Measures on repatriation of mortal remains

2003/2032(INI) - 21/10/2003

The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Michael CASHMAN (PES, UK) on the adoption of measures concerning the repatriation of mortal remains. The report began by noting that there was currently no uniform EU-wide provision governing the repatriation of mortal remains from one Member State to another. The death of an EU citizen in a Member State other than his/her country of origin resulted in more complex procedures, a longer time before burial or cremation and higher costs than if the death had occurred in the deceased person's country of origin. Pointing out that freedom of movement and residence was a fundamental right within the EU, MEPs stressed that, with greater intra-Community mobility in general, the number of Community citizens who die in a country other than their country of origin was bound to increase. The report concluded that the repatriation of mortal remains without excessive cost or bureaucracy should be regarded "as a corollary of the right of each EU citizen to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States". The report added that the provisions of the Council of Europe's 1973 Strasbourg Agreement, which imposes strict rules on the cross-border transfer of mortal remains, were the source of indirect discrimination in that they applied essentially to "non-nationals", which ran counter to the Community scheme of things. The Commission was urged to ascertain whether or not the Agreement was compatible with Community law and to ensure that the latter was upheld. MEPs also called for harmonised standards and procedures to be applied in the cross-border transportation of corpses throughout the EU and asked the Commission to ensure that, as far as possible, Community citizens were treated in the same way as nationals in their home country.