

OPEN LETTER

It's in your hands – the fate of working parents and carers across Europe depends on you

Time for the EPSCO Council to adopt a position on the EU Work-Life Balance directive

Brussels, 18 June 2018

Dear Ministers,

We represent, via our European umbrella organisations, 3.471 NGOs and 89 trade union confederations. Our call is joint with the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of three political groups in the European Parliament, the Rapporteur and shadow Rapporteurs of five political groups, and the Presidents and Vice Presidents of three Intergroups and Coalitions of the European Parliament, together with the Presidents of two groups in the European Economic and Social Committee.

We urge you to respect European citizens and their representatives by moving forward and adopting a Council position on the proposal for a Directive on Work-Life Balance for parents and carers at your meeting on 21st June 2018.

On this date, you will be asked to position yourself in favour or against the Council position on the EU Work-Life Balance Directive. With your decision, you will not only express your country position on a text, but you will also decide on the fate of millions of parents and carers in the European Union: people who struggle every day to juggle their responsibilities towards their children, families and other people with support needs, with their working lives.

The existing EU legal and institutional framework fails to sufficiently address challenges faced by its citizens and does not provide adequate solutions for the needs of modern societies. This proposed directive includes provisions for improving equal sharing of work and care between women and men, by introducing minimum standards for paid paternity leave, paid parental leave, carers leave and flexible working arrangements for parents and carers.

The proposal for a Directive on Work-Life Balance is the right way forward and we urge you to adopt a Council position and not further delay the adoption of a general approach.

All EU Heads of State and Governments, together with the EU Institutions, proclaimed the European Pillar of Social Rights in Gothenburg in November 2017 and this directive is the first concrete output that would transform the principles of the Pillar into reality, providing improvements to the lives of millions of parents and carers.

The European Commission published the proposal for a directive on 26 April 2017. The European Social and Economic Committee delivered its opinion, in broad support of the proposal, in December 2017. The European Parliament has a clear calendar of works: the Legal Affairs Committee and the Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee have already voted on their respective opinions and the Employment and Social Affairs Committee will vote in the coming weeks. All these procedures are transparent and European citizens can follow them step by step, exposing the elected representatives to scrutiny.

On the contrary, the deliberations in the Council are not subject to the same level of transparency. This can lead to indefinite postponement of decisions, with the excuse that a compromise cannot be reached among the national delegations with citizens left in the dark about why there is a lack of progress.

More than a year after its publication and one year from the 2019 European elections, it is now time for you to take up your responsibility and secure that citizens recover trust in the European project and its social dimension.

Working parents and their families as well as carers and those who depend on them do not have time to lose.

Please do not waste this opportunity to show your citizens you care about them.

Signatories:

COFACE Families Europe
AGE Platform Europe
Alzheimer Europe
Autism Europe
European Disability Forum
EuroCarers
Eurochild
EuroHealthNet
European Network for Independent Living
European Women's Lobby
European Youth Forum
ILGA Europe
Inclusion Europe
International Federation for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus
Make Mothers Matter
Mental Health Europe
Social Platform
SOS Children's Villages International

European Trade Union Confederation – ETUC

Udo Bullman MEP, S&D President
Philippe Lamberts MEP, Greens/EFA Co-President
Monika Vana MEP, Greens/EFA Vice-President
Gabriele Zimmer MEP, GUE/NGL President

David Casa MEP, EMPL Rapporteur and EPP EMPL coordinator
Maria Arena MEP, S&D EMPL shadow rapporteur
Agnes Jongerius MEP, S&D EMPL coordinator
Vilija Blinkeviciute MEP, S&D FEMM shadow rapporteur
Iraxte Garcia-Perez MEP, S&D FEMM coordinator
Jana Zitnanska, MEP, ECR EMPL shadow rapporteur
Ernest Urtasun MEP, Greens/EFA FEMM shadow rapporteur and co-coordinator
Jean Lambert MEP, Greens/EFA EMPL Coordinator
Terry Reintke MEP, Greens/EFA FEMM co-coordinator
Tania Gonzalez Peñas MEP, GUE/NGL EMPL shadow Rapporteur

Olga Senhalova MEP, President Disability intergroup
Brando Benifei MEP, Vice-Chair, Disability Intergroup
Marek Plura, MEP, Vice President of the Disability Intergroup
Miriam Dalli MEP, Chair of the Coalition for Mental Health and Wellbeing in the EP
Daniele Viotti MEP, co-Chair of the LGBTI Intergroup

Gabriele Bischoff, President of the Workers' Group, European Economic and Social Committee.
R.A. Arno Metzler, President of the Diversity Europe Group, European Economic and Social Committee