



27 November 2015

Mr. Ged Nash, TD
Minister for Business and Employment
Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
23 Kildare Street
Dublin 2, D02 TD30

Re: Urgent need for an EU Strategy for Equality between women and men 2016-2020

Dear Minister Nash,

On behalf of our two organisations, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), we are contacting you in relation to the follow-up to the European Commission's Strategy on equality between women and men¹ which ends on 31 December 2015. **We are very concerned that the European Commission (EC) is planning to downgrade the new Strategy for equality between women and men to a Staff Working Document rather than an official Communication.**

A Staff working document is far from a real commitment to make change for women and girls in Europe. It is a background document which does not bind all EU institutions, whereas a Strategy provides a long-term vision, constitutes an overarching policy framework and sets out monitoring and accountability mechanisms to reach the objectives inscribed in the Strategy.

Without a political EU Strategy on equality between women and men, it will be difficult, even impossible, for the European Union to meet its legal commitments to achieve equality between women and men, as stipulated in Articles 2 and 3 of the TEU and to steer a transformative gender mainstreaming policy as per Article 8 of the TFEU.

Two months after the adoption of the new Sustainable Development Goals, the EU must walk the talk and develop its own policy framework to realise women's human rights, as described in goal number 5. Such a strategy would also transform EU commitments to the Beijing Platform for Action into action: the Beijing objectives on institutional mechanisms require strong and coordinated frameworks and institutions to realise equality between women and men.

In June 2015, **22 Ministers** responsible for gender equality, including Minister Aodhán Ó Riordain, sent a joint letter² to Commissioner Jourova in which they strongly call for a new Strategy on equality between women and men after 2015 citing it as "*an important reference*

¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, *Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015*, Brussels, 21.9.2010, COM(2010) 491 final

² Letter of 3 June 2015 signed by Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden. This was further supported by Finland.

framework for action that helps to set and maintain the national agenda for gender equality and increases its visibility, (which is) crucial for our common struggle for a more equal society.”

In June 2015 and by a vast majority, the **European Parliament**³ adopted its position for an EU Strategy on equality between women and men in which it calls on the Commission *to draw up and adopt a new separate strategy for Women’s Rights and Gender Equality in Europe.*”

In July 2015 Congress and the **ETUC** replied favourably to the public consultation on the future to gender equality and asked for the adoption of a new Strategy. The vast majority of trade unions, civil society organisations and individuals contributing to this consultation expressed a similar request.

We now need the European Commission to transform all the calls of Member States, European Parliament, trade unions and civil society organisations into a concrete Strategy.

On 7 December, you will take part in the meeting of the EPSCO Council. We ask you to call for a binding EU Strategy for equality between women and men and to refuse any proposal which would not meet this aim.

Yours sincerely,

Montserrat Mir
ETUC Confederal Secretary

Patricia King
General Secretary, CONGRESS



CC: Mr Aodhán Ó Riordain T.D.
Minister of State for New Communities, Culture, Equality and Drugs Strategy,

³ European Parliament EU Strategy for equality between women and men post 2015, Rapporteur: Maria Noichl, adopted 9 June 2015