

[Brussels, 1 August 2014] The EWL Secretary General Joanna Maycock has been interviewed by [Euronews](#) on maternity leave rights in Europe.

In fact, since the European parliament adopted in a first reading the draft maternity leave directive nearly four years ago, the text has been blocked in the Council by a number of member states.

“In a nutshell what the European parliament proposed in 2010 was a minimum of 20 weeks full paid maternity leave for women, plus it strengthens other rights.

“For example it strengthens the rights around dismissal for pregnant workers, so it’s a very important proposal. As you pointed out in your question, the whole proposal has been blocked in the European Council (of Ministers) since 2010, so it’s now four years overdue.

“The European Commission has therefore proposed we shelve the legislation as part of measures to reduce bureaucracy in the EU.

“Now we think women’s rights and rights of families are not red tape. So we think it’s really important that the maternity leave directive is put back on the table. Measures to strengthen maternity rights are essential to everyone to have more and greater equality between women and men and certainly across the EU, parenthood is the main factor in limiting women’s earning power and participation in the labour market.

“So a strengthened maternity leave directive would have a huge impact in terms of addressing the gender pay gap, child poverty and other types of social inclusion. In May in the European elections, European citizens sent a really clear message to the European institutions that they are not very happy with what is going on. We think that if Europe wants to reconnect with citizens it needs to demonstrate tangible benefits in terms of improved rights.

“The maternity leave directive if it’s put back on the table would ensure immediate benefits for millions of families across the EU and would give a clear signal to European citizens that Europe actually cares. So, yes, it can be saved and we hope it will be saved. The European Parliament and the Italian presidency of the EU are now in negotiations to see whether they can salvage the directive and we think that is absolutely essential.”