



Recommendation 531 (1968)¹

Present crisis of the European society

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Considering that one of the prominent features of the crisis through which our society is at present passing - and this applies particularly to Europe - is the problem posed by the young people of today and the unrest in the universities ;
2. Observing that the combination of demographic pressure coming from the younger generation, society's ever-greater need of men and women with higher education qualifications, and the democratisation of the educational process, has far-reaching repercussions, over and above the purely material or financial factors, on the life and climate of our schools and universities ;
3. Noting that on top of the problems affecting the universities all the evidence points to the difficulties arising in any case from sheer numbers being aggravated by changes in the biological and sociological fields and, indeed, on the psychological plane which threaten to produce serious long-term effects on the social function of the younger generation as a whole ;
4. Considering, in particular, that the era of mass communications and mass culture tends more and more to be reflected in a process of industrialisation of the human spirit which causes a maximum degree of alienation, and stressing the harmful consequences of the commercial exploitation of young people's purchasing power ;
5. Considering, moreover, that unrest in the universities has become a world-wide problem - even though it derives from a composite and multiple pattern of different motivations according to which continent, nation, or even region is affected ;
6. Noting that the only possible solution for a problem such as this is close co-operation of the state, university teachers and students for the conduct of a wide-ranging dialogue between these various elements ;
7. Observing that some countries have already made a certain amount of headway in this matter of ensuring a measure of discussion by, and participation of, students in the reorganisation and management of university affairs and that it is right and proper to encourage such a development ;
8. Observing, moreover, that up to now the member states of the Council of Europe have been tackling independently a whole complex of sociological and cultural problems which are at the root of a process of transformation occurring on an unprecedented scale and which project on the whole of our European society a latent threat of cultural and structural disintegration ;
9. Being of the opinion that action taken by the Council of Europe hitherto in this sphere provides a complete justification for its continuing concern with the problems involved, if only on the score that certain current trends and proposals are likely to impair the beneficial prospects foreshadowed in European conventions, such as particularly, for example, the European Cultural Convention and the Conventions on the Equivalence of Periods for University Studies, and on the Academic Recognition of University Qualifications ;

1. Assembly debate on 24 September 1968 (12th Sitting) (see [Doc. 2432](#)see [Doc. 2432](#), report of the Committee on Culture and Education). Text adopted by the Assembly on 24 September 1968 (12th Sitting).



10. Considering in consequence that the Council of Europe should be playing an active part in the search for appropriate solutions for the common problems posed by the younger generation in general and the educational issue in particular, with specific reference to the prospects of tomorrow's Europe ;
11. Being of the opinion that the 6th Conference of the European Ministers of Education, scheduled for the spring of 1969 in Paris, would be the appropriate context for a wide-ranging top-level confrontation on the causes of the crisis in European higher education and the best means of dealing with it ;
12. Reserving the right to give more ample extension to its opinions on this matter at some later date, and recalling in this connection that by its [Resolution 303 \(1965\)](#) and its Order No. 265 (1967) the Assembly had already taken the decision to undertake a detailed study of the problem of Europe's younger generation,
13. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers :
 - a. invite the governments of the member countries :

to define anew the fundamental tasks of the university in our European society and withal the conditions under which it performs its functions, on the basis of a wide-ranging dialogue and with the collaboration of the students no less than of the teachers and the official world ;

with due regard for the aspirations for tomorrow's Europe and the demands that are likely to be made in consequence, and always with an eye to the future, to seek a new dimension for the necessary reforms in the educational system, particularly in the higher educational field, thus transcending national solutions to the problem, which must necessarily vary with the different countries ;

to combat through individual and collective effort the harmful consequences of the consumer society on young people, and particularly the pernicious effects of mass communications and the commercialisation of the information process ;

to make use of the Conference of European Ministers of Education as the appropriate framework within which there should be contrived a European policy in the educational field, to be implemented by the various international organisations concerned - and specifically the Council of Europe and its Council for Cultural Co-operation ;
 - b. with regard to the younger generation problem, make greater use of the European Youth Centre and develop this organisation with a view to securing concerted endeavour on the European plane between representatives of the governments, European members of parliament and representatives of the non-governmental youth organisations.