

International Women's Day: Zero tolerance for female genital mutilation

Ahead of International Women's Day on 8 March, European Commission Vice-President Viviane Reding and Commissioner Cecilia Malmström have today joined human rights campaigners to call for zero tolerance for female genital mutilation (FGM). The Commission organised a high-level roundtable event to discuss how the European Union can help Member States to eradicate the practice – thought to have affected several hundred thousand women in the EU. The Commissioners were joined by Members of the European Parliament and the world's leading anti-FGM campaigners, including 'desert flower' Waris Dirie, Khady Koita and Chantal Compaoré – First Lady of Burkina Faso.

In parallel, today the **Commission launched a public consultation** calling for views on how best to develop measures at EU level to fight female genital mutilation. The consultation will run until 30 May 2013. The Commission has also announced **EUR 3.7 million** in funding to support Member States' activities to raise awareness of violence against women and a further **EUR 11.4 million** for NGOs and others working with victims.

"Today the European Commission is joining forces with some very inspiring women to call for zero tolerance for female genital mutilation. This is an extremely harmful practice which violates the human rights of women and girls. The EU will fight to end female genital mutilation – not only on International Women's Day, but on all 365 days of the year," said Vice-President Reding, the EU's Justice Commissioner. *"I call on everyone with an insight in this area to share their views on how to best tackle female genital mutilation."*

"Female genital mutilation is a severe violation of human rights. The risk of being subjected to this practice should constitute a valid reason for granting asylum or humanitarian protection. In our asylum legislation, we are paying particular attention to women and girls who are seeking asylum due to the threat of physical mutilation. Women and girls who are at risk of female genital mutilation, or parents who fear persecution because they refuse to have their child undergo this practice should be given suitable protection in Europe," said Cecilia Malmström, EU Commissioner for Home Affairs.

New report on FGM

Today's high-level roundtable discussion on FGM comes as the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) releases a new report on female genital mutilation in the EU, following a request by Vice-President Reding. The report concludes that FGM is by nature a global, transnational phenomenon. While there is no hard evidence of FGM being practised in the EU, thousands of women and girls living in the EU have been subjected to the practice either before moving to the EU or while travelling outside the EU.

The report finds that there are **victims, or potential victims, in at least 13 EU countries**: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Spain, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden and the UK. However, it also highlights the need for rigorous data as a basis for tackling the problem.

Eradicating FGM will require a range of actions focusing on data collection, prevention, protection of girls at risk, prosecution of perpetrators and provision of services for victims, says the report. Victims of FGM can rely on protection under the EU's Victims Rights Directive, adopted on 4 October 2012, which explicitly refers to FGM as a form of gender-based violence ([IP/12/1066](#)).

But while **all EU Member States and Croatia have legal provisions in place to prosecute the perpetrators of FGM**, either under general or specific criminal laws, prosecutions are very rare. This is due to difficulties detecting cases, gathering sufficient evidence, a reluctance to report a crime and, above all, a lack of knowledge about female genital mutilation.

EIGE has therefore also published a report identifying **a series of good practices from nine Member States** in combating FGM. The report gives examples of successful policies and projects, including:

- A **Dutch** project to prevent FGM by bringing together healthcare professionals, police, schools, child protection services and migrant organisations;
- A **French** organisation which focuses on bringing prosecutions in cases of FGM by acting as a 'civil party' in trials;
- A specialised health service in the **UK** with 15 clinics that cater to the specific needs of women affected by FGM.

Background

Female genital mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the female external genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons, as defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

FGM is carried out for cultural, religious and/or social reasons on young girls between infancy and age 15. FGM constitutes a form of child abuse and violence against women and girls; it has severe short-term and long-term physical and psychological consequences.

In the EU countries where women victims or girls and women at risk of FGM live, the practice mainly occurs during a stay in the country of origin and very rarely in the territory of the EU.

The Commission adopted a 'Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015' on 21 September 2010, setting out a series of priorities for gender equality, including ending gender-based violence. The strategy included a specific reference to female genital mutilation. On 6 February 2013 which is the International Day against Female Genital Mutilation, the European Commission reaffirmed its strong commitment to eradicating this extremely harmful practice ([MEMO/13/67](#)).

For more information

[European Commission – Ending gender-based violence](#)

[Report by the European Institute for Gender Equality – Female genital mutilation in the EU & Croatia](#)

[National factsheets – Female genital mutilation in the European Union & Croatia](#)

Public consultation -

[Homepage of Vice-President Viviane Reding, EU Justice Commissioner](#)

Twitter Hashtag: **#zeroFGM**

[Download the press release in pdf format](#)

[Access the press release in Europa website](#)

Annex 1: Estimated number of women victims, potential victims, and girls at risk of FGM (where studies are available)

