



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPÉEN DES FEMMES



Make
Mothers
Matter



ILGA
EUROPE
Equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual,
trans and intersex people
in Europe



EUROPEAN ANTI POVERTY NETWORK



socialplatform



europaean
youth forum



EFN



EUROPEAN
DISABILITY
FORUM



coface
CONFEDERATION OF FAMILY ORGANISATIONS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

solidar

Mr Frans Timmermans
Vice-President of the European Commission
European Commission
B- 1049 Brussels
Cc: Commissioner Vera Jourova

Brussels, 27 April 2015

Re: Call to maintain the “Maternity leave Directive” on the table

Dear Commissioner Timmermans,

The European Women’s Lobby (EWL), the European delegation of Make Mothers Matter (MMM), ILGA Europe, the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), Social Platform, the European Youth Forum, the European Federation of Nurses (EFN) the European Disability Forum (EDF), the Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union (COFACE) and SOLIDAR, representing millions of women and men throughout Europe are deeply concerned about the negative impact the withdrawal of the proposal to strengthen the Maternity Leave, would have on women throughout Europe.

We cannot understand that, in the name of “better regulation”, this particular piece of legislation that would strengthen women’s rights is under attack at a time when Europe needs women to have more children while not being penalised on the labour market.

We therefore call on you to reconsider your position and maintain the proposal on the table beyond June 2015 to give more time to the Council to resume negotiations with the European Parliament.

Considering the fact that the current Maternity Leave directive is from 1992, and that the labour market has changed substantially since then, a legislative revision is urgently needed to promote the participation of women in the workforce while allowing them to reconcile work and family life. We understand that an alternative proposal from the Commission would not provide a legislative framework and we believe it will not guarantee women's rights, if this is the case.

While austerity measures have been cited as a reason to withdraw this directive, it should be seen as an investment, ensuring basic physical and emotional needs of children in Europe while keeping mothers on the labour market.

Women represent 60% of graduates in higher education and can be a key lever for inclusive growth. However, only 63% of women in the EU are working, although the Europe 2020 strategy target employment rate is at 75%. The revision of this directive is crucial to achieve this target and ensure the health and safety of women who continue to be discriminated on the labour market due to pregnancy and childbirth. At a time when a lack of trust currently exists between Europe's citizens and the European institutions, if Europe is to reconnect with its citizens it needs to demonstrate that it is able to ensure rights, equality and justice for all. Adopting a stronger Maternity Directive would send a positive message to European citizens, especially women and show that European institutions are able to reach consensus on issues that matter to them in their daily lives.

For all these reasons, we urge you to keep the Maternity Leave Directive on the table in order to ensure mandatory minimum European standards to improve the health and safety of women before, during and after childbirth.

We believe this will show a genuine willingness to reconsider a very important issue for the millions of European citizens, who currently see their social rights weakening.

Yours sincerely,

The European Women's Lobby

The European delegation of Make Mothers Matter

ILGA Europe

The European Anti-Poverty Network

Social Platform

The European Youth Forum

The European Federation of Nurses

The European Disability Forum

The Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union

SOLIDAR