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European Commission work programme 2015 a huge blow to gender equality

Speaking following the European Commission's presentation of its 2015 work programme to the European Parliament [December 16], Social Platform President Heather Roy has criticised the Commission's threat to withdraw the maternity leave directive in six months if no agreement is reached.

Social Platform – the largest civil society alliance fighting for social justice and participatory democracy in Europe – has long advocated for an EU Maternity Leave directive. The directive has previously received support from the Italian Presidency of the Council of the EU, the European Parliament and civil society organisations, as well as from Commissioners Vera Jourová and Marianne Thyssen during their European Parliament hearings. Despite this, Commission First Vice-President Frans Timmermans stated yesterday that the Commission is on the brink of consigning the directive to the political scrap heap.

The Maternity Leave directive would contribute to the elimination of the gender pay gap, increase women's access to the labour market and reduce child poverty. It fosters women's economic engagement and contributes to the EU's goal of reaching an employment rate of 75% by 2020.

Social Platform is also disappointed to see that the Commission is continuing its narrative on the importance of jobs and growth – as laid out in President Juncker's investment plan – without acknowledging the vital role that social policies, beyond employment, play in existing and upcoming initiatives in this area.

'President Juncker states that he is committed to being bigger and more ambitious on big issues, and smaller and more modest on small issues. According to this logic, we can see that in the view of the new Commission social issues are not even on the radar,' explained Ms Roy: 'A 'triple A' social rating will remain a pipe dream until the Commission introduces concrete measures to make it a reality.'

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