



Dear President von der Leyen,

Dear President Sassoli,

Dear President Michel,

Dear President Plenković,

The Women's European Council (WEUCO) brings together MEPs, Commissioners and representatives of the Presidency of the Council of the EU with the purpose of framing the European agenda from a gender perspective and undertaking tangible actions to tackle inequalities between women and men.

We, Vice-Presidents and Members of the European Parliament, Members of National Parliaments and representatives of the Council, together with European Women Alliance (EWA) have adopted the following conclusions at the fourth WEUCO meeting and, hereby, we submit them to you with a view to setting equality between women and men as a high priority on the EU political agenda.

In view of the European Council on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2020, we wish to underline that equality between women and men is a fundamental principle of the European Union, enshrined in the Treaties, upheld in the European Pillar of Social Rights, targeted in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and further promoted in the recently adopted Gender Equality Strategy. Gender mainstreaming is a specific mission of the EU.

## **I. A GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN THE COVID-19 RESPONSE**

The COVID-19 outbreak and its aftermath are having severe economic and social consequences and are affecting differently women and men. Therefore, the response to the COVID-19 crisis has to incorporate

the gender perspective in order to avoid increasing female unemployment and inequalities with negative repercussions on the European economy and society and the Union's capacity to recover.

Women still face barriers in the labour market. Employed women are over-represented in the formal care sector. High intensity, high physical and mental strain, atypical working time and conditions as well as low earnings and pensions often characterize the work performed by women. They are also highly employed in other sectors like hospitals, cleaning services and food. During the crisis, women have continued to carry out most of the domestic and care work and have faced increased risk of gender-based violence, exacerbated by lockdown measures.

**WEUCO calls on the Council, the Commission, the European Parliament and the Member States to:**

- Incorporate a gender perspective in all their actions to face the Covid-19 outbreak and its aftermath;
- Support the adoption of a gender-mainstreaming approach when designing, implementing and assessing EU policies and programs laid down under the recovery packages including React EU, the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the Multi Annual Financial Framework 2021-2027, and the Just Transition Fund with a view to measuring progress toward the objective of gender equality;
- Such an approach should be underpinned by ex-ante analysis, monitoring and ex-post assessment of EU policies and legislation and based on inter-sectorial disaggregated data.

## **II. EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH EMPLOYEMENT, SOCIAL INVESTEMENTS AND INNOVATION**

Women are underrepresented in the labour market, in management positions and are less remunerated than men for an equal work. Lack of equal sharing of care and domestic responsibilities and tasks between women and men are among the causes of this gap. Policies and actions aimed at supporting work life balance and enhancing access to care facilities can lead to a full economic independence and empowerment of women.

**WEUCO calls on Member States to:**

- strengthen the efforts to boost women's participation and gender equality in the labour market by removing all material and immaterial obstacles impacting the number and quality of female labour participation and by promoting equal sharing of care and household responsibilities between women and men and by supporting the equal take-up of parental and carers' leave by women and men;
- implement without delay the work life balance directive;
- shaping a modern, effective and people-centred welfare system to achieve higher living standards, social inclusion, innovation and competitiveness, elimination of poverty, with the aim of ensuring upward economic and social convergence at EU level by maximizing the social outcomes of the public expenditure in the framework of Next generation EU;

- ensure that the principle of equal pay for equal work is applied, in line with Article 157 TFEU, and address the causes behind the gender gaps in pay, earnings and pensions;
- step up efforts to promote the principle of gender equality in their national education and labour market policies by including targeted measures in national action plans within the framework of the European Semester and the Recovery and Resilience Facility;
- investment in human capital, training and lifelong learning to equip female workers in a changing labour market and to prepare for a potential change of career path in accordance with the growing demand for e-skills in many different sectors, while ensuring fair and sustainable working conditions in order to allow that women and men – equally – can take advantage of the opportunities that come with the environmental and digital transformation of the economy;
- ensure access to existing funds in order to promote and support women entrepreneurs, particularly in the framework of the green and digital transformation of the economy;
- promote quality jobs and equip women and men with the competences required to take up these jobs, in connection with the green and digital transitions, address precarious working conditions, such as low pay, involuntary part-time work and low job security, and insufficient social protection.

**WEUCO calls on the Commission to:**

- adopt actions to address the gender pay gap including through the introduction of the transparency measures and a minimum wage framework;
- adopt without delay a child guarantee initiative also in view of combating child poverty and their families' poverty as well as an antipoverty strategy to support women who have greater precariousness and are at higher risk of poverty.

Yours,