Country	Criminal law provisions against FGM	Estimated no. of women with FGM (date of study)	Estimated no. of girls at risk of FGM	Estimated no. of women from FGM-affected regions living in the EU (where no FGM-specific data is available)
Belgium	Specific	6,260 (2011)	1,975	
Bulgaria	General	No data available	No data available	
Czech Republic	General	No data available	No data available	
Denmark	Specific	No data available	No data available	15,116
Germany	General	19,000 (2007)	4,000	
Estonia	General	No data available	No data available	
Ireland	Specific	3,170 (2011)	No data available	
Greece	General	1,239 (2006)	No data available	
Spain	Specific	No data available	No data available	30,439
France	General	61,000 (2007)	No data available	
Italy	Specific	35,000 (2009)	1,000	
Cyprus	Specific	No data available	No data available	1,500
Latvia	General	No data available	No data available	
Lithuania	General	No data available	No data available	
Luxembourg	General	No data available	No data available	
Hungary	General	170-350 (2012)	No data available	
Malta	General	No data available	No data available	

Netherlands	General	29,210 (2013)	40-50 each year	
Austria	Specific	8,000 (2000)	No data available	
Poland	General	No data available	No data available	
Portugal	General	No data available	No data available	9,263
Romania	General	No data available	No data available	
Slovenia	General	No data available	No data available	
Slovakia	General	No data available	No data available	
Finland	General	No data available	No data available	4,400
Sweden	Specific	No data available	No data available	91,420
UK	General	65,790 (2007)	30,000	
Croatia	Specific	No data available	No data available	

Source: EIGE: Female genital mutilation in the European Union and Croatia, except from the Netherlands: Marja Exterkate - Female Genital Mutilation in the Netherlands. Prevalence, incidence and determinants (2013)

Annex 2: Support organisations for victims of FGM in the Member States

Name of the organisation	Country	Website
Beratungsstelle für sexuell missbrauchte Mädchen und junge Frauen	Austria	http://www.maedchenberatung.at/

MAIZ - Autonomes Integrationszentrum von und für Migrantinnen	Austria	http://www.maiz.at/
Miteinander Lernen - Birlikte Öğrenelim	Austria	http://www.miteinlernen.at
Netzwerk österreichischer Frauen- & Mädchenberatungsstellen	Austria	http://www.frauenberatenfrauen.at/
Verein Orient-Express - Beratungs-, Bildungs- und Kulturinitiative für Frauen	Austria	www.orientexpress-wien.com
Viele - Verein für interkulturellen Ansatz in Erziehung, Lernen und Entwicklung	Austria	http://www.verein-viele.at
ZEBRA Zentrum zur sozialmedizinischen, rechtlichen und kulturellen Betreuung von Ausländern und Ausländerinnen in Österreich	Austria	http://zebra.or.at
Groupe pour l'Abolition des Mutilations Sexuelle féminines asbl (GAMS)	Belgium	www.gams.be
INTACT	Belgium	www.intact-association.org
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Български център за джендър изследвания	Bulgaria	www.bgrf.org
Unit for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture, Humanitarian Affairs Unit of Future Worlds Center	Cyprus	http://www.urvt.org/
Asante Kenya, nadační fond.	Czech Republic	www.asantekenya
Amnesty International Denmark	Denmark	www.amnesty.dk
Femmes de la terre	France	www.femmesdelaterre.org

Tostan France	France	www.tostanfrance.com
Frauenrecht is Menschenrecht	Germany	www.fim-frauenrecht.de
Aktion Weißes Friedensband e.v.nein nein	Germany	www.friedensband.de
Amnesty International Deutschland	Germany	www.amnesty.de
Deutsches Netzwerk zur Überwindung weiblicher Genitalverstümmelung	Germany	www.netzwerk-integra.de
Internationale Aktion gegen die Beschneidung von Mädchen und Frauen e.V.	Germany	www.intact-ev.de
Terre des Femmes - Menschenrechte für Frauen e.V.	Germany	www.frauenrechte.de
Stop Mutilation e.V. - Gegen die Beschneidung von Mädchen und Frauen in Europa und Afrika	Germany	www.stop-mutilation.org
Target e.V., Ruediger Nehberg	Germany	www.target-nehberg.de
AkiDwa : Akina Dada Wa Africa	Ireland	www.akidwa.ie
Irish Refugee Council	Ireland	http://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/
Somali Human Rights Advocacy Group in Ireland	Ireland	
Vincentian Refugee Centre	Ireland	http://www.vrc.ie/
Fundacja Inicjatyw Psychospołecznych (suspended)	Poland	www.fundacjafip.org.pl (not valid any longer)
Associação Para o Planeamento da Família	Portugal	www.apf.pt
Associação Portuguesa de Apoio à Vítima	Portugal	http://www.apav.pt

Instituto Marquês Valle Flor	Portugal	http://www.imvf.org/
Associação de Mulheres Contra a Violência	Portugal	www.amcv.org.pt
Africa Advocacy Foundation	United Kingdom	http://www.a-af.org/
Birmingham & Solihull Women's Aid	United Kingdom	http://www.bswaid.org/
Black Association of Women Step Out	United Kingdom	www.bawso.org.uk
Child Rights Information Network	United Kingdom	www.crin.org
Daughters of Eve	United Kingdom	http://www.dofeve.org/
Equality Now	United Kingdom/Kenya/USA	http://www.equalitynow.org
FGM National Clinical Group	United Kingdom	http://www.fgmnationalgroup.org/contact_us.htm
Manor Gardens Centre	United Kingdom	www.manorgardenscentre.org
Southall Community Alliance	United Kingdom	http://southallcommunityalliance.org/
WomenKind World Wide	United Kingdom	http://www.womankind.org.uk