

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000294/26  
to the Commission  
Elena Kountoura (The Left)  
(26 January 2026)**

**Subject:** Prohibition of the use of the term ‘parental alienation’ or related concepts in custody, gender-based and domestic violence proceedings in Member States

In recent years, there has been a particularly worrying trend in some Member States regarding the use of the unscientific term ‘parental alienation’ or related pseudo-concepts in criminal and civil court proceedings concerning domestic violence and parental care/custody and contact with children <sup>(1)</sup>.

Given that:

- international organisations have repeatedly warned that the use of these false concepts, which have no scientific basis, leads to the systematic denial of allegations of abuse against women or children, thereby undermining the protection of victims <sup>(2)</sup>;
- the European Parliament has called on Member States not to recognise ‘parental alienation’ syndrome in their judicial practice and law and to discourage or even prohibit its use in court proceedings, particularly during investigations to determine the existence of gender-based violence <sup>(3)</sup>,

Can the Commission answer the following:

1. In which Member States have such unscientific concepts been introduced into legislation or is the use of such unscientific concepts tolerated in judicial proceedings concerning parental care/custody and contact with children in cases involving domestic violence?
2. What measures does the Commission intend to take, in the context of the implementation of the Istanbul Convention and EU law, to ensure that such unscientific concepts are not recognised in Member States’ judicial practice and legislation?
3. Does the Commission intend to propose in the forthcoming Gender Equality Strategy the adoption of guidelines for Member States to avoid the use of such pseudo-terms <sup>(4)</sup>?

Submitted: 26.1.2026

**Answer given by Ms Lahbib on behalf of the European Commission  
(25 March 2026)**

The protection of children’s rights and the prevention and combating of gender-based violence remain key priorities for the Commission.

The Roadmap for Women’s Rights <sup>(1)</sup>, reaffirmed the Commission’s commitment to gender equality and the Gender Equality Strategy 2026-2030 put forward concrete actions contributing to the realisation of the Roadmap’s principles and objectives.

The EU acceded to the Istanbul Convention as regards the parts that fall within the EU’s exclusive competence. The Convention provides the guiding framework to effectively combat gender-based violence.

In the absence of a cross-border dimension, any rules of substantive family law, such as rules governing the custody and parental access rights and principles of child protection, relating to the concept of ‘parental alienation’, do not fall under EU competence.

The landmark Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence <sup>(2)</sup> applies to all victims and recognises the need to protect child victims of domestic violence.

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, the GREVIO Baseline Evaluation Report on Greece (2023), which criticises the fact that the Greek authorities may give legitimacy to the controversial and scientifically unfounded term ‘parental alienation’ as a form of domestic violence.

<sup>2</sup> See EDVAW’s statement ‘Intimate partner violence against women is an essential factor in the determination of child custody’, and the report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, entitled ‘Custody, violence against women and violence against children’. Furthermore, the WHO and the American Psychological Association (APA) reject the use of this syndrome and similar concepts.

<sup>3</sup> See resolution of 6 October 2021 on the impact of intimate partner violence and custody rights on women and children.

<sup>4</sup> Member States should also take effective measures to protect victims on the basis of a harmonised, mandatory risk assessment.

<sup>(1)</sup> European Commission — A Roadmap for Women's Rights (COM/2025/97 final).

<sup>(2)</sup> Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on combating violence against women and domestic violence, OJ L, 2024/1385, 24.5.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1385/oj>.

The definition of a victim includes children who have suffered harm because they have witnessed domestic violence. This will give children a more central role in criminal justice procedures.

The next meeting of the EU Network on the prevention of gender-based and domestic violence <sup>(3)</sup> on 26-27 March 2026, entitled Turning Best Practices into Action: Combating Domestic Violence more efficiently in the EU, will include a session on Child custody, visitation rights and domestic violence, giving Member states the opportunity to share best practices in this field.

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<sup>(3)</sup> [https://commission.europa.eu/eu-network-prevention-gender-based-violence-and-domestic-violence\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/eu-network-prevention-gender-based-violence-and-domestic-violence_en).