

DR. CAROLINE LUCAS

Green Party
for the South East of England

Commissioner Rehn
DG Enlargement
The European Commission
200 Rue de la Loi
B1049 Brussels
Belgium

October 2nd 2007

Dear Commissioner,

You may recall that we corresponded earlier this year about the appalling conditions in Romanian orphanages and the treatment of disabled children in particular. It has now come to my attention that there are similar problems in Bulgaria.

BBC Four recently screened a documentary called Bulgaria's Abandoned Children and, although I did not see this myself, I am reliably informed by a number of constituents that it highlighted serious failings with regard to child protection. As well as an apparent absence of trained medical staff or stimulating environment, many of the children were being subjected to physical abuse. The orphanages featured were not heated adequately and young girls were being showered by male attendants. During filming some of the children allegedly died of starvation.

From our previous correspondence, I fully appreciate that national child protection policy is beyond the remit of the EU. Nevertheless, Bulgaria has an obligation to meet certain standards under the Copenhagen Criteria. I would also argue that this treatment is a severe abuse of the human rights of some of the most vulnerable members of society ie disabled, orphaned children and thus is very much the responsibility of the EU.

I would urge the Commission to fully investigate the situation in Bulgaria and, if appropriate, offer guidance and support in order to ensure that the type of cruelty witnessed by my constituents is brought to an immediate end.

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Lucas - Green Party MEP for South East England.