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Strong laws and prosecution are powerful deterrent factors when it comes to female genital mutilation (FGM) in the EU. Family members fear the consequences of the law more than the consequences of not having it done. However, in order for the laws to work, police and justice must enforce them and prosecute those responsible for their crime. These are some preliminary findings from an upcoming study by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE).

“Our research shows how important a strong legal framework is for the prevention of female genital mutilation. However, simply having a law in place is not enough. Training for people implementing the law is vital, combined with awareness raising of the legislation amongst the communities involved”, said Virginija Langbakk, Director of EIGE, ahead of the international day of zero tolerance for female genital mutilation

In recent years, the legal framework against the practice has strengthened, partly due to the introduction of the Istanbul Convention, which recognises that female genital mutilation exists in Europe. So far, 16 out of 28 EU Member States have ratified it, while the European Union has signed it.

Awareness campaigns are the other crucial element to ending female genital mutilation. EIGE's research found that when people were more aware of the legal and health consequences, they were less likely to practice it. Among communities who are unaware of the law, there is a greater risk of it happening. Involvement of these communities is essential for efforts to end the practice to be successful.

In the EU today, women from FGM-practicing countries continue to seek asylum. It is important that professionals (for example, immigration officers, health practitioners and teachers) who are in contact with women asylum seekers from these countries are properly trained to notice and assess the potential risk of female genital mutilation. These people are in a good position to spot women and girls at risk and provide support to those who have already undergone the practice.

EIGE aims to increase knowledge and data on female genital mutilation in the EU. The research will further complete the picture of the risk of FGM by adding comparable data from six Member States (Belgium, Cyprus, Greece, France, Italy and Malta) to previously conducted risk estimations (Ireland, Portugal, Sweden and Germany).

To gain a better understanding about female genital mutilation, in 2017 EIGE conducted 24 focus group discussions with first and second-generation women and men originating from FGM practicing countries who reside in the EU. The complete study results will be published later this year.

Further information

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[EIGE's earlier studies on FGM](#)

[EIGE's good practices on combating FGM](#)

[EIGE's Gender Equality Index report on violence against women that includes female genital mutilation](#)

European Commission's [joint statement](#) and [MEMO](#) on FGM

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