

## Appeal from the German Confederation of Trade Unions and the German Women Lawyers Association

to the Equality Ministers of the EU Member States

upon the occasion of their informal meeting within the scope of the German Presidency of the Council of the EU on 19/20 November.

Dear Ministers,

The International Labour Conference in June 2019 ultimately concluded an international agreement which sets binding minimum standards for combating sexual harassment in the ILO Convention (No. 190). This convention has established a definition of sexual harassment and violence which applies worldwide for the first time in history. This definition applies not only to the workplace but also to the world of work as a whole.

The German Confederation of Trade Unions (*Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund*, DGB) and the German Women Lawyers Association e.V. (*Deutscher Juristinnenbund e.V.*, djB) are convinced that the provisions of the convention must now be implemented into peoples' actual lives quickly in order to improve the protection offered to employees in reality.

Europe should lead the way here, and ultimately make good on the commitment that they made in their Gender Equality Strategy for the 2020–2025 period. Therein, this is stated as follows: 'To address violence and harassment in work contexts, the Commission will continue to encourage Member States to ratify the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention on combating violence and harassment in the world of work [...].'

To ensure that men and women can effectively defend themselves against violence and sexual harassment in the workplace, the EU must empower its Member States to ratify the ILO Convention as soon as possible. Only then can the states initiate ratification of this on a national level and implement the ILO Convention (No. 190) within their national legislation.

Indeed, the European Commission had already submitted an appeal to this effect in January 2020. However, a few of the countries did not support the adoption of the decision within the Council, and therefore the authorisation process was shelved and has not been revisited since.

This state of affairs cannot remain as it is: The COVID-19 crisis has shown that there is an urgent need for action, to protect women in particular from violence. Girls and women run a far higher risk of becoming a victim of sexual violence than men, both within Europe and worldwide. 33% of women in the EU have already experienced physical and/or sexual violence at least once, and 55% have been sexually harassed.

Dear Ministers,

It's high time that the EU made some progress on this issue so that women especially will soon be able to invoke the ILO Convention (No. 190) and demand that their rights be upheld, following its ratification and implementation in the EU Member States.

We strongly support your efforts, as the persons responsible for ensuring gender equality in your respective countries, to drive forward the authorisation process at the EU level and, in doing so, to overcome all national and European obstacles that this brings with it. Win over your governments – you can rely on our solidarity.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Reiner Hoffmann'.

Reiner Hoffmann  
President

German Confederation of Trade Unions

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Maria Wersig'.

Prof. Maria Wersig  
President

German Women Lawyers' Association e.V.  
[registered association under German law]