



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Dear Mr President,

The Commission would like to thank the Austrian Bundesrat for its opinion of 18 September 2009 regarding the Commission's Communication on "An area of freedom, security and justice serving the citizen" {COM(2009)262}, the so-called Stockholm Programme. The Commission welcomes the Bundesrat's opinion and took it into account as part of the discussions on the Stockholm Programme.

Like the Austrian Bundesrat, the Commission considers terrorism and organised crime to be major threats which need to be addressed through an EU-wide security strategy. The internal security strategy will be an important element in the Action Plan for implementing the Stockholm Programme.

The Commission shares the assessment by the Austrian Bundesrat that the principle of mutual recognition should be improved. The Commission will consider the incorporation of appropriate legal safeguards in this area.

The Commission welcomes the importance attached by the Austrian Bundesrat to data protection. The protection of citizens' data within the EU and in its relations with other countries is a priority for the Commission. With respect to the concerns expressed by the Austrian Bundesrat on plans for the European evidence warrant, the Commission recognises the importance of adequate legal protection.

As regards the integration of immigrants, the Commission is fully aware of the significance of this issue. The Commission envisages a joint coordination mechanism to support the efforts of Member States, based on the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

Once the Stockholm Programme is agreed upon, the Bundesrat's opinion will of course also provide valuable input for the Action Plan which is to be adopted during the Spanish Presidency in 2010.

I look forward to developing our policy dialogue further in the future.

Yours sincerely

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Vice-President of the European Commission

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