



Press Release

Save the Directive on Maternity Leave . The Directive must be confirmed by the Council of Ministers of the European Union.

In October 2010, the European Commission proposed the review of the Directive on maternity leave (adopted in 1992, it is still currently in force), by recommending an increase in the maternity leave from 14 weeks to 18 weeks. The European Parliament (the *Estrela report*) has decided an even larger extension of the fully paid maternity leave to 20 weeks as well as the provision of two weeks fully paid paternity leave. The European Parliament report has proposed measures which protect women who have recently given birth, so that their jobs can be ensured when they go back to work.

The Council of Ministers, which must give its consent to the adoption of these positions, did not accept the European Parliament decisions, invoking their costs of implementation. Thus the proposal for a review of the Directive, has been blocked for seven years and now well founded fear exists about the time limit, provided for the issuance, which may expire. According to the European Committee, which included the review proposal in the “REFIT Programme”, the directive will be withdrawn, unless an agreement is reached by the end of June 2015; it will be replaced by a “modern alternative solution”, which means that it will be replaced by a proposal with little or no benefit.

This procedure together with the intransigence of the Council is an unacceptable blackmail against mothers and working women.

The General Secretariat of Gender Equality considers that it is important that the Directive on maternity leave be voted, which is a model of the International Labor Organization of the United Nations, and it is necessary for the health and safety reasons of women.

Pregnant women and new mothers are among the most vulnerable working groups of the labor market. This situation is aggravated in periods of economic crisis. Over the last five years our country has experienced this situation because of the implementation of harsh austerity policies and Memorandums, as it is also the case in the rest of Europe where austerity policies are implemented.

The maternity leave on full pay ensures the economic independence and the essential equality of women who have recently given birth, the strengthening of their rights as well as the promotion of gender equality in Europe.

Together with the Greek Government, we call upon the leadership of the other EU Member States to express their support before the European Council for the request to save the Directive and find a solution in favour of adopting the new Directive on Maternity Leave.

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