

Joint letter on the continuation and strengthening of gender equality and LGBTIQ equality in the European Union

To:

Ursula von der Leyen

President of the European Commission

Helena Dalli

European Commissioner for Equality

Dear Madam President of the European Commission,
Dear Madam Commissioner,

At their last informal EPSCO Council meeting on 26 and 27 February 2024, the European Gender Equality Ministers discussed the future of gender equality policy in the EU. Shortly before the end of the current mandate of the European Parliament, and close to the end of the term of office we, the undersigned Ministers, would like to seize the moment and call for sustained efforts to establish gender equality and LGBTIQ equality in the EU.

By declaring the **Union of Equality**, you have notably put gender equality and LGBTIQ equality at the heart of the European agenda. Appointing the **first-ever stand-alone Commissioner for Equality** as well as a **College of Commissioners with a gender-balanced representation** has sent a strong signal in support of our common efforts to achieve gender equality and LGBTIQ equality in the EU. We welcome the strong emphasis you and your Commission have put on ensuring a European Union where people in all their diversity can live free from discrimination and with equal opportunities. Remarkable progress has been made with regard to equality during this period.

However, challenges remain in the EU. Gender equality and LGBTIQ equality have not yet been achieved. In addition, when it comes to sexual and reproductive health and rights as well as concerning the rights of LGBTIQ persons we observe a resistance and rollback in Europe. There is a growing transnational anti-gender movement questioning the benefits of an equal society with equal opportunities and rights for people in all their diversity and targeting laws and policies that are aimed at protecting women and their reproductive health and rights as well as LGBTIQ rights.

We, the undersigned Ministers, are highly alarmed by these developments which **run contrary to the fundamental European values of human dignity, freedom, equality and equal treatment.**

It is vital to design strategies which **secure human rights and equality as well as fundamental freedoms for everyone in the EU.** We, the undersigned Ministers, therefore urge the next Commission to continue the good work and to strengthen gender equality and LGBTIQ equality as well as the fight against all forms of discriminations across the European Union, stressing the added value for human and social rights, economic growth and the ecological transition.

In doing so, measures and initiatives should be elaborated so as to fully respect the various labour market models of the individual Member States, as well as the autonomy of the social partners.

We therefore call on the next European Commission to:

- continue and strengthen the mandate of the **Commissioner for Equality Portfolio** (with relevant competencies and the conditions required to carry out the mission) and to continue the important work of the **Task Force on Equality** supporting the Commissioner for Equality, in order to build an inclusive European Union of Equality as well as to continue the gender-balanced composition of the next European Commission,
- further develop ambitious **Gender Equality** and **LGBTIQ Equality Strategies** and introduce **regular impact evaluations**,
- continue the establishment of a **Union of Equality with an intersectional approach** and to increase political commitment within the European Commission for gender equality and LGBTIQ equality,
- continue and strengthen **gender mainstreaming** in the Commission's sectoral policies, Directorates-General, financial programmes and European funds as well as areas of EU external action, with a special focus on the EU's neighbouring countries,
- support Member States in their efforts to also give higher visibility and more space to **gender mainstreaming and equality in the Council and in all its formations.**

We, the undersigned Ministers, look forward to discussing this further as part of the upcoming process of setting the priorities for the next European Commission with a strong focus on gender equality and LGBTIQ equality.

Yours sincerely,

Marios Hartsiotis

Minister of Justice and Public Order –
Cyprus

Marie Bjerre

Minister for Digital Government and
Gender Equality – Denmark

Signe Riisalo

Minister of Social Protection –
Estonia

Sanni Grahn-Laasonen

Minister of Social Security –
Finland

Aurore Bergé

Minister for Equality and the Fight
Against Discriminations – France

Lisa Paus

Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior
Citizens, Women and Youth – Germany

Maria-Alexandra Kefala

Deputy Minister of Social Cohesion and
Family – Greece

Roderic O’Gorman, T.D.

Minister for Children, Equality, Disability,
Integration and Youth – Ireland

Monika Navickienė

Minister for Social Security and Labour –
Lithuania

Yuriko Backes

Minister for Gender Equality and Diversity
Minister of Defence
Minister for Mobility and Public Works –
Luxembourg

Rebecca Buttigieg

Parliamentary Secretary for Equality and Reforms – Malta

Robbert Dijkgraaf

Minister of Education, Culture and Science – The Netherlands

Katarzyna Kotula

Minister of Equality – Poland

Margarida Balseiro Lopes

Minister of Youth and Modernization - Portugal

Luka Mesec

Minister for Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities – Slovenia

Ana Redondo García

Minister for Equality – Spain

Paulina Brandberg

Minister for Gender Equality and Working Life – Sweden