

LETTERS

International Press Centre Résidence Palace,
Rue de la Loi 155, Box 6, 1040 Brussels, Belgium
Fax: +32 (0)2 540 9071 • Letters: evletters@europeanvoice.com
Website: www.europeanvoice.com

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REUTERS

A leap forward for women's rights

Your article "Spain faces uphill struggle for EU-wide protection order" (3-9 June) struck a pessimistic note. The next day, 4 June, justice and home affairs ministers agreed to move ahead with the creation of a European protection order (EPO).

This is an important step forward in ensuring the protection of women. The Spanish EU presidency estimates that some 100,000 EPOs will be issued every year, most of them for female victims of male violence. Some 45% of women suffer at some point from such violence and one in five in Europe falls victim to domestic abuse. If properly implemented, the EPO will guarantee a consistent level of protection for victims of violence when they move within the EU.

The EPO does not, however, guarantee the same level of protection for all victims. As a measure of mutual recognition of national protection orders, it offers no harmonisation or minimum standards to which all member states must adhere. Many EU member states do not even provide

Spain faces uphill struggle for EU-wide protection order

Toby Vogel
tvogel@economist.com
A Spanish proposal to create a European protection order for victims of domestic violence hangs in the balance ahead of a meeting of justice ministers in Brussels tomorrow (4 June). Other member states, including Germany and the United Kingdom, have doubts about the legal basis of the proposal, according to diplomats, and might be ready to block it. Spain, which holds the presidency of the Council of Ministers until the end of the month, has declared its ambition to get agreement on such a protection order as a priority of its presidency.

the Commission. She announced that the Commission would propose its own, broader draft directive on victims' rights in January. A Spanish spokesperson said that there was no reasonable argument in favour of waiting and that the presidency had sought the broadest legal basis possible. Further doubts The Commission's opposition and the reservation voiced by some member states have prompted other governments to raise doubts. Neither nor the UK call-state an act to a priority of its presidency.

protection orders for women victims of violence in intimate partnerships. These differing levels of protection need to be addressed. Freedom of movement is a highly laudable aspect of the EU, but protection from violence is a basic human right, as is equality between women and men.

The EPO is to be welcomed as the first legally binding EU instrument on violence against women. On this basis, it is time to move forward towards a comprehensive EU approach to combating this widespread and fundamental violation of women's rights.

Myria Vassiliadou

Secretary-general

The European Women's Lobby

Brussels

Nord Stream and energy security

Lena Kolarska-Bobińska's article on Nord Stream ("Making Nord Stream a European project", 20-26 May) misses the point. Nord Stream is a commercial investment and not a political project. It is recognised as a priority project under the EU's Trans-European Energy Networks, as the pipeline fills an urgent European need for additional import capacity and more diverse transport routes. Since the Nord Stream consortium was formed, a Dutch shareholder has joined the consortium and a French company is in negotiations to do the same, both on commercial terms.

Kolarska-Bobińska wrongly assumes that gas will only be delivered to Germany. In fact, commercial agreements already exist to distribute gas to different companies across Europe. Contracts are in place to ship gas via Nord Stream not only to Germany, but also to Denmark, France, the Netherlands and the UK. As is standard practice in the industry, these contracts were concluded directly between individual buyers across Europe and the exporter in Russia, without German or other intermediaries. No restrictions on the re-sale of gas are imposed upon the buyers.

In order to receive permits for construction, Nord

Stream conducted an intense stakeholder consultation including public hearings in all countries around the Baltic Sea. The governments and national environmental authorities of all nine Baltic Sea countries participated in 16 multilateral meetings over the course of three and a half years, while NGOs, national experts, fishermen and the general public were all able to have an input. This open dialogue resulted in several optimisations of the project, such as changes to the route of the pipeline, before authorisations were received from the permitting countries: Denmark, Finland, Germany, Russia and Sweden. It

therefore cannot be stated that any country in the region, including Poland, was not been consulted.

Nord Stream will enhance European energy security and will increase supplies to those regions where gas demand is expected to rise as domestic European resources decline. Nord Stream is being completed quickly, setting a standard for mutually beneficial EU-Russia co-operation on commercial terms and international consultation for infrastructure projects.

Sebastian Sass

Head of EU representation

Nord Stream

Brussels

Nationality is irrelevant

You headlined your front-page story in last week's edition "Italy's Manservisi takes new home affairs job" (3-9 June).

Why not, then, "Scotland's McKenzie" or "Wales's Griffiths" when announcing the appointment of the permanent secretary to a UK ministerial department?

While Stefano Manservisi is definitely an Italian citizen, he has been appointed to that post in his capacity as an EU official and is supposed – like

any other director-general, director, head of unit, administrator or assistant – to "carry out his duties and conduct himself solely with the interests of the Communities in mind". Article 11 of the staff regulations also states that an EU official "shall neither seek nor take instructions from any government, authority, organisation or person outside his institution".

Pedro Escandilla

Brussels

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annemarchadier@economist.com

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