

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

RECOMMENDATION No. R (81) 17

OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS TO MEMBER STATES ON ADULT EDUCATION POLICY ¹

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 6 November 1981
at the 339th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Having regard to the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education held in Stockholm in 1975, which endorsed the principles of permanent education, and to the Symposium on "A Permanent Education Policy Today", held at Sienna in 1979 ;

Having noted the discussions in the conference entitled "Adult education: ten years of change: prospects for the 1980s", which was organised by the Council of Europe in Strasbourg in 1980 ;

Having noted the intention of competent national authorities to intensify co-operation and interaction in the field of adult education ;

Considering that, at the present time, millions of women and men find themselves faced by the urgent necessity for vocational training or retraining and for an updating of their education in order to cope with new patterns of work, of unemployment and of leisure ;

Considering that adult education is one of the means to respond to present difficulties caused by the evolution of the labour market and the continuous introduction of new technologies ;

Convinced that adult education is also one of the means of responding to the increasing demand for access to knowledge and to the cultural heritage on the one hand, and for active participation in the creation of knowledge and of new cultural values, on the other hand ;

Convinced that adult education is a fundamental factor of equality of educational opportunity and of cultural democracy, and therefore of particular importance for ensuring the promotion of equal status for women and men ;

Underlining that adult education is also a powerful factor in the protection of democracy and the rights of individuals and disadvantaged groups to the extent that it can enable people to make critical judgments and act consciously on the increasing flood of information,

Recommends the governments of member states :

a. to take account, in the implementation of their policies for adult education, of the factors set out in the appendix or to draw them to the attention of the competent bodies concerned so that they can be considered and, where appropriate, taken into account ;

b. to ensure that this recommendation and the reference documents ² which form its basis are distributed as widely as possible among all persons and bodies concerned with the different forms of the education of adults.

1. When Recommendation No. R (81) 17 was adopted and in application of Article 10.2.c of the Rules of Procedure for the meetings of the Ministers' Deputies, the Representative of Switzerland reserved the right of his government to comply with it or not.

2. Report of the Sienna Symposium on "Permanent Education Policy Today", and the final report of the project "Development of Adult Education".

FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED IN APPLYING ADULT EDUCATION POLICY

A. While respecting the variation, as between member states, of structures and of social, economic and administrative conditions, particularly their educational systems, it is important, concerning the objectives of adult education policy :

1. to regard adult education as one of the factors for economic and social development ;
2. to take into consideration in adult education the whole person in the totality of his or her social, economic and cultural context and for that purpose further reduce any existing contrast between general education and vocational training ;
3. to integrate progressively adult education in a comprehensive system of permanent education by developing at all levels of education approaches and methods that can be used by adults in order to meet the diverse educational needs which arise throughout their lives ;
4. to promote, by means of adult education, the development of the active role and critical attitudes of women and men, as parents, producers, consumers, users of the mass media, citizens and members of their community ;
5. to relate, as far as possible and according to national circumstances, the development of adult education to the lifestyles, responsibilities and problems of the adults concerned ;
6. to stimulate industrial and commercial firms as well as administrations and public services to promote adult education by taking into account, in addition to their technical requirements, training needs connected with industrial democracy and socio-cultural development ;
7. to encourage, in fields such as health, quality of life and the environment, housing, work and employment, family, culture and leisure, the co-operation between public, voluntary and private adult education agencies (including the universities) and other educational and social welfare agencies ;
8. to support adult education experiments aiming at the creation of activities and job opportunities, particularly those responding to social needs not covered by free enterprise or by the public sector.

B. Concerning the organisation of adult education, it would be appropriate :

9. to take into account :
 - a. the responsibilities appropriate to the different levels (national, regional and local) and the machinery necessary to develop adequate co-operation and co-ordination of interested institutions both within and between these levels ;
 - b. according to national situations, the optimum dimension of the "local unit" to which the organisation and management of adult education could be handed over, it being understood that, where appropriate, the central government would continue to assume co-ordination, set standards and protect the interests of migrant workers and disadvantaged groups ;
10. to consider the possibility :
 - a. of co-ordinating, where national systems make this appropriate, the actions of the various government departments responsible, entirely or partially, for adult education ;
 - b. of encouraging mutual information, consultation and proper co-ordination between public authorities and responsible voluntary bodies at all levels regarding their adult education policies and activities ;
 - c. of establishing an advisory council able to help the development and realisation of adult education policies by its technical advice and support ;
11. to investigate whether and under what conditions the coherent development of adult education could be facilitated by the drawing up of an outline law or other statutory provisions.