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**INFORMATION NOTE**

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from: General Secretariat of the Council  
to: Council

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Subject: European Parliament proposal to establish a European Day against Bullying and School Violence  
– *Information from the Presidency*

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Delegations will find attached an information note from the Presidency on the above subject, which has been included on the agenda under "Other Business" for the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council meeting on 24 February 2014.

**European Parliament proposal to establish  
a European Day against Bullying and School Violence**

Following the Written Declaration, under Rule 123 of Parliament's Rules of Procedure, on establishing a European Day against Bullying and School Violence, an issue raised by the Greek MEP Georgios Koumoutsakos as well as by MEPs Alexander Alvaro, Roberta Angelilli, Maria Badi i Cutchet, Keith Taylor and supported by a majority of EP members, it was acknowledged that:

1. Violence is one of the most common violations of fundamental rights, which represents a serious threat to its victims' development and physical and mental health, and prevents their basic needs from being met on a basis of equality;
2. Children are the most vulnerable group in society, and school should therefore offer a safe environment with the child's best interests as its focus;
3. Physical, verbal, sexual and psychological violence, including threats and physical punishment, are flagrant violations of children's right to life, safety and dignity;
4. The Commission is called upon to support the establishment of a European Day against Bullying and School Violence, in order to raise awareness of the serious effects of this phenomenon;
5. The Member States, as States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, are encouraged to take appropriate measures to protect children from all forms of physical and psychological violence, including cyberbullying, and to empower young people, parents, teachers, carers and society as a whole to prevent and combat bullying;
6. The Member States are urged to support lifelong training for professionals working with children and to encourage active participation by young people – inter alia using new technologies – in practising peaceful dispute resolution.

This Declaration, together with the names of the signatories, has been forwarded to the Commission, the Council and the national parliaments of the Member States.

On 4 February 2013 an announcement was made during Parliament's plenary session in Strasbourg that the Written Declaration on establishing a European Day against Bullying and School Violence had been adopted.

The Commission has repeatedly expressed concerns about violence against children, including in school settings. It has also addressed the issue of bullying and cyberbullying in several answers to Written Questions from the European Parliament.

Bullying and cyberbullying can have a severe negative impact on children, and the Commission welcomes actions that strengthen the fight against these phenomena.

Protecting children from exposure to harmful content online and empowering them to deal with risks such as cyberbullying is part of the Commission's 2012 Strategy for a Better Internet for Children. Safer Internet Centres have been instrumental in raising awareness of online risks, including cyberbullying, among children, parents and teachers.

Ever since, parallel measures aimed at raising awareness have been taken in most Member States.

In Greece, for instance:

- An Observatory for the Prevention of School Violence and Bullying was established in 2013 by Ministerial Decision, accompanied by a Steering Committee.
- School violence and bullying was investigated through a nationwide survey which was completed during months April - May 2013.
- The Observatory is located within the Ministry of Education and covers both Primary and Secondary Education.

- The purpose of the Observatory is to provide for the welfare and safety of the school community by combating school violence and bullying. It seeks among other things to record, study, and deal with incidents at an early stage, and to raise awareness and mobilise the entire educational community all at once.
  
- More specifically, the Observatory aims to:
  - design, support and supervise actions to inform and sensitise the school community (students, teachers, parents) and the local community;
  - design specialised training and continuing education programmes for teachers;
  - provide guidance to the school community on identifying incidents of school violence and bullying;
  - develop support networks and supervise the activities of agencies which are associated with the Ministry of Education and work for the protection of children's rights;
  - conduct studies on school violence and bullying;
  - prepare and publish annual statistical reports related to the phenomenon.

Children are rightly considered to be the most vulnerable group in society. A European Day of this kind could help to raise awareness and send out a strong message. It should also be noted that an International Day of Non-Violence exists as a United Nations initiative aimed at promoting non-violence. However, bullying is a specific form of violence which is not always physical and which has a wide variety of implications for both the perpetrator and the victim. It is also a very sensitive social issue, increasingly widespread and of growing importance.

The Presidency supports the European Parliament proposal and calls on the Commission to take action, so that the fight against bullying can be promoted and indeed strengthened by establishing a European Day against Bullying and School Violence.