

Ms Věra Jourová

European Commissioner for Justice, Consumers
and Gender Equality
European Commission
Berlaymont
rue de la Loi, 200
1040 - Brussels

30 November 2015

Dear Commissioner,



I would like to thank you for the letter you addressed on 26 October 2015 to our President Emma Marcegaglia to draw our attention to the European Equal Pay Day of 2 November. This date is a sound reminder of the long road already made and ahead of us to achieve gender equality in Europe.

If there is still a lot of work to do to close the gender pay gap, we think that more recognition is needed of the progress made over the last decade. Today, the gender pay gap stands at 16.4% on average in the European Union. It stood at around 25% in 2002.

This progress reflects the increasing women's participation in the labour markets during the 90s and subsequent years. But more progress is needed in this area, notably to allow men and women to better reconcile work and family life and to make gender neutral career choices.

Reducing the gender pay gap therefore relates to better reconciliation policies, which in our view are mainly the responsibility of the Member States. As you may know, we agreed together with the other European social partners to address these two inter-related issues as part of the 2015-2017 EU social dialogue work programme. In this light, BUSINESSEUROPE stresses the need for the Commission to take into account the autonomous work of the social partners in this area before making further steps on its own initiatives. We feel that a dedicated meeting between the Commission and the EU social partners to discuss this is necessary as part of the ongoing 1st stage consultation of the European social partners.

On the link between the gender pay gap and discrimination, we have doubts that pay discrimination is responsible for up to half of the gender pay gap as you suggested in your letter. We would be glad if you could share with us the analysis this is stemming from. In our view, the gender pay gap does not indicate or mean discrimination, or an absence of equal pay for equal value work. And the existing EU and national legislative frameworks are adequate to prevent and address gender discrimination where it occurs. At the same time, employers are actively engaged in the design of modern pay systems, thereby aiming to ensure gender neutral pay systems in line with the diversity of national industrial relations systems.

Achieving gender equality in practice and higher employment participation of women in the labour markets will also depend on EU and national efforts to promote diversity in employment and at the workplace more generally. In this respect, following earlier discussions between BUSINESSEUROPE and your cabinet, we are pleased to invite you or a member of your team to a roundtable on "**Business practices on how to improve diversity**" to be held on **Thursday 4 February 2016 from 9h to 12h30** at the BUSINESSEUROPE's premises in Brussels.

We will send you or your designated representative further information prior to the date, as well as a detailed agenda. For any question, please contact Maxime Cerutti, Director for Social Affairs, at m.cerutti@businesseurope.eu.

Considering the overlap with issues that are the responsibility of Commissioner Thyssen, we will send her a copy of this letter.

Yours sincerely,



Markus J. Beyer