



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Dear President,

The Commission thanks the Senat for its Opinion on the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 {COM(2020) 152 final}, and on the Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation of the EU Action Plan 2017-2019 on tackling the gender pay gap {COM(2020) 101 final}.

Equality is at the forefront of the Commission's priorities for this mandate. The launch of the Gender Equality Strategy in March this year was a first key deliverable on President von der Leyen's commitment to a Union of Equality. The Strategy frames the Commission's work on gender equality and sets out the policy objectives and key actions for the 2020-2025 period. With this strategy, the Union has an empowered framework for gender equality, to ensure progress towards the goal of a gender-equal Europe.

The Commission welcomes the Senat's support to the strategy. As to its comments and recommendations, it would like to clarify the following:

Preventive work to combat gender-based violence is indeed fundamental for achieving the objective of ending such violence. As stated in the Gender Equality Strategy, a first step involves educating boys and girls from an early age about gender equality and supporting the development of non-violent relationships. The launch of an EU network on the prevention of gender-based violence and domestic violence will support exchange of good practice among Member States and stakeholders, and will also provide funding for training, capacity building and support services.

The Gender Equality Strategy underlines that women and men must have equal opportunities to participate in and lead in all realms of society. The Commission recognises women's role in peace building and conflict resolution: for example, the EU Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2019-2024 underlines the importance of women's leadership and equitable participation of women in all aspects of peace and security as well as in all areas of policy decision-making and programming. The

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Commission will ensure that the EU's internal and external actions to promote gender equality will be coherent and mutually reinforce each other.

Concerning the gender pay gap, the Senat notes that improved and accessible information on pay levels can reveal potential gender bias or discrimination in remuneration structures of business or industry and recommends further pay measures in sectors where women are traditionally overrepresented in order to eliminate the gender pay gap. The Commission's Political Guidelines specify concrete measures in this area and the Commission will launch by the end of 2020 a comprehensive package of legislative and non-legislative measures to help realise the principle of equal pay between men and women and to close the gender pay gap.

The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the issues raised by the Senat and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Nicolas Schmit
Member of the Commission*