



**Jean-Claude JUNCKER**  
President of the European Commission

Rue de la Loi, 200  
B-1049 Brussels  
Tel. +32 2 295 50 33  
jean-claude.juncker@ec.europa.eu

Brussels, 19 JUN 2019  
Ares (2019) 1609480

*Dear Honourable Member,*

*I would like to thank you for your letter denouncing an article and photos published in the Greek newspaper Makeleio.*

*Please let me start by underlining that the Commission condemns any form of discrimination or intolerance since they run counter to the values the European Union is built upon. Gender equality is a fundamental value of the European Union. The principle of equality between women and men is enshrined in the Treaty on the European Union and the Charter of Fundamental Rights.*

*The EU is confronted with new challenges such as backlash on women's rights, anti-gender mobilisation and populist and extremist movements. These movements manifest themselves in sexist and racist hate speech and resistance to the progress made in women and girls' rights in past decades. Combating gender-based violence, including online violence, is one of the five priorities of the Commission's "Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019". This framework sets out the objectives and actions for the Commission's work on achieving gender equality. The Commission therefore ensures, within the limits of its competences, that fundamental rights, including the right to dignity or the right to non-discrimination are respected.*

*./..*

*Mr Dimitrios PAPADIMOULIS, MEP  
European Parliament  
Rue Wiertz, 60  
1047 BRUSSELS*

*E-mail: [dimitrios.papadimoulis@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:dimitrios.papadimoulis@europarl.europa.eu)*

*It remains nonetheless the competence of national authorities to investigate, prosecute and try, in accordance with applicable national legislation, individual cases of alleged hate motivated speech and crime. This includes the assessment of whether a specific incident represents a genuine and serious public incitement to violence or hatred. The Commission is not in a position to replace national authorities, and in particular the competent courts, in such an assessment. This assessment shall, in each individual case, carefully take into account the necessary protection of women and girls on the one hand and the right to freedom of expression which, in line with the case law of the European Court of Human Rights, also applies to expressions and content which “offends, shocks or disturbs the State or any sector of the population”<sup>1</sup>.*

*In order to build the capacity of national authorities to effectively prevent and counter hate speech and hate crime, the Commission has stepped up its work with national law enforcement and judicial authorities, including by providing guidance<sup>2</sup> on best practices and supporting training through targeted funding<sup>3</sup>.*

*Yours faithfully,*

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a stylized 'A' followed by a long horizontal line.

---

<sup>1</sup> Council of Europe – “Media Regulatory authorities and hate speech”, July 2017 <https://rm.coe.int/media-regulatory-authorities-and-hate-speech/16807338f5>

<sup>2</sup> Commission's Guidance note on the practical application of Council Framework Decision on combating racism and xenophobia, available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/document.cfm?doc\\_id=55607](https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/document.cfm?doc_id=55607)

<sup>3</sup> For more information, see [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/grants1/programmes-2014-2020/rec/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/grants1/programmes-2014-2020/rec/index_en.htm)