

**Question for written answer E-007099/2015
to the Commission (Vice-President / High Representative)**
Rule 130
Beatriz Becerra Basterrechea (ALDE)

Subject: VP/HR - Girls' and young women's right to education in Sierra Leone

Now that schools have opened again after being closed for eight months due to the Ebola outbreak, the Government of Sierra Leone has announced that it will not allow pregnant girls and young women to attend school or take exams to progress to higher education.

The Minister of Education, Minkailu Bah, has declared that their presence 'would provide a bad example for other innocent girls'. This discrimination affects thousands of girls and young women, since, according to Sierra Leone's demographic and health survey for 2013, 28 % of young women between the ages of 15 and 19 are either pregnant or have a child. In addition, local NGOs are denouncing an increase in the number of rapes reported – 2 200 in 2014 compared to 1 500 in 2013.

Bearing in mind that the EU is Sierra Leone's main development partner and that, according to COM(2010) 491 final, the EU ought to use its policies on development to promote equality between the sexes and women's empowerment, I would therefore ask the VP/HR:

1. What is the VP/HR's assessment of this discriminatory measure adopted by the government, considering that a specific goal for Sierra Leone in terms of the 11th European Development Fund is to improve access to education?
2. What measures will the VP/HR adopt to encourage the Government of Sierra Leone to allow all pregnant girls and young women to attend school?