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Information technologies and the traceability of products, particularly food products

Motion for a resolution
presented by Mr Fischer and others

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only the members who have signed it

Over the last few years, there have been regular episodes that have shaken the confidence of numerous consumers, particularly with regard to food safety. Examples include swine fever, bird flu and mad cow disease, as well as the discovery of contaminated meat. Consumers and politicians are undoubtedly justified in demanding guarantees of proper food quality and a "transparent" production process. These apply in principle to all products. Similarly, the circulation of counterfeit products of lower quality, as is currently the case, causes economic damage that can be counted in billions and frequently places consumers at risk.

Politicians have the important task of protecting public health through an effective system for withdrawing unsatisfactory products from sale, preventing fraud where analytical methods cannot be used to identify products' origin, for example in organic agriculture, establishing barriers to the transmission of dangerous pathogenic agents to human beings, providing for effective monitoring and means of responding in emergencies and preventing the spread of epidemics.

The subject of the "traceability" of the origin of products is now highly topical. To assist the system for tracing products, all necessary information on them and their origins should be registered and made accessible. First practical experiments with Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) systems have highlighted their great potential for securing effective traceability, which could be extended to the European scale, so long as the right infrastructure is put in place.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe should consider the following questions:

How can consumers' health be effectively protected through compliance with health standards?

What role does "traceability" play in this regard in member states?

How can each product and its component parts best be identified and recorded (in each country)?

How can information on the date and place where such products are moved or modified best be transmitted?

What systems currently exist to record, save and circulate this information?

What experience has already been gained in the use of these systems?

What technical or other conditions must be established to ensure that all the citizens of the Council of Europe's member states benefit equally from the introduction of such data collection and processing systems?

*Signed*¹:

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EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EDG: European Democratic Group
UEL: Group of the Unified European Left
NR: not registered in a group