



Recommendation 932 (1982)¹

5th Parliamentary and Scientific Conference "Technology and Democracy" (Helsinki, 3-5 June 1981)

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Having taken note of the findings of its 5th Parliamentary and Scientific Conference, convened in Helsinki from 3 to 5 June 1981 ;
2. Aware of the magnitude of contemporary technological change, and of the transformations of society and civilisation it may bring through effects on economic and industrial structures, on human freedoms and on political organisation ;
3. Considering that there are positive aspects to these transformations, of which advantage must be taken, but at the same time recognising that there are problems to be solved and dangers to be avoided :

A. Positive aspects

1. technological change is the key to material progress ;
2. the material progress achieved by the Western countries has enabled them to meet the needs of their populations and to exert a predominant influence in world affairs ;
3. notwithstanding the problems and dangers it presents, technological change is globally beneficial : Europe must gain control over her technological future by, as a prior condition, maintaining or recovering a leading position in research ;
4. moreover, Europe and other advanced industrial countries must share the fruits of their scientific and technological activities with the developing countries in proportion to their moral and historical obligations and to the immense problems (food, energy, communications, professional training, etc.) which these countries have to meet ;

B. Problems and dangers

Effects on society :

technological change will lead to the loss of jobs in many sectors ;

however, the correct response is not to refuse change but to exploit it for the creation of jobs in other sectors (research, services, culture, etc.) ;

Threats to privacy and dangers for democracy :

technological processes are making society more and more complex and intractable to control by political leaderships, which often lack understanding of the nature of these processes and, through concern with immediate issues, risk neglecting the long-range problems posed by science ;

1. Assembly debate on 25 January 1982 (20th Sitting) (see [Doc. 4830](#), report of the Committee on Science and Technology). Text adopted by the Assembly on 25 January 1982 (20th Sitting).



the new information technologies permit the gathering and processing of data on individuals so as to constitute a redoubtable weapon in the hands of any political authority not subject to democratic control ;

the anxieties created by the pace and dimensions of technological change, which at an ever-increasing rate is transforming the human condition, have led to movements for direct public participation in scientific and technological policy decision-making ; the readiness to participate and to share responsibility is to be welcomed ; however, care must be taken that the actions of these movements do not compromise the traditions and values of parliamentary democracy ;

lastly, technological progress provides in all areas of life a power with which human beings risk being intoxicated, and which they are the less able to exercise responsibly in that human wisdom and self-control have not kept pace with scientific advance ;

4. Believing that to realise the benefits of technological change, to address the problems and avoid the dangers it presents, Europe must at once expand and intensify its efforts in fundamental research and technological innovation, its scientific potential being comparable to those of the United States and Japan but less effectively exploited due to the inadequacy in certain areas of current forms of co-operation ;

5. Having regard to the Declaration (20 March 1981) of Ministers meeting within the framework of the Committee on Scientific and Technological Policy of OECD, and counting on the continuation of the work of this committee, in particular on policies for innovation, on the strengthening of fundamental and university research, and on the strengthening of the scientific and technological capabilities of developing countries ;

6. Inviting the European Science Foundation to give an opinion on the proposals of the 5th Conference ;

6.1. for the creation of an advisory body of scientists and political decision-makers to advise governments and parliaments on priorities for scientific research and major technological investments therein, and for the siting of facilities and installations ;

6.2. for the funding, within the framework of priorities thus determined, of high-level multinational research teams attached to various "centres of excellence" for the execution of programmes of limited duration,

7. Calls on the governments of member states :

- a. to concert their efforts to maintain or recover leadership in research and development as a prior condition to restoring the competitiveness of European industry ;
- b. to see that new ideas are tried out in work organisation, job sharing, training and retraining ;
- c. to provide for efficient collaboration between European research centres, in order to avoid duplication of effort and to concentrate on agreed priority areas ;
- d. to co-ordinate, in particular within the framework of the European Space Agency, their contributions to the 2nd United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space ("Unispace" - Vienna, August 1982) ;
- e. to take account of their obligations towards the developing countries, and to recognise that transfers of knowledge and technology will not reflect or promote the values of the civilisation from which they derive unless they are conducted in a spirit of respect for the receiving civilisations and unless Europe engages in a continuing dialogue with these civilisations ;

8. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers take appropriate steps in consultation with the Council of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development to convene a meeting of the Council of Europe/OECD Liaison Committees with a view to follow-up action on the proceedings and proposals of the 5th Conference.