

## Better protection of children in international divorce disputes

- Increasing rates of international divorces and cross-border child abductions within the EU require EU laws on conflict resolution to be improved,
- MEPs propose that the law should further emphasise protecting the rights of the child,
- Decisions on parental child abduction cases must be made by practising and experienced family judges

### **MEPs put children at the forefront of their concerns on Thursday when adopting their proposals to change EU laws on resolving international divorce disputes**

While acknowledging the quality of the Commission's proposals to improve the regulation in place, MEPs propose strengthening the rights of children throughout the dispute resolution procedure between the divorcing couple. This would notably mean ensuring that the child has the right to express an opinion, which would be obtained through a clear procedure, without exerting pressure on the child and by a specially trained expert interviewer.

If a child is abducted to another EU country by one of their parents, MEPs propose that the matter must be dealt with by practising and experienced family judges, to ensure the best interests of the child are prioritised.

Opening the debate on the topic on Wednesday, Parliament's draftsman Tadeusz Zwiefka (EPP, PL) dedicated his intervention to stressing the importance of the child dimension.

"The child is the weakest link in disputes between parents and therefore needs all the protection we can give. Notably, the hearing of the child is a key issue which merits detailed provisions", he said.

MEPs also want to improve information-sharing and cooperation between the member states' judicial authorities.

Parliament's opinion was adopted by 562 to 16 with 43 abstentions. The opinion will now be passed on to the Council, which is responsible for ultimately taking a decision.

### Quick Facts

The Commission [estimates](#) that there are 16 million international families in the EU and sets the number of international divorces in the EU at around 140,000 per year. There are around 1,800 parental child abductions within the EU every year.

The European Parliament has a Mediator for International Parental Child Abduction. This post is currently occupied by [Elisabeth Morin-Chartier](#)

### Further information

[Adopted text will be available here \(click on 18.01.2018\)](#)

[Video recording of the debate \(click on 17.01.2018\)](#)

[Profile of the rapporteur: Tadeusz Zwiefka \(EPP, PL\)](#)

[Procedure file](#)

[EP research service paper on the changes to the regulation \(January 2018\)](#)

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