



ENDING FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION: WHERE DO WE STAND IN EUROPE?



WHO WE ARE

END FGM is a European campaign, led by Amnesty International, working in partnership with 15 organisations in EU member states. **The campaign aims to put female genital mutilation (FGM) high on the EU agenda and to echo the voices of women** who have undergone FGM and those at risk of being subjected to it.

The Campaign's work is based on the principles of human rights based approaches, which frame female genital mutilation as a violation of human rights, aim at empowering rights-holders (women and girls who have undergone or are at risk of FGM) and seek an active and meaningful participation of those directly affected by the practice of FGM.



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OUR PARTNERS



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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Dr Christine Loudes
END FGM European Campaign Director

Almost five years ago, ten organisations of various sizes and approaches, speaking many African and European languages, came together in Brussels with the hope of bringing attention to the invisible women and girls living or arriving in Europe.

The plight of women and girls who are at risk of female genital mutilation (FGM) or have been subjected to FGM is often unknown to the people who ought to know - their doctors, gynaecologists, midwives, teachers, social workers,

asylum officers and policy makers. Owing to its founding principles of gender equality and respect for fundamental rights, the European Union has the power to change this. So we gathered expertise from our partner organisations and women and girls who have lived through the practice. Together, we identified **five areas** (detailed on page 15) in which the EU could end FGM and protect women and girls. We raised support for action by engaging decision-makers, holding events at national and European levels, reaching out to the media and engaging the public.

As a result, we've created a **community of supporters** to reach our goal for an EU action plan to end FGM.

With our network of 15 partner organisations and our fearless

strong voices guiding us, we have raised over 42,000 signatures of support for EU action, commitments of 50 Members of the European Parliament, creative contributions of five international artists and designers and built alliances with key civil society actors. Thanks to all of you we have successfully placed the issue of FGM on the highest fora in Europe.

So, what has been achieved so far?

- The issue of FGM is recognised in key political declarations and policy documents of the European Parliament, European Commission and European Council.
- Six European Commissioners committed to prioritize prevention of FGM and launched a public consultation to develop EU measures to fight FGM in Europe and abroad.

- The first ever mapping study on FGM in Europe by the European Institute of Gender Equality establishes the situation across Europe, highlights good practices and offers recommendations to bridge the gaps in knowledge, policy and action.
- The victim's rights directive offers concrete protection mechanisms and access to justice and support services to women and girls subjected to FGM. The revised directives on asylum address FGM as a gender-based persecution and require specific healthcare support for FGM-affected asylum seekers.

These are commendable developments in which we have played a key part, with our partners and allies, by contributing to the decision-making process. So far, this ensures that the affected women and girls are protected on paper. In reality, we have miles to go before these policies are translated into practice.

The implementation of the directives and a concrete action plan from the European Commission are yet to be seen.

So, we must continue.

The economic crisis has hit Europe hard. This has had a devastating impact on human rights organisations, including our partners, who are entrusted by the governments to provide essential services to FGM-affected women and girls on stretched resources.

Each year, 180,000 girls and women in Europe are estimated to be at risk of FGM.

Postponing the protection of these women and girls means limiting their future.

On 27 February 2013, the Campaign hosted a day of action in Brussels.

We started the conversation with a seminar at the European Parliament, co-hosted by Vice-President Isabelle Durant. This was followed by a gala at Bozar, the Centre for Fine Arts, to exhibit four spectacular creations made by rose

petals with signatures of our 42,000 supporters. With each creation, the artists and designers sought a creative response from the decision makers attending from across Europe.

This publication offers an insight into the discussions and commitments made on this day, in the context of the END FGM European Campaign's work since its inception in 2009. We also look at the future through the lens of Europe's commitments and the potential for action. Finally, I urge you to read about our strong voices, who inspire me on a daily basis and will hopefully encourage you to join us and demand a safe future for all.



VOICES OF EXPERIENCE

Activists speak out against female genital mutilation, for human rights

The END FGM European Campaign offers a space to **women and girls affected by FGM to speak directly to the EU.** Their experiences and the **expertise of our partner organisations** define and guide our calls for European political action to end FGM. On 27 February 2013, they brought their concerns and recommendations to the heart of the EU.

“My work with young people, especially young women, has been focused on empowerment to say no to violence. It is difficult to say no when everyone that you love and respect is saying yes.”

