

To Commissioner Helena Dalli

Sent by email

Dear Commissioner Dalli,

I am contacting you in follow up to our recent phone call and to encourage you to raise with President Von der Leyen the need for the EU to take account of the gender-differential impact of COVID-19 in the development of responses, policies and the targeting of resources.

There is a stronger gender dimension to the current crisis. Not only are the majority of workers in health services women, a job that puts them at highest risk but so are the majority of workers in cleaning and supermarkets who all too often have their health and safety put last.

The evidence is also mounting that the economic impacts of COVID-19 will hit women harder, as more women work in low-paying, insecure and informal jobs.

As more Member States enact closure of schools and childcare facilities to contain the spread of COVID-19, women's ability to engage in paid work faces extra barriers. In this time of crisis women are facing the unfair and sometimes impossible choice of giving up their children so that they can continue to support emergency and essential services. The usual families supports are not available as the need for self-isolating of people over 60 means that many grandparents are also faced with impossible choices.

When households are placed under strain and as self-isolation and quarantine are employed, the risk of domestic violence tends to increase. Reports from some impacted communities are showing that COVID-19 is driving similar trends right now.

As representatives of women working and leading in our workplaces, families and communities we are calling on you to ensure that women's needs and realities do not fall through the cracks, even as we are trying to get more data and knowledge about COVID-19.

We ask you to raise the need for mitigation strategies that specifically target the economic impact of the outbreak on women workers. In particular by:

- Targeting measures on protecting jobs and incomes – this means ensuring that any resources to help business are made conditional on those businesses protecting the jobs and incomes of workers, examples include Tripartite Agreements that protect the pay of workers such as in place in Denmark (see link to ETUC webpage for more information).

- Urgent priority support for measures to provide childcare for workers who are providing emergency and essential services.
- Ensure that emergency support benefits and other income supports are adequate and cover all workers regardless of their employment contract or self-employment / gig or platform work. Additional measures to help workers to manage hardships in paying rent, utilities and other bills and buying food.

Moreover we call on you and your Cabinet to use this time to prepare legal and other initiatives that will build women's economic resilience to deal with this and future shocks, so that they will have the resources they need for themselves and their families. Gender equality at work should be a corner stone of the future world of work and this means that any arguments from various sectors that the proposal for a Directive on Pay Transparency should be seen as an option for when times are good must be robustly rejected. Fair, equal, collectively bargained wages will be even more important to secure a fair way out of the emerging economic crisis.

Keep well.

Yours sincerely,



Esther Lynch
Deputy General Secretary