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**AD HOC COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF
NATIONAL MINORITIES**

(CAHMIN)

**Proposal from Patrick BENNIS (Ireland)
and Christiaan COLPAERT (Belgium)
for a provision to be included in the
draft protocol complementing the
ECHR in the cultural field**

Preliminary remarks

This document reproduces extracts from the final Conference report (DECS/AE (93) 23) of the Conference "Adult Education and Social Change in Europe: Development for all" (Strasbourg 22-25 March 1993) organised in the framework of the CDCC Project "Adult education and social change".

Louvain, 25 June 1994

The Director
Directorate of Human Rights

Dear Sir,

At a meeting of experts at the Council of Europe in March 1993, Mr Bennis and myself, both being interested in human rights, introduced the concept of the right to education and continued training as a human right¹.

The Council of Europe documents² indicate that the participants³, who came from all over Europe and represented all approaches to the problem, were unanimously in favour of the idea of extending the right to education beyond the elementary education referred to in Article 2⁴ of the Protocol to the Human Rights Convention (Paris, 20 March 1952).

As communication within the Council of Europe is slowed down by the weight of the administrative machinery needed to ensure the necessary rigour in many cases, I am taking the liberty of drawing attention to certain parts of the report on the final conference "Adult Education and Social Change - Development for All" held in Strasbourg from 22 to 25 March 1993.

These ideas are very close to the rights to be covered in the cultural protocol which is in preparation.

I should be most grateful for your co-operation in finding a place in the new human rights protocol for the proposal by Mr Patrick Bennis and myself.

Yours faithfully,

Chr. COLPAERT

¹ Appendix 1, p. 68 of document DECS/AE (93) 23.

² DECS/AE (93) 23, Appendix 2

"The participants unanimously urge the Council of Europe to ensure that Adult Education remains a specific, permanent focal point of its work, as a crucial factor and ideal means of strengthening pluralist democracy and human rights, seeking solutions to the problems facing society, and promoting awareness of a European cultural identity."

and, further:

"The participants recommend that the Council of Europe: ...

Define the right of adults to education as part of the extension of the scope of "human rights",..."

³ The list of participants is appended.

⁴ Case-law (D 5962/72 (UK) 13.3.75, 2/50): "The right envisaged in this provision is concerned primarily with elementary education and not necessarily advanced studies such as technology".

Appendix 1

to document DECS/AE(93)23

Proposal from Patrick BENNIS (Ireland) and Christiaan COLPAERT (Belgium)

Each person has a human right to learning to the extent he/she wishes and is capable on a life-long basis.

This would include:

- a. No one discriminated against concerning access to adult education on the basis of race, sex, religion, etc.
- b. The provision of a wide range of learning opportunities relevant to adult and suitable in content and in time and "mode of provision", and in response to the expressed needs of adults.
- c. Accreditation of educational achievement, including the accreditation of prior learning.
- d. Actual promotion of adult education.
- e. Special action to assist adults who are disadvantaged to reach an educational standard equal to what is at present reached at the end of the second level.

A P P E N D I X 2

to document DECS/AE(93)23

DECLARATION OF THE FINAL CONFERENCE

CONSIDERING

Europe's social fabric and its democratic structures to be under threat;

The steadily worsening employment situation and the resulting difficulties faced by large sections of the population with respect to access to employment;

The foreseeable demographic changes, which will contribute to an increase in the proportion of elderly people and constitute a decisive challenge to the management of our societies in three age-groups.

The transformation of social roles, relationships at work, economic, social and political relations, and identity-forming processes, which means that the current generation of adults is particularly vulnerable;

CONVINCED

That democracy must enable each individual to participate fully in determining the choices which will shape his or her destiny, and to play an active role in the development process;

That adult education is an ideal way of developing the human skills demanded by the challenges of our time, and a powerful means of building and consolidating democracy and the rights of disadvantaged individuals and groups;

That proposals relating to education are inseparable from more fundamental options for economic, social, political, cultural and local democracy;

EMPHASISING

That there is still much inequality of access and disparity amongst facilities available, despite the unprecedented development of training over the last decades and the general consensus which it enjoys,

The participants at the Conference organised by the Council of Europe on "Adult Education and Social Change in Europe: Development for all" held on 22-25 march 1993 in Strasbourg,

Having analysed with satisfaction the extremely positive results of activities initiated by the Council of Europe under the umbrella of the project on "Adult education and social change", in which 25 countries participated, notably by funding 39 seminars or study visits.

