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EMPLOYERS CRITICAL OF EU PROPOSAL TO EXTEND MATERNITY LEAVE

In view of the upcoming European Parliament vote on pregnant and breastfeeding workers, European companies call on MEPs to oppose the proposals to extend maternity leave to 18 or even 20 weeks.

BUSINESSEUROPE agrees with the objective to improve the health and safety of women at the workplace. However, extending maternity leave to 18 or 20 weeks would impose massive costs. Public finances are stretched, and businesses, especially SMEs, are struggling for survival. Yet, for nine countries alone, the proposal would generate annual costs of over 6 billion Euros.

The proposals would undermine diverse and well-functioning national systems which offer a mix of different leave arrangements. There is no justification for the EU to interfere with these systems. Neither is a proposal aimed at pregnant or breastfeeding workers the right vehicle to introduce paternity leave.

Finally, the proposals would also be detrimental for women's employment opportunities and will impose unnecessary constraints towards achieving much higher female employment rates.

BUSINESSEUROPE Director General Philippe de Buck stressed: *"Labour markets need more women to be active and to fill managerial positions. However, the Estrela proposal is expensive and burdensome, especially for companies. This is not the right way to improve protection for female workers and will increase the complexity of hiring women. This is not what we want or need."*

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