

31 October 2024

Let's talk about YES, EU!

Dear Presidency, Commissioner Johansson,

In the proposal for a revision of the directive on combating sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child sexual abuse material it is suggested to introduce the concept of lack of consent in the definition of rape concerning **children who have reached the age of sexual consent** (Article 3.9).

We strongly welcome this proposal. Reaching an agreement on including lack of consent in the definition of rape for adolescents is of outmost importance for Finland, Greece, Latvia, Luxembourg, Romania, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.

According to the Fundamental Rights Agency, 1 in 20 women over the age of 15 in EU have been raped. Non-consensual sex is an extremely serious violation of individuals' sexual integrity and must be prevented and combated with full force at all levels, including at EU level.

It should be self-evident in a modern society that sexual acts must be voluntary to be legal. The violation of an individual's personal and sexual integrity should not be dependent on if the perpetrator has used violence, threats or taken advantage of a victim's particularly vulnerable situation or not. Consent must always be given to engage in sexual activity.

We want to ensure that young persons receive as comprehensive legal protection as possible against unwanted sexual acts. Also, transforming societal norms is especially important when it comes to children. If they

learn from a young age that “**yes means yes**”, it will have a great positive impact on society’s view of sexuality and sexual interaction.

We, Finland, Greece, Latvia, Luxembourg, Romania, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden, stand ready to protect sexual integrity of young persons in the EU. In doing so, we need to be ambitious and make sure that the EU legislation brings an added value to the existing regulations. Let’s make consent and the principle of “**yes-means-yes**” an EU standard.

We trust in your support.

Kind regards

Leena Meri, Minister of Justice, Finland

Georgios Floridis, Minister of Justice, Greece

Inese Lībiņa-Egnere, Minister of Justice, Latvia

Elisabeth Margue, Minister of Justice, Minister Delegate to the Prime Minister for Media and Connectivity, Minister Delegate to the Prime Minister for Relations with Parliament, Luxembourg

Alina-Ştefania Gorghiu, Minister of Justice, Romania

Andreja Katič, Minister of Justice, Slovenia

Félix Bolaños García, Minister of the Presidency, Justice and Relations with the Parliament, Spain

Gunnar Strömmer, Minister for Justice, Sweden