

Professor Danuta Hübner
European Parliament

***2020 International Women Day: Women as Key Agents for Change – Plenary
Statement***

European Parliament, Brussels

March 10th 2020

I applaud the Gender Equality Strategy presented by the Commission. I want to bring your attention to two things today:

First, the Strategy points to a continuing commitment by the European institutions to gender equality as one of the cornerstones of the Union of Values.

It is an important value statement in itself.

We live in an era when the populist, fundamentalist, anti-liberal narration is dominant in some parts of Europe. When populist parties get power, one of their first goal is to diminish the rights of women. Equality is emphatically not their priority, to say the least.

This is why the institutions should see themselves as guardians of our freedoms, of the rights of our citizen – including the women citizens.

When the national governments abdicate, or actively act against their obligations toward half of their countries' citizenry, we have to step in and defend those who have their rights denied or abrogated in any way.

And, secondly: on a more practical dimension of equality strategy.

One of its goals is to reduce the pay gap based on sex.

We have to fight for it together. But we also have to look toward action on the national level. This is the place where we can become really key agents for change. And we should share with others what we do.

In this spirit of sharing I want to say that The Polish Women Congress has been working for a decade now on introducing progressive, women oriented change in Poland.

And just few days ago it presented a project, first in Poland, of a bill, that would limit the wage differentials between women and men . The pay gap in Poland now stands at 19 %.

Presenting such a project is a strong signal that women in Poland see themselves as agents for change, even in a not so supportive political climate.

But closing the glaring pay gap should not fell victim to a progressive and a conservative division, and even more not to a fundamentalist backlash, present in ALL European countries.

Closing a pay gap is an act of simple justice toward 50 percent of European society.