

**Question for written answer E-001014/2016
to the Commission**

Rule 130

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Subject: Protection of women and children at all stages of their journeys to the EU

International bodies and NGOs have warned that refugee women and children are victims of sexual violence and discrimination, and that they lack protection along routes in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Western Balkans.

This situation has also arisen within camps in Hungary, Croatia and Greece, owing to the climate of impunity that reigns, the insecure facilities and the lack of any action by the governments concerned to prevent sexual and gender violence.

UNHCR estimates that over 50% of the refugees to have arrived in Europe so far this year are women and children, compared to 27% in June 2015. They run the risk of hypothermia, pneumonia and other illnesses brought on by the low temperatures experienced.

In view of this, and since the EU should take urgent action, in line with legislation under the European Common Asylum System and the Treaties, can the Commission state:

1. Whether it will take steps to encourage an upgrading of refugee reception facilities in order to ensure the safety and protection of refugees?
2. Whether it feels that the number of experts dealing with cases of sexual and gender violence needs to be increased at the points where most such cases occur?
3. What steps it will take to address the extreme circumstances in which children are finding themselves?