

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

RESOLUTION (78) 62

ON JUVENILE DELINQUENCY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 29 November 1978
at the 296th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers,

Having regard to the benefit to Council of Europe member states of establishing common principles for the protection of young people and criminal policy concerning them ;

Having regard to the fact that important changes are taking place in contemporary society, associated in particular with technological progress, urbanisation and development of the mass media ;

Having regard to the fact that these changes affect interpersonal relationships, especially within families, and sometimes have adverse effects on the personal and social development of young people ;

Considering that governments have much to gain by taking measures which make the best use of the positive aspects of social change and limit the undesirable consequences ;

Considering that the social integration of young people is not in the first instance a task for judicial bodies but comes mainly within the scope of social policy and its development ;

Considering that the following action is apt to influence favourably the socialisation of juveniles :

- improving housing conditions and social facilities for families with children, particularly in large housing estates, by making services and suitable accommodation available to promote the best possible development of young people ;

- ensuring that there is an opportunity for all adolescents to have vocational training which corresponds to their interests and aptitudes ;

- taking steps to ensure that young people are associated with the world of work and avoiding their unemployment for long periods ;

- increasing measures of financial and social support for families with children, in particular the most disadvantaged ones ; guaranteeing the care and safety of children ;

- reviewing the school system so as to ensure that schools meet the needs of each pupil and the requirements of modern life, and providing for the early detection of psychological and social difficulties among young people so that the latter can continue to be educated within the normal system ;

- encouraging youth associations and organisations of sports and leisure-time activities which help to integrate their members into society ;

- encouraging the mass media to take a greater and more constructive interest in the problems of young people by not perpetuating prejudices and stereotyped reactions in their respect,

Recommends the governments of member states to take account of the positive implications of the social measures mentioned above for the prevention of juvenile delinquency and the social integration of the young and to consider the possibility of taking the following measures in the field of criminal policy :

a. ensure the safeguarding of the fundamental rights of young people by their participation in all judicial and administrative measures which concern them ;

b. review the sanctions and other measures applied to young people and increase their educative and socialising content ;

c. keep to a minimum the sanctions and other measures which entail deprivation of liberty, and develop alternative methods of treatment ;

d. provide for the abolition of large isolating institutions and their replacement by smaller establishments supported by the community ;

e. attach special importance to assisting young people during periods of institutional treatment and in particular in the period of transition from institutional treatment to freedom outside ;

f. review the law on minors in order to provide more effective assistance for young people at risk while avoiding marginalisation ;

g. develop the community's participation in the implementation of measures aimed at young people in danger ;

h. ensure that all the services available to young people in general are accessible to minors at risk ;

i. co-ordinate the activities of all bodies concerned with assisting young people (social and educational services, police, courts, etc.) ;

j. involve families and volunteers in the work of the relevant professional teams ;

k. develop the training and information of those concerned with the development of services and institutions with responsibility for young people in danger or young delinquents, in order to modify repressive attitudes ;

Recommends the governments of member states to promote research in the field of social policy, in particular on the impact of preventive measures on the socialisation of families and young people as well as on the means of developing social solidarity ;

Requests governments :

1. to ensure that this resolution, together with the explanatory report, is widely circulated within the appropriate bodies and departments ;

2. to send a report every five years to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on action taken on these recommendations.