



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 17.1.2018
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Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Senato della Repubblica for its Opinion on the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the Protection of Children in Migration {COM(2017) 211 final}.

The protection of children in migration, regardless of status and at all stages of migration is a key objective for the European Agenda on Migration. The Commission therefore supports - through training, guidance, operational assistance and funding - the Member States in their endeavours to provide adequate protection to the most vulnerable categories of migrants and in particular to children.

Over the past years, a growing number of children in migration have arrived in the European Union, many of them without their families. Italy is well familiar with this phenomenon, as a significant number of unaccompanied migrant children arrived to its shores. The Italian Ministry of Labour informs that, as of 31 August 2017, there were 18,486 unaccompanied minors registered as present in Italy. This unprecedented surge in arrivals has put several national reception systems, in particular the Italian, under severe pressure. While the European Union and the Member States' policies and legislation provide a solid framework for the protection of the rights of children in migration, the pressure of large numbers of arrivals has revealed several protection gaps and shortcomings.

In its Communication, the Commission took stock of the existing challenges and proposed a number of priority areas for Member States to focus on, supported by the Commission and European Union Agencies, in order to strengthen the protection of children in migration.

The main aim of the Communication is to foster coordinated and effective interventions by all stakeholders, public and private, to address together the most pressing protection gaps in terms of identification, reception, implementation of procedural safeguards, as well as the establishment of durable solutions. The Communication also identified a need to step up cross-cutting actions at all migratory stages, such as using better and in a more targeted way

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European Union financial support, improving data collection on children in migration and providing training to all those working with children in migration. These actions will be implemented in synergy with those taken by the European Union to protect children globally, including in the countries of origin and transit.

A determined, concerted and coordinated follow-up to the key actions set out in this Communication is required at Union, national, regional and local levels, also in cooperation with civil society and international organisations. The Commission will monitor this process and will report to the European Parliament and the Council on progress achieved in enacting the priority actions outlined in the Communication.

The Commission is pleased that the Senato della Repubblica shares the objectives set out in the Communication and has called upon the Italian government to act for strengthening the protection of children in migration. The Commission also fully supports the priority lines of action that were signalled by the Opinion to the Italian government.

Italy is one of the Member States that has been confronted with the most challenges due to the large number of arrivals of migrant children on its shores, and it is one of the Member States that has shown most its commitment to improving the reception conditions and the level of protection offered to the migrant children. It is necessary to recall in this context the recent adoption by the Italian Parliament of the "Legge Zampa" (Law 47/2017), which constitutes a remarkable step ahead on the way to improving the protection of migrant children. The new law aims to secure the availability of qualified guardians to assist them from the early stages after their arrival in Italy, and it introduces a modern and holistic approach to age assessment procedures that should be both efficient and respectful of human dignity. The Commission will follow the implementation of this Law, and stands ready to support the Italian authorities in this exercise as needed.

The Commission hopes that these comments address the issues raised by the Senato della Repubblica and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

*Dimitris Avramopoulos
Member of the Commission*