Leyla Hussein, Strong Voice and Founder, Daughters of Eve



“When I first arrived in Ireland, I had to go through a medical check up. There were two nurses there, and I was assisted by a male translator. When they discovered I had gone through FGM, the nurses were in shock and thought I had had an accident. I didn’t understand how they could be so unaware. It was difficult to explain it to the translator. Many of the other asylum seekers had to go through the same difficulties.”

Ifrah Ahmed, Strong Voice and Founder, United Youth of Ireland



Aissatou fled Guinea to protect her daughters from being cut: “I hope I will be able to return to Guinea to continue the work I do in Belgium to end FGM, to save other young girls and mothers from the pain of exile.”

Aissatou Diallo, Strong Voice and Board member, GAMS Belgium



STRONG VOICES

The Campaign has created this platform for individuals with a personal link to the practice of FGM and the courage to speak out. These three strong voices have shared their experiences with journalists, national, EU and UN officials despite threats and other challenges from within their communities.

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Our network consists of 15 diverse community-based organisations across Europe. They protect women and girls' rights through advocacy, direct healthcare and legal support, community engagement, awareness raising and other means.



Naana Otoo-Oyortey MBE, Executive Director of the Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development (FORWARD)

"We have seen evidence of what is possible at national and European level, we have seen political commitment... but above all we have seen that we need to work strategically with communities. We can never win the battle without engaging with those who are most at risk."



"Our organisation was founded in 2006 to provide African women a space to speak about the issues that affect them and their children and to represent themselves directly. This space has given us the opportunity to campaign and raise awareness against FGM."

Virginia Wangare-Greiner, Director of Maisha

"Law enforcement without prevention and the engagement of the community is just not worth it. In the Netherlands, we have based our actions on the needs and initiatives raised by the affected men and women. For example, we created the national health passport, which states the dangers of FGM and the fact that it is a criminal offence in the Netherlands. This helps parents protect their daughters when they return to their countries and face the pressure of their community and their family."

Zahra Naleie, Senior Project Leader, Federation of Somali Associations in Netherlands (FSAN)



THE EUROPEAN UNION ON FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

After over four years of campaigning by the END FGM European Campaign, the issue of **female genital mutilation is recognised as an issue of concern for Europe**. All EU institutions publically state that FGM is a human rights violation and that **women and girls in Europe have the right to be free from this violence**. The first ever study mapping the practice of FGM across the EU was released in 2013. Collectively, the laws on asylum have been strengthened to include specific focus on women and girls fleeing FGM or those already living with FGM. Internationally, the **EU supported the UN General Assembly** on intensifying efforts to combat female genital mutilation.

Read the key remarks made on the day of action in Brussels, by the representatives of each EU institution.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Resolution (14 June 2012):

“Urges the Commission to give specific attention to female genital mutilation as part of an **overall strategy for combating violence against women**, including joint action against female genital mutilation”.



“A multidisciplinary approach is necessary.... We need to work with the affected communities to tackle a problem that is European and international.”

– European Parliament Vice-President
Isabelle Durant

EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND THE EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE

Joint statement by six EU Commissioners:

“We need to complement existing national legislation prohibiting the practice by **raising awareness about the detrimental effects of female genital mutilation** on the psychological and physical health of women and girls and by providing support services for victims.”



“We can do our part at political level through UN, regional

and bilateral pressure. You can count on us both internally and externally”

– Veronique Arnault, Director for Human Rights and Democracy, European External Action Service



“FGM is an unacceptable breach of our values and rights; EU has clear norms to protect gender equality.”

– Aurel Ciobanu-Dordea, Director for Equality, DG-Justice

Funding opportunities for projects in EU countries: “The DAPHNE programme continues to support work against FGM.... The PROGRESS programme will support EU member states to launch awareness raising campaigns.”

EU COUNTRIES

All EU countries have either specific or general laws criminalising FGM, however prosecution alone cannot end such a deeply-entrenched social norm.

8 countries have national action plans specific to FGM, although not all have been supported by the governments.

A number of **promising practices exist in various European countries**, four of which are detailed on page 11.

