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RUE DE LA LOI, 200  
B-1049 BRUSSELS  
TEL. (+32-2) 298 16 00

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Ares(2011) link 827112

*Dear Ms Fischbach-Pyttl,*

*Thank you for your letter dated 28 July which was also addressed to my colleagues Commissioner Olli Rehn and Commissioner László Andor.*

*The European Commission considers that Member States' current public budget consolidation programmes are indispensable as part of efforts to preserve Europe's economy and to secure future growth and jobs. To complement these consolidation programmes, there are policies that contribute to limit the social costs, in particular by mitigating the impact on the most vulnerable groups.*

*Most of the responsibility for the implementation of these policies lies within the national prerogatives of the Member States. However, the European Union has taken an active role in promoting such policies in a number of areas. Some of these policies are Active Labour Market Policies which enhance the employability of the most vulnerable groups and help the unemployed back to work; fiscal measures to reduce the cost of labour; measures to fight undeclared labour; the extension of the entitlements to unemployment benefits or the enhancement of the participation of women in employment.*

*The Commission has regularly monitored the impact of the crisis on employment among various population and age groups, including women, and various sectors in a number of publications such as the yearly Employment in Europe (EiE). The forthcoming 2011 edition is intended to offer a better understanding of the impact of the crisis in terms of poverty and social exclusion. Where relevant, it will provide data broken down by gender.*

*With an eye to meeting the 75% employment target set in Europe 2020, the Commission has urged the Member States to set national employment sub-targets, including for women, in their National Reform Programmes. The country-specific recommendations assess progress made by individual Member States and highlight the most urgent problems in terms of boosting jobs and growth in each country. The implementation of the country-specific recommendations is monitored closely by the Commission services. To that end, they use indicators agreed with the Member States<sup>1</sup> under the European Employment Strategy. Where relevant, data is analysed by gender.*

*Ms Carola Fischbach-Pyttl  
General Secretary  
EPSU  
45 rue Royale, Box 1  
B - 1000 Brussels*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=477&langId=en>.

*As regards the gender pay gap, equal pay for equal work and work of equal value is one of the main priorities of the Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015. The Commission has decided to continue the information campaign on the gender pay gap in 2011. It aims to raise public awareness of the different causes of the gender pay gap (one of the causes we highlight is the undervaluation of women's work) and to explain how it can be tackled. These actions are reinforced with the institution in 2011 of an annual European Equal Pay Day which will allow us to see the evolution of the gender pay gap over time.*

*In order to support these actions it is important to count on reliable statistics on earnings. These are based on the Structure of Earnings Survey (SES). The data concerning public administration and the public sector is not covered by legislation and therefore the transmission from the Member States of this data is optional. But for the available data, all variables in the SES can be broken down by gender. The same applies to employment statistics, where all variables of the annual and quarterly Labour Force Survey are available for breakdown by gender. Furthermore, in each Working Group Eurostat reminds countries to complete the data collection as regards breakdowns, coverage etc.*

*Finally, as regards the future reform of the EU public procurement directives, the Commission will have to make a reasoned and balanced choice, taking into account the variety of opinions expressed during the public consultation launched by the "Green Paper on the modernisation of EU public procurement policy - Towards a more efficient European Procurement Market". We envisage allowing procurers to make better use of social and environmental considerations in public procurement, while avoiding the introduction of compulsory obligations on "what to buy" and the imposition of additional administrative burdens on contracting authorities and economic operators thus ensuring full respect of the principles of non-discrimination and transparency. This approach will permit better support for the common societal goals, including gender equality.*

*Yours sincerely,*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'Z' shape with a horizontal line extending to the right.