14 May 2018

Dear Baroness Goldie,

During the Committee stage of the EU (Withdrawal) Bill on Monday 19 March and at Report stage on Wednesday 25 April you raised an issue on the EU programme funding, with a specific focus on how it relates to the Government’s work to tackle domestic abuse. I am sorry that I did not respond to you at the time during the Committee and Report stages and I apologise for the delay in writing to you.

Currently, the EU provides funding through the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Fund to promote non-discrimination, combat racism, xenophobia, homophobia and other forms of intolerance as well as promoting rights and equality. These are fundamental rights and freedoms in our democracy.

The financial settlement has now been signed-off by both UK and Commission negotiators in a draft Withdrawal Agreement and welcomed by the EU-27 at the March European Council. Under the terms of the financial settlement the UK will remain in the budget in the years 2019 and 2020 and benefit from the implementation of the budget as if it had remained a Member State. This means that any UK recipient – public or private – who would have benefited from funding from EU programmes over the current budget cycle will continue to receive that funding.

In the event that the Withdrawal Agreement is not ratified, the guarantee that the government made to recipients in 2016 will come into effect. This guarantee covers structural and investment fund projects signed before we leave the EU, so long as they are good value for money and in line with domestic strategic priorities and the payment of awards where UK organisations successfully bid directly to the European Commission on a competitive basis for EU funding projects while we remain in the EU.

In the case of structural funds, each government department will be accountable for ensuring that value for money and domestic priorities drive the way their departments commit EU funding. These conditions will only be applied in such a way that the current pipeline of committed projects are not disrupted.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]
All bids for direct bid programmes submitted before EU Exit, such as for the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Fund, will be covered by the guarantee.

The UK Government is committed to doing everything it can to end domestic abuse, and as you highlighted during debate, we are currently consulting on a package of legislative and non-legislative measures to transform our response to these repugnant crimes.

We have committed £100 million in funding from 2016-2020 through the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy, and this funding includes £17m awarded to 41 local areas through the VAWG Service Transformation Fund. We have made progress, and in the ten-year period between 2007 and 2017 we have seen a 63% rise in the number of convictions for VAWG offences. However, there is still much more to do, which is why we are bringing forward a new package of work to tackle domestic abuse. I encourage you to contribute to the consultation and make your views known, and welcome your comments on how international and domestic funding streams can best complement one another.

Following the debate on Monday 19 March, the Home Office has made contact with departments across Government to highlight this important issue. Many departments have an interest in EU funding and the government is currently considering what could replace them once we have left the EU. Your contributions have been helpful in reinforcing the importance of the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Fund as part of this work.

I hope you find this letter helpful. I will also send a copy to those Peers who spoke to both amendments and will also place a copy in the House library.

Yours sincerely,

Annasari Ali-Behien

BARONESS GOLDSIE

Baroness Lister of Burtersett
House of Lords