



## EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development

Human Development and Migration  
Acting Director

Brussels,  
devco.b.4(2016)3713781

Dear petitioners,

**Subject: Please attend the Girls' Education Forum and commit to a plan to get every girl learning**

Thank you for your e-mails to Commissioner Neven Mimica concerning the "Girls' Education Forum 2016: An Equal Right to Education", organised by the UK's Department for International Development in partnership with Global Citizen and CHIME FOR CHANGE in London on 7 July 2016. The event should help raise awareness and the global ambition on girls' education, in line with the Sustainable Development Goal 4, which we fully support.

Gender equality is a clear priority for the European Union (EU). The EU promotes various measures and actions for gender equality and empowerment of women and girls in both its internal and external policies, most specifically through the *Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019* and the *Gender Action Plan in External Relations 2016-2020*. Gender equality dimension is also mainstreamed in the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation with Member States in Education and Training (ET 2020), through which the EU and its Member States work together to tackle *inter alia* the gender gap in education and promote more gender-balanced choices in education. Moreover, in March 2015 EU Education Ministers approved the Paris Declaration on "Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education", which also strengthens the promotion of gender equality.

Our new *Gender Action Plan in External Relations 2016-2020* is a comprehensive, robust and results-oriented blueprint for EU action in partner countries, especially in developing, enlargement and neighbourhood countries, including in fragile, conflict and emergency situations. It will strive to make our work on the ground more effective so as to deliver concrete outcomes and improvements for girls and women worldwide. It promotes policy coherence with internal EU policies, in full alignment with the EU Human Rights Action Plan, and it holds us all to account on its delivery.

*The Gender Action Plan in External Relations 2016-2020* includes four pivotal areas of action. The first one is about institutional culture shift – about how the EU delivers, integrating a gender equality perspective in all its activities and promoting stronger leadership on gender issues at all levels. The other three are thematic and focus on:

- ensuring physical and psychological integrity for girls and women, to prevent and combat any form of violence or harmful practices against them;
- promoting social and economic rights and empowerment of girls and women, to ensure their full access to economic resources, employment and services, including full enjoyment of the educational and health systems;
- strengthening girls' and women's voice and participation, including in decision-making processes that affect their lives at family, community and political levels.

One of the key factors for girls' and women's empowerment in all segments of life is education. In the EU development cooperation, we accompany our partner countries in their efforts to reform their educational systems, in line with the ownership principle, and stress the importance of equity in education through policy dialogue that informs all our interventions. Indicators for education programmes are always disaggregated by gender in order to achieve greater gender balance with our programmes.

Since 2004, the EU has helped 300,000 female students enrol in secondary education and contributed to boosting the enrolment in primary education to 90% between 1990 and 2011, which translates into a total of 13.7 million new pupils. We have seen how education can give girls and women a much stronger voice and also help them strengthen their roles in public, economic and private life.

This is why it is indeed crucial to continue fervently promoting an ambitious education agenda for girls at the global level so as to achieve Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this respect we welcome the "Girls' Education Forum 2016: An Equal Right to Education" and its initiative to develop a shared vision and priority actions to deliver on girls' education, engage the wider public - particularly the young people - and also showcase what works.

Due to other previously undertaken commitments, Commissioner Mimica will unfortunately not be able to attend the Girls' Education Forum 2016. At the same time, rest assured that through his continuous efforts and leadership at EU level on gender equality issues he will keep supporting all actions aimed at getting every girl into school, learning and finishing education.

Yours sincerely,

Jean-Louis VILLE