Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
https://pace.coe.int

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Doc. 669
01 May 1957

Institution of a European Conference of Ministers of Postal and Telecommunication Services

Report[1]
Committee on Economic Affairs and Development
Rapporteur: Mr Karl CZERNETZ, Austria

1. 1957 - 9th Session - First part

A. Draft Recommendation

The Assembly,

Having regard to its Recommendation 102 of 24th October 1956;

Having considered the reply of the Committee of Ministers to this Recommendation to be found in Chapter II of the Eighth Report of the Committee of Ministers to the Assembly;

Believing that the Committee of Ministers has misinterpreted the proposals contained in Recommendation 102;

Hoping that these proposals will lead to practical steps being taken in the national parliaments of Member States of the Council of Europe,

Recommends :

that the Committee of Ministers should reconsider these proposals in the light of the explanations contained in the attached Explanatory Memorandum prepared by the Economic Committee, which is hereby endorsed by the Assembly;

that they should make a further communication to the Assembly on this matter in time for the second part of the Ninth Session; and

that they should, in particular, report to the Assembly on action taken by individual Member Governments in this field.

B. Explanatory Memorandum

1.

1. The essence of Recommendation 102 was a proposal that the Member States of the Council of Europe should set up a European Conference of Ministers of Postal and Telecommunication Services in order to promote closer collaboration between member countries in this field, if necessary on the basis of a partial agreement. The essence of the Committee of Ministers' reply is that the Committee sees no reason to set up such a conference within the framework of the Council of Europe, in view of the work being carried out by other international institutions, more particularly the Working Party which met at Frankfurt in February 1957 and which includes eight of the Member States. From this it appears that the Committee of Ministers did not understand the real intention of Recommendation 102.

2. The Assembly never proposed the institution of the new conference " within the framework of the Council of Europe ". Recommendation 102 proposed the institution of a European Conference of Ministers of Postal and Telecommunication Services as an independent organisation, generally analogous to the European Conference of Ministers of Transport.

3. There already exist European organs designed to secure collaboration between Member States in the fields of trade, payments, productivity, agriculture, inland transport and air transport, but no organisation of a permanent nature exists to secure European co-operation in postal and telecommunication services, even though this is a field in which many activities are essentially of an international character. The need for such an organisation has been felt in many quarters, and its creation was proposed by the French Minister of Posts and Telecommunications in an address to the Consultative Assembly on 9th July 1955. Nor was this an isolated initiative. Other proposals of a similar nature were contained in the report of the Intergovernmental Committee in Brussels set up by the Messina Conference, published in April 1956. The Bonnefous proposals of July 1955 were considered by the Economic Committee over a period of a year and discussed with the Universal Postal Union and the International Telecommunications Union in order to avoid conflicts of interest or competence.

4. In the meantime, a Working Party was set up by the six Messina Powers in order to make a start on an informal basis. This Working Party met in Paris in January 1956, at Rome in November 1956, and at Frankfurt in February 1957. It has been joined by representatives of Switzerland, Austria, the United Kingdom, Ireland and Turkey, thereby clearly indicating the interest of eleven Governments in developing co-operation in this field. The Working Party has itself expressed the wish that its membership should be extended to include other European countries and that it should be given a permanent status; the wishes of the Working Party therefore correspond to the Assembly's proposals, but the Working Party itself has recognised that decisions on these matters fall outside its competence.

5. It follows from the above that the Assembly's proposal should be understood as aiming to put on a permanent basis, with a wider membership, the work which is now being done informally and empirically by the Working Party. When the representatives of eleven European countries, including ten Members of the Council of Europe, have expressed the Avish that this should be done at meetings of the Working Party, it seems hard to believe that other representatives of the same Governments should take a different view when meeting at Strasbourg. What is needed is a political decision to give effect to the wishes both of the Working Party and of the Assembly. The Committee of Ministers is a political organ competent to take that decision.

6. Paragraph 5 of Recommendation 102 asked that the Committee of Ministers should request the Government of France, as the country on whose territory the seat of the Council of Europe has been established, to issue French stamps over-printed " Conseil de l'Europe " for the official mail of the Council, following the practice already adopted by the Government of Switzerland for the United Nations and certain of the Specialised Agencies established in Geneva. The Committee was encouraged to read in the Ministers' Report that the French Government sees no objection to this suggestion. The Committee hopes to read in the Ministers' next Report that the French Government has agreed to act on the proposal.

7. Paragraphs 6 and 7 of Recommendation 102 proposed that other Member States should be invited to issue the European stamp already issued by six of them and that, during the sessions of the Assembly, all Members should use a special cancellation mark to commemorate the occasion. The Committee of Ministers reports that it has left it to each individual Government to take such action on these proposals as it wishes.