

TO GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Brussels, 28 October 2019

Dear **Member of the Government/Title or Name**,

We are writing to you regarding the proposed Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme in the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027, and more specifically regarding the allocation of funds to gender equality and combating violence against women and girls within this Programme.

Equality between men and women is a founding value of the EU. Yet, gender inequality and gender-based violence are still widespread within the EU. In recent years, an increasingly [organised](#), [visible](#) and [well-funded](#) opposition to women's rights and gender equality has risen. This [backlash](#), combined with an overall undermining of EU fundamental values, a shrinking civic space and lack of funding for civil society, are threatening the progress achieved towards gender equality and hindering the critical work done by women's rights organisations and defenders. We believe the EU can make a real difference through this Programme, by providing crucial support to women's rights organisations at local, national and transnational level, particularly to those working in challenging contexts.

Ms Ursula von der Leyen has committed to make gender equality a priority and to put forward a Gender Equality Strategy. These commitments would remain empty rhetoric if not properly resourced. **We therefore call on **Member States/Name of country** to support increased funding to the Rights and Values Programme, particularly for civil society organisations, and sufficient and earmarked funding for gender equality and combating gender-based violence within this Programme.**

We welcome the inclusion of positive elements in the [provisional agreement](#) following negotiations with the European Parliament, notably: the inclusion of gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting, gender impact assessments, and indicators disaggregated by sex; an additional strand on Union Values; a sub-strand on Gender equality; a sub-strand on Gender-based violence; and the recognition of the need to adopt an intersectional and multidimensional approach to combat gender-based violence, as well as the need to support women's rights organisations.

For this ambitious Programme to have the strongest impact, it is crucial now to **allocate adequate budget** (Art. 6) to it. Therefore, we further call on **Member States/Name of country** to ensure:

- An increase of the **total amount** allocated to the Programme to €1.834 billion, as requested by the European Parliament. The €642 million currently proposed by the European Commission will be insufficient given the continuous attacks on EU fundamental values and the shrinking civic space. An increase is even more necessary now that the creation of the Union Values strand should be appropriately funded and not come at the expense of other strands. Finally, we find it paramount to ensure that a similar budget is allocated internally as well as externally (see the NDICI budget) to fund EU action and ensure internal/external coherence.
- Sufficient and **earmarked funds for civil society organisations**, as asked by the European Parliament (Art. 6).

It is also absolutely crucial to allocate **sufficient and earmarked budget for gender equality and combating gender-based violence** within the respective strands. Given the estimated €226 billion that violence against women costs every year according to [EIGE](#), it is high time the EU invests more, and more transparently, in preventing it.

This should be ideally done through **independent budget lines**: the Daphne strand should be allocated an independent budget (as mentioned in the Preamble, para. 10).

Member States should at the very least agree on the **allocated percentages** requested by the European Parliament in Annex - I of its [position](#) adopted on 17 April 2019. In this case, the European Commission should respect these percentages when implementing the Programme, and a strong and transparent monitoring mechanism should be put in place, allowing oversight from the European Parliament.

In the absence of such measures, it would be impossible for the EU to assess how much it is spending for gender equality and the EU would fail to respect its commitment to implement gender budgeting.

In line with the percentages included in Annex - I, we call on **Member States/Name of country** to ensure:

- at least €72.6 million dedicated to the **sub-strand on Gender equality**, within the Equality, Rights and Gender Equality strand (15% of 484 million);
- at least €193.6 million dedicated to the **sub-strand on Gender-based violence**, within the Daphne strand (40% of 484 million).

We sincerely hope that our requests will find in you a strong ally. With your help, the EU can become a place where women and men can equally thrive, free from coercion, violence and discrimination.

We thank you very much for your kind attention and please do not hesitate to contact us, should you need any further information.

This letter was signed by 11 civil society networks representing over 520 organisations.