THE REALITY IN NUMBERS

Learn more:

- Study to map the current situation and trends of female genital mutilation in 27 EU Member States and Croatia, European Institute for Gender equality, 2013
- Too Much Pain: Female Genital Mutilation & Asylum in the European Union – A Statistical Overview, UNHCR, February 2013
- Female Genital Mutilation in the Netherlands: Prevalence, Incidence and Determinants, PHAROS, January 2013

500,000

WOMEN AND GIRLS LIVING IN EUROPE HAVE UNDERGONE FGM
(EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT)

180,000

AT RISK EVERY YEAR

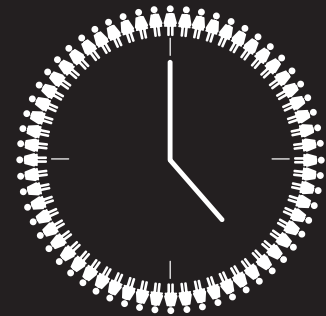
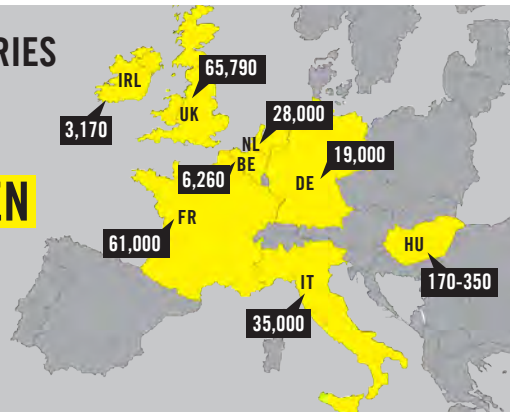
SOME EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

HAVE ESTIMATES OF THE

NUMBER OF WOMEN

AND GIRLS LIVING

WITH FGM



EVERY MINUTE, **5 GIRLS**
ARE SUBJECTED TO FGM IN THE
WORLD (WHO)

WHAT'S

A Europe-wide qualitative and quantitative prevalence study based on a shared methodology

MISSING?

Info on the number of women and girls at risk in Europe, taking into account second generation migrants and specificities of different ethnic communities

An assessment of the impact of policies already put in place to eradicate FGM

UNHCR ESTIMATES

9,000



WOMEN AND GIRLS THAT HAVE UNDERGONE FGM SEEK ASYLUM IN EUROPE

1,000

ASYLUM CLAIMS EACH YEAR ARE RELATED TO FGM

PROMISING PRACTICES IN THE EU

The experience of these EU countries could guide and inspire future European action

BELGIUM

“Stratégies concertées” is a multidisciplinary plan of action developed with community-based organisations.

Objectives:

- Increase the coordination and the quality of the interventions
- Increase the recognition and the involvement of the grassroots organisations

Outcomes:

- Integration of FGM in the national action plan on violence against women in 2010
- Quantitative and qualitative research: 6,260 girls/women have undergone FGM and 1,975 are at risk (1 January 2008)
- Awareness raising campaigns
- Multidisciplinary guidelines and training for health and social workers and opening of special medical units

PORTUGAL

Programmes of Action to Eliminate FGM

Launched in 2009, the government-led Programme of Action strengthens Portugal's role in ending FGM in two ways: internally, it engages in awareness raising, training and support to the affected women and girls; externally, Portugal increases its engagement at the international level to bring FGM to an end globally. The Programme is implemented through an “Intersectorial Group”, composed of equality bodies, international organisations and NGOs. This allows **multidisciplinary action against FGM from perspectives of health, reproductive and sexual rights, immigration and asylum, justice, development cooperation and education.**

THE NETHERLANDS

The chain approach

Since 2006, the State Secretary for Health, Welfare and Sport coordinates all the agencies involved in a holistic strategy focused on preventing FGM. Municipalities are given freedom to create their own chains of authority bodies addressing behavior change and healthcare.

Prevention	Education and awareness raising involving key figures of the communities, midwives, youth workers and asylum seekers
Protection/ investigation	Risk identification by education and youth health care professionals using available reporting methods
Prosecution	Deterrance effect
Provision of services	Provision of appropriate services by health and social workers

ITALY

The law no. 7 of 9 January 2006 recognises FGM as a specific criminal offence and foresees prevention measures, support services for victims, awareness raising activities and engagement with cultural mediators at community level. A commission for preventing and combating FGM has approved two strategic plans. Under the current budget, €3 million is available to regional authorities for various projects, including training of cultural mediators.

A CREATIVE RESPONSE TO FGM



Jerzy Buzek,
Former President of the
European Parliament,
wears the rose petal



Activists prepare to
collect signatures



A.S. Roma football team shows off their
signed petals



Women in the UK sign
the rose petals

ROSE PETALS RAISE SUPPORT FOR EUROPEAN ACTION AGAINST FGM

Offering a vision of a world without female genital mutilation is crucial to set the stage towards positive change. Over **42,446 signatures on paper rose petals** were raised in 2010 across Europe to demand Europe's leaders to end female genital mutilation and protect girls and women. **Four artistic creations empowered with signatures of our supporters** were exhibited through the Art for Action tour.

