

**Agenda item 6i Equality
Appendix Work-life balance**

The ETUC responded extensively to the first phase consultation of social partners on the possible action addressing the challenges of work-life balance faced by working parents and caregivers as reflected in its position paper, which was adopted by the Executive Committee on the 17th of December 2015.

On 12 July 2016, the European Commission launched the second stage consultation of the European social partners on possible action addressing the challenges of work-life balance faced by working parents and caregivers. In the document, the Commission provided an overview of the responses of the European social partners to the first stage consultation launched on 11 November 2015. In addition, the Commission called for the opinions of the European social partners as regards proposals for further actions at European level.

ETUC has proposed to the employers to negotiate on the following:

The revision of Council Directive 92/85/EEC on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of pregnant workers (Maternity Directive) to extend the length of statutory leave from at least 14 to 18 weeks with full pay.

The ETUC also proposes the revision of the Parental Leave Directive 2010/18/EU, based on the EU social partners' agreement. In particular, the following elements should be addressed: ensuring payment for the leave, providing for greater flexibility of the leave arrangements and considering raising the age of children for which the leave is required. As regards flexible working time arrangements, parents should be entitled to request more flexible working arrangements, which could include homeworking, working part-time, or reducing working hours. While the ETUC emphasises that workers need to have greater control over their working time, flexible working arrangements should not, however, contribute to disadvantaging women further in terms of working time reduction and reduction of pay. Addressing flexible working patterns could be taken up at EU level while the development of detailed solutions would be the task of collective agreements at the appropriate national levels. Having greater control over one's working time should not be seen as replacement for specific regulation designed to improve work-life balance. But, as suggested by the Commissions' consultation this issue could be addressed within the context of the revision of the Parental Leave Directive.

In relation to Carers' leave, the ETUC would welcome a proposal for a directive as a supplement to the provision of affordable professional care. An entitlement to leave similar to parental leave could be considered.

The ETUC also underlines that family-related leave and flexible working arrangements should be combined with the availability, affordability, accessibility and quality of early childhood education, and care facilities for the elderly or for people otherwise in need of care. A proposal for a carers' leave directive should be designed so as not to reinforce existing gender stereotypes and practices. Investment in early childhood and care should be part of the European Investment Plan. Equally important would be the attainment of the Barcelona targets on childcare via the consistent application of the country-specific recommendations and through the European Social Fund, for example.