

Professor Danuta Hübner

“Recovery Must Be Gender Inclusive”

European Gender Equality Week in the European Parliament

AFCO Committee meeting

European Parliament, Brussels (online), 27 October 2021

Gender equality is firmly embedded in the EU Treaties and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The EU, its institutions, and the Member States are bound to ensure that gender equality perspective is incorporated into policy-making.

Gender Equality Week is a time when we take stock of what we do as parliamentarians and what we still need to do to better respond to the expectations put on us by the women of Europe and all those who care about equality.

Thank you, Gwendolyn Delbos Cornfield, for your work on behalf of our Committee and for your comprehensive report on gender mainstreaming in the Parliament and in AFCO.

It is useful to look at what we must do in the European Parliament, at our commitment to gender equality in a broader context.

COVID induced crisis was tough for women. It pushed many women out of the labor market. Many lost their professional carriers and salaries. It is hard to see whether they will ever get them back.

Gender skills gap grew further. Upgrading digital skills of girls should be a priority.

Gender pay gap is huge. Pension gap is even higher.

On the multilateral platform of the Conference on the Future of Europe 85% of participants are men. And last, but not least, there is still much smaller number of women in decision making bodies.

All that increases the need for progress now and for moving our part of the world closer to real parity.

Recovery must be gender inclusive, or it will lose some of its effectiveness. We must ensure that the gender equality which appears in many National Recovery Plans is truly implemented.

Pandemic is one more lesson proving that real parity can only be achieved through binding measures, accompanied by public – private joint efforts and legislative interventions.

It does not come as surprise that the current populist discourse in some member states of the European Union takes its strength also from denigrating women, degrading them as persons and political actors.

Populists and autocrats in democracies in distress cannot come to terms with a fact that women form a core of the pro democratic forces.

And let me conclude with a proposal. Since AFCO is the committee responsible for the institutional aspects of the enlargement, we should consider inviting both the responsible authorities and representatives of civil society fighting for gender equality in the countries of Western Balkans.