The situation of single mothers and one-parent families

1997/2251(INI) - 18/09/1998 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Adopting the report by Mrs Ludivina GARCIA ARIAS (PSE, E) on single mothers and single-parent families, the European Parliament started by observing that the structure of the family in the European Union was changing considerably, due particularly to demographic changes. It noted that single-parent families constitute 10% of family units in the European Union and that the incomes of single-parent families are often lower than those of two-parent families and that they are thus often more susceptible to poverty and social exclusion. Emphasising that between 80% and 90% of single parents are women who act as the head of the household, it expressed concern at the vulnerable situation of this type of family and considered that a comprehensive study should be made into this phenomenon. Insisting that neither single mothers nor single fathers have equal access to the labour market, it stressed the importance of a providing a childcare system (especially after school) so that parents can reconcile family and working life. Parliament proposed the launch of a serious debate on the subject and called on authorities to identify and define the obstacles faced by single parents wishing to take up or recommence employment in order to be economically and socially independent. Parliament also called for: - guidelines and policies to help the integration of single parents into society; - improved legal systems and practices in the Member States in order to ensure that both parents fulfil all obligations towards their children; - best formulae for share custody with a fair division of family responsibilities; - account to be taken of aid to single parents in the criteria governing grants from the EU's structural funds; - reduced tax burdens on undertakings which make a nursery and childcare service available to their employees; - the adaptation of national divorce procedures to make it possible for both partners to draw up a divorce agreement in which they agree on mutual rules for the care and bringing-up of their children. Finally, Parliament considered that the situation of single-parent families must have priority over public budget deficit considerations and rejected the point of view that single parents willingly choose their situation and deliberately exploit the social security system.