

25 July 2016

E-006037-16

**Question for written answer  
to the Commission**  
**Rule 130**  
**Dominique Martin (ENF)**

▶ **Subject: Care within the family**

 Answer(s)

In the present-day context where Europe's population is ageing at an increasingly rapid rate, childcare and care of elderly parents are two major concerns for families. Provision of good quality day-care facilities requires significant investment, and a great many regions or municipalities experiencing difficulties just do not have the resources for this. In most cases, care from other family members is often the only solution.

— Does the Commission plan to encourage Member States to include time spent in childcare or care of elderly parents in their calculation of qualifying years for pensions?

— Should Member States also be encouraged to introduce allowances or a form of income support for people who dedicate themselves to bringing up their children or caring for elderly members of the family?

16 September 2016

**E-**  
**006037/2016**

**Answer given by Ms Thyssen on behalf of the Commission**

The Commission shares the assessment of the Honourable Member that many parents and carers in Europe today face considerable difficulties reconciling work with caring responsibilities for children and elderly/dependent relatives. Therefore, the Commission launched one year ago a 'New Start' initiative to support greater work-life balance<sup>(1)</sup>. Once the social partners have expressed their opinion on the possible legislative initiatives, the Commission will start preparing proposals to be presented in the first semester 2017.

Crediting pension rights for periods of care can help improve the adequacy of pensions for people with caring responsibilities. The 2015 Pension Adequacy Report<sup>(2)</sup> of the Commission and the Social Protection Committee contains a dedicated chapter on 'Pension credits and pension accrual during periods out of labour market,' with a strong focus on labour market absences due to caring. In particular, it observes that the vast majority of individuals who take career breaks linked to child-rearing and care for dependant adults are women, therefore pension crediting for these periods can help mitigate the negative effects of shorter or interrupted careers on women's retirement incomes.

As concerns income support for carers, the 2013 Social Investment Package<sup>(3)</sup> and its accompanying Recommendation on Investing in Children<sup>(4)</sup> have emphasised the importance of adequate income support coupled with enabling services, such as childcare and long-term care provisions, in order to prevent and reduce poverty amongst families.

These policy observations aim to support the mutual learning and exchange of best practices among Member States, which remain responsible for developing their national social protection systems.