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

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 533 (1968)[1]

Synchronising and harmonising population censuses in Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Recalling its Opinion No. 47 (1967) on the first European Population Conference, in which it asked the Committee of Ministers to include the synchronisation and harmonisation of population censuses in the Intergovernmental Work Programme of the Council of Europe ;

2. Gratified that the Committee of Ministers has met this request ;

3. Having noted the important work done in this field by the United Nations Conference of European Statisticians and the proposals made by the first European Population Conference which the Council of Europe held in 1966 at the suggestion of the Consultative Assembly ;

4. Regretting that the recommendations by the competent organs of the United Nations for synchronisation of censuses have not been given effect by all Council of Europe member states and that those concerning harmonisation of censuses have met with only a partial response ;

5. Considering that periodic population censuses continue to furnish the basic data essential to public authorities for the framing of their economic, social and cultural policies ;

6. Believing that, in order to have comparable statistical data, compiled as far as possible simultaneously and in accordance with the same definitions and designed to facilitate technical co-operation between European countries, population censuses should be synchronised and harmonised among member states ;

7. Recognising that synchronisation of population censuses in Europe, which can come about only gradually, presupposes certain adjustments by member states to their legislation ;

8. Believing that the standardisation of population census questionnaires should bear initially on a limited number of basic questions, of European significance, relating to specific fields, while leaving member states full freedom in the choice of the other questions, of national or regional interest ;

9. Believing that, at European level, the Council of Europe is the appropriate institution for drawing up one or, if necessary, more agreements on the harmonisation and synchronisation of population censuses ;

10. Considering that, in view of the profound and rapid changes in the social structures of most member states, some statistics soon lose their value and that it is accordingly desirable that, between fullscale censuses, micro-censuses, concerned in particular with population movements and the working population, should be carried out ;

11. Considering that census returns lose their value unless they are speedily processed and that statistical data, harmonised as fully as possible, should be published in accordance with common standards so that a long-term European policy can be implemented ;

---

1. Assembly debate on 24 September 1968 (13th Sitting) (seeDoc. 2422, report of the Committee on Population and Refugees). Text adopted by the Assembly on 24 September 1968 (13th Sitting).

12. Having regard to the political advantages to be gained from a European population census in full conformity with the objectives of the Council of Europe as set out in its Statute,

I. Urge member governments :

a. synchronise their periodic population censuses by holding them in the same year - if possible in 1980, and in any case as from 1980 - and, subsequently, in the same months and applying to the same day ;

b. to harmonise their population censuses by using henceforth, as far as possible, the same definitions and by simultaneously asking a number of fundamental questions, of European significance ;

c. to stress, if possible, on the occasion of each census some special subject of European interest, such as internal and international migration, working population, fertility or households ;

d. to carry out, between major periodic population censuses, micro-censuses whose dates and subjects are likewise, at least in part, arranged jointly ;

II. Instruct a committee of experts, with whose work the Consultative Assembly and the Organising Committee of the European Population Conference would be associated and on which all European states, including the interested non-member states, would be invited to be represented :

a. to draw up one or, if necessary, more European agreements, open to accession by non-member states, with a view to the synchronisation and harmonisation of population censuses ;

b. to propose procedures for the joint processing and publication of the main results of censuses.