



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

Brussels, 19 October 2012

To: President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso

Dear Commission President Barroso,

RE: Strengthen equality between women and men in the Annual Growth Survey 2013

As Secretary General of the European Women's Lobby (EWL), I am writing in anticipation of your forthcoming **Annual Growth Survey**, which is scheduled to be adopted shortly.

As the crisis rolls on from year to year, the EWL believes that it is time to take stock and to draw lessons from how the crisis is being addressed. We can see many disastrous decisions caused by austerity measures that are hitting hard the real lives of women, men, girls and boys throughout the European Union. One of the lessons we can draw from this crisis is that macroeconomics, social well-being and equality are intrinsically linked and cannot be dissociated neither in the analysis of the crisis nor the solutions for the future. As many studies show, **gender equality** is a condition *sine qua non* of social justice and well-being, but also of sustainable growth and the European Union needs women, more so than ever, to steer it out of the crisis. A gender equality perspective must be integrated into all macro, micro economic and social policies including financial and monetary policies. I invite you therefore to **strengthen equality between women and men in the Annual Growth Survey to give direction to the European Semester 2013**.

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In order to do this, I refer to your State of the Union speech addressed to the European Parliament on 12 September 2012 which the EWL followed with great interest, and in which you called for a “*new direction and new thinking*” as well as a “*European space*” to avoid resorting to national solutions for ‘European problems’. We agree with this statement and would like to make a number of proposals that follow your line of thought as expressed in your speech, the basis of which we assume will be mirrored in the forthcoming Annual Growth Survey (AGS) 2013. These are included in more details in the appendix to this letter:

1. **Strengthen gender equality in the financial architecture and reinforced budgetary supervision, including implementing gender budgeting methods and tools.**
2. **Strengthen women in decision-making both in relation to 50/50 in the future European Commission and in the European Parliament and through the introduction of EU binding legislative measures to ensure the equal representation of women and men in economic decision-making.**



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3. **Strengthen gender equality as an investment in human capital. Closing the gender pay, poverty and pension gaps will not only contribute to women's economic independence but will also contribute to the sustainability of public finances.**
4. **Strengthen equality as opposed to 'equity' to ensure that a rights-based approach to equality of outcome remains the central goal of the EU.**

I trust that you will give careful consideration to the EWL proposals for inclusion in the Annual Growth Survey 2013 and look forward to more stringent gender equality policies in this crucial forthcoming policy orientation document.

Yours sincerely,

Cécile Gréboval
EWL Secretary General

Cc: Vice-President of the European Commission Viviane Reding
Ms Catherine, Secretary General, European Commission
Mr Johannes Laitenberger, Head of Cabinet of President Barroso
Mr Martin Selmayr, Head of Cabinet of Vice-President Reding
Mr Aurel Ciobanu-Dordea, Director for Equality of DG Justice
Ms Daniela Bankier, Head of Unit Equality between Women and Men



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Appendix

Strengthen equality between women and men in the Annual Growth Survey 2013 Proposals from the European Women's Lobby

1) Strengthen gender equality in the financial architecture and reinforced budgetary supervision

The **European Central Bank**: we call on the Commission for the remainder of its mandate to call for and support **parity democracy** in this crucial institution. The absence of women in the governing board is shameful and needs to be urgently addressed. The EU's monetary and euro policies not only require a European space but have to bring the voices and expertise of women in to the governing body of this major European institution.

Women will no longer tolerate being left on the margins of financial decision-making policies and bodies particularly in light of the Commission's announcement of a "**blueprint for deepening economic and monetary union**" and forthcoming **legislation for a single European supervisory mechanism** as a stepping stone towards a banking union. All major decisions that will be taken in the future to move towards a **fiscal** and -in the long term – political union, cannot and should not happen without women's full input.

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With regards to the **reinforced budgetary supervision**, streamlined through the European semester process and corresponding national reform programmes, national stability and convergence programmes and country-specific recommendations, we urgently stress that recommendations are addressed to Member States to introduce **gender budgeting**, an inherent tool of gender mainstreaming, to achieve equality between women and men. Gender budgeting is a guarantee of good governance.¹

We draw your attention to the impact of austerity measures and public spending cuts particularly on women, who are in the majority both workers and beneficiaries of public services. However, the lack of **gender impact assessments** at national and European level (country-specific recommendations) makes it harder to mitigate the gender impact in the absence of such tools. Tax and spending changes in budgets can have very different impacts on women and men; budget decisions can affect women and men differently and can either exacerbate or improve gender equality, by widening or narrowing gender gaps in a number of areas that extend beyond the labour-market.

¹ Framed within the governance priority of the Belgian *Plan fédéral de gender mainstreaming : pas moins de 40 politiques intégreront la dimension de genre en vue d'éviter ou de corriger certaines inégalités entre les femmes et les hommes*, 6 juillet 2012 follow-up to the *Circulaire relative à la mise en œuvre du gender budgeting conformément à la loi du 12 janvier 2007*, 2010



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2) Strengthen women in decision-making

Women's gross under-representation in decision-making in the private sector is undemocratic, inefficient and contributes to broader inequality between women and men. At a time of economic turbulence in which EU citizens are expecting positive signals from EU leaders in relation to promoting a more equal and social Europe, we ask European level decision-makers and leaders to support binding measures to ensure the equal representation of women and men in economic decision-making. The debate over economic governance has gained force with the crisis; an increasingly large body of research has demonstrated how gender equality and diversity on boards of administration is a factor in efficiency. In recent years, Norway, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy and Spain have all adopted progressive legislation to improve the representation of women on boards of administration, with positive results. These successful examples should be a model for the European continent as a whole.

3) Strengthen gender equality as an investment in human capital

We would like to draw your attention to the contradictions we perceive in calling for reforms of the labour-market that do not take into consideration the different starting points and position of women and men on the labour-market. Women continue to be concentrated in low-paid jobs, part-time work, undervalued sectors of the economy and the persistent gender pay, which translates into a gender pension gap results in women's lower lifelong earnings and the feminisation of poverty as women age. Labour-market reforms that call to remove pressure on wages and labour costs do not only result in a downward spiral and precarious work, but represent a loss of potential income for the State both with regards to income tax and contributions to social security systems, which is the core of the European Social Model. Therefore, we propose that the gender pay gap is seriously tackled by introducing mandatory measures for companies to carry out gender audits and corresponding measures to address gender gaps, failing which financial sanctions should be introduced². Closing the gender pay gap will increase women's contribution to the public purse with a subsequent positive impact on reducing public deficits and strengthening social security systems.

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4) Equality as opposed to equity

We wish to draw attention to the systematic use of the term 'equity' in the Commission President's *State of the Union 2012 Address*, and would like to reiterate that the EU is founded on the principles of **equality** and this should be the driving force in the forthcoming Annual Growth Survey. The term 'equity' denotes a relative factor of 'fairness' which does not have as its goal the true outcome of equality between women and men and equality for all, in line with the EU treaty obligations.

² See France, *Décret N° 2011-822 du 7 juillet 2011 relatif à la mise en œuvre des obligations des entreprises pour l'égalité professionnelle entre les femmes et les hommes*, Ministère du travail, de l'emploi et de la santé et Ministère des solidarités et de la cohésion sociale, entered into force on 1 January 2012