

Question for oral answer O-0000/2011

to the Council

Rule 115

Eva-Britt Svensson

on behalf of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

Subject: Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Directive 92/85/EEC on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding

The European Parliament's position maintains the dual legal basis of the Commission proposal (Article 153 and 157(3) of the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union), providing for equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation.

Since the European Parliament adopted its position on the revision of the "Maternity leave directive", on 20 October 2010, the Council has not reached a formal position on this proposal. Nevertheless, we are aware that several Member States voiced concerns over the amendments adopted by the European Parliament and the related cost implications, in particular those on the extension of the length of the maternity leave (20 weeks), the level of allowance (full payment) and leave provisions for the fathers (2 weeks of fully paid paternity leave).

Taking into account the context of the current financial crisis and the different existing maternity leave systems in the Member States, the European Parliament is receptive to be flexible and is available to work together with the Council, in order to reach an agreement which will fulfil the needs and expectations of European families and of the European economy. It should also be noted that in order to reach the 75% employment rate for women, as set out in the EU 2020 strategy, further measures enhancing reconciliation of work and family life will have to be implemented.

Is the Council prepared to consider compromises on the main issues, such as the length of maternity leave, the level of payment and ceiling?

Given the context of the austerity measures resulting from the current financial crisis, would the Council consider the possibility of the gradual implementation of the revised Directive, as proposed by the European Parliament, by 2020?

In order to find more flexible ways for implementation, does the Council aim to discuss a "passerelle" clause, in particular in relation to the recently revised Parental leave Directive, which will have to be implemented by the Member States from 2012?

Does the Council aim to support a paternity leave in this directive, prepared on the basis of the European Parliament's cost-benefit analysis?

Tabled: ...

Forwarded: ...

Deadline for reply: ...