To: **Hon. Frans Timmermans**
First Vice-president of the European Commission
Hon. Vera Jourova
EU Commissioner on Justice Consumers and Gender Equality
CC: **Hon. Jean-Claude Juncker**
President of the European Commission
Hon. Neven Mimica
EU Commissioner on International cooperation and Development
Hon. Dimitris Avramopolous
EU Commissioner on Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship

Brussels, 31 October 2016

RE: European Coalition to end violence against women and girls demands for a sustainable year of focused actions on violence against women in 2017

Dear Honourable Frans Timmermans, Vice-President of the European Commission
Dear Honourable Vera Jourova, EU commissioner on Gender equality

We are writing to you on behalf of the European Coalition to end violence against women and girls, a group of more than 20 European civil society networks across the EU (see their logos at the end of this letter).

We welcome the initiative of the European Commission year of focused actions on violence against women in 2017. Even if we regret that it will not be a European Year, we trust that this Commission initiative can bring positive change in combating violence against women and girls (VAWG). In this regard, we want to put forward several recommendations in order to ensure that the year of focused activities achieves sustainable impact.

First of all, the European Commission should ensure that the year of focused activities on violence against women is an integral part of a comprehensive **EU strategy to prevent and combat of all forms of violence against women and girls in Europe, in accordance to the relevant Council Conclusions**. This comprehensive EU Strategy to end violence against women and girls should be based on the six Ps approach (Policy, Prosecution, Prevention, Protection, service Provision, and Partnership).

Furthermore, we call on the European Commission to develop an **EU level awareness raising campaign in 2017**, building on the existing initiatives[1] and expanding them, as per the recommendations made by the EC Advisory Group in 2013, and the recommendations below. The EU level awareness raising campaign should be based on a **comprehensive definition of violence against women** as per the Council of Europe convention of Preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention) and EU guidelines on violence against women and girls.
The campaign should be inclusive of all women and girls including women from migrant and ethnic background, women with disabilities, young and older women, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women, women from different religions, cultures and beliefs, women from rural and urban areas. The campaign should also acknowledge that violence against women is the main structural expression of inequality between women and men. Moreover, poverty and gender inequalities marginalize women and increase the risk of violence, while at the same time violence against women results in poverty.

[1] i.e. The White Ribbon Campaign, developed the European Institute of Gender Equality (EIGE).

The campaign should be provided with adequate resources for its development, implementation and evaluation.

The year of focused activities on ending violence against women should t**arget a wide-range of decision makers and stakeholders** -including the wider public, victims, perpetrators, EU decision-makers, EU Member States, professionals, media, trade unions, local authorities, civil society and the business sector- and propose strategic targeted actions for each of them.

The European Commission should organize an **Inter-ministerial Conference on violence against women and girls** to foster the commitment of EU Member States Governments to take concrete actions.

The EU year of focused activities should convene positive and concrete messages and inspire and lead people and stakeholders to further action. It should also provide information to victims about their rights and accessible support services.

We strongly believe that The European Commission should put in place an **EU Women's Helpline number** for all women and girls victims of violence. An EU Women's helpline number, referring victims to the specialist women's helplines in the country where they live, is an important measure to improve women's access to adequate support, including for women moving cross-border inside the EU whether voluntary or as victims of human trafficking. The European Commission should ensure that the national helplines are financially supported to provide an adequate service.

Furthermore, an effective and sustainable **prevention strategy** must be in place at EU level, involving all relevant actors in a coordinated approach. In order to coordinate such action and allow for long-term consistency the EU should appoint an **EU Coordinator** who will be accountable for the EU action and will also act as representative of the EU to the Committee of the parties at the Council of Europe once the Istanbul Convention is ratified by the EU. Such team will ensure that the EU meets its obligations of the Istanbul Convention by putting in place a **coordinating body to end violence against women**.

