



Mr. Brian Crowley, MEP
Mr. Sean Kelly, MEP
European Parliament
Brussels
Belgium

4th July 2013

Dear Mr. Kelly / Mr. Crowley,

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RE: CEF cuts threaten EU's commitment to protect children from online sexual exploitation

In your capacity as MEPs and ITRE Committee members, you are no doubt aware that TEN-TELE¹ deliberations are on-going as to the priorities that must now be addressed, given the vastly-curtailed budget allocated to the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). I realise that there are many conflicting demands but I would like to draw your attention to the threat that **if certain amendments (see next page) are not adopted, essential EU-funded activities to protect children online and disrupt paedophile activities are likely to cease operation.**

Much CEF emphasis lies on growing youth employment, a key element being to establish an environment which allows them to work within the Internet-based digital services sector. Therefore we must encourage and educate children in these technologies; much of which is a national responsibility. However, along with the great opportunities brought by these technologies, there are downside issues relating to children's use of the Internet and the sexual exploitation of vulnerable children online which transcend national competencies.

Because the Internet is global these crimes are perpetrated internationally and require international responses. Children can be subjected to online grooming through services hosted in other jurisdictions and paedophiles exchange images and videos of child sexual abuse across national borders. **Cooperation between member states and coordination at EU level is therefore essential to combat these issues. Up to now, this has been provided by the now-ending EU Safer Internet Programme (SIP).**

Since 2000, through the SIP, the EU has been at the forefront of coordinating action against the distribution of child sexual abuse content, raising awareness of the issues and supporting research of children's use of this rapidly evolving medium to allow better evidence based policy and action development. SIP has part-funded Hotlines in the EU which provide a service for the public to report suspected child sexual abuse content on the Internet.

SIP also granted almost all the funding of INHOPE, (the coordinating body that facilitates interchange of validated notices between Hotlines). INHOPE ensures officially recognised notices get relayed to the jurisdiction where Law Enforcement and Internet Service Provider (ISP) action must be taken to remove the illegal content from the Internet. This requirement

¹ Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on guidelines for Trans-European Telecommunications Networks and repealing Decision No 1336/97/EC



is now embodied in the Child Exploitation Directive² which Ireland and other member states must transpose by mid-December this year.

If CEF budget cuts result in INHOPE being unable to function effectively and Hotlines, often run on a shoestring by NGOs, are forced to close down, then the very structure on which ISPs rely to obtain official notice to act against illegal child sexual abuse content will collapse.

Furthermore the EU generates enormous goodwill stemming from international recognition of its leadership in establishing and supporting the INHOPE network, as this serves not only EU member states but other nations worldwide.

While ISPs (companies providing public Internet infrastructure) rely on notices from the INHOPE network to swiftly delete illegal child sexual abuse content from their servers, these INHOPE-coordinated notices also contribute essential information to law enforcement. This often initiates investigations which can identify perpetrators and lead to abused and endangered children being rescued from the abusive environment.

ISPai respectfully requests that you would vote in the ITRE Committee and at plenary to ensure that these services, essential to making the Internet a better place for children, continue and are further refined and supported into the future.

We look forward to following the progress on concrete negotiations on the TEN-TELE Regulation Guidelines under the Lithuanian presidency and your Parliament ITRE Committee vote on July 9th.

We urge that your vote on Tuesday, 9th July next goes specifically to ratifying **Amendments 6&7 (Eric Banki & Roland Paksas' proposals), Amendment 56 (Jürgen Creutzmann & Graham Watson) Amendments 35, 36, 52, 53 and Amendments 56-62 (with sponsors including Vicky Ford, Angelika Niebler and Claudette Abela Baldacchino).**

Seeing these amendments pass will not ensure funding for the INHOPE network or Hotline.IE - but will allow future negotiations to take place in a backdrop where these services are considered as "Core" and "Building Blocks" and not merely useful appendages to important infrastructural provisions.

I'm sure you will agree that online child protection and safety should always be central to any telecommunications development programme, especially where existing funding from this source is threatened.

Hotline.IE and INHOPE would be pleased to brief you and your ITRE colleagues should you require any further information relating to our work or concerns around the actions to be funded in multi-yearly work programmes of CEF.

Yours sincerely,

<PD Signature>

Paul Durrant, (CEO ISPai & Manager Hotline.IE)

² DIRECTIVE 2011/92/EU OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 13 December 2011 on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA