of Europe represent only approximately half the population of our Continent, and that throughout the history of Europe most of the nations in question have had close political, cultural and economic ties with the other European nations not represented at Strasbourg.

3. Since its formation, your Committee has worked constantly to fulfil its mandate. It has been encouraged by the Assembly's confirmation of this mandate and by the Assembly's evident desire to see the membership of the Council extended where possible, as instanced by the invitation to Austria. In itself the existence of the Special Committee proves that, in due course, the Assembly will welcome the adherence of the nations not at present represented in the Council and, in the meantime, is not neglecting their interests.

4. With regard to public opinion, the role of the Council of Europe in general, and of its Assembly in particular, is dual. One of its functions is to gather together representatives of the peoples of Europe so that they may express their views on proposals affecting those whom they represent. It is equally important, however, that the public in Europe should be kept constantly informed of the activities and efforts of the Council. Your Committee therefore considers it a matter of urgency that we, the Representatives to the Assembly, should not lose touch with those who send us to our national Parliaments and thus, though indirectly, to Strasbourg, because otherwise our best achievements may not be understood.

5. It is evident, however, that at present publicity undertaken by the appropriate services of the Secretariat-General reaches only nationals of Member States and those of a few other democratic countries. We have as yet made little effort to speak to those who dwell within " the other part of Europe "—those living in other countries which are at present either ineligible for membership, or unwilling to accept it. Virtually the only information about the western world, and thus about the Council of Europe, which is available to these peoples, comes through the medium of broadcasts sponsored, on the one hand, by certain Member States, and, on the other hand, by the Vatican, the United States and " Radio Free Europe ". There is evidence that these programmes command a wide audience. But praiseworthy though these national and individual attempts are, they unfortunately lack the authority which attaches to the official documents of the Council and the information published by the Information Services of the Secretariat-General of the Council of

Europe. For these reasons your Committee now proposes that adequate means should be put at the disposal of the Secretariat-General of the Council of Europe to inform the non-Member States of the aims and achievements of the Council of Europe.

2. Part II

6. What are the themes which we must explain and expand to audiences in the countries which are not represented in the Council? In most countries, we must expect that ignorance not only of the Council of Europe and of the progress of European unity, but also of the general evolution of the West, will be widespread.

7. The information disseminated in countries not Members of the Council of Europe should have as its basic theme the fact that the Strasbourg organisation constitutes the first large-scale attempt in the history of our Continent to eliminate once and for all the causes and the possibilities of war between European nations and to handle political, social, cultural and economic questions on an international parliamentary basis.

8. It is vital to stress the fact that in its relations with other nations the Council of Europe will also endeavour to eliminate recourse to war and will pursue its aims by purely peaceful means. The aims and principles that animate the Council of Europe are such that in the long run they will win the support of the peoples concerned. The Council of Europe has no need of arms to spread its ideals and all propaganda directed against those ideals will in the end be proved false.

9. The conditions under which a State may become eligible to join the Council of Europe should be explained repeatedly. It should be emphasised that the Council is in no sense a "closed shop" and that its Members actively wish non-Member countries to join it. On the other hand, it should be equally emphasised that respect of the human rights and fundamental freedoms guaranteed by the Convention and Protocol for the protection of Human Rights and fundamental freedoms is essential; examples of the practical application of the provisions of this Convention should be given and often repeated.

10. The above considerations imply that news of the Council and of the progress towards European unity shall be placed in its proper setting; that we should not forget to explain the principles, to us self-evident and so familiar as to require no comment, which form the constant background of our work. Such principles no longer form part of the life of people under authoritarian régimes, and a new generation is now growing up which will have never known them.

11. The implementation of a publicity programme on these lines calls for the collaboration of experts who are familiar with the situation in the countries to which the broadcasts are addressed. The experts will act as advisers and afford assistance of a practical nature.

12. Publicity should be given to measures of aid extended by the West to refugees. If the proposed "Cultural Fund" is established, its existence and the use made of it should be widely advertised. The protection in exile of the national cultural life of the countries concerned, the scholarships, political, economic and social rights granted to exiles—all these subjects would be of interest to their intended audiences. Finally, any matters of particular concern to the nations not represented would of course be suitable subjects. Examples are the work of the Special Committee, debates in the Consultative Assembly on relevant topics, and the consequent Resolutions and Recommendations adopted by the Assembly.

13. There exist, of course, considerable differences in the political and psychological situation of the different European nations not represented in the Council of Europe. This has been explained in detail in your Committee's Report relating to the creation of a European Fund for Exiles (See 3rd Session, 1951 : [Doc. 61](#), §§ 5 and 6) and the definitions given in that Report apply equally to the subject matter of this Report. It therefore has to be borne in mind that the indications given above apply to broadcast information destined for countries ineligible to join the Council.

