

Maternity leave decision is 'huge step backwards'

Written by Pierre Baussand and Joanna Maycock on 18 July 2014 in News
News

Pierre Baussand and Joanna Maycock explain why they disagree with the European commission's decision to scrap the maternity leave directive.



On July 15 the commission announced to the parliament that they will withdraw their proposal for an improved maternity leave directive because it has not made progress in two years.

This action goes against the political will of the Italian EU presidency, the European parliament and civil society organisations including the Social Platform, the European Women's Lobby (EWL) and the Trade Unions (ETUC).

A revised directive would make a positive difference to millions of women and men and their families. We are concerned that if the commission withdraws the proposed directive there is a risk that it will not be reintroduced as a legislative proposal.

It may be a small step for the commission but it is a giant step backwards in the struggle for equality between men and women which is one of the common values on which the European Union is

founded.

Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker has said that 'discrimination must have no place in our union'.

We welcome his commitment to convince national governments to advance on the proposal for an anti-discrimination directive and we urge him to take the same approach for the protection and rights of pregnant women and parents of new born babies.

We believe that withdrawing the proposal undermines the EUs commitment to gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

Transport commissioner Siim Kallas, who has been covering other portfolios, argued in the European parliament this week that the withdrawal of the present proposal would allow president Juncker to discuss with the new commissioners how maternity leave can be given a fresh start.

The Italian EU presidency also spoke about a fresh start but they clearly refer to their wish to work with the new and engaged Parliament to re-open the debate and move forward with the present Proposal.

The EWL and ETUC put forward several arguments in favour of the directive in their joint letter of July 14 to the parliament.

They powerfully argue that the present proposal would contribute to the elimination of the gender pay gap, increase women's access to the labour market, and reduce child poverty.

It fosters women's economic engagement and contributes to EU's objective to reach 75 per cent employment rate by 2020.

About the author

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