



Latvijas Republikas Pastāvīgā pārstāvniecība Eiropas Savienībā
Permanent Representation of the Republic of Latvia to the European Union

23, Avenue des Arts, 1000 Brussels tel. (32 2) 238 31 00 fax (32 2) 238 32 50, e-mail : permrep.eu@mfa.gov.lv

Brussels, 4 June 2015

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Ms Renate Nikolay
Head of Cabinet of Commissioner Věra Jourová

Dear Ms Nikolay,

I have the honour to forward to you the letter from the Ministry of Welfare of the Republic of Latvia dated 3rd June 2015.

I should be grateful if you could forward this letter to Commissioner Věra Jourová.

Enclosed: The copy of the letter of the Ministry of Welfare of the Republic of Latvia.

Yours Sincerely,



Juris Štālmeisters

Deputy Permanent Representative

3 June 2015

Ms Věra Jourová
Commissioner for Justice, Consumers
and Gender Equality
European Commission
1049 Brussels

Dear Commissioner,

As a follow up on the Forum on the future of gender equality, we would like to highlight the need for the Commission to present a new Strategy for equality between women and men.

The EU has built a solid framework for the promotion of gender equality over the past 30 years and should continue to do so. Member states recognise the Strategy for equality 2010-2015 as an important reference framework for action. They also report that it helps to set and maintain the national agenda for gender equality and increases its visibility.¹

We are convinced that a new Strategy on equality between women and men after 2015 is crucial for our common struggle to a more equal and fair society, capable of increasing growth and reducing poverty. We therefore urge the Commission to adopt a new Strategy after 2015.

The EU needs a Strategy for equality between women and men

Despite progress and many actions taken, gender equality remains very much “unfinished business”. Consequently, there is a unanimity among the member states of the necessity of a new Strategy, as reflected in the Council Conclusions adopted in December last year, with a call on the Commission to develop a new Strategy for equality between women and men.²

¹ Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, Opinion on Gender Equality in the EU in the 21st century: remaining challenges and priorities, page 5. Adopted November 2014.

² Council conclusions “Gender equality in the EU: the way forward after 2015. taking stock of 20 years of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. Para 19a, adopted at EPSCO December 2014.

A new Strategy is essential to meet the goal on gender equality in the global post-2015 agenda. The member states and the Commission have committed to ensure that gender equality and the human rights and empowerment of women and girls are reflected as a stand-alone goal in the forthcoming UN post-2015 agenda and integrated into all other goals.³ The EU should implement in its internal affairs what we address and promote externally.

The Strategy should be a “stand-alone Strategy” and not merged with other grounds of discrimination

Women are not a minority. Women constitute at least 50 percent of the population of the European Union. Over the last years, we have seen a growing focus on judicial aspects of equal treatment, while developing and promoting active gender equality policies receives less attention.⁴ The current trend of merging gender equality policies with other grounds of discrimination tends to reduce gender equality to a pure human rights issue. It is thereby risking that gender equality policy loses even more of its power, budgets and strength to address structural inequalities and discrimination at societal level.

We believe that gender equality policy deserves its own field of strategy and framework. Not least if the Commission is committed to fulfil and live up to gender equality as a value and a goal as enshrined in the Treaty (Article 2 and 3), as well as a commitment to gender mainstreaming (TFEU Article 8).

It is important to reinforce governance of gender equality in the EU

The status and profile of gender equality currently shows signs of decreased importance in the EU.⁵ One example of this downgrading is the status of the annual *Report on equality between women and men*, as well as the present discussion of the need of a new Strategy. The Annual Report should get its formal status back in form of a Communication with the possibility of a strong political message. It can then serve as a basis for a dedicated debate on gender equality at the EPSCO council and

³ Council conclusions "Gender equality in the EU: the way forward after 2015 Taking stock of 20 years of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. Para 20i, adopted at EPSCO December 2014.

⁴ Effectiveness of Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Gender Equality, Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States. Report by EIGE 2014.

⁵ Effectiveness of Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Gender Equality, Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States. Report by EIGE 2014.

as input for council conclusions. A political message is also essential for the Commission in its dialogue with the European Parliament.

Striving for equality between women and men is a matter of social fairness and an economic must to strengthen Europe's competitiveness to reach Europe 2020 employment targets. In addition, according to the Eurobarometer, 76% of Europeans think that tackling inequality between women and men should be an EU priority.

Therefore, we are convinced that presenting a new Strategy is perfectly in line with the Commissions ambitions of better regulation and commitment to priorities that really matter.

We also want to take the opportunity to remind that the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men has adopted an Opinion on Gender Equality in the EU in the 21st century. It is very praiseworthy of the work of the European Commission in developing and implementing its 2010-2015 Strategy for equality and it identifies some priorities that should be included in the next Strategy.⁶

Yours sincerely,

Gabriele Heinisch –Hosek,
Minister for Education and
Women's Affairs, Austria

Elke Sleurs, Secretary of State in
charge of Fight against Poverty,
Equal Opportunities, Disabled
Persons, Urban Policy, Scientific
Policy, assistant to the Minister of
Finance, Belgium

Ivailo Kalfin, Deputy Prime-
Minister and Minister of Labor
and Social Policy, Bulgaria

Milanka Opačić, Vice President of
the Government and Minister of
Social Policy and Youth, Croatia

Jiří Dienstbier, Minister for
Human Rights, Equal
Opportunities and Legislation,
Czech Republic

Ionas Nicolaou, Minister of Justice
and Public Order, Cyprus

⁶ Opinion on Gender Equality in the EU in the 21st century: remaining challenges and priorities, Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, adopted November 2014.

Pascale BOISTARD, State
Secretary for Women's rights
France

Manuela Schwesig, Federal Minister
for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,
Women and Youth, Germany

Foteini Kouvela, General
Secretary for Gender Equality-
Hellenic Ministry of Interior and
Administrative Reconstruction,
Greece

Aodhán O Riordáin, Minister of
State for New Communities,
Culture and
Equality and Drugs Strategy, Ireland

Stefano Sannino, Italian
Permanent Representative to the
European Union, Italy

Uldis Augulis, Minister of Welfare,
Latvia

Algimanta Pabedinskiene,
Minister of Social Security and
Labour, Lithuania

Lydia Mutsch, Minister for Equal
Opportunities, Luxemburg

Helena Dalli, Minister for Social
Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and
Civil Liberties, Malta

Małgorzata Fuszara, State Secretary,
Government Plenipotentiary for
Equal Treatment in the Chancellery
of the Prime Minister, Poland

Luis Marques Guedes, Minister of
the Presidency and of
Parliamentary Affairs, Portugal

Rovana Plumb Minister for Labour,
Family, Social Protection and the
Elderly, Romania

Anja KOPAČ MRAK, Minister
of Labour, Family, Social Affairs
and Equal Opportunitie, Slovenia

Alfonso Alonso Aranegui , Minister
of Health, Social Services and
Equality, Spain

Åsa Regnér, Minister for Gender
Equality, Sweden