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Press release | 20.10.2010

Jill Evans MEP welcomes vote on fully paid maternity and paternity leave

EFA press release

Plaid President, Jill Evans MEP, welcomed today's vote in the European Parliament on the health and safety of pregnant workers. MEPs voted for a minimum of 20 weeks maternity leave on full pay for women and two weeks paternity leave on full pay for men.
Following the vote, Jill Evans MEP said:
"By supporting decent rules, MEPs have voted to help overcome the barriers to women having children and continuing to work. This in itself is an investment in our future and will help to invigorate the economy at a time when we need it most.
"The parliament also voted to ban the dismissal of pregnant workers. Past figures show that over 1,000 women in Wales have taken legal action against their employers every year, claiming they were sacked because of pregnancy. The former Equal Opportunities Commission helpline in Wales was receiving more enquiries about pregnancy discrimination than any other, accounting for 40% of the total.
"It's now up to the twenty seven European Union governments to back the recommendation so it can become law. The UK government is strongly opposed to the changes, although our provision already lags behind the rest of Europe. We may have the longest maternity leave at 52 weeks, but it is far from fully paid so the poorest can't afford to take the time off. The UK government is concerned about increased costs although the figures show that any additional costs could be offset by a small increase in the number of women working, which would certainly be the result. Parental leave is a long term investment in the workforce. Countries that provide better parental support also tend to see new parents take less sick leave and holidays and will help economic recovery and growth in the longer term.
"Although the changes would affect both parents if they become law, the impact on women is the greatest as, for example, in local government, women make up 72% of the workforce and are more likely to be working part-time."

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Jill Evans

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