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2 May 2006

Preventing the first form of violence against children: abandonment at birth

Motion for a resolution
presented by Mrs Bargholtz and others

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only the members who have signed it

1. The Assembly is concerned at the growing number of children being abandoned both in Western Europe and in the new member states of the Council of Europe, where the phenomenon is, unfortunately, fairly widespread. UNICEF has just published an alarming study concerning eastern European countries and Central Asia.
2. Children are abandoned at birth for the following reasons: poverty, ignorance, unwanted pregnancies (particularly teenage pregnancies) and lack of contraception and sufficient financial aid. The mothers or the parents often have no other choice than to abandon their child.
3. Children with disabilities are very often abandoned at birth or at least separated from their families and routinely placed in institutions; they are the victims of inadequate care provision, a lack of tolerance towards differences and old-fashioned attitudes which have remained largely unchanged.
4. In some member states, a poorly implemented policy of not placing young children in institutional care means that hospitals are filled with abandoned children with whom the staff have no idea what to do. The absence of procedures for registering births can be an obstacle to adoption and open the door to malpractices and child trafficking.
5. Abandonment is the first form of violence against children, who are entitled to have a family. It is necessary to frame a policy to prevent the abandonment of children, by:
 - putting an end to outmoded practices whereby children are separated from their mother at birth,
 - registering children at birth,
 - ensuring that there are social workers in maternity hospitals and wards,
 - introducing appropriate welfare services to provide support for mother and child,
 - giving mothers financial aid,
 - providing advice and special assistance and making sure that parents are more closely involved in cases where a child is born with a disability, etc.

Signed (see overleaf)

*Signed*¹:

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AKHUNDOVA, Elmira, Azerbaijan, SOC
ALAY FERRER, Vicenç, Andorra, SOC
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COUSIN, Alain, France, EPP/CD
DONABAUER, Karl, Austria, EPP/CD
ILICALI, Mustafa, Turkey, EPP/CD
JACQUAT, Denis, France, EPP/CD
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¹ SOC: Socialist Group
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EDG: European Democratic Group
UEL: Group of the Unified European Left
NR: not registered in a group