

(English version)

Question for written answer E-004078/19
to the Commission
Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D)
(27 November 2019)

Subject: Ineligibility for parental leave

In the EU, 34% of women and 23% of men aged 20-49 are ineligible for parental leave. When considering the employed population only, 10% of women and 12% of men are ineligible for parental leave despite being in employment.

Since parental leave in many Member States is restricted due to varying eligibility criteria, many people are left with no alternatives to parental leave. Moreover, changing labour market conditions and the increasing trend towards temporary contracts and self-employment leave people with no access to parental leave which, in turn, increases the risk of poverty, especially in the case of single parents and their children. This is unacceptable.

Does the Commission plan to propose any measures in this field in order to ensure at least minimum access to parental leave?

Answer given by Ms Dalli on behalf of the European Commission
(11 February 2020)

The co-legislators adopted in June 2019 the directive on Work-Life Balance for parents and carers, based on a proposal in 2017 by the Commission ⁽¹⁾. This directive introduces a set of legislative actions (including paid parental leave) designed to modernise the existing EU legal framework, with the aims of better supporting a work-life balance for parents and carers, encouraging a more equal sharing of parental leave between men and women, and addressing women's underrepresentation in the labour market.

In order to benefit from parental leave, parents need to be workers. In addition, in accordance with Article 5(4) of the directive, Member States are allowed to make the right to parental leave subject to a period of work qualification or to a length of service qualification, which shall not exceed one year ⁽²⁾.

Considering that the directive lays down minimum standards, Member States can introduce farther-reaching ones, for example foresee paid parental leave for other categories of persons than workers, granting those rights without any requirement of work-qualification or consider measures concerning single parents in order to address the risk of poverty in such cases.

In addition, in line with Article 5(6) Member States are obliged to assess whether the conditions of access to and the detailed arrangements for parental leave should be adapted to the specific needs of parents in certain particularly disadvantaged situations.

Finally, the Commission will after five years of the directive's implementation look at the 'interaction between the different types of leave [...] as well as other types of family-related leave [...] as well as 'the rights to family-related leave that are granted to self-employed persons' ⁽³⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU.

⁽²⁾ In the case of successive fixed-term contracts within the meaning of Council Directive 1999/70/EC (14) with the same employer, the sum of those contracts shall be taken into account for the purpose of calculating the qualifying period.

⁽³⁾ Article 18(2).