

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
Substantive session of 1998

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON
ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Third periodic reports submitted by States parties
under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant

Addendum*
PORTUGAL**

[7 November 1997]

* The second periodic reports concerning rights covered by articles 1 to 15 submitted by the Government of Portugal (E/1990/6/Add.6 and E/1990/6/Add.8) were considered by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights at its twelfth session (see E/C.12/1995/SR.7, 8, 10 and 27) and at its fifteenth session (see E/C.12/1996/SR.3133 and 54), respectively.

** The information submitted by Portugal in accordance with the guidelines concerning the initial part of reports of States parties is contained in the core document (HRI/CORE/1/Add.20).

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II. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICIES

541. One innovation made by the thirteenth constitutional Government with regard to science and scientific research was the establishment of a Ministry of Science and Technology, which is responsible, inter alia, for promoting advanced scientific research, strengthening recognized scientific institutions, creating independent facilities for science policy evaluation and follow-up, and promoting international collaboration.

542. The Ministry's organization act, ratified by DecreeLaw No. 144/96 of 26 August, aims to update the institutional framework of Portugal's science and technology policy in the light of: the recent expansion and diversification of the country's scientific and technological potential; the increasing internationalization of scientific systems, for example in the European Union; and awareness of the increased importance of the spread of scientific and technological culture in social and economic life and for citizens of a modern State.

(a) The Ministry of Science and Technology on the Internet

543. The Ministry of Science and Technology (MCT) has set up a Website on the Internet, where information may be found on:

Government activity in science and technology;

A regular report (every 100 days) on MCT activities;

Legal and administrative documents originating from MCT;

Agreements concluded with other bodies;

Science and technology budget;

Press releases on MCT activities;

Competitions;

International cooperation;

Calendar of scientific meetings;

Standing forum on science and technology policy;

Science and technology statistics;

Science and technology ministries and bodies in other countries.

(b) Activities of the Ministry of Science and Technology

544. A working group the Commission on the Establishment of the Science and Technology Observatory was set up under Decree No. 13/MCT 96 (Official Gazette 79, second series, of 2 April). The basic objectives of the Observatory will be to gather, process and analyse information on the country's science and technology network and scientific and technological information derived from international sources.

545. The Ministry of Science and Technology (Organization) Act created a new organizational structure for the Ministry by establishing three autonomous bodies under its auspices: the Foundation for Science and Technology, the Science and Technology Observatory, and the Institute for International Scientific and Technological Cooperation. The first of these is chiefly responsible for finance and evaluation, and the second for gathering, processing and disseminating scientific and technological information. The Institute was established with a view to the internationalization of Portugal's scientific system.

546. DecreeLaw No. 146/96 of 26 August established specialized science colleges with the aim of bringing together in the same institution teachers and researchers working in the same discipline. The purpose of the colleges is to give the scientific community an adequate opportunity to participate in defining and monitoring scientific and technological policy.

547. A new programme (Life Sciences Programme), which aims to develop the experimental teaching of sciences in primary and secondary education, has been set up in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education. This initiative constitutes an effort to combat cultural and scientific illiteracy. Until 30 September 1996, schools, universities, student associations and businesses, inter alia, submitted applications to establish experimental science teaching activities. A budgetary item

has been established within the Ministry of Science and Technology for this purpose.

548. An information campaign entitled "Astronomy on the beach" was conducted during August 1996 on the joint initiative of the MCT, the Lisbon University Science Museum, and amateur astronomy societies and groups. The idea was to give Portuguese people who were spending their summer holidays by the sea their first taste of astronomy, with the help of amateur astronomers. The campaign was a huge success (with around 100,000 participants), and the MCT subsequently announced that it would support sciencebased associations and other similar initiatives in other fields of knowledge.

549. A series of conferences is being organized as one of the MCT's priorities: to promote scientific culture in various ways. The aim is to help explain and disseminate scientific thinking, by showing just how science is constructed. Science in all its aspects, reproduces data from everyday experience, but in a different way: scientists form groups similar to other human groups, but the rules by which scientific communities operate attest to the existence of rigorous specific requirements. The same thing happens with other aspects of science: we are continually making observations, we form hypotheses, we are asked to prove our statements, we use instruments, etc. But what characterizes science is the imposition of additional constraints on each of these operations.

550. The aim of these conferences is thus to investigate these constraints, which have been grouped into around 10 aspects of scientific method, in order to reach a better understanding of scientific thought. These aspects are: scientific communities, the subject of science and scientific objectivity, scientific language, observation and visualization, scientific instrumentation, hypothesis and theory formulation, demonstration and experimentation, scientific proof and the publicizing of discoveries. This programme, which is due to run until 30 January 1998, will be the subject of a textbook written specially for secondarylevel teachers and students.

551. On 24 July 1996, in Paris, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Science and Technology signed a cooperation agreement with the European Space Agency (ESA). This is a general agreement establishing a timeframe and plan for Portugal's full membership of ESA. However, it paves the way for the immediate signature of specific agreements on participation by Portuguese research companies and institutions in a number of the Agency's operational programmes. One such programme is the Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS), a joint project of ESA, the European Organization for the Safety of Air Navigation (EUROCONTROL) and the European Commission, for which 11 Portuguese research companies and laboratories have been selected. The Portuguese State's financial contribution (to ESA) amounts to around 1 million ecus (around 200 million escudos) in the first year for a programme that should last three more years at the same level of financing.

(c) The financial resources of the Ministry of Science and Technology

552. The budget allocation for MCT increased in 1996 from 19.6 million to 26 million escudos. This was the biggest rise in percentage terms in

the 1996 budget. The amounts for some 300 MCTfunded research units almost tripled (from 1.5 million to 4 million escudos).