

To Jean-Claude Juncker and Günther Oettinger,
President of European Commission and European Commissioner for Budget and Human Resources,

Cc Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President of European Commission

Brussels, 4th September 2017

Dear President Juncker and Commissioner Oettinger,

We welcome the European Commission's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy '*A better workplace for all: from equal opportunities to towards diversity and inclusion*' published on 19th July 2017. It is a significant milestone for the European Commission to acknowledge the importance of promoting a diverse workplace. The concrete measures in this strategy vis-à-vis the inclusion of women, staff with disabilities, LGBTI staff and older staff are promising and demonstrate the European Union's role as champions of equality and diversity.

However, we, the undersigned organisations, are writing to express our deep concern with the decision to exclude staff belonging to racial, ethnic and religious minorities as a specific target group in this strategy and the failure to plan targeted measures to improve racial, ethnic and religious diversity at the European Commission.

As organisations we are committed to the notion that equality for some is incomplete without equality for all. Our organisations represent individuals with complex and intersectional identities. We therefore cannot propose to advance the rights of some groups whilst ignoring those of racial, ethnic and religious minorities. This could entail a serious gap in protection for staff belonging to racial, ethnic and religious minorities and may send the wrong signal to other employers in the EU.

President Juncker's mission letter dated 12 July 2017 tasked Commissioner Oettinger with:

"Developing a diversity strategy for the personnel and administrative policy of the Commission, taking into account the excellency and high motivation of the European civil service and administration, to reflect the diversity of our society in terms of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation."

By not specifically tackling discrimination based on race, ethnic origin and religion, this strategy falls short of this mission and overlooks one of the most pressing concerns of diversity and inclusion in the European Commission today. This omission sends the message to current and future racial, ethnic and religious minority Commission employees that their concerns will not be a priority of this administration.

The European Commission has been widely criticised for under-representation of racial, ethnic and religious minorities within its workforce. Many commentators have argued that the European Commission must better reflect the diversity of the European society. Particularly at senior levels, the issue of under-representation is acute. This points to a trend of structural discrimination within the European Commission and jeopardises the equal inclusion of racial, ethnic and religious minority staff. Such issues are not addressed in the Commission's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, despite briefings and repeated calls to do so by NGOs and MEPs.

In a European Commission press release dated 19 July 2017, Commissioner Oettinger was quoted:

"We want our staff to be valued and accepted, irrespective of their age, gender, sexual orientation or disabilities. If we build on this diversity, we will be more innovative and deliver better results for our citizens."

It is unacceptable to suggest that value and acceptance is irrespective of age, gender, sexual orientation and disability only. The European Union was founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, *including the rights of persons belonging to minorities*.

We therefore ask that:

- 1) The Strategy is amended immediately to include 'racial, ethnic and religious minority staff' as a target group and specific measures are developed to ensure that the Commission is a fair and equal workplace for this group.

- 2) The specific measures acknowledge and take steps to address the overwhelming lack of representation of racial, ethnic and religious minorities (particularly at senior levels), discrimination within the workplace, and the need for policies for reasonable accommodation of cultural and religious needs for Commission staff. Particular attention should also be devoted to the workplace situation of women belonging to this group.
- 3) In the design of the forthcoming operational action plan the European Commission should seek advice from organisations with expertise on this issue, and consult racial, ethnic and religious minority staff – both men and women. The plan should implement specific measures for this target group.

We look forward to your response, and to a constructive discussion on how to address these concerns.

Yours sincerely,

1. European Network Against Racism
2. Amnesty International
3. African, Caribbean and Pacific Young Professionals Network
4. AGE Platform Europe
5. CEJI – A Jewish Initiative for an Inclusive Europe
6. Center for Intersectional Justice
7. Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe
8. Coexister Europe
9. Eurochild
10. European Disability Forum
11. European Forum of Muslim Women
12. European Jewish Community Centre
13. European Network for People of African Descent
14. European Network on Religion and Belief
15. European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network
16. European Roma Information Office
17. European Roma Rights Centre
18. European Union of Jewish Students
19. European Women's Lobby
20. Euroregional Center for Public Initiatives
21. Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations
22. Hindu Forum of Europe
23. Human Rights Without Frontiers International
24. ILGA Europe
25. Quaker Council for European Affairs
26. Queer Stagiaires
27. Runnymede Trust
28. Seva Jatha
29. United Sikhs