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Subject: Recommendations arising from the second External Evaluation of the European Institute for Gender Equality

Dear Commissioner Dalli, Dear Commissioner Hahn,

As Chairperson of the Management Board of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), I am pleased to write to you and present the recommendations of EIGE's Management Board arising from the second independent External Evaluation of EIGE.

The External Evaluation was carried out in accordance with Article 20 of EIGE's Founding Regulation (Regulation (EC) No 1922/2006) and aimed to assess the impact of the Institute on the promotion of gender equality and shall include an analysis of the synergy effects; address the possible need to modify or extend the tasks of the Institute, including the financial implications of any such modification or extension of the tasks; examine the appropriateness of the management structure in carrying out the Institute's tasks and also take into account the views of stakeholders, at both Union and national levels.

The terms of reference for the External Evaluation were developed by the Management Board and were agreed with the European Commission. The evaluation covers the period from 2015 to 2020 and was overseen by a Steering Committee chaired by the MB Chairperson. Given that the data collection was performed in 2022, the analysis also covers

the 2021-2022 period in some instances, with a view to ensuring the relevance of findings for the nearest future.

The Final Evaluation Report, a copy of which is attached to this letter, was examined by the Management Board at its meeting on 10-11 November 2022, in accordance with Article 21 of the Founding Regulation. This Article requires the Management Board to examine the conclusions of the evaluation and to issue to the Commission such recommendations as may be necessary regarding changes in the Institute, its working practices and its remit.

Preliminary comments

According to the External Evaluation, EIGE is a well-functioning organisation and fulfils the mandate set out in its Regulation. EIGE's expertise and programme of work is key in the promotion of gender equality in the EU. Data and research produced by EIGE is needed to ensure and inform further progress. Stakeholders value EIGE's contribution to the development of effective policies and initiatives. The Index continues to be the main reference within the EU, it is a platform for comparability between Member States (hereinafter "MS") and allows for monitoring the status of gender equality in the EU.

There have been many improvements since the first evaluation of EIGE was carried out in 2015. EIGE has satisfactorily followed up on the recommendations of that evaluation, including the improvements concerning management and governance, efficiency, delivery and outcomes, visibility, and refocusing on the activities which add the most value.

The second evaluation shows that EIGE has improved and followed up on the previous evaluation, however, it is apparent that some key concerns made in the first evaluation are still prevalent, such as the role and function of the Experts' Forum, the functioning of the Management Board (hereinafter "MB") as well as financial and staffing issues.

In general, the MB sees EIGE's role and function as even more important in integrating gender and intersectional perspectives into mitigating the ongoing crisis and recovery efforts as well as the accelerated transition towards a modern, resilient and sustainable Europe. EIGE is best placed to support the EU to ensure that the lessons learnt from the previous economic crisis, when the policy choices had an overwhelmingly disproportionate effect on women and girls, are taken into account. EIGE is the centre of excellence on gender mainstreaming in the EU and has a crucial role in promoting gender mainstreaming in EU institutions and processes, and, by extension, to the MS themselves, through expert advice and analysis.

Conclusions of the independent external evaluation

The evaluation undertook extensive consultation to inform its work and explored the work of EIGE under five EU evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and EU-added value.

It included five case studies on specific aspects of EIGE's work programme: the Gender Equality Index, Gender mainstreaming toolkits, the Experts' Forum, Administrative data collection on gender-based violence and the Gender Statistics Database. Based on its

analysis, the evaluators made some specific recommendations, which are further addressed in this letter.

KEY ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE MANAGEMENT BOARD

While noting the range of recommendations made as part of the evaluation, the MB has chosen to focus on the key structural and strategic recommendations arising from the review. The MB is of the view that these recommendations are central to the effective operation of EIGE and its ability to fulfil its mandate, as well as to carry out many of the more discrete recommendations contained in the evaluation report.

Recommendations to be considered by the Commission

The MB is looking specifically at recommendation No 1: ***Allocate the necessary resources to EIGE that are needed to adequately respond to the increasing requests for technical assistance from the EU institutions and Member States***, recommendation No 14: ***On a strategic level, strengthen EIGE's work on gender mainstreaming*** and recommendation No 20: ***Allocate sufficient human and financial resources necessary to carry out respective tasks***. These recommendations focus on allocating sufficient and adequate financial and staffing resources to EIGE that are necessary to deliver on its mandate, achieve objectives and carry out respective tasks. These recommendations also follow the report findings that pointed out the increasing stakeholder demands for technical support resulting from growing needs and the obligations for gender mainstreaming.

Allocating sufficient and adequate resources

The evaluation findings make a strong case that the current resources allocated to EIGE are not sufficient to fulfil the tasks assigned to it in the Founding Regulation, and this is being amplified by the increasing demand for support from EIGE to the Union institutions and the MS, alongside the specific tasks and operational objectives EIGE is expected to achieve.

The evaluation also found that EIGE's limited size means that human resources are too widely dispersed across a large variety of operational and administrative tasks and functions; the number of positions allocated to each task or function is minimal. This poses an operational and business continuity risk, as any unexpected staff departures or shortages have a significant effect on EIGE's activities.

Ensuring that EIGE has the resources to continue to work effectively and to expand their capacity is a key priority for the MB. In considering this report, the MB took note of the findings of the evaluation report that stakeholders generally agreed that EIGE was under-resourced, but is also mindful of the budgetary constraints in establishing a suitable budget.

The MB is of the view that EIGE requires resources to recruit the necessary experienced staff to carry out its many objectives and priorities. It is important that each area of work should be adequately resourced in order to minimize risks to the operation of EIGE and ensure business continuity.

