



European Feminist think tank
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Brussels, 26th April 2020

Dear Madam President,

On March 8th, we enthusiastically welcomed the detailed, ambitious Gender Equality Strategy which was presented by Commissioner Dalli, on behalf of the Commission over which you preside. Recognising the structural dimensions of inequality, it marked a significant and necessary change over previous Commissions' initiatives.

One of the most important measure of the new strategy is the commitment to produce binding pay transparency measures before the end of 2020. This carries the hope to address in a clear and democratic way the 17% average gender pay gap, which has been constant for the last 30 Years! Securing "equal pay for equal work," a promise embedded in the Treaty of Rome, is essential to restoring women's faith in European integration processes, at the very time when EU credibility is being challenged at many levels. Comprising a majority among EU citizens, women's support is essential for achieving other ambitious goals outlined in your July 2019 speech to the European Parliament.

Since March 8, the Covid 19 pandemic and the complete halt of most economic activities has transformed the political landscape and we are proud of the many achievements of the Commission under your chairmanship, starting with the SURE program, but trying to design a holistic response.

It would be an extremely bad signal if the Commission was to postpone the one item for gender equality from its 2020 work program at a time when most of the essential (paid and unpaid) jobs of caring and nurturing realized by women are what holds our societies together. When this crisis subsides, the EU will also have to rely on women's full-time contributions to revitalize and heal our fragmented societies, as well as to build an environmentally and socially resilient economy in which demands for care and solidarity (often prerogatives of women) will prevail.

We sincerely hope, Madame President, that you will uphold both the spirit and the letter of EU law, enshrined in the Treaties, which declare gender equality a "fundamental" European value, as well as an actionable right.

Introducing binding pay transparency measures to hold to account, inter alia, the economic actors who receive public funds from the EU and the Member States to help with their recovery, is a small but symbolically significant contribution to European values and to

recognizing the enormous efforts made by millions of anonymous women throughout the crisis.

As a next step, we also encourage you to make sure that the “massive relaunch package” that the Commission is expected to design will adhere to the rules of gender mainstreaming in recognition that women “hold up half of the sky” and have suffered the crisis most often with devotion and silence.

The Gender Equality Strategy has raised our hopes, and expectations, that you will boldly pursue the goals you so eloquently outlined in July, as the key to securing public re-commitment to European integration.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if and when we can be helpful.
With our very best wishes,

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