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# The practice of prenatal selection by sex

**Written question No. 685 to the Committee of Ministers**
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Prenatal selection by sex is a practice tacking place in several member States of the Council of Europe, including in Western Europe. It consists of the decision to terminate the gestation of a foetus because of his or her sex. Female foetuses are the main victims of this selection.

Several international bodies and instruments condemn this practice. First, the *Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine* of the Council of Europe and the Resolution on the girl child adopted by the General Assembly of the United-Nations (A/RES/52/106). The Committee of Ministers, in its Recommendation 5 (2002) *on the Protection of Women against Violence*, adopted on 30 April 2002, stated that: *"Member states should: 79. prohibit [...]*pre-natal selection by sex, and take all necessary measures to this end." The Parliamentary Assembly, in its Resolution 1829 (2011) on Prenatal sex selection, as well as the Commissioner for Human Rights in his *Comments* of January 15th 2014 called for the criminalisation of this practice by the member States of the Council of Europe.

However, scientific studies and the British press revealed that couples practice "feminicide" with the complicity of physicians. This practice also exists in Sweden, where the National Board of Health and Welfare *(Socialstyrelsen)* stated that sex-selective abortion by sex is not illegal. The United-Kingdom and Sweden are the two countries in Europe where the legal limit for abortion "on demand" is the latest: 24 and 18 weeks respectively, whereas it is 10 to 12 weeks in most of the countries in Europe.

These are serious questions, raising both a bioethical issue, and also an unlawful discrimination against women, demanding a strong legal answer.

Mr Ghiletchi,

To ask the Committee of Ministers,

What measures does the Committee of Ministers intend to take to make the prohibition of prenatal selection by sex effective in all the member States of the Council of Europe?