# Prison conditions in the Union and others sentences

1998/2052(INI) - 12/10/1998

The Committee has adopted the own-initiative report by Mr Pierre PRADIER (ARE - F) on prisons (conditions in the EU and other sentences). The objective of this report is to aid the Member States in devising policies and reaching decisions which could help improve the results of imprisonment, which are not satisfying as things stand. A further goal is to elicit or develop the sense of responsibility in inmates, so as to facilitate their reintegration in society. The Union's prison population today stands at approximately 400 000. Allowing for movements within a given year and taking prisoners' relatives into account, the subject of prison conditions directly concerns almost 2 m people. The members of the committee tabled a number of amendments to the original text. Sixteen of these are compromise amendments The rapporteur stressed the need for the committee to reach a clear joint position, so that Parliament can deliver a properly consistent opinion. The report refers to the various functions of imprisonment, and examines the questions of overcrowding, provisional detention and alternative forms of sentencing. The committee calls on the Member States to ensure the full application of the Council of Europe's provisions on prison conditions, in particular those concerning minimum health standards: cell design, diet, clothing, heating, hygiene, access to sanitary facilities, participation in work, education and training and socio-educational, cultural and sporting activities. All these elements help maintain prisoners' dignity and contribute to their reintegration in society. The committee also insists that due account be taken of prisoners' families. Prisoners should be held near the place of residence of their families. Regular visits from spouse and children play a highly beneficial role in encouraging prisoners to reform, to develop their sense of responsibility and, finally, to return to society. The report recognises the difficult conditions under which prison wardens have to work, and stresses the need for them to be given initial and ongoing training and to be offered better working conditions. It also suggests the creation of networks for exchanging experiences.