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**AD HOC COMMITTEE OF LEGAL ADVISERS ON PUBLIC INTERNATIONAL LAW**  
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**Strasbourg, 12-13 September 2000**

**RESOLUTION (2000) 2 OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS**  
**ON THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE'S INFORMATION STRATEGY**

Secretariat memorandum  
prepared by the Directorate-General of Legal Affairs

**COUNCIL OF EUROPE  
COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS**

**Resolution (2000) 2  
on the Council of Europe's information strategy**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers  
on 11 April 2000  
at the 706<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers,

Acting in accordance with the objectives set by the Statute, the Final Declarations of the Vienna and Strasbourg Summits, and the "Budapest Declaration for a Greater Europe without dividing lines";

Reaffirming the importance it attaches to the fundamental principles governing information and communication in a democratic society, as set out in Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, amplified by the Committee of Ministers Declaration of 29 April 1982 on freedom of expression and information;

Stressing that the free movement of information, openness in the decision-making process and the accountability of managers for the fulfilment of their responsibilities are fundamental features of a democratic society;

Being aware that it is essential that the public should be properly informed about the objectives of Europe's political design in all its aspects, and about achievements and prospects in this respect, if that design is to succeed;

Wishing to strengthen the role of the Council of Europe in the process of European unification, and accordingly willing to develop co-operation between the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and the European Court of Human Rights which form the foundations of an institutional order for Greater Europe, together with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe which allows the level closest to the citizens to be involved in co-operation;

Recalling the numerous occasions on which both the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly took position in favour of giving the Council of Europe greater presence and a higher profile and making it more effective, particularly by means of a dynamic information policy based on the principle that transparency is the rule and confidentiality the exception;

Bearing in mind the recommendations in the final report of the Committee of Wise Persons, particularly those set out in the section on "Improving the visibility of the Council of Europe",

Agrees on the following guidelines for an overall strategy for the Council of Europe's information policy:

1. If the Council of Europe is to have a high profile, it is first necessary to affirm its

uniqueness and its role in European integration as the Organisation that works to promote unity throughout Greater Europe on the basis of the ideals and principles that are the common heritage of the member states. To this end, the Committee of Ministers:

- reaffirms the importance of the emblems created by the Council of Europe, and subsequently adopted by the European Union, to symbolise Europe's grand political design in the eyes of the public: the starred blue flag and the Ode to Joy have come to be seen, among a vast public, as the hallmarks of a determination to live together, which unites all Europeans regardless of their differences;
- agrees on the need to supplement these shared European symbols with distinctive symbols specific to the Council of Europe and, to this end, decides to continue using the logo that the Council of Europe adopted for its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary;
- stresses the central role of the Secretary General in the field of information and communication, as the natural spokesperson for the Organisation as a whole;
- accordingly invites the Secretary General to devise and implement a communication policy based on:
  - an approach centred on a limited number of topics, highlighting the Organisation's image and focussing on its political role and the areas in which it excels;
  - defining target groups rigorously and using appropriate technological means to ensure maximum impact;
  - reducing the number of press releases and improving their content;
  - adapting structures and working methods to the needs of users and giving professional means to the departments responsible for press, media and public relations;
  - implementing a rapid reaction process involving, as far as possible, the Secretary General, the Chair of the Committee of Ministers and the President of the Parliamentary Assembly;
  - co-ordinated timetabling, whereby key Council of Europe events are as far as possible scheduled in such a way as to ensure regular media interest;
  - highlighting the wealth and diversity of the publications produced by the Council of Europe, in the framework of a clear and coherent editorial policy;
  - with due regard for budgetary constraints and the fact that there are two official languages, gradually adapt the Council of Europe's linguistic policy so that it is commensurate with an organisation whose geographical scope now covers the entire continent of Europe and which is responsible for meeting the challenges of security and stability in Europe and the main political, social, educational and cultural challenges facing all European societies.

2. The Council of Europe's profile is also closely linked to the dynamism and profile of its four main bodies, namely the two statutory organs with general responsibilities (the

Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly), as well as the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe and the European Court of Human Rights. Being convinced that joint efforts in this area are bound to be of benefit to the Council of Europe as a whole, the Committee of Ministers:

- encourages its Chair and Secretariat to promote the action of the Committee of Ministers via a dynamic information policy<sup>1</sup> and invites them to report regularly on achievements and desirable developments;
- takes note of the information policy guidelines of the European Court of Human Rights<sup>2</sup> and invites the Chair and the Secretariat of the Committee of Ministers to explore the prospects described therein for increased co-operation between the Committee of Ministers and the Court;
- invites the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe to draw up guidelines for their own information policies in the light of the general strategic guidelines set out in this resolution, seeking to highlight their distinguishing features, their responsibilities and their specific powers;
- stresses the crucial role to be played, in the key area in which the Council of Europe excels, by the Commissioner on Human Rights, as an independent distinguished figure responsible for promoting education in, awareness of, and respect for human rights as embodied in Council of Europe instruments;
- invites the institutional partners mentioned above to maintain regular contact with the Committee of Ministers, in co-operation with the Secretary General, in order to develop the necessary synergies and make the institutional diversity of the Council of Europe fully reflect the coherence of its action.

3. To improve its profile the Council of Europe must also achieve a more marked and more active presence in its member states, primarily by involving them more closely in publicising the Council, its activities and the dissemination of their results. To this end, the Committee of Ministers:

- invites the Secretary General and the member states concerned to implement, as a matter of urgency, its decision to transform the Information and Documentation Centres in the new member states into Council of Europe Information Offices with a clearer legal status and increased potential, in conformity with Resolution (99)9 of 28 July 1999;
- recalls its decision of principle to encourage the setting up, in all member states, of Council of Europe outposts (which may take various legal and administrative forms), and invites the member states to make specific proposals to this end;

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<sup>1</sup> The outlines of the Committee of Ministers' information policy are given in document RAP-INF(2000)3.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. document RAP-INF(2000)1 addendum.

- encourages the Secretary General, the member states concerned and the authorities responsible to make use for this purpose, wherever possible, of the potential provided by the presence of decentralised Council of Europe units in a number of member states<sup>3</sup>.

4. Essential though it is, giving the Council of Europe a higher profile and a stronger presence is not an end in itself: the aim is primarily to allow the Organisation to fulfil its statutory functions more effectively and with greater credibility and transparency. To this end, the Committee of Ministers:

*- stresses that the aim of the Council of Europe's information strategy must be to foster an awareness of the issues concerned rather than simply disseminating information or merely giving the Council a higher profile. Accordingly, every effort must be made - and this responsibility rests primarily with the bodies involved and their secretariats - to give to the specialised groups directly concerned (national, local and regional elected representatives, judges and prosecutors, lawyers, teachers, etc) knowledge of the activities and achievements of the Council of Europe in their areas of competence;*

- reaffirms the benefits of the actions traditionally taken by the Council of Europe in respect of people in a position to act as multipliers (journalists, heads of NGOs, prominent bodies and figures in the civil society, etc) so that a wider public can be reached through them;

- stresses that high priority should be given to making maximum use of the potential of the new information technologies and the development of the Internet, which for the first time give the Organisation the means of reaching a wide public direct at a cost compatible with its resources, irrespective of the practical obstacles and barriers stemming from distance and time constraints that traditionally hinder such communication.

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<sup>3</sup> At present these comprise the Paris and Brussels offices, the Lisbon North-South Centre, the European Youth Centre in Budapest and the Centre for Modern Languages in Graz.