



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

Brussels, 8 February 2013

Minister Jan O'Sullivan TD
Minister for Housing and Planning
Mechanics Institute
Hartstonge Street
Limerick

Dear Minister O'Sullivan,

Re: EU Roundtable Discussion of EU Ministers with responsibility for homelessness

As President and Secretary General of the European Women's Lobby (EWL), we are writing to congratulate you on the initiative to host an EU Roundtable discussion of EU Ministers with responsibility for homelessness, which will take place on 1 March 2013 within the framework of the Irish Presidency.

As representatives of the largest coalition of women's non-governmental organisations in the EU, representing women's organisations from the 27 EU Member States, three accession countries as well as European-wide organisations, we wish to draw your attention to the urgency of addressing the situation of homeless women. While the numbers of women who are or become homeless are unknown, there is evidence that women become homeless for a number of reasons that may differ from men. This means that in order to be efficient, policies to address homelessness need to be adapted to women's specific situation and needs. For example, the crisis and subsequent austerity measures that have hit the housing market but also cuts in benefits and funding to women's organisations that provide direct services to women and their children fleeing violence at the hands of male partners, have resulted in women turning to the streets. The hidden aspects of homelessness among women, often accompanied by their children, also include temporary arrangements in friends and/or families homes. This increases women's precarious situation as temporary solutions of this type prevent women from making long term plans for their future and that of their children, leading them on the path to long term social exclusion.

One of the headline targets of the Europe2020 Strategy relates to combating poverty, of which homelessness is "*one of the most extreme forms, which has increased in recent years*"¹. In the absence of an encompassing headline target in the aforementioned Strategy on gender equality, other than in relation to the employment rate, **we urgently call on you to ensure that a gender equality perspective is applied to addressing and combating homelessness**. The different facets of homelessness among women must be addressed in a holistic way and form an integral part of all EU policy frameworks, including, the Social OMC, the European Platform against Poverty, Cohesion Funds, the (future) Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived, the forthcoming Social Investment Package, as well as systematic gender impact assessments and monitoring of the impact of austerity measures on women and men.

¹ As cited in the Programme of the Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2013 : <http://www.eu2013ie/ireland-and-the-presidency/about-the-presidency/programme-and-priorities/>



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Women of all ages become homeless and as such are vulnerable to sexual violence and sexual exploitation. A gender equality perspective to addressing homelessness must be ensured to safeguard women's human rights and dignity.

We trust that you will give your utmost attention to this issue and wish you a very successful meeting.

Yours sincerely,

Viviane Teitelbaum
President

Cécile Gréboval
Secretary General

c.c. Ambassador Montgomery, Permanent Representation of Ireland to the EU
Vice-President of the European Commission Viviane Reding
European Commissioner László Andor
Mr Aurel Ciobanu-Dordea, Director for Equality of DG Justice
Ms Daniela Bankier, Head of Unit Equality between Women and Men
Ms Lieve Fransen, Director "Europe 2020: Social Policies", DG EMPL