



PRESS RELEASE EPP WOMEN – 25 March 2010  
On  
**Maternity Leave**

On 25 March the EPP WOMEN organized a Colloque in the European Parliament that was presided over by Doris PACK (MEP), President of the EPPW, in which Viviane REDING, Vice-President of the European Commission and Commissioner for Justice Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, and Androulla VASSILIOU (MEC), Commissioner for Education, Culture and Youth took part as key-note speakers.

During the meeting the EPP WOMEN in particular discussed the initiative of the European Commission to revise the EC Directive of 1992, and the standpoint of the FEMM Commission of the European Parliament on this. The Directive of 1992 deals with measures to improve the security and the health of pregnant female employees, and of female employees who have recently given birth, and employees who breastfeed their babies in the workplace.

The European Commission now proposes to prolong the period of maternity leave from 14 weeks to 18 weeks, with 2 weeks obligatory before or after giving birth for which a remuneration and /or an “appropriate” allowance is being paid. Furthermore this change includes a guarantee to female employees that they will get back their former position or an equal position when they return to the workplace after their maternity leave.

The FEMM Commission of the European Parliament, however, suggests an extension of the period of maternity leave to 20 weeks that are fully paid, and for the integration in this Directive of paternity leave of 2 weeks that is fully paid.

Concerning the extension of the period to 20 weeks, the EPP WOMEN question the real necessity of this for the health and security of women. Also they point at possible negative effects: additional time away from a job enhances the risk of losing qualifications. Any extension of a time period that is not paid or under-paid, increasing inequality between men and women at the moment of hiring employees....

Moreover, the argument of higher birthrates cannot be taken into account, since research has shown clearly that birth growth rates increase when there is a rise in the level of education and employment of women.

Also, the crucial question of financing these measures raises inevitable difficulties. In particular the funding for raising children and dependent persons will be endangered,

while priority still needs to be given to increasing the number of women on the labour market.

**For these reasons the EPP WOMEN support the initiative of the European Commission to prolong maternity leave to 18 weeks.**

**The EPP WOMEN underline that pre-natal leave is introduced into the Directive, to cover the possibility of premature births and to offer the possibility of recovery from giving premature birth.**

**On the other hand the EPP WOMEN support the proposal of the FEMM Commission to introduce a paternity leave of 2 weeks, being obligatory and fully paid and with a guarantee against redundancy.** This requires a separate Directive, since the judicial basis is different from the judicial grounds of the Directive on maternity leave.

The **EPP WOMEN** also support the proposal for leave in case of **adoption** of a child under the age of 6 months. This too requires a separate Directive because of the above mentioned argument.

The EPP WOMEN underline the importance of **fighting against sexist stereotypes** in education and the media. It has to be made clear that paternity leave is a measure of necessity to stress the equal importance of the father in raising children.