



## THE COMMISSION WITHDRAWS ITS PROPOSAL FOR A “MATERNITY LEAVE DIRECTIVE”

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On 1<sup>st</sup> July 2015, the European Commission decided to withdraw its draft “*Maternity Leave Directive*” from 2008, given the lack of progress by the European co-legislators.

### Background

In October 2008, the Commission had proposed to amend the Council Directive 92/85/EEC on improving the Safety and Health of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding by increasing the minimum length of maternity leave from 14 to 18 weeks for all pregnant workers in the EU.

On 20 October 2010, the European Parliament not only agreed to the proposal but decided to exceed the minimum length from 18 to 20 weeks paid maternity leave. Following the strong resistance of a majority of Member States, the dossier was blocked for more than four years within the Council. Despite a series of Ministerial and technical Council discussions, there was no agreement to engage in negotiations with the Parliament in order to find a compromise on the proposal.

### Political context

As announced in its 2015 work programme, the Commission now decided to withdraw and replace the original proposal by a new initiative. This is due to the fact that no agreement was found between the Council and the Parliament by the end of June 2015 (see in this regard, the Secretariat note of 14<sup>th</sup> January 2015).

This new initiative wishes to open the way for a fresh approach to meet the policy goals of improving the protection of mothers, better reconciling professional and family life and easing female participation in the EU labour market. Therefore, the Commission intends to present a broader initiative that will promote the objectives of the previous proposal by providing minimum protection to workers and by taking account of the developments in society over the past decade. This initiative will tackle a wider range of issues that face working parents in their daily lives, including diverse forms of maternity and parental leave, work/life balance and the role of carers. The main goal is to see how an action at EU level could best contribute to the debate.

As a consequence, the Commission presented its ideas on 29 July 2015 in the form of a roadmap entitled “*New start to address the challenges of work-life balance faced by working families*”. This document presents the key objectives to be addressed and the three main options proposed by the Commission to this end (legislative measures, non-legislative measures or mix of both).

### Next steps

In the framework of this roadmap, the Commission will launch a public consultation as well as – according to article 154 TFEU - a consultation of EU social partners in order to receive the widest possible feedback of interested and concerned parties. The EU cross-industry social partners would also have the possibility to negotiate an agreement in this regard. In case no negotiations will take place or no agreement will be found by the social partners, the Commission will start the process of preparing legislative amendments as explained above.

In any case, this new initiative will be included in the 2016 Commission work programme, which is likely to be published by the end of the year 2015.

Given the high potential impact that such initiative could have on the cleaning industry, members will be informed as soon as new developments occur.

Members will find attached the Commission roadmap (only available in English language) as well as the link to the Commission press release (available in all EU languages):

[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-15-5287\\_en.htm?locale=EN](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-5287_en.htm?locale=EN)

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