

**Statement - The European Chemical Employers Group, ECEG,
encourages work-life balance without new legislation**

04/10/17



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Work-life balance should address the challenges of working parents and carers by linking participation in the labour market with flexible arrangements agreed at company-level suitable for workers and employers alike, without neglecting business competitiveness and job creation contributing to a strong European chemical industry.

Companies' competitiveness is crucial for job creation in Europe. **Flexible working arrangements agreed at company or branch level** can respond best to workers' and companies' needs. Modern working patterns, including flexible working arrangements and digital technologies can optimise the balance between work and private life. It is essential for chemical businesses to adapt swiftly to market demands in times of changes in economic structures and work organisation.

The **autonomy of the social dialogue** is unnegotiable. By proposing to repeal the current parental leave directive which was produced by cross-industry social partners the European Commission disregards the autonomy of social partners and acts against its own initiative to re-launch the European social dialogue. Cross-industry social partners have already signed agreements on part-time and telework, which leave sufficient space for national and company-level actions. We believe that additional legislation, i.e. extension of leave arrangements and other work arrangements, would put Europe at a further disadvantage compared with global leaders. In particular, the new EC proposal intends to enable parental leave requests for children aged up to 12 years old. As a direct consequence, businesses would have considerable difficulties to organise and forecast potential temporary absences of employees. Compared to the current situation, companies' planning reliability would become more complicated. Especially SMEs would struggle to implement additional leaves, not to mention the administrative burdens for HR management overall, which could potentially put jobs at risk. Hence, the ECEG does not support the EC's proposal.

The **role of the European legislator** is to act as a policy coordinator among member states, as defined in article 5, TFEU, and support and complement national actions via EU non-legislative policy measures. The European Commission must respect the **principles of proportionality and subsidiarity**. We support subsidiary multilevel governance in Europe. We believe that existing national and regional arrangements, social partner agreements at branch and company-level prove that the most suitable solutions are to be found as close as possible to the needs of employers and workers. For instance, this is the case for national legislation in most member states on paternity leave. Any measures taken on EU-level should be based on clear evidence of the added value of a European approach. We encourage

European policy-makers to focus on **non-legislative proposals** and aspects, such as awareness-raising and policy learning based on good practices and linked to the Open Method of Coordination. Within the European Semester process, we believe that the EU should encourage member states to increase the availability, affordability and quality of childcare facilities, including adapting opening hours to families' needs, and welcoming children at all ages.

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Background:

On 26 April 2017, the European Commission proposed a series of legislative and non-legislative measures within the framework of the European Pillar of Social Rights. Actions relate to work-life balance, the information of workers, access to social protection and working time.

The ECEG responded to both social partner consultations on information of workers (Written Statement Directive, 91/533/EEC) and access to social protection.

Moreover, the ECEG participated at two dedicated hearings with the European Commission and cross-industry social partners BusinessEurope and ETUC to exchange on an **Interpretative Communication** on the Working Time Directive (2003/88/EC).

More information:

European Commission, Delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights:

[Facts and figures](#)

[Press release](#)

[Interpretative Communication on Directive 2003/88/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time, published 24 May 2017](#)

[Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU](#)

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About ECEG

ECEG, the European Chemical Employers Group, founded in 2002, is a recognised European Sectoral Social Partner, representing the chemicals, pharmaceuticals, rubber and plastics industries in Europe. Our sector provides approximately 3.3 million direct jobs in more than 94.000 enterprises.