



Dear Mrs Reding,

The European Commission has decided 2013 will be the year of Europe's people and their rights. As Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights & Citizenship, you have launched an online questionnaire on the obstacles we face when we try to exercise our rights. Sadly, your questions make no reference to violations of key fundamental rights. Unless we enjoy these, we're also denied access to the very rights you're enquiring about. But despite the EU's obligation to respect and promote human rights, it's simply turning a blind eye to violations in EU countries. This means it's falling far short of protecting our human rights.

There's no shortage of EU laws or powers to defend human rights. The problem is a desperate lack of political will-power. All of us deserve to live safe from human rights violations so we can enjoy our rights free from fear and pointless constraints. We want the Commission to use its existing powers **boldly** to tackle today's defects and make a tangible difference for human rights in Europe.

Commissioner, it's time to stand up for the rights of **everyone** in the EU. Please listen when we answer the questions you've forgotten to ask!

Two of the gravest human rights deficits in the EU, which also deny people access to other rights, are discrimination and violence against women. You ought to have asked **better** questions like:

- ***Have you suffered discrimination at school or work?***
- ***Have you, your mother, or friends suffered a violent attack because they are women?***

Millions of people throughout the EU struggle to get education, jobs and homes and many can't move around freely. Why? Because the rising tide of intolerance is denying Romani people housing, preventing Muslims from getting jobs, and is overlooking homophobic bullying in schools, to cite just a few examples. Some countries simply aren't applying the EU's existing anti-discrimination law properly, and even that doesn't offer the same protection against all kinds of discrimination. So millions of people are exposed to discrimination with no hope of justice.

A quarter of European women are victims of physical violence, and one in ten endures sexual violence at least once. An estimated half-million women and girls in EU countries are living with the after-effects of female genital mutilation (FGM). Another 180,000 are at risk. Health and social workers are frustrated because they lack the knowledge or guidelines to help their clients.

Commissioner, please speak up for **all** of us and ensure you:

- **Play a pivotal role in enhancing Europe's human rights protection. Devise an ambitious EU human rights policy which tackles existing defects and redresses violations**
- **Fight discrimination whomever it affects. This means efficiently monitoring how EU countries apply anti-discrimination law, and more forcefully closing gaps in the safety net by enhancing the EU's anti-discrimination standards**
- **End violence against women, including FGM, as the Commission promised in 2010, deploying a comprehensive strategy and action plan, developed with community-based organisations**