

Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality
The Chair

IPOL-COM-FEMM D(2024) 17097

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To: The Ministers of Equality

Subject: Gender Equality in the EU

Dear Minister,

I am writing to you in my capacity as outgoing Chair of the European Parliament's Committee for Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM), to share with you some considerations regarding the future of gender equality in Europe.

As you know, this year is an important year of change, not only in the European Parliament, but for our whole European Union. As the leadership of the Parliament and the Commission is about to change, I count on you to continue to put the Union of Equality on your priority list. There are a number of ways that I think this could be done.

On 7 May, you met to discuss, amongst other issues, the possible inclusion of equality to the title of the EPSCO configuration of the Council. In this context, I remind you of the European Parliament resolution of 10 March 2022 on gender mainstreaming which calls for the Council to establish a Council configuration on gender equality. The EU needs a platform for intergovernmental exchange on gender equality and a formal forum for the ministers and state secretaries responsible for gender equality, in order to strengthen gender mainstreaming across all EU policies and legislation, develop dialogue and cooperation between Member States, exchange best practices and legislation, unblock negotiations on the main files related to gender equality, deliver common responses to EU-wide problems and ensure that gender equality issues are discussed at the highest political level.

The European Parliament is committed to gender equality and endorses gender mainstreaming as one of its official policy approaches to ensure it. FEMM contributes to this work within the context of its Gender Mainstreaming Network. We regret the fragmented implementation of gender mainstreaming across policy areas and institutions at the EU level, and would encourage your colleagues in other Ministries to take gender equality into consideration more consistently based on solid analysis and expertise. Mainstreaming gender equality through their work would ensure that all citizens would benefit equally from the policies that they are putting in place. We also have a European Agency dedicated to supporting you in that task, namely the European Institute for Gender Equality.

The Agency produces independent research and shares best practice to promote gender equality and eliminate gender discrimination. It develops methodological tools and provides technical support for gender mainstreaming in EU and national policies. The Agency can support your work by combining research, data and tools to help you design measures that are inclusive, transformative and promote gender equality in all areas of life.

In its second External Evaluation, the Agency was found to be a well-functioning organisation that fulfils its mandate as set out in its founding regulation. However, there were some areas for improvement, which I want to share with you.

Firstly, the absence of representation of one-third of the Member States in its governing body (Management Board) poses a serious challenge to maintaining dialogue with all EU countries. The Management Board invited the Commission to amend EIGE's founding regulation and to expand the composition of the Management Board by not only including representatives of all Member States, but also a representative of the European Parliament. For now, the Commission has proposed to have the EU Member States that are not represented in the Board to be invited as observers. This should remain as a temporary measure to involve the unrepresented stakeholders, since observers are not able to vote and take decisions in the interest of the Agency.

Despite some progress, the utility and role of EIGE's advisory body (Experts' Forum) remains weak. The external evaluation considers it essential to revise the composition, role and working methods of the advisory body. It should be carried out together with the revision of the composition of the Management Board. Such changes would entail the revision of the Founding Regulation of the Agency, which the Commission typically initiates in accordance with the review clauses in Agencies' regulations and following a second External Evaluation.

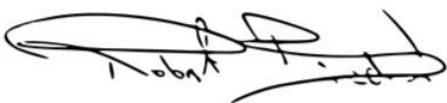
Finally, the External Evaluation report reveals significant staff shortages that prevent the Agency from fully responding to its stakeholders' needs. This includes technical assistance at national level. Strong reinforcement of the Agency's capabilities in terms of staff and budget is needed to enable it to respond adequately to stakeholders' needs and to effectively address EU priorities.

I invite you to consider calling for an opening of the Founding Regulation to address these issues and support any proposals for an increase in resources for the Agency.

Finally, I count on your support to tackle future challenges, while seizing the opportunities, for gender equality in the EU. This includes supporting the next Commissioner responsible for gender equality and the next Chair of the FEMM Committee.

Wishing you all the best in your future endeavours, and know that I remain a strong ally in the work to promote gender equality in Europe.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Biedroń', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Robert Biedroń
Chair
Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality