


Procedure file

Basic information	
INI - Own-initiative procedure	1997/2251(INI) Procedure completed
The situation of single mothers and one-parent families	
Subject	
4.10.02 Family policy, family law, parental leave	

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	FEMM Women's Rights	PSE GARCÍA ARIAS Ludivina	02/09/1997

Key events			
24/10/1997	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
25/06/1998	Vote in committee		Summary
25/06/1998	Committee report tabled for plenary	A4-0273/1998	
17/09/1998	Debate in Parliament		
18/09/1998	Decision by Parliament	T4-0530/1998	Summary
18/09/1998	End of procedure in Parliament		
12/10/1998	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	1997/2251(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	FEMM/4/09449

Documentation gateway				
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A4-0273/1998 OJ C 313 12.10.1998, p. 0007	25/06/1998	EP

The situation of single mothers and one-parent families

The Committee adopted the report by Ludivina GARCIA ARIAS (PES, E) on the situation of single mothers and one-parent families. One-parent families account for some 10% of all families with children recorded in the EU. In addition, between 80% and 90% of single parents are women. The committee wants the EU to commit itself to solving the fundamental problem of the huge differences in the situations faced by single mothers in every Member State. Problems exist at various levels: social security, the jobs market and employment legislation, vocational training, housing, childcare facilities, schooling, etc. The EU has been looking into this matter since 1992 but Parliament is not satisfied with the results achieved so far. Hence its decision to draw up this own-initiative report, which calls for a number of measures including the following: - the drafting of guidelines and policies to help the integration of single parents into mainstream society; - support from social security systems for single-parent families to cover their essential needs as well as steps to identify the obstacles preventing most single parents from joining or rejoining the world of work, which would enable them to be economically and socially independent; - improvements in the legal systems and practices of the Member States to ensure that both parents fulfill all obligations towards their children, together with steps to devise formulae for shared custody; - measures to have assistance for single parents included in the criteria of the Structural Funds; - the granting of tax credits to firms which provide their employees with childcare facilities.?

The situation of single mothers and one-parent families

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 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.?