

Directorate-General for Internal Policies of the Union
Directorate for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs
Secretariat of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

To the Chairperson(s) of the Committee(s) concerned

Dear Colleague,

For many years now the European Parliament (EP) has been celebrating International Women's Day (IWD) with a special event bringing together parliamentarians from across Europe. We decided to continue this important tradition, this year with extending our reach to the national parliamentarians outside of the EU and working together with our partner institutions in a broader geographical setting in order to collaboratively combine our efforts and impact relevant discourses in a more direct manner.

Women's participation in economy retains global salience. Though women's contributions to economy and science must be recognised and celebrated, the fact remains that in this changing world, the shift to inclusionary economy is not progressing as planned by the pledges of policy-makers. Further to the differences in the rate of participation for women and men in the labour market, gender gaps are sustained in today's labour markets, most notably in payment and pensions. Other gaps are also evident in the ability of women and men to balance private and professional lives, undertake entrepreneurship roles, be appointed in top management positions and on company boards, and participate in science and engineering professions. Each of our countries has made certain advances in some of these areas, and therefore we should use this opportunity to discuss what we as policy-makers can do further to unlock and utilise the potential contributions of the half of our working-age population to our economies.

Hence, on the occasion of the 2017 International Women's Day, the EP's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) would like to invite Members of the National Parliaments of the EU Member States, the enlargement countries, the countries in the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood and supranational parliamentary assemblies to attend an interparliamentary committee meeting on the theme:

"Economic Empowerment: Let's act together!"

The overarching theme of economic empowerment will further be more focused through discussions and workshops which will be co-hosted by our partner institutions. The theme is furthermore in line with the 2017 UN Commission on the Status of Women: *Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work*, representatives of which will be present as well, thereby ensuring that the voice of our participants reaches the highest levels of global decision-making. FEMM IWD 2017 will provide an international forum to the national gender equality leaders for exchange of experiences and best practices in advancing women's economic situation, while also accentuating the issue on the European and global equality agenda.

We are therefore very pleased to invite up to four Members of the corresponding committee(s) of each National Parliament (two from each chamber in the case of bi-cameral Parliaments) to attend

this event on **Wednesday, 8 March 2017 and Thursday, 9 March 2017 in the European Parliament in Brussels.**

In view of preparing this meeting, a short questionnaire will be made available to you, to guide the contributions for the discussion. We would welcome your written contributions ahead of the event, which would then be collated and distributed to the participants. They will also be used as important input to the FEMM's current own-initiative report on "*Women's Economic Empowerment in the Private and Public Sectors in the EU*".

Practical details regarding the meeting will be forwarded in due course to your Parliament's representatives/services responsible for relations with the European Parliament.

We sincerely hope that you will be able to accept our invitation and we are looking forward to welcoming you to the European Parliament on 8 and 9 March 2017.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Blinkevičiūtė', written in a cursive style.

Vilija BLINKEVIČIŪTĖ
Chair of Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality