



Mrs Edite ESTRELA
MEP
Group of the Progressive
Alliance of Socialists & Democrats
European Parliament
60 rue Wiertz
1047 - Brussels

2 March 2010

Dear Mrs Estrela,

In March, the European Parliament is due to vote on the draft directive on pregnant and breastfeeding workers.

BUSINESSEUROPE welcomes the objective to improve the health and safety of women at the workplace but wishes to express its strong concerns on key proposals to amend the 1992 Directive that have been adopted in the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM).

First, companies are opposed to an extension of the leave period beyond 14 weeks and certainly up to 20 weeks, as is requested by the FEMM Committee. The need for such an extension is not backed up by concrete evidence on health and safety grounds and could end up being detrimental to women's employment opportunities.

Secondly, the proposal to increase compensation to 100% for all the leave period is not realistic. It will in many countries generate significant extra costs, annual estimates of which include € 700 million in Germany and £ 2 billion in the UK. Europe cannot afford this given the pressure on public finances and the fact that many companies, notably SMEs, are still struggling for survival.

Member States have put in place a complex mix of different leave arrangements. It is at national level that the right mix of such arrangements as well as the level of compensation should be determined. At the very least, Member States should be allowed to cap the compensation, as proposed by the Commission, to the level of sick leave.

Thirdly, we strongly oppose the inclusion of paternity leave in this draft Directive, which is aimed at improving the health and safety situation of pregnant and breastfeeding workers. Broader work-life balance measures, notably aimed at fathers, go beyond the scope of this Directive. This would go against the EU's Better Regulation Agenda.

While the objectives behind the draft Directive are well-intentioned, it would actually end up having a detrimental effect. BUSINESSEUROPE therefore urges you to reconsider this proposal and the negative effects it will have on growth and employment.

Yours sincerely,



Philippe de Buck