EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

President of the European Commission José Manuel BARROSO
European Commission
Berlaymont
rue de la Loi, 200
1040 – Bruxelles
[sent by email : jose-manuel.barroso@ec.europa.eu]

Brussels, 25 October 2013

Dear President Barroso,

RE: Integration of a gender equality perspective in the Annual Growth Survey 2014 and the next European Semester

We write on behalf of the European Women's Lobby, the largest umbrella organisation of women's associations in the EU, represented in 31 countries, to call on you to ensure that a gender equality perspective is firmly integrated into the forthcoming Annual Growth Survey.

The AGS is an essential moment to ensure that gender equality becomes an explicit objective of the European 2020 process and the European Semester, as stipulated in the European Pact for Gender Equality 2011-2020.

The European Women's Lobby closely followed the 2013 European Semester process. Despite the commitments made in the Pact for Gender Equality and purported success of the recently published midterm review of the Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015, several outcomes of the European semester fell short of our expectations. A large deficit persists in gender mainstreaming- the integration of a gender equality perspective into every stage of policy processes – design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation throughout the European Semester process. Nine Country Specific Recommendations (PL, DE, NL, IT, AT, HU, MT, RO, BG) resulting from the National Reform Programmes referred explicitly to women while other Country Specific Recommendations (ES, SK, LV, UK, EE, CZ) addressed gender equality in a narrow sense, namely, aiming to increase women's employment rate by enhancing childcare services. We very much welcome the fact that many of the Country Specific Recommendations proposed by the Commission mentioned childcare and affordable care services, and that one Member State (AT) has now been explicitly asked to address the gendered pay and pension gap. However, given that the gendered pay and pensions gap exists in all EU countries, we must insist that all countries are asked to address this. Furthermore, we maintain that equality between women and men goes beyond addressing a 'component of a well-functioning labour market' – and rather is to be pursued actively as paving a path for full citizenship and engagement in a structural manner that includes the voices of half of Europe's population in the planning, implementation and evaluation processes of the EU2020 strategy.

In order to ensure that the outcomes of the European Semester 2014 will be in line with the commitments of the EU Treaty, Strategy for Equality between Women and Men and Pact for Equality between Women and Men, the Annual Growth Survey 2014 should:

1. Firmly establish equality between women and men as an overall principle, as enshrined in the Treaties articles 2, 3(3), 8 and 141.
2. Require the Member States to address the gendered impact of the current crisis and the gender inequalities in and outside of the labour market to address barriers that prevent women from participating in the labour market on an equal standing with men and contribute to their social exclusion.
3. Enforce requirements for high quality evaluation and monitoring from a gendered perspective to ensure that the policy guidance will not have a disproportionate negative impact on women.

We trust that you will give this issue your utmost attention.

We look forward to the adoption of a gender-sensitive Annual Growth Survey.

Sincerely yours,

Viviane Teitelbaum
President

Cécile Gréboval
Secretary General

Cc: Vice-President Viviane Reding
        Commissioner László Andor
        Ms Catherine Day, European Commission Secretary General
        Mr Aurel Ciobanu-Dordea, Director for Equality of DG Justice
        Ms Daniela Bankier, Head of Unit Equality between Women and Men
        Head of Cabinet of Commission President Barroso
        Head of Cabinet of Vice-President Reding
        Head of Cabinet of Commissioner Andor