

Parliamentary Assembly: Democratic Impact of New Communication & Information Technologies

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On 22 April 1997, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) adopted its Resolution 1120 (1997) on the impact of the new communication and information technologies on democracy.

Recognising that technological progress generates social, cultural, economic, educational, civic and other kinds of benefits for the public, the PACE is keen to harness the potential of new communication and information technologies (NCITs). In this Resolution, it advocates finding measures to avoid, inter alia, “the commercialisation and fragmentation of political messages”; “the marginalisation of parliamentary procedures” and “social discrimination”. It also seeks to stimulate active “electronic citizenship”.

The PACE calls on national parliaments to take legislative action designed to maximise NCITs’ potential benefits for the public and to “reconcile technological progress with respect for democratic principles and human rights”. It cautions against the introduction of “complex and unworkable rules which would hamper the evolution and development of the NCITs”. It urges that a proper balance be struck “between respect for freedoms, the protection of privacy and the fight against crime”.

The PACE also calls for political action by national parliaments, including with regard to: the organisation of training in the NCITs from a young age in public and private educational systems; the provision of universally accessible and affordable computer facilities, and the promotion of “appropriate national legislative measures so as to set a legal framework for the preservation of private data, the protection of young people and respect for ethical rules and human rights”.

Resolution 1120 (1997) on the impact of the new communication and information technologies on democracy, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 22 April 1997

<http://assembly.coe.int/Mainf.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta97/ERES1120.htm>