14. For those other nations which receive information from Western sources freely, the problem is somewhat different. Here the means used should be primarily written publicity. While varying in emphasis from country to country, this publicity would concentrate on answering two questions : why has the Council of Europe come into being and why is it pursuing the aim of building the "closer unity" of Europe? What has the Council achieved, what does it plan to do, and what benefits will accrue to its Members?

3. Part III

15. Your Committee considers that, whereas the working out of the details of the publicity programme to be directed towards non-represented nations should be left to qualified persons, it would nevertheless be useful to indicate briefly the available possibilities and sketch the nature of the service which the Secretariat would be able to undertake if given the means and the authority so to do.

16. Publicity-media fall under four main headings : the spoken word, i. e. broadcasting; written; visual; other means, including personal contacts. In general, only the first of these media would be available for publicity in the countries which are at present ineligible to join the Council : it is consequently on broadcasting that the main efforts of the Secretariat would be directed.

17. Broadcasts to non-Member States are of course no new venture : at present programmes are directed towards the nations not represented, by the broadcasting systems not only of Member States (France, the United Kingdom, etc..) but of other States and private organisations such as the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe... It is possible that all these systems would reply favourably to a request to devote more time to the Council of Europe and to the theme of European unity, but for a variety of reasons it would appear better to approach only those radio-stations which are controlled by Member States of the Council of Europe. The Secretariat could help in the realisation of appropriate radio programmes, for subsequent diffusion by Member States, in three ways. In the first place, it could supply the elements of, and basic documentation for such programmes, in English and French : this is work which would require little or no extra staff, and indeed it is to some extent carried out already. Secondly, it could supply entire programmes, again in French or English. This method would also be relatively cheap and easy to use, additional staff requirements being modest. Both these methods have however the disadvantage that the Council would have virtually no control over the final programme devoted to its activities. A third method would be for the Secretariat to supply programmes in the language in which they are to be broadcast : in this case, it would evidently be necessary to secure the services of persons having the appropriate linguistic qualifications. Here the expense would be somewhat greater but at least the Council could be confident that, if the broadcast were made, its contents would be satisfactory. Your Committee considers that, whereas no effort should be spared or aid withheld to induce the broadcasting companies of Member States to extend and improve their references to the aims and achievements of the Council of Europe in their programmes directed towards the nations not represented, a better solution might lie in the direct transmission of programmes by the Council itself, using transmitters put at its disposal by Member States. This method would have advantages, for in no other way could the Council not only ensure complete control of its programmes but also plan and produce them as a connected and progressive series.

18. Broadcasts would be directed to all the nations not represented, not merely to those which are at present ineligible to join the Council of Europe. In the case of those non-Member States unwilling rather than ineligible to join the Council, it will be possible however to have recourse to the other three publicity-media mentioned above. Indeed States in this category may largely be treated as if they were Members of the Council, the primary difference being that a greater amount of effort will be needed, and that the Governments concerned cannot necessarily be expected to offer the facilities which the Governments of Members have willingly accorded.

19. The only hindrance to the provision by the Secretariat of written, publicity to non-Member States not opposed to its reception is the lack of funds and of the authority to do so. Granted these, there would be no difficulty in the way of distributing on a large scale and in the national language, booklets and other written material to give accurate and impartial information on the Council, its aims and its achievements, in schools, universities, libraries, Government offices and all places where such information would be the most useful.

20. The needs of visual publicity could be satisfied by adequate arrangements for the showing of " European films " (of which there is already a sizeable library) for the display of posters and for the installation of exhibitions devoted to illustration of the European Idea.

21. Finally, in some non-Member countries, the appointment of correspondents should be envisaged. These could be recruited from among nationals of the country concerned who are interested in the Council and the progress of European unity. The correspondent would be on the spot to help with distribution of material, organise lectures, etc; at the same time he would report on reactions to our publicity and advise on its modification, extension and improvement

22. Your Committee repeats that the above is no more than an outline of a publicity service the detailed execution of which must be left to qualified persons. It hopes however that enough has been said to indicate that adequate means exist for the implementation of a successful service, if the funds and the authority are forthcoming. It should perhaps be added that your Committee is advised that the funds needed would not constitute any large increase in the present contributions of Member States.

23. What will the Council of Europe and the peoples of free Europe gain from a publicity programme as outlined in this Report? In the first place, the knowledge that in all parts of Europe the people are becoming better-informed about, and hence more friendly-disposed towards us, our work and our aims. In the second place, the hope that our action may be a help and an encouragement to nations which are at present precluded from participating in the work of the Council of Europe and need to be assured that their interests are considered in all our endeavours for a greater European unity. In the third place, the belief that in a future not too long delayed certain nations at present eligible but unwilling to join us will overcome their hesitations. Finally—and for this no date can be fixed—an equal conviction that sooner or later the Council of Europe will indeed become what, by its title, it claims to be. And this will be no pious wish for, not content with having confidence in the future, we will be doing our best to shape it according to our hopes.

24. It is in this spirit that, in the course of its meetings on 26th and 27th August, your Committee adopted, with one abstention, the following Recommendation, now submitted to the Assembly :