Prison conditions in the Union and others sentences

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In adopting its resolution on prison conditions in the EU and improvements and alternative penalties, drafted by Mr. Pierre PRADIER (ARE, F), the Parliament called on the Member States to apply fully the Council of Europe's prison rules with particular regard to the rules on minimum health requirements covering the fitting-out of cells, food, clothing, heating and hygiene, and access to health facilities, work, education and training and social and educational, cultural and sporting facilities. All of these aspects contribute to the dignity and social rehabilitation of prisoners. Furthermore, the Parliament called on the Member States to comply scrupulously with the recommendations of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and to implement the recommendations addressed to them. The resolution also makes reference to the need to take the interests of prisoners' families into account, unless there are specific and justified grounds for not doing so (possible involvement in crime, mafia, etc.) by holding prisoners close to the homes of their families and encouraging visits. The Parliament calls on the Member States to set to work drafting a fundamental prison law laying down a legal framework which regulates the internal (substantive) legal position, the external legal position, the right of complaint and obligations of prisoners and provides for an independent supervisory body to which prisoners can turn in the event of violation of their rights. The Parliament also urges the Member States to ensure the strict application of the WHO directive laying down principles on which to base measures to combat HIV infection and AIDS in prisons. As it takes the view that minors do not belong in prisons, it calls for the introduction of constructive, humane laws on penalties for young offenders geared to the responsibility and skills of young people and providing alternative solutions to locking young people up in prisons, and for measures aimed, as far as possible, at remedying the emotional and educational deficiencies which are often the cause of delinquency. It stresses that alternative penalties to detention should be used in all cases where they would not jeopardise the safety of persons and property and calls on the public authorities to make use of semi-custodial arrangements or open regimes based on specific rules and to cultivate conditions under which these regimes can be used in a way which ensures public safety and responsible behaviour on the part of prisoners. The resolution urges the Member States, in particular, to introduce specific policies to encourage the reintegration into the workforce of former prisoners, and to end the all too frequent discrimination which in practice gives them no chance of finding employment in the broad sector covered by public companies and the civil service. Member States should step up their efforts to recruit, train and deploy social and educational support staff to prisons, open regimes and post-release follow-up activities. Lastly, the resolution calls for MEPs to have the right to visit and inspect prisons and detention centres for refugees within the European Union.