



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

H. E. Viktor Orbán
Prime Minister of the Government of the Republic of Hungary

C/c: H. E. Mr. José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, President of the Government of Spain
H. E. Joëlle Milquet, Vice-Prime Minister and Minister for Employment and Equal Opportunities,
Government of Belgium
H. E. Miklós Réthelyi, Minister of National Resources, Government of Hungary
H. E. Péter Györkös, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative of
Hungary to the EU

RE: Commitment to evaluate the EU Trio Presidency priority on combating violence against women in the EU

Brussels, 3 March 2011

Your Excellency,

On 8 March 2011, the peoples of Europe and the world will celebrate the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day. On this occasion, the European Union (EU) shall also mark one year since the adoption of Council Conclusions on the Eradication of violence against women in the EU. We believe that the EPSCO Council on 7 March 2011 provides a great opportunity for the current EU Trio Presidency to celebrate women's rights and in particular to commit to present by June 2011 an evaluation of the developments that were implemented with regards to the priority given to the struggle against violence against women in the current 18 months.

Indeed, in its 18 month programme of 27 November 2009, the Trio Presidency (Spain, Belgium and Hungary) indicates that *"priority will be given to the question of violence against women"*, through actions to be undertaken under different overarching policy areas, therefore demonstrating the importance of a comprehensive and coordinated EU response to this pervasive violation of women's human rights.¹

Under the Spanish EU Presidency, the EU Council presented concrete plans regarding an EU action against violence against women. The EU Council Conclusions on the eradication of violence against women in the EU of 8 March 2010 calls on the European Commission to *"devise a European Strategy for preventing and combating violence against women by establishing a general framework of common principles and appropriate instruments"* and to *"consider additional legal instruments aimed at eradicating violence against women."*

These conclusions are followed very closely by a Trio Declaration on equality between women and men on 26 March 2010 which clearly identifies violence against women as an issue of gender equality: violence against women *"is first and foremost a violation of human rights and the most cruel manifestation of gender inequality. The struggle against gender-based violence requires joint efforts, given that it is a global phenomenon we must all face together. Violence against women is also a major barrier to employment of women and the advancement of their professional careers."*

We see the Trio Declaration as a strong policy document as it refers to the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), which has been endorsed by all EU Member States, and to the EU commitment to implement it, including its

¹ In its work programme, the Trio Presidency stresses on the need to combat violence against women as an issue of gender equality (under the area of Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs), of crime prevention and fight against serious and organised crime (under the area of Home Affairs) and of judicial cooperation in criminal affairs (under the area of Justice).



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provisions on violence against women.² The Trio Presidency indeed proposes to the Member States “to make special efforts to eradicate violence against women, developing the European strategy following the agreed conclusions of the EPSCO Council held on the 8th of March 2010.”

Complementing the appeal of the Trio and all EU Member States, the European Parliament has regularly called for EU action to combat this blatant violation of human rights: its Resolution of 25 November 2009 called for a Directive and an Action Plan on violence against women, and that of 26 November 2009 urged the Commission and the Council to establish a clear legal basis for combating all forms of violence against women and furthermore called once again on the Commission to draw up a more coherent policy plan on this issue.³

Thus far, the European Commission (EC) has yet to set out a concrete proposal of how to implement the Council Conclusions, and despite EC commitments⁴ to elaborate a strategy and an EU action plan to combat violence against women, there are no sign of concrete EU action being put forward at this stage. As the Trio Presidency is running its last months, we expect reiterated political engagement from the Trio Presidency as regards the eradication of violence against women in the EU.

In Europe, seven women die every day from male domestic violence.⁵ An estimated one in five women falls victim to domestic violence, costing EU Member States as much as 16 billion Euros every year – or one million Euros every half hour.⁶ Now it is time for the EU Trio Presidency to demonstrate its individual and collective political will to make its commitment to justice and fundamental European values a reality. International Women’s Day gives you the opportunity to be accountable for your political statements and demonstrate that the Trio Presidency had clear plans about how the EU should eradicate violence against women.

We expect your reassurances that the EU Trio Presidency is still working hard to keep violence against women on the European agenda, your evaluation of the Trio action on this field, and your plans to put forward a strong and comprehensive proposal for an EU Strategy for preventing and combating violence against women in 2011. Such Strategy should reflect the EU’s commitment to develop actions and legally-binding instruments within a comprehensive policy framework, taking action on all fronts (prevention, protection, prosecution, provision, partnership) and addressing all facets of violence against women.

We look forward to receiving a written answer that we would convey to all our member organisations. We of course remain at your disposal for any assistance we may be able to provide.

Sincerely yours,

Brigitte Triems
EWL President

² The Beijing Platform for Action (1995) states that “violence against women is a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of women’s full advancement”.

³ European Parliament resolution of 25 November 2009 on the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council – An area of freedom, security and justice serving the citizen – Stockholm programme. European Parliament resolution of 26 November 2009 on the elimination of violence against women.

⁴ In April 2010, the Commission duly included a commitment in the Communication on the Stockholm Action Plan to deliver a ‘Communication on a strategy to combat violence against women, domestic violence and female genital mutilation, to be followed by an EU action plan’ and noted a timeline for this action of 2011-2012. It also included the adoption of an EU-wide Strategy on combating violence against women in the provisions of the 2010-2015 EU Strategy for Equality between Women and Men.

⁵ Psytel, 2007 Daphne Project on the evaluation of mortality linked to domestic violence in Europe

⁶ Psytel, 2006 Daphne Project on the cost of domestic violence in Europe