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18<sup>th</sup> August 2008

Dear

I am writing on behalf of the UK Joint Committee on Women (UKJCW), which represents the UK on the European Women's Lobby board. The European Women's Lobby (EWL). EWL is the largest alliance of women's non-governmental organisations in the European Union, bringing together thousands of member organisations in Europe. We are commenting on the prospect of the move to enlarge protection from all forms of discrimination. The UKJCW supports the campaign to adopt a comprehensive anti-discrimination directive, but we are dismayed that sex is not included in the current directive given the abundant evidence that gender discrimination pervades every facet of life in Europe.

We ask therefore that the European Commission and the European Parliament ensure a uniform protection for all grounds of discrimination, including in relation to European gender equality legislation in order to avoid a hierarchy of rights between the different grounds of discrimination.

Regarding the current negotiations on a new anti-discrimination directive, the UKJCW would like to

- Express support to the campaign calling the European Commission to adopt a comprehensive anti-discrimination directive that will provide a higher level of protection in respect to all grounds of discrimination currently covered in the Employment Equality Directive (disability, age, religion or belief and sexual orientation).
- Stress that a gender perspective is indispensable and should be mainstreamed in any new anti-discrimination directive.

Regarding gender equality legislation, the UKJCW recognize that the adopted directive on goods and services was a first step in addressing discrimination between women and men outside employment. However, we need to emphasize that sex-based discrimination is not yet fully protected. In fact, important shortcomings in the material scope of the gender equality legislation (for example on health, media and education) have limited the legislation's impact. Media and political discourses in the last few months have expressed the misleading notion that gender equality is fully protected under EU legislation; this is far from being the case. The UKJCW and the EWL call therefore for a leveling-up of gender equality legislation to avoid a hierarchy of rights between sex-based anti-discrimination legislation and the anti-discrimination legislation on other grounds.

We are hopeful that UK policy makers will support this call for leveling-up of gender equality legislation and will challenge political discourse that is gender-blind in the discussion of current directives (and on all occasions).

Please get in touch with any concerns or questions—we look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

Dr. Marsha Scott  
UK Joint Committee on Women