COUNCIL OF EUROPE
COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

RECOMMENDATION No. R (94) 14

OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS TO MEMBER STATES

ON COHERENT AND INTEGRATED FAMILY POLICIES[1]

(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 22 November 1994
at the 521st meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)

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

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is the achievement of greater unity among its members, for the purpose of safeguarding and realising the ideals and principles which are their common heritage and of facilitating their economic and social progress; .

Considering the European Convention on Human Rights and recalling in particular the right to respect for private and family life as defined in Article 8;

Considering the European Social Charter and recalling the right of the family to social, legal and economic protection as defined in Article 16;

Bearing in mind the Declaratión on equality between women and men, adopted by the Committee of Ministers at its 83rd Session (16 November 1988);

Bearing in mind Recommendation 1074 (1988) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on family policy;

Bearing in mind Recommendation No. R (92) 2 of the Committee of Ministers on making family benefits generally available;

Taking note of the final communiqués of the sessions of the Conference of European Ministers responsible for Family Affairs;

Bearing in mind the rich diversity of work already completed by the Council of Europe relating to questions affecting families;

Taking into account the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;

On the occasion of the International Year of the Family 1994 proclaimed by the United Nations;

Taking note of the interaction between the family and political, economic and social evolution;

Recognising that the family takes on different forms within the same society, or within the lifespan of a single individual, thus creating different stages of family life cycles;

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1. When Recommendation No. R (94) 14 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 the Netherlands declared that he accepted this recommendation reserving, however, the right to apply its provisions, as appropriate, to single persons and people living together, and provided that measures to assist families with children do not harm the interests of other categories.

Recognising that the interests of families in all sectors of society and areas of policy call for a better co-ordination of all social policies involved – for example those affecting young people, elderly people, and disabled people, as well as health, employment, vocational training, social protection, consumer protection, culture, migration, environment, housing, education, media, traffic and tourism – in order to give families better living conditions and to improve their human relations;

Recognising that the dramatic changes in family structures create a need for coherent and integrated family policies, followed by appropriate measures, to promote balanced legal, social and economic treatment for families, helping them to discharge their functions and thus to live in dignity,

Recommends that member governments support the implementation of coherent and integrated family policies on the basis of the following principles: consultation, co-ordination, efficiency and flexibility; these principles to be applied across the board, at local, regional and national level, as appropriate.

Appendix to Recommendation No. R (94) 14

Basic principles

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, family policies must support families in present-day society, giving them the protection and assistance which they need to discharge their functions in society. The full potential of all families, and particularly the poorest families, must be promoted, so that they can exercise both their responsibilities and their independence in a manner consistent with the dignity which belongs to every human being.

1. Regardless of its form and diversity, the family remains a fundamental unit of society; it plays the primary role in socialisation.

2. The family also plays the primary role in promoting solidarity between the generations and with the weakest members of the community, as well as genuine partnership between the couple. Parents are primarily responsible for bringing up their children according to the basic values of a democratic society. High priority must be given to education and mediation services making it possible to resolve any family conflicts.

3. Within families, the rights of each member must be taken into account.

4. The family must be a place where equality, including legal equality, between women and men is especially promoted by sharing responsibility for running the home and looking after children, and, more specifically, by ensuring that mother and father take turns and complement each other in carrying out their respective roles.

5. The public authorities should promote the harmonious reconciliation of family life and working life.

6. Family policies must take into account the plurality of family structures and their specific needs.

7. Children should be prepared for independent, responsible and caring citizenship by having their rights and needs taken into account within the family. They should be educated and adequately informed about their rights and duties.

8. The public authorities should make the necessary provision to enable children to help themselves to have access to their rights, and are entitled to intervene in the private family domain, in accordance with the law, when the child is in danger within it. They need to be aware of the responsibilities and difficulties involved in respecting as far as possible the integrity of the family unit, whilst also identifying and deciding on appropriate action in those cases where the child's rights are violated by family members.

9. Government policies should take account of the costs involved in bringing up children.

10. In order for older family members to enjoy a dignified and secure old age, it is particularly necessary to respect their capacity to stay independent, to continue to take their own decisions and to remain a part of the community.

11. Governments have a special responsibility to protect families at times of economic crisis, particularly by introducing both preventive and assistance measures to achieve a significant reduction in the number of families living in poverty, while fully respecting their dignity.

12. The public authorities should create conditions conducive to the well-being and autonomy of families, particularly by providing appropriate day-care, medical, social, educational and cultural services.

13. Families should be given the possibility of forming or joining associations, so that they can convey their views on family issues to the authorities and suggest measures which they consider in their interest.

14. The concept inherent to this recommendation is defined as follows:

i. the significance of preventive family policy must be emphasised: a family may need guidance, counselling and services at different stages of its life, by means of which its vulnerability can be greatly diminished;

ii. the concept for a coherent and integrated family policy is that the role of the public authorities is to create the circumstances conducive to the emergence of a family unit in which the individual can develop in safety, self-respect and solidarity, enjoying fundamental rights, in a legal, social, cultural and economic context. Special needs of different types of families at various stages of family life cycles must be allowed for here;

iii. the concept of a coherent and integrated family policy must be applied in examining all stages of policy with reference to the interests of the family and all its members;

iv. the objective is that a coherent and integrated family policy should function across administrative boundaries as a factor co-ordinating all action taken affecting families;

v. in practice this means co-ordinating and reconciling the various sectors which affect members of families as citizens, for example social security, working life, education, environment, consumer interests, culture, housing, traffic, mass media and tourism.