

*Brussels, 05 May 2025*

**Subject: Remarks by Vice President Antonella Sberna – The EU’s Commitment to Child Protection in the Digital Space**

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Dr. Ernesto Caffo and to all of you for your kind invitation.

Regrettably, I cannot be with you in person today, as I am currently in Strasbourg. Nonetheless, it is a great pleasure to share this message with you.

Today offers a valuable moment for reflection, and I thank you for the tireless work you do every day.

Every conversation we have helps strengthen our collective effort to combat child abuse—an issue that affects some of the most vulnerable members of our society. Each day, we are confronted with distressing accounts of abuse, violence, and the spread of disturbing images and videos online.

Awareness of this crisis is growing, but the road ahead remains long, and we cannot afford to slow down. The rise of new technologies has made this fight even more complex, yet we must remain determined—because behind every shared image, there is a real child, a real story.

As many of you know, I have always been deeply committed to this cause. As a Member of the European Parliament, I view this battle as a cornerstone for the future of our society. The numbers remain alarming—every child is potentially at risk, and we are hearing more and more about cases of online grooming.

We are working relentlessly to reduce online child abuse and to ensure that families are properly informed about digital tools, helping to prevent risks that could jeopardize the safety of our children.

The European Union is making strong progress through comprehensive strategies, enhancing cooperation among Member States, law enforcement, and judicial authorities.

Europe is taking action. Concrete and innovative measures are being introduced to fight online child abuse. The Digital Services Act, for example, includes tools for parental control and age verification—an important first step. Moreover, funding initiatives for platforms that report and remove illegal content are already producing encouraging results.

In addition, the proposed regulation on preventing and combating child sexual abuse online (CSAM) aims to establish a legal framework requiring online service providers to detect, report, and remove such content. The EU’s new comprehensive strategy on children’s rights, along with the European Strategy for the Rights of the Child, are two key policy frameworks designed to better protect children and place their needs at the heart of European policy.

The European Strategy for a Better Internet for Kids promotes coordinated action among Member States, law enforcement, and tech companies. The establishment of a European Centre to Combat Child Sexual Abuse will further reinforce our protection efforts.

Still, many challenges remain—particularly when it comes to protecting children on digital platforms, in unregulated online spaces, and within encrypted messaging services. It is crucial that Europe continues to strengthen its legislation, implementing increasingly effective systems for monitoring and prevention.

I warmly welcome the relaunch of the Child Dignity Alliance, a network that unites institutions, civil society, and the tech sector to protect children’s dignity and fight abuse—especially in the digital world. This is a global challenge, and Italy is well positioned to lead the way, ensuring that every child can grow up in a safe environment, both online and offline. Thanks to your work at Telefono Azzurro, and that of many other organizations, this goal is already coming within reach.

Thank you again for the invitation. I wish you a productive and inspiring continuation of your event.

Hon. Antonella Sberna  
Vice President of the European Parliament