

**Question for written answer E-002662/2014
to the Commission**
Rule 117
Tonino Picula (S&D)

Subject: Combating violence against women

On 5 March 2014 the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights published the findings of a survey conducted in all 28 Member States into violence against women. The data on violence, obtained from interviews with 42 000 women, are more than alarming, showing as they do that one woman in three has suffered physical or sexual abuse since the age of 15. Figures of this kind are utterly at odds with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. One woman in 10 has, since the age of 15, experienced some form of sexual abuse, and one woman in 20 has been raped. Violence against women is, worryingly, one of the crimes least likely to be reported, a fact which further underlines the need to take such measures as might be necessary to ensure that women are properly protected.

Although national policies to combat violence against women are in some respects similar, Member States approach the problem in different ways. Despite the fact that violence against women is an issue debated at EU level, there is as yet no common EU-wide strategy aimed specifically at protecting women from violence. In its debates Parliament has repeatedly called for a strategy to counter violence, including a legally binding instrument. The Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence) and the 2012 EU directive on victims of crime have laid down minimum standards of legal protection, but in many cases these are neither suitable nor sufficient.

Following on from its 2010 opinion on an EU strategy on violence against women and girls and from Parliament's efforts to strengthen EU policy in this area, and given the shockingly high number of abused women, what practical steps will the Commission take to further consolidate the legal framework to protect women subjected to violence? Are there any plans for European programmes to raise awareness of the harm that abuse does and to educate people on that point from the earliest age? Will a common European strategy be adopted for the express purpose of combating violence against women and protecting them?