



YLVA JOHANSSON

MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION
HOME AFFAIRS

Rue de la Loi, 200 B-1049 Brussels
Tel. +32-2 295 01 70
cab-johansson-contact@ec.europa.eu

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Honourable Members of the European Parliament,

Thank you for your letter of 20 October 2021 addressed also to Executive Vice-President Margrethe Vestager, Vice President Margaritis Schinas and Commissioners Věra Jourová, Thierry Breton and Didier Reynders.

Combating child sexual abuse in all its forms both offline and online is of high priority to the Commission. Taking a holistic approach to protecting children from sexual violence, as mentioned in your letter, remains of the utmost importance.

The EU Strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse adopted in July 2020 announced eight initiatives to implement and develop the right legal framework, strengthen the law enforcement response and catalyse a coordinated multi-stakeholder action in relation to prevention, investigation and assistance to victims.

The upcoming legislative proposal announced in the Strategy will help us to better combat and prevent child sexual abuse. We want to clarify roles and responsibilities online: we plan to ensure that companies do their part by mandating them to detect, report and remove child sexual abuse online, and we want to establish a dedicated EU centre to prevent and combat child sexual abuse. The EU centre will play a key role: it will facilitate the work of online platforms in detection, reporting and removal of child sexual abuse online, and at the same time ensure that these efforts are not misused to target other content.

The Centre will support EU Member States and all stakeholders in prevention of these crimes, and support for survivors. It will act as a hub of expertise for all aspects of prevention and victim support and cooperate with similar Centres around the globe.

Prevention is indeed an important component in stopping the cycle of abuse. The work to develop a network connecting practitioners in this field which would ensure possibility to exchange best practices on prevention programmes across the EU is already ongoing.

The Commission also continues to promote capacity building to ensure that law enforcement have the right training and tools to tackle both offline and online aspects of this crime. Accordingly, the Commission is launching regular calls for projects under the Internal Security Fund-Police. Law enforcement are also supported through the EMPACT (European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats). Under this new policy cycle, crimes of child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation have been included as an EMPACT priority with its own operational action plan and key actions.

In the proposal, we will ensure due respect for confidentiality of communications as an essential component of fundamental rights, including the respect for private and family life, protection of personal data and safeguarding of freedom of expression as laid out by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The Commission will take into consideration the outcomes of the open public consultation as well as the full and thorough impact assessment we are currently carrying out. We will make every effort to ensure that the proposal fully respects the privacy and data protection rights of both children and all others engaging online. We will ensure that any possible mechanisms and procedures are necessary, proportionate, and underpinned by a number of safeguards that strictly limit their purpose.

I would finally like to recall again the commitment made by the Commission to consider solutions that would not prohibit or generally weaken encryption. The Commission is not considering proposing any mechanisms or solutions in its proposal that will break this commitment.

I am also committed to continuing the dialogue with the European Parliament, in the lead up to the adoption of the Commission proposal and of course during the legislative procedure.

Yours sincerely,



Ylva JOHANSSON

Annex: Recipients

Annex

Patrick Breyer MEP

Alviina Alametsä ME

Rosa D'Amato MEP

Pernando Barrena MEP

Saskia Bricmont MEP

Antoni Comín MEP

Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield MEP

Francesca Donato MEP

Cornelia Ernst MEP

Claudia Gamon MEP

Markéta Gregorová MEP

Francisco Guerreiro MEP

Svenja Hahn MEP

Irena Joveva MEP

Petra Kammerevert MEP

Marcel Kolaja MEP

Moritz Körner MEP

Karen Melchior MEP

Clara Ponsatí MEP

Mikuláš Peksa MEP