Family policy and social protection of battered chidren

1998/2143(INI) - 05/01/1999

The Committee endorsed a report by Marie-Thérèse HERMANGE (UFE, F) on the protection of families and children. It called for guidelines for an integrated family policy which takes account the diversity of family models and goes beyond the strictly economic approach of policies geared to benefits and allowances. The Member States should conduct specific family policies supporting and protecting the family financially and in its educational and social role. Children should be placed at the heart of the European debate, too. The Committee suggested that all proposals for Community acts should be accompanied by a family impact statement geared to the well-being of children. Furthermore, an extraordinary European Council should be organized to debate the consequences of the demographic, family and child protection policies pursued by Member States. The Commission should hold a conference on the situation of children in the EU. In addition to the institutional and procedural measures, the Committee put forward several proposals concerning the development of a child-protection policy which should focus on protecting children's health and promoting an environment which favours child development. In practical terms this would require, inter alia, * the establishment of a European prenatal epidemiological network to combat child and maternal mortality; * the rapid implementation of directives related to reconciling work and family life; * a directive on child care; * the appointment of national children's ombudsmen; * the creation of a European centre for children in danger; * the approximation of national child protection laws; * the harmonisation of legislation on child pornography and the introduction of rules governing extra-territorial powers making it possible to prosecute and punish people who have committed sexual offences outside their national territory; * adoption of a code of conduct with the aim of curbing the development of sex tourism; and * combatting the exploitation of children at work by giving preference to countries which respect international provisions and by promoting a labelling scheme guaranteeing those provisions.