

Brussels, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2009

## **The EU Commission will finance the European Financial Coalition (EFC) to fight child abuse images distribution on the Internet**

***"The European Commission will provide up to 427.000€ of funding for the activities of a European Financial Coalition against child sexual abuse content on the Internet," announced today Jacques Barrot, Vice-president of the European Commission in charge of Justice, Liberty and Security.***

The coalition - led by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre (the UK's dedicated policing organisation for protecting children from sexual exploitation) and funded by the European Commission, - is a public-private informal group including the police authorities, financial operators, internet service providers, NGOs and other partners, whose aim is to work together in the fight against child pornography.

MasterCard, Microsoft, PayPal, VISA Europe and the NGO Missing Children Europe are amongst the founding members of the new coalition and are joined by Allen and Overy and ICMEC - the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children as advisory members to the EFC. On the law enforcement side of the EFC, founding members also include Europol and the Italian National Postal and Communication Police.

The Coalition was launched today at a press conference organised at the Headquarters of the UK law enforcement agency CEOP (Child exploitation and online protection centre), in the presence of Vice-President Jacques Barrot.

The Commission will provide up to 427.000€ of funding for the activities of the coalition, which aims to bring together all partners engaged in the fight against the commercial distribution of child sexual abuse images on the Internet. The Coalition will help to identify and protect victims, locate and arrest criminals – paedophiles as well as those who gain economically from selling images – and, above all, to confiscate the profits from these criminal activities. As a result, buying child pornography by credit card or other electronic payment systems will be prevented. In addition, the Commission will shortly put forward proposals to update and strengthen the Council Framework Decision on combating sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children.

Vice-President, Jacques Barrot, Commissioner responsible for Justice, Freedom and Security, highlighted the importance of this initiative by saying *"I am fully committed to providing the highest possible form of protection for children against all forms of crime and abuse. It is a reality that the rapid growth of the internet has opened up a serious criminal market for images of child sex abuse. The European Financial Coalition will help identify and protect victims, and, above all, confiscate the profits from these criminal activities. However, in order for the Coalition to be fully effective, more partners, including the Member States, need to join it. I am ready to fully support them in their efforts. "*