



Labklājības ministrija
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Ms Věra Jourová,
European Commissioner for Justice,
Consumers and Gender Equality

*On the European Year for combatting violence
against women and domestic violence*

Dear Commissioner,

Latvia highly appreciates the fact that the role of gender equality in the European Union (EU) has evolved in a positive direction and that for the very first time gender equality is included in the title of a European Commissioner. It is a clear evidence that gender equality is an issue that must be discussed on a regularly basis, and for which the best efforts need to be put in place.

Recently, the issue of violence against women and domestic violence has been one of the main topics on the gender equality agenda. The survey by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) on violence against women (2014) shows that violence against women, especially in close relationships, is a serious problem throughout the EU. The main results indicate that many women still lack information on the resources and support available to the victims of violence. Moreover, on February 2015 FRA published a research on the extent and nature of support for victims, identifying the promising practices that exist in the Member States. It was concluded that most of the Member States were shaping the system of support services for the victims of crime, including such crimes as violence against women and domestic violence and that more efforts were needed at the national, regional and European level.

All of these findings clearly demonstrate the need to actively combat violence against women and domestic violence as well as to ensure that every victim has access to comprehensive and effective support. The relevant experts and professionals can play an even greater role in identifying the risks of violence and providing assistance, including support in criminal proceedings, as well as in the prevention of secondary and repeated victimisation.

As the country currently holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Latvia calls upon the Commission to adopt a proposal declaring 2016 as the European Year for combating violence against women and domestic violence. By establishing such thematic year the EU would raise public awareness, encourage the Member States to act decisively to end violence against women and domestic violence and to enhance the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of the system of support measures for the victims. Moreover, the establishment of a European Year would encourage the signing and/or ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. The proposal is also supported by the Latvian non-governmental organisations active in the field of gender equality and children and family rights.

It is also recalled that the European Parliament adopted a Resolution on 10 March 2015 on progress on equality between women and men in the EU including recommendations to the Commission on combating violence against women. In particular, the Parliament renewed its call on the Commission and the Member States to make 2016 the European Year to end violence against women with a view to provide adequate training for the services involved, as well as for professionals, such as police officers, doctors, magistrates, lawyers, teachers and anyone, who could, by virtue of their occupation, provide assistance to women who have been victims of violence.

I look forward to your support in this matter and to meeting you in the next meeting of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council in Luxembourg on 18 June 2015.

Yours sincerely,

Minister

U.Augulis

15.05.2015.