

Roberta Metsola
President of the European Parliament
European Parliament
PHS 09B011
60 Rue Wiertz
1047-Bruxelles

Brussels 12 July 2022

Dear Ms. Metsola.

We are writing to you in your capacity as President of the European Parliament, on the topic of the lack of parental leave opportunities for Members of the European Parliament.

We write you, as we are both about to embark on months of something this house does not formally afford us, and for which there still does not exist adequate rules and procedures: parental leave connected to the addition of new children to our respective families.

We write you, because our situations not only raises practical questions, but also those relating to democracy and representation. With Denmark having 14 members of this Parliament, this number is set to be temporarily reduced to 12, only because both of our respective families are, or have been, expanding.

We write you, because unlike what is the case in many national parliaments, the European Parliament does not allow for the temporary use of a substitute to replace us while we are away, caring for (and in the case of Mrs. Linea Søgaaard-Lidell, giving birth to) our respective children. This deprives the country we are from, and its citizens, of adequate representation at the European-level, and adds extra pressure and stress on us as parents, in a time in which we should be allowed to focus on our children.

We write you, because this is not a new problem, but instead a persistent one. The current situation risks pressuring female members to return to their mandate as quickly as possible - if they do not wish or have the opportunity to bring their infant babies with them to Parliament, for committee meetings or to the plenary chamber. The current rules leaves them with no genuine choice if they wish to fulfil their obligation and represent their electorate. At the same time, male members are questioned about, if they really need time with their small children.

We write you, as we hope that we will in the future have an even more diverse and representative European Parliament, meaning that we should foresee the situation will happen repeatedly, in the years to come.

We write you, as we simply do not find the current situation acceptable. We consider that in its practice on this point, the European Parliament does the exact opposite of the policies and legislation we otherwise promote. We legislate on the right to parental leave, but exempt ourselves from it. This leaves us open for criticism and for calling us out for not



practising what we preach. This is something we are sure you will agree on, which will serve no one.

We write you, also knowing that the current situation is nothing that is of your doing, but rather is an unfortunate leftover from the past. A leftover that will have to change and that only will change because of concrete action.

We write you, because we hope that we, together, can ensure that ours will be the last generation of members of this house that will have to be without normal rules for maternity and paternity leave.

We write you to have the assurances that at the very latest when the next European Parliament takes office, the situation will have changed, and the European Parliament will have been brought into the 21st century on this topic.

We write you with our kind regards,

Nikolaj Villumsen
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