

## European Commission wants stronger sanctions against child sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and child pornography

***The European Commission today proposed new rules obliging EU countries to impose more severe punishment on those who sexually abuse children. The proposal also calls for criminal prosecution of activities like 'grooming' (befriending children with the intention of sexually abusing them) and "sex tourism", even if the child abuse has taken place outside the EU. The Commission also wants more to be done to prevent these offences and to protect the victims. It particularly wants to make sure that offenders can get tailor-made treatment so that they don't abuse again.***

*"Child sexual abuse" means children being subjected to horrendous crimes that leave deep scars for their whole lives. "Child sexual exploitation" means using children as sex objects and getting rich out of their suffering. "Child pornography" means images of children suffering sex abuse. Downloading or viewing child pornography on the internet leads to more children being raped to produce those images" said Home Affairs Commissioner Cecilia Malmström. "The response of the EU cannot be too clear or too resolute. Whatever the EU can possibly do against that, the EU must do and will do."*

Studies suggest that between 10% and 20% of children in Europe will suffer one or other form of sexual abuse during their childhood. Some forms of sexual violence are still on the rise. The number of websites devoted to child pornography is growing, 200 images containing child pornography are put into circulation every day. Child victims portrayed in pornography are getting younger, and the images are becoming more graphic and more violent. Some 20% of sex offenders go on to commit new offences after conviction.

Today's proposal would make it easier to fight these crimes through different tools:

- by providing severe criminal sanctions across the EU for sexual abuse and exploitation, as they are serious crimes. New forms of abuse will also be covered, like 'grooming' - luring children through internet and abusing them, viewing child pornography without downloading files or making children pose sexually in front of webcams.
- "Sex tourists" travelling abroad to abuse children will face prosecution when they come home.
- Child victims will be protected against additional trauma resulting from interviews by law enforcement and judicial authorities, or having to be exposed in front of the public in court, and will be helped by a free lawyer.
- Every offender should be assessed individually and offered tailor-made treatment so that they don't abuse again.
- Prohibitions on activities involving contact with children imposed on offenders should be effective not just in the country where they were convicted but across the EU.

- Member States shall take the necessary measures to obtain the removal of internet pages containing or disseminating child pornography. If such websites are difficult to remove, Member States will be obliged to ensure that access to websites containing child pornography can be blocked, as they are very difficult to take down at the source, especially if the site is outside the EU. The proposal will leave it to Member States to decide exactly how the blocking should be implemented but legal safeguards will always apply.

The proposal would replace existing legislation in place since 2004, and build on a proposal made in March 2009 ([IP/09/472](#)). After the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, this proposal has to be reshaped. This will allow the Commission to verify that EU law is correctly translated into national rules and take those countries that are not complying to Court.

They will now be discussed in the European Parliament and the EU Council of Ministers and once approved should be translated into national legislations.

## **Background**

[MEMO/10/107](#)

The Commission today also proposed measures to combat human trafficking ([IP/10/380](#), [MEMO/10/108](#))

**Today's proposal can be found at:**

[http://ec.europa.eu/justice\\_home/news/intro/news\\_intro\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/news/intro/news_intro_en.htm)