



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 03/11/2009
C/2009/7940

Mrs Elsa PAPADEMETRIOU

Chairwoman of the Special Standing
Committee on European Affairs of the
Hellenic Parliament

Dear Mrs Papademetriou,

The European Commission thanks the Hellenic Parliament for its opinion on the Proposal for a Council Framework Decision on combating the sexual abuse, sexual exploitation of children and child pornography (COM(2009) 135 final).

The European Commission considers sexual abuse, sexual exploitation of children and child pornography to be serious crimes and is fully aware that the protection of children must be adequately reinforced. Strengthening prosecution of offenders and the protection of child victims is the aim of the proposal for a new Framework Decision in this field.

Therefore the European Commission particularly appreciates the opinion of the Hellenic Parliament, which aims at enhancing some crucial aspects of the proposal, especially with respect to the provision on the non application of sanctions to the victim, on free legal counselling and free legal representation for child victims, and on child pornography as well as the explicit inclusion of all means of communication which can be used to disseminate images of sexual abuse.

The above mentioned comments and suggestions of the Hellenic Parliament will be taken in due consideration by the European Commission during the following phase of the discussion in the competent group of the Council.

As far as the age of sexual consent is concerned, due to the significant difference of national legislation on this subject, the Commission considered that the reference to national law is the only way to deal with the definition of crimes in which such age is generally considered a constituent element.

However, the age of sexual consent is only relevant in a limited number of cases, while full protection to all children below 18 years is ensured in all the crimes in which the use of coercion, or abuse of authority, or abuse of victims' vulnerability, or sexual exploitation is involved.

I hope that these explanations are useful for the Hellenic Parliament and remain available to provide any further information.

Yours sincerely

Margot WALLSTRÖM
Vice-President of the European Commission