Health and safety at work: workers who are pregnant, have recently given birth or are breastfeeding

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The Council took stock of progress made on the maternity leave directive on the basis of a Presidency report.

The report draws the following preliminary conclusions:

- maternity leave (even shorter than 20 weeks) with full pay was not supported;
- considering further payment at the level of sick pay was the option that won the most support from delegations. Several delegations raised the concern that "sick pay" itself was an unclear term (there are different levels of sick pay, including statutory and contributory sick pay, and the level might also depend on the length of the sickness);
- there was also some support for an option entailing a maternity allowance with a ceiling, as a basis for further discussion;
- while some delegations considered the "passerelle" clause to be an interesting option, there were others who were not able to accept this approach.

Moreover, it concludes that, in the light of recent discussions, it has become crystal clear that the period of 20 weeks of maternity leave with full pay is unacceptable to the Council. Taking into account the broad diversity of maternity protection and social security systems among the different member states, as well as the financial implications, especially during the crisis, the introduction of such a solution could have counterproductive effects.