

Query by the Latvian ombudsman concerning discrimination of female scientists in EU funded projects on the grounds of pregnancy, maternity and parenthood

Case opened

Case Q2/2022/MHZ - Opened on 24/03/2022 - Decision on 09/06/2022

Secretariat-General

Head of Unit - C2

European Commission

Dear Mr X,

We have received a query from the Office of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Latvia (Latvian Ombudsman).

In essence, the query concerns the right to maternity leave of a scientist who is working on a project under the PostDoc Latvia programme, which receives funding under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

The scientist wanted to take maternity and parental leave during the time assigned to the project. To accommodate this, she asked the relevant authorities in Latvia to postpone the deadline for completing the project. The authorities replied, informing her that the applicable rules did not allow for this. They referred to article 65 of Regulation 1303/2013 [1] to justify the refusal to pause the project and extend the deadline to enable the researcher to take maternity/parental leave. The project on which the scientist is working is scheduled to be completed on 23 August 2023.

An association representing the scientist then turned to the Latvian Ombudsman.

To help the Latvian Ombudsman deal with the complaint, could the Commission please clarify the following:



Given the provisions in article 7 and recital 13 of Regulation 1303/2013 on the need to promote gender equality, does the Commission have any views on how to overcome the limits of the action deadline in article 65 (31 December 2023), where participants in a project covered by the ERDF need to take leave linked to the birth of a child (maternity, paternity or parental leave) ?

We would appreciate it if the Commission could respond to this query by 6 April 2022, so that we can forward the information to the Latvian Ombudsman.

Yours sincerely,

Rosita Hickey Director of Inquiries

Strasbourg, 24/03/2022

[1] Regulation 1303/2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32013R1303> [Link]