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European Commission
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Brussels, 11 May 2020
Ref: [REDACTED]

Dear Ms President,

We are contacting you to raise with you the concern of UNI Europa, the European Services Workers Union representing seven million workers, about the Commission's work programme. We understand from the ETUC that the EU Commission is considering a plan that puts the EU Pay Transparency Directive and the whole Gender Equality Strategy on ice.

We urge you to reconsider. In our assessment such an approach would be a mistake with far reaching consequences.

President, you made gender equality a cornerstone of your Presidency. Binding Pay Transparency was one of your first 100-day commitments. Action to secure gender equality cannot be called into question, even in times of a COVID-19 crisis. Equal pay is a requirement of the EU Treaty, it is not a fair-weather option.

There is a strong interconnection between the EU road to recovery plan and establishing the new normal after COVID-19, this underscores the need for a Gender Equality Strategy. Throughout the EU, key workers, in sectors where the work is predominantly undertaken by women, are underpaid and undervalued. This needs to be tackled as part of the recovery, working women should not be sent to the back of the queue to be dealt with after the recovery.

The announced Pay Transparency Directive must go ahead and moreover must be reframed to tackle the root causes of inequality and the undervaluing of work. Covid-19 has spotlighted how the unfair market-determined salaries of workers such as cleaners, retail, transport, care and healthcare workers have diverged from the real value that they provide to society and the economy. It is long past time that low-wage workers secure a permanent income boost and earn a fair wage with adequate benefits.

The Pay Transparency Directive can do this by including provisions that assist workers and their unions to re-evaluate pay and secure increases that reflect the real value of the work to the organisations and society. Crucially, it must empower unions to bargain to build a new normal where work that is done by women is properly valued and paid.

This crisis will mark a new beginning. We need to remember those who are working on the frontline, in services, care, cleaning, we cannot repeat what happened after the 2008 crisis when companies bounced back but working people and gender equality paid the price.

I look forward to your positive response. We remain available to assist you in your endeavours to secure an EU where Gender Equality is a reality for all women.

Yours sincerely,



Oliver Roethig
Regional Secretary



Veronica Fernandez Mendez
Head of UNI Equal Opportunities