

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1382/04
by Joke Swiebel (PSE)
to the Commission

Subject: Domestic work

On 30 November 2000, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on regulating domestic help in the informal sector¹. In it, Parliament called, inter alia, for a European definition of domestic work to be drawn up and for attention to be devoted to this sector of the economy under employment policy.

Paid domestic work is often performed by the most disadvantaged members of the work force. Women with inadequate and out-of-date education/training, including many third-country nationals. They have no choice but to do domestic work with fragmented working hours and no legal security or social protection of any kind (they are not unpaid housewives or house-husbands looking after their own households). This type of exploitation occurs because their employers - i.e. the families for whom domestic work is performed - are able to plead innocence, due to the lack of regulation. However, as demand for domestic services is growing due to social change, it is time to revise the relationship between domestic workers, their employers and the authorities. How exactly this should be done is a matter which still requires much study and consultation. At all events, such work requires a legal and social basis which affords the workers concerned recognition and social security and improves the quality of the work itself.

What progress has the Commission made in developing a policy on this? What study has been undertaken and what consultations initiated? What are the results? Will the Commission submit a communication to Parliament on this subject?

¹ OJ C 228, 13.8.2001, p. 193.