

**Question for oral answer O-000048/2015
to the Commission**

Rule 128

Iratxe García Pérez, Anna Maria Corazza Bildt

on behalf of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

Subject: Ending the practice of early, forced marriage of girls

All girls and boys have the right to a childhood in which they can play, enjoy their right to education, be protected from harm, abuse and exploitation, and develop their full potential as citizens, as stipulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. But for millions of children childhood is cut short by early, forced marriage, which not only constitutes a violation of children's rights but is also a form of violence against women. It violates girls' right to bodily integrity, autonomous decision-making such as family planning, and freedom from violence, including marital rape – as stated in the UN Beijing Platform for Action and Declaration. Delaying marriage and childbirth can improve social and economic development and protect girls from the risks of HIV infection, death during childbirth and medical conditions such as obstetric fistula.

The EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development, adopted in 2010, calls for gender to be a principal or significant objective of at least 75 % of all new EU-funded projects. The EU Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy, adopted in 2012, identifies the prevention of child marriage as a priority for the European External Action Service and the Member States.

1. What steps has the Commission taken so far to urge the EU and its Member States to sign and ratify the Istanbul Convention?
2. What concrete plan of action does the VP/HR have as regards trade, cooperation and association agreements with third countries, with a view to ending child marriage?
3. Will the dialogue with third countries and regional organisations (in particular the African Union and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) include specific targets and monitoring mechanisms aimed at eradicating early, forced marriage?
4. What initiatives will the Commission support when conducting information and awareness-raising campaigns in communities in which this gender-based human rights violation is practised, in partnership with international organisations and partner countries and in particular by getting girls into school, helping girls to develop skills, raising awareness among parents and community leaders, offering economic support and incentives for girls and their families and supporting laws and policies aimed at ending child marriage?

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