An **EU monitoring framework** needs to be put in place in order **to assess the implementation of the EU strategy on the eradication of all forms of violence against women and girls** in Europe and eventually the implementation of the Istanbul Convention at EU level. Relevant European Institutions and Civil Society Organisations must be part of this framework, as per the experience of the EU monitoring framework of the implementation of the UN Convention on the rights of people with disabilities at EU level. Financial and human resources should be provided to the framework in order to ensure its efficient working.

The European Commission must ensure the **continued monitoring and measurement of the prevalence of violence against women at EU level**, following on from the first survey conducted by the Fundamental Rights Agency in 2014. Additionally, policy and legislative progress must be monitored at EU and national level by all relevant EU institutions/bodies, involving experts on violence against women and girls at grassroots level.

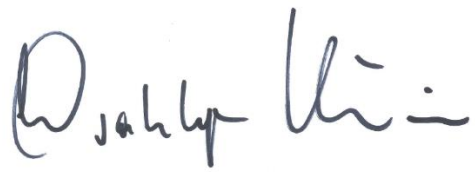
The EU year of focused actions against violence should be **supported by additional, specific and sustainable funding**, as a complementary initiative to the Daphne Programme. The EU campaign must also provide financial and other support to awareness raising activities at EU and national level. Funding for awareness raising activities at national level should fund Member States and Civil Society Organisations, including women's organizations, working to end VAWG at European and national level.

In this regard, the European Coalition to end violence against women and girls welcomes the EC restricted grants for awareness-raising and education activities aimed at preventing and combating violence against women. However, we regret that this call was open only to governments and that cooperation with civil society NGOs and women's organisations was not made compulsory.

We also regret the fact that the next call for the DAPHNE to promote access to justice and support of victims of gender-based violence, also includes in the same call the treatment of perpetrators. It is really important that the work with perpetrators does not have the same source of funding as the work with women and girls who are victims of gender-based violence. Resources to provide support and access to justice to victims are scarce and there is a concerning lack of women's support services in many EU countries (especially Eastern and Southern European Countries). Therefore, the priority of the call and the projects granted under the call, should be on providing empowering support to victims in the first instance.

We trust that you will give these issues your utmost attention and we would also would like to request to have a meeting with you in order to further discuss these proposals and the EC initiative of the year of focused actions against violence against women in 2017.

Yours sincerely,



Edith Schratzberger-Vécsei
President of the European Women's Lobby
On behalf of the European Coalition to end violence against women and girls which includes the following civil society networks:

AGE Platform Europe; Amnesty International; BPW-Europe Business and Professional Women; COFACE –Confederation of Family organisations in the European Union; ; End FGM- European Network; European Disability Forum (EDF); European Forum of Muslim women (EFOMW); European Network against Racism (ENAR); European Network of Migrant Women (ENoMW); European Network on Religion and Belief (ENORB); European Roma Information Office (ERIO); European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC); European Women's Lobby (EWL); European YWCA; European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA); International Alliance for Women (IAW); ILGA-Europe - The European Region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association; Mental Health Europe (MHE); Men Engage Alliance; PICUM - the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants; Social Platform; Transgender Europe –TGEU; WAVE Network -WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE EUROPE-; World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS).


AGE
Platform Europe


AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL


BPW
EUROPE


cofacе
CONFEDERATION OF FAMILY ORGANISATIONS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION
FAMILIES EUROPE


End FGM
EUROPEAN NETWORK


EUROPEAN
DISABILITY
FORUM


EUROPEAN
FORUM OF
MUSLIM
WOMEN


enar


EUROPEAN NETWORK
OF MIGRANT WOMEN


enorb
European Network on Religion & Belief


erio
European Roma Information Office


CONFEDERATION
SYNDICAT
EUROPEAEN
TRADE UNION


EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPEEN DES FEMN


European
YWCA


FEANTSA


ILGA
EUROPE
Equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual,
trans and intersex people
in Europe


UF
FRA
GII
JUS


MenEngage Alliance
working with men and boys for gender equality


M·H·E
Mental Health Europe


PICUM
PLATFORM FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON
UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS


socialplatform


TGEU


WAVE


WORLD ASSOCIATION
OF GIRL GUIDES
AND GIRL SCOUTS