Joelle Milquet,
Vice Prime
Minister of
Belgium



From left to right: Sonia Villone, Vice
President Amnesty International Italy,
Mara Carfagna, former Minister of Equal
Opportunities, Emma Bonino, current Italian
Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Daniela
Colombo, President of AIDOS

PETAL CREATIONS TRAVEL ACROSS EUROPE

8,000 signed petals were designed into art and design pieces by Walter

Van Beirendonck, Ilaria Venturini Fendi, Adriana Bertini and Nayia Evangelou. Their creations have brought together the demands of people and offer a positive vision of a world free from FGM!

Through the Art for Action tour, the petal creations traveled from **Cyprus to Portugal, Italy** and finally to Brussels in February 2013. At each stop, civil society actors, affected communities, politicians and the media were offered a positive space for dialogue on the challenges and opportunities for a safe future.

Former Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs Giulio Terzi speaks at the Italian Senate



Civil society actors and the artist Adriana Bertini stand next to her mother-child dresses in Lisbon, Portugal

Christina Kaili of Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies speaks to the press at the Parliament of the Republic of Cyprus



COMMITMENTS RAISED BY THE ART FOR ACTION TOUR

Decision-makers at each stop of the tour were urged to take action! The Campaign raised a number of commitments to act at the EU and national levels. Italy confirmed support to its regional bodies and continuation of funding; Portuguese authorities committed to collect data and engage with affected communities; the human rights committee of the Cypriot Parliament promised to engage with health and asylum professionals.



Panel of strong voices, partners and other experts at the European Parliament seminar



Artists and designers with their creations and Strong Voice Ifrah Ahmed at the Art for Action gala.



Malian singer Rokia Traoré offers her musical contribution to the gala at Bozar, Brussels



European Commission Vice-President Viviane Reding (centre) receives the END FGM recommendations and a reflective art piece made by Brazilian artist Adriana Bertini



Walter Van Beirendonck's walking lips sculpture parades through Bozar

IMPACT

The finale in Brussels brought the people's voices to the EU decision makers, some of whom showed their support for **action on FGM in Europe and abroad**. Since then, the European Commission has sought public opinion on potential EU action.

A SAFE FUTURE FOR ALL

WHAT CAN THE EU AND MEMBER STATES DO?

The Campaign recommends a multi-tiered approach for an effective and decisive end to the practice of female genital mutilation.



Data collection

A shared methodology for data collection is needed to build policies and compare progress within Europe



Health

Doctors and health professionals require tools, knowledge and training to deal with the consequences of FGM



FGM and violence against women and girls

While FGM is a particular form of harmful practice, it must be addressed through integrated policies on violence against women and children



International Protection

Women and girl asylum seekers living with or at risk of FGM are yet to be assured protection by the Common European Asylum System



External Relations of the EU

As a global actor, the EU should raise the issue of FGM in its relations with the rest of the world

EU action plan on FGM

In response to the consultation with stakeholders, the European Commission should develop an action plan on FGM incorporating these five key areas while ensuring the engagement of affected communities.

EU strategy on violence against women

There is yet to be comprehensive EU response to the various forms of violence against women in Europe. The European Commission must deliver on its promise to develop an EU strategy on violence against women.

Council of Europe Convention on violence against women and domestic violence

EU and member states should sign and ratify the Council of Europe Convention. It is a comprehensive legal instrument that would address not only FGM but all other forms of gender-based violence.

NEW TOOLS BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE END FGM EUROPEAN CAMPAIGN

“UNITED TO END FGM”: FREE E-LEARNING TOOL FOR ASYLUM AND HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

The UEFGM course aims to improve knowledge about FGM amongst health professionals, asylum officers and social workers in Europe. This project is funded by the END FGM European Campaign and is supported by UNHCR. Register now at uefgm.org.

RESOURCES ON ENDFGM.EU

Gather information and expertise on FGM and violence against women on this free and public space. It compiles hundreds of summarized and downloadable documents relating to international and regional standards, promising practices, guidelines for professionals encountering the practice and political commitments at European and international level.

You can also access studies mentioned in this publication and expert presentations from the END FGM seminar.

FIND US ONLINE: WWW.ENDFGM.EU

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