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Chapter IV of Opinion No. 13 of the Assembly (Rôle of the Council of Europe in the cultural field)

Communication

Committee of Ministers

1. Letter from the Secretary-General to the President of the Assembly

Strasbourg, 29th June, 1956.

Sir,

In my letter of 9th March I informed you of the views of the Committee of Ministers regarding the questions raised by the Assembly in Opinion No. 13 and in Recommendation 73 (1955) on the duplication of work in the various European organisations ¹.

Chapter IV of the Opinion of the Assembly, which deals with cultural matters, was closely examined by the Committee of Ministers, whose opinion I have the honour to communicate to you below.

1.1. 1. General policy

The Committee of Ministers wishes in the first place to reaffirm the importance it attaches to cultural matters and to the efforts of the two cultural organs of the Council. Activities of this kind indeed afford a most effective means of promoting the aims of the Council of Europe.

The Committee of Ministers considers that the cultural programme as now drawn up by the Committee of Cultural Experts, naturally, calls for implementation— by the Governments, on the one hand and the Secretariat-General, on the other. Cultural activities should be directed towards the following aims :

- a. to foster and encourage deeper understanding of European culture;
- b. to develop wherever feasible the European idea and the European spirit;
- c. to promote cultural relations in the literal sense of the term;
- d. to encourage collaboration in all cultural and scientific fields.

The European Cultural Convention, which may justly be called the charter of European multilateral co-operation, lies at the basis of the entire programme. New projects are continually being added to this programme, as, for example, the exchanges between European universities arranged for 1956.

The present programme contains no project which could usefully be delegated to an international non-governmental organisation. Nevertheless, the Secretariat-General from time to time invites official representatives of non-governmental organisations to assist in the organisation of certain of its activities, as for instance the invitation extended to M. de Rougemont, Director of the European Cultural Centre, to preside over meetings of the Round Table, and t h a t addressed to M. von Cornides, of the Association of Institutes of

1. See [Doc. 481](#).



European Studies, to direct the annual course of European studies which is held concurrently with the autumn session of the Assembly. Opportunities for co-operation of this kind will become the more frequent as the range of the Council's cultural activities is extended.

1.2. 2. Co-operation with the Assembly

The Committee of Ministers has always been aware of the Assembly's desire for the setting up of a Joint Cultural Committee. This Committee is now in existence and has held two meetings, which were attended by members of the Committee of Cultural Experts and of the Committee on Cultural and Scientific Questions. The Committee of Ministers has approved the Rules of Procedure of the Joint Cultural Committee.

1.3. 3. Possible establishment of a Co-ordination Committee

The Secretariat-General maintains close and regular contacts with international governmental organisations, in particular UNESCO, and with regional organisations such as Western European Union. The Committee of Ministers does not consider it realistic or expedient at the present time to go any further towards the establishment of a co-ordinating organ. Indeed the Joint Cultural Committee may be said to fulfil this function insofar as, in accordance with its terms of reference, its object is to allow of a free exchange of views between the members appointed by the Assembly's Committee on Cultural and Scientific Questions and the members appointed by the Committee of Cultural Experts concerning the cultural policy to be carried out within the framework of the Council of Europe.

1.4. 4. Relations with UNESCO

The Committee of Ministers agrees that the annual report of UNESCO should be discussed at meetings of the Joint Cultural Committee. Furthermore, the Committee of Ministers is prepared to recommend to Member Governments that they include in their delegations to UNESCO General Conferences one at least of the persons who regularly attend meetings of the Committee of Cultural Experts or of the Assembly Committee on Cultural and Scientific Questions.

1.5. 5. Co-operation at the non-governmental level

With regard to co-operation with non-governmental organisations, the Committee of Ministers reaffirms its view that consultative status must become an effective channel for collaboration and must be put to the fullest possible use. In this connection, the Committee of Ministers feels it useful to recall that consultative status has been granted to the following non-governmental organisations concerned wholly or partly with cultural activities :

Association of Institutes for European Studies;
International Federation of Christian Trade Unions;
International Confederation of Free Trade Unions;
World Assembly of Youth;
European Youth Campaign.

It should be noted that the Secretariat-General has already established relations with the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, which are to assist in the organisation of the course of European studies in 1957.

The Committee of Ministers shares the Assembly's desire to make use of these consultative arrangements so as to bring the largest possible number of non-governmental organisations into co-operation with the Council in the carrying out of its cultural programme. The Committee of Cultural Experts has, in fact, recommended that a Youth Conference be held in 1957 in order to enable non-governmental youth organisations holding consultative status to discuss ways and means of co-operation with the Council. Invitations to attend this conference will be extended to :

two leaders from each of the organisations in 'question';
the members of the Youth Sub-committee.

1.6. 6. Cultural Fund

The Committee of Ministers submitted Assembly Recommendation 74 to the Committee of Cultural Experts, who briefly examined the proposal at their 11th Session in October, 1955 and again at their 12th Session in May, 1956. It emerged from the discussions that, although there was no unanimous feeling in favour of the establishment of the Fund, a number of delegations approved it in principle. The Committee of Cultural Experts therefore decided to refer the Recommendation back to the Bureau so that it might be amended in such a way as to obtain, if possible, the general assent of the Committee at its next Session.

1.7. 7. Creation of specialised European institutes in the cultural field

The Committee of Ministers has noted the proposal to establish specialised European institutes in the cultural field and looks forward to receiving the Assembly's suggestions in this matter.

1.8. 8. Cultural Conventions

With regard to the bilateral Conventions concluded between Member Governments, each meeting of the Committee of Cultural Experts provides an opportunity for an exchange of views and information designed to facilitate the application of these Conventions. The Secretariat-General will be drawing up a list of existing agreements, which will provide a comprehensive survey of present-day cultural relations and reveal any gaps that still remain. The Secretariat is also in close touch with UNESCO, whose work will, of course, be dealt with in the annual reports of that organisation to the Assembly.

1.9. 9.

Finally, the Committee of Ministers wishes to say how much it appreciates the interest taken by the Consultative Assembly in the cultural activities of the Council and the steps the Assembly has taken for the development of European cultural policy.

I remain, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

signed: Dunstan CURTIS

Deputy Secretary-General