



*European Economic and Social Committee
Workers' Group*

Brussels, 18 March 2015

Declaration of the Workers' Group of the European Economic and Social Committee on the proposal to amend 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 Workers' Group of the European Economic and Social Committee notes with dismay that obstacles regularly slow down the progress of social rights in the European Union and demands, in particular, that we finally move towards improvement of women workers' rights that citizens have been expecting for years.

Since 1992, European law has guaranteed maternity leave of at least 14 weeks. In 2008, the European Commission proposed to increase this leave to 18 weeks.

In 2009, the EESC drafted and transmitted to the institutions its opinion SOC/329⁽¹⁾.

For its part, the European Parliament approved in 2010 a text increasing paid maternity leave to 20 weeks and providing for the establishment of a paternity leave.

Since then, the European Parliament and the Council have not managed to agree on the issue. Finally, the European Commission issued a six-month ultimatum for an agreement to be reached or else the proposal will be withdrawn.

The EU must uphold its social principles and must guarantee rights for its citizens. It must seize every possible opportunity to show to the people that it works to improve the living and working conditions of women in particular. Moreover, at a time when Europe is facing important demographic challenges, protecting the rights of men and women workers and defending jobs must be priorities.

In this framework, the Workers' Group calls European leaders to fulfil their political responsibilities and to enter into negotiations with the European Parliament in order to find a compromise as soon as possible.

¹⁰ Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the 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 COM(2008) 637 final – 2008/0193 (COD), [OJ C 277, 17.11.2009, p. 102–108](#).