



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 10.10.2017
C(2017) 6751 final

Dear Chair,

The Commission would like to thank the Houses of the Oireachtas for their Opinion on the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, an Initiative to Support Work-Life Balance for Working Parents and Carers {COM (2017) 252 final}.

In putting forward this proposal, the Commission is making good on its commitment in 2015 to present a new initiative taking a broader perspective to improve the lives of working parents and carers.

The Commission welcomes the support of the Houses of the Oireachtas for the aims of the proposal and would like to provide some clarification regarding its proposal.

The Commission notes the concerns of the Houses of the Oireachtas regarding the cost implications for both Member States and employers. While the proposed measures might entail short-term costs for employers, our impact assessment shows that in the long run supporting a better reconciliation of professional and caring responsibilities and addressing women's underrepresentation in the labour market will have positive economic impacts on companies and Member States. Indeed, the economic loss in the EU due to the gender employment gap amounts to around €370 billion per year. The Commission proposal leaves it up to the Member States to regulate on whom will pay the additional leave allowances, in order to take current national arrangements into account.

Discussions between the Commission and the co-legislators, the European Parliament and the Council, concerning the proposal are now underway and the Commission trusts that an agreement will be reached in the near future.

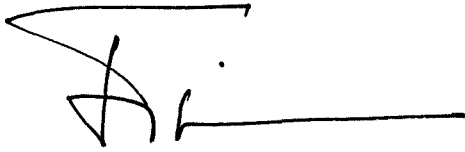
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The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the issues raised by the Houses of the Oireachtas and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'F' followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

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*Valdis Dombrovskis
Vice-President*