



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

To: President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso

Brussels, 29 March 2012

Dear European Commission President Barroso,

Re: Restore equality between women and men as the key component of EU employment policies in the forthcoming Employment Package

In a few weeks, the European Commission will adopt the so-called 'Employment Package' that will set the direction for a 'job rich recovery' in the EU and make, among other things, concrete proposals to strengthen flexicurity policies. The European Women's Lobby (EWL) calls on the Commission to use the Employment Package as an opportunity to put gender equality, one of the core fundamental principles of the European Union and a key factor of economic growth, back into the centre of the EU employment policies.

The visibility of gender equality in the EU employment policies and long-term strategies has significantly decreased since the 1990s¹. Neglecting the gender dimension seriously compromises the effectiveness of European employment policies as gender equality is a prerequisite for reaching the employment and poverty targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy and ensuring economic growth in the EU. To date, the employment initiatives under the Europe 2020 Strategy as well as the Strategy itself have remained silent on equality between women and men. The Strategy and its employment initiatives focus on increasing employment rates, job creation, labour mobility and flexibility, assuming that women and men have the same starting point. The absence of specific measures to redress the gender inequalities that keep women away from labour markets and the lack of consistent gender mainstreaming, coupled with the impact of the crisis, risks reproducing the idea of women as 'second earners' and deepens their social exclusion as well as increases their poverty risk.

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In the appendix to this letter, the European Women's Lobby makes recommendations on the following issues to strengthen gender equality in the forthcoming Employment Package:

1. Re-value the care economy

Re-value the care economy, the green economy and ICT to ensure that these are on an equal footing in terms of the value and growth potential for a job rich economy, attractive to both women and men. Efforts to enhance job creation and tackle gender segregation within the main growth sectors must include: improved quality of 'white jobs' in the care sector; facilitating access to all three sectors for both women and men; improvement of working conditions, reduction of the gender pay gap, and the establishment of a gender balance by redirecting European Globalisation Funds to retrain women into ICT and green jobs and men into the care economy.

¹ Stratigaki, Smith, Villa: *The Ever Declining Role of Gender Equality in the European Employment Strategy*, 2010.



2. Flexicurity policies will not work without sustainable care and reconciliation

As a prerequisite for increasing employment rates as well as for an adequate 'security' component work - private life reconciliation and care should be at the forefront of all of the flexicurity policy pathways. To this end: Strengthen reconciliation of work and private life by improving provisions for paid care leave and care services. Go beyond the Barcelona targets to provide quality, affordable and accessible child care services ensuring sustainable care targets for elderly and dependent persons. Monitor the implementation of flexicurity policies from a gender equality perspective.

3. Create the conditions for women and men to become 'equal earners'

Ensure that efforts to bring women into the labour market will not reproduce and/or reinforce the traditional idea of women as 'second earners' or second contributors to growth and recovery. Addressing issues related to the gender pay gap, women's working patterns, working conditions and disproportionate care responsibilities as well as taxation policies are crucial in this context. The European Commission should issue Country Specific Recommendations to Member States to move from family based taxation methods to individualised taxation and to address other forms of unequal fiscal treatment of married and cohabitating women which have severe consequences in terms of their life-long earnings and pension rights.

4. Address the diversity of barriers to women's participation in the labour market

Address specific groups of women, especially migrant women to ensure their full participation in the labour-market by addressing issues of deskilling, the absence of mechanisms to recognise qualifications obtained in non EU countries, the difficulty in finding work experience and combating discrimination against migrant women on the labour-market.

5. Boost women's entrepreneurship

In the context of the EU Directive² on equal treatment between women and men engaged in a self-employed activity which is due to be transposed by August 2012: Facilitate access to credit, continue the current aid for female entrepreneurship in future Community support frameworks and develop positive action measures to promote entrepreneurship among women.

We strongly recommend that our proposals be integrated in Country Specific Recommendations and subsequently monitored by the European Commission. Women make up 51 % of the population in the EU and should not be treated as a specific and/or discriminated 'group'. Europe's future economy and exit strategies from the crisis depend on women's participation and contribution to the economy on equal terms with men.

² Directive 2010/41/EU on the application of the principle of equal treatment between women and men engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity and repealing Council Directive 86/613/EEC, 7 July 2010, Official Journal of the European Union, L 180/1, 15.7.2010,



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The European Women's Lobby trusts that you will give your utmost attention to our recommendations and that these will be integrated into the forthcoming European Employment Package.

Yours sincerely,

Brigitte Triems

Cécile Gréboval

Brigitte Triems
EWL President

Cécile Gréboval
EWL Secretary General

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