The MB notes that EIGE has managed financial and staffing resources very well but that unless further resources are allocated, EIGE will not be able to re-prioritize its tasks, which could result in them having to reject stakeholder requests. The MB will continue to monitor the developments and recommend the consideration and prioritizing of the EIGE budget.

Revising the composition of the Management Board

Paragraph 10 of the Common Approach sets provisions for the composition and functioning of the MB. The composition of EIGE's MB does not comply with the EU Common Approach as it does not include representatives from all MS. The MB is central to the oversight of EIGE and ensuring its effective operation.

The evaluation shows that revising the composition of the MB by including representatives of all MS would allow for ensuring the continuity of work and maintaining dialogue with all MS. Also, the creation of an Executive Board based on the current Standing Committee would help to streamline the decision-making process in EIGE and contribute to enhancing efficiency and effectiveness. These changes would result in better alignment with the Common Approach and would contribute to raising the efficiency and effectiveness of EIGE.

The MB is of the view that the Board would benefit from the inclusion of representatives from all MS. However, the MB considers that there are differing approaches which could address the current lacuna where a Member State is not sitting on the MB and that these options should be considered.

Experts' Forum

The previous evaluation identified only a few synergies between the work of the MB and the Experts' Forum and recommended to reconsider its role and functioning.

Several changes took place since to follow up on the recommendations of the previous evaluation. However, despite all the efforts to enhance the role and working methods of the Experts' Forum, the second evaluation indicates that the utility and role of the Forum remain limited.

The evaluation found that the Experts' Forum still struggles to demonstrate a clear added value. The evaluation suggests that securing the excellence and independence of the activities of EIGE could instead be supported by, for example, a scientific committee, ad hoc experts' groups or another fora. However, since maintaining the dialogue and involvement of the MS in the work of EIGE is essential and the Experts' Forum currently is the only body of EIGE that includes representatives from all MS, any significant reform should be carried out together with the revision of the composition of EIGE's MB.

The MB is of the view that despite the efforts following the previous evaluation, the added value of the Experts' Forum continues to be challenged, and hence, strongly recommends that the composition, role and working methods of the Experts' Forum is revised.

Opening EIGE's Founding Regulation

In its' consideration of the recommendations outlined above, the MB is conscious that formally addressing these recommendations may require formal amendment to EIGE's

Founding Regulation. Given the scope for broader implications of this, the MB has concluded that a risk assessment would be appropriate to further inform discussion and would ask the Commission to contribute support and expertise to this process.

Recommendations aimed at EIGE management

The evaluation presents a range of recommendations guiding EIGE's management to improve the operational functioning and efficiency of EIGE. These recommendations include a variety of issues of which the MB specifically supports the follow up of recommendations No 12, 15 and 23.

Recommendation No 12 on developing an organizational strategy to strengthen the intersectional approach

According to the External Evaluation, EIGE has made major steps in applying the intersectional approach to data collection, analysis and reporting. Nevertheless, an organizational strategy for enhanced intersectionality could allow for a more coherent approach across EIGE's activities and a commitment to continuous improvement. All actors in the gender equality field are developing their thinking and understanding of intersectionality and the MB thinks that EIGE could benefit from drafting an organizational strategy on the intersectional approach.

Recommendation No 15 mapping and reviewing the needs in the area of gender mainstreaming of the EU and national level stakeholders with policy-making and budgetary competences. Against the available resources, EIGE should consider the work on 'toolkit development' against other viable options to satisfy stakeholders' needs (more direct technical assistance, emerging policy areas that may require specific competence development for gender mainstreaming, etc.)

The evaluation found that EIGE was effective in meeting the general objectives defined in its Founding Regulation and in complying with its tasks. EIGE is also effective in meeting its strategic objectives. EIGE has been found to be particularly effective in meeting its first strategic objective of providing high-quality research, data and tools to support decision-making by EU and national policymakers. Specifically, EIGE's stakeholders were largely satisfied with the quality of the services and outputs produced by EIGE in 2015-2020.

An increasing demand for EIGE's expertise in gender mainstreaming is expected to continue growing in the near future. However, due to the limited capacities in this area, EIGE should consider other options to meet stakeholders' needs.

Recommendation No 23 on building on EIGE's accumulated credibility and expertise to create larger networks

The evaluation recommends EIGE to increasingly embed its' work on gender equality within larger policy programmes, following the priorities of the Commission's agenda, as it emerged in the chapter on Relevance. According to the External Evaluation, EIGE is already taking steps in the right direction: it quickly reacted to the Covid-19 pandemic, offering gender analyses of its developments in terms of public health, employment, and economic hardships. Also, EIGE's recent focus on the European Green Deal represents another step in the right direction. However, stakeholders suggested that EIGE could become more

involved in other policy areas. Further work should be coupled with better dissemination efforts to ensure that existing knowledge reaches EIGE's stakeholders.

The MB is of the view that these valid recommendations would apply at an operational level to EIGE and would encourage the management of EIGE to ensure their implementation in an appropriate manner. The MB will oversee and monitor the implementation and continue the dialogue with EIGE management on the measures needed to follow up on the recommendations.

CONCLUDING WORDS

Dear Commissioner Dalli, Dear Commissioner Hahn,

The MB of EIGE, drawn from the authorities of the MS, considers the work and role of EIGE as central to efforts to address gender inequality, and the importance of EIGE comes through strongly in the second independent External Evaluation.

The MB is committed to ensuring that EIGE can continue to carry out its work efficiently and effectively, and the External Evaluation is a useful tool to identify measures which can add to the operation of EIGE and the scope of its work.

The MB avails itself to remain available to the Commission to provide further clarity on any matters raised in the External Evaluation or in this letter.

Yours sincerely,



Tanja Auvinen
Chairperson
Management Board

Annexed

- Final evaluation report – Second independent external evaluation of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE/2020/ADM/04)