DECLARE THAT:

Vocational training is not the only answer to unemployment,

The changes in employment and work are having a strong impact on the relationship between general education and vocational training as hitherto defined and are consequently necessitating an adaptation of structures and curricula to reinforce the dialectical links between initial education, adult education and vocational training;

Given the structural nature of the changes under way, any project relating to education must be focused on citizenship and the continuity of the socialisation process of each individual, group or community;

At all levels, it is important to recognise the important role of adult education, as regards its working methods as well as its contents, when building democratic citizenship.

Adult education must be extended to all adults without distinction and a service must be set up to provide individual help and advice on working out options and defining a personalised course of training.

The education provided must enable the individual to acquire the flexibility and capacity to anticipate, which are necessary for active participation in the creation of wealth, knowledge and new cultural values; and in critical analyses of change at all levels;

Neither initial education nor vocational training alone can fulfil this role;

The priority task is to create a coherent system out of elements which are currently dissimilar, fragmented and enfeebled, in order to construct an educational system geared to the requirements dictated by the democratic construction of an "information based society";

Political will is the only factor that will allow conversion on a large scale, especially if the effective use of the new communication and information media is envisaged as could be desirable.

TO THIS END, THE PARTICIPANTS RECOMMEND

In accordance with the principles of reform set out in the appendix,

THAT MEMBER STATES:

Examine the conditions in which to lifelong education might be extended and made available to all adults;

Promote a policy of participation of all adults in education by taking the financial measures needed;

Examine the ways and means of achieving a coherent policy on adult education, in conjunction, in particular, with regional and local authorities, social partners and the professionals concerned;

Consider the possibility of co-ordinating the actions of the various ministries responsible for adult education;

Enlist businesses in the promotion of adult education;

Encourage the formation of an organised, coherent adult education sector characterised by efficiency and a diverse range of responses, particularly recourse to modern communication techniques;

Develop education systems geared to the individual, which foster individual autonomy and self-confidence;

Envisage the reallocation of funds, taking the possibility of budget transfers into account, in line with an approach geared to adult education in its broadest sense of:

- a. emancipation contributing to the development of the individual and his or her autonomy, facilitates community involvement and making people more employable,
- b. vocational education and training as a means of boosting employment and contributing to economic restructuring and social change;

Recognise the vital contribution of voluntary Organisations and allocate them new resources accordingly;

The participants unanimously urge the Council of Europe to ensure that Adult Education remains a specific, permanent focal point of its work, as a crucial factor and ideal means of strengthening pluralist democracy and human rights, seeking solutions to the problems facing society, and promoting awareness of a European cultural identity.

The participants recommend that the Council of Europe take the initiative for projects, particularly in the new member states, relating to community involvement and local development which are, factors important to democratisation.

The participants recommend that the Council for Cultural Co-operation, through increased co-operation with the other steering committees:

Take all the steps needed to strengthen the international network for co-operation and regular exchange of information and comparison of experiences between member countries on Europe-wide scale;

Examine the value of institutional arrangements for meeting requests for assistance and technical exchanges, particularly from the new member states;

Continue the work of describing and analysing the different legislative provisions in the member States, in conjunction, if appropriate, with the relevant non-governmental organisations;

Centre the future work of the Council of Europe on the fundamental role of adult education in the promotion of democratic citizenship and the strengthening of democratic value;

Embark on a new adult education project concerning the role, purpose and potential of community education in a widening Europe characterised by rapid social, cultural, economic and political change.

The participants recommend that the Council of Europe:

Recognise adult education as a fundamental vector, and as one way of providing the countries of Central and Eastern Europe with the services necessary for the construction of democratic political regimes and the economic reconstruction and for the gradual participation of ethnic and linguistic minorities in European life;

Define the right of adults to education as part of the extension of the scope of "human rights", but also recognise it as an essential means of giving human rights a tangible form, a means which is as important as formal, legal guarantees;

Encourage member States to devise a coherent and integrated adult education policy;

Publicise this declaration and appendix, and the reference documents on which they are based, as widely as possible among the people and organisations engaged in the various forms of adult education.

Continue with and strengthen co-operation with international organisations (Unesco, OCDE, etc.);

Work closely with the Commission of the European Communities in order to devise a common approach and take the existing programmes in the field of adult education a stage further.