

16th April, 2020

Mr Phil Hogan
Commissioner
EU Commission
Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat 200
1049 Brussels
Belgium

Dear Commissioner Hogan

I am contacting you to raise with you our concern about the leaked EU Commission work programme where it seems that the plan is to put the EU Pay Transparency Directive on ice. The leaked version states the following:

“European Gender Equality Strategy (non-legislative, Q1 2020), Adopted - followed by binding pay transparency measures (legislative, incl. impact assessment, Article 157 TFEU, Q4 2020): On pay transparency, this was highlighted in the Political Guidelines, but it should be noted that anything of substance will inevitably mean more administrative burden for companies. It is questionable whether the autumn will really be the right time for this proposal”.

If accurate, we urge you to reconsider. In our assessment such an approach would be a mistake with far reaching consequences.

Action to secure equal pay cannot be called into question. Equal pay is a requirement of the EU Treaty; it is not a fair weather option. There is a strong interconnection between a need to create a new normal after Covid-19 and guaranteeing equal and fair pay. Throughout the EU key workers, in sectors where women predominantly work are unfairly underpaid and undervalued.

Covid-19 has spotlighted how the unfair market-determined salaries of workers such as cleaners, retail, transport, care and healthcare workers have diverged from the real value that they provide to society and the economy. It is long past time that low-wage workers secure a permanent income boost and earn a fair wage with adequate benefits.

The announced Gender Pay Transparency Directive must go ahead and moreover must be re-framed to tackle the root causes of inequality and undervaluing of work. It can do this by including provisions that assist workers and their unions to re-evaluate their pay and to secure increases that reflect the real value of the work to the organisations and society. It must empower unions to bargain to build a new normal where work that is done by women is properly valued and paid.

This crisis will mark a new beginning. We need to remember those who are working on the frontlines, in services, care, cleaning, we can't repeat what happened after the 2008 crisis when companies bounced back but working people and equality paid the price.

We urge you to reconsider.

I look forward to your positive response

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Patricia King', with a large, stylized initial 'P'.

Patricia King
General Secretary

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