Concept note

Female Genital Mutilation
online discussion
29 October 2013

**Time:** 10:00 am to 12.30 pm & 14.30 pm to 17:00 pm (CET)
**Place:** EuroGender, eurogender.eige.europa.eu

At the European Union level, Female genital mutilation (FGM) is recognised as a violation of the rights of girls and women, and is a form of gender-based violence involving procedures that include the partial or total removal of the external female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

In all EU Member States (MS), legal provisions dealing with body injury, mutilation and removal of organs or body tissue, are applicable to the practice of FGM and may be used for criminal prosecution. In addition, in some countries, a principle of extra-territoriality renders it possible to prosecute the practice even when it is committed outside of the country’s borders. These different legal provisions are a cause for further differences in data on FGM within the European Union.

EIGE’s report “Female Genital Mutilation in the European Union and Croatia” has just been published this year. The report identified that within the EU Member States there is a need for establishing a common concept of “prevalence of FGM”. There is a lack of comparable data which is caused by non-harmonised methodologies, definitions and approaches used, as well as a wide variation in the use of information sources to collect data and to estimate the extent of FGM at national or regional level.

In order to further progress on the understanding of prevalence of FGM in Europe, a more in-depth definition needs to be discussed. As for the starting point of the discussion the following definitions should be understood within the framework of European Union standards applied for Health statistics:

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• **Prevalence** refers to the number of cases of a given phenomenon existing at a certain time expressed as the proportion of a population affected at any time in a year.²

• **Incidence** is the number of new cases of a given phenomenon arising in a given period in a specified population.³

The main methodological approach currently used to estimate prevalence is the “extrapolation of African prevalence data method” whereby statistical information is gathered from national statistical offices and national census to extract data on women living in a certain Member State and originating from FGM practicing countries.

Beyond the extrapolation method, it is also necessary to identify sources to gather enhanced information on prevalence of FGM in the EU. For instance, administrative records: hospital and medical records, international protection records, police and criminal justice records as well as child protection records could represent additional sources to integrate data on FGM prevalence. Data from these records could act as initial proxy indicators of prevalence and incidence of FGM at both regional and national levels. However, many of these records are not systematically used, the existing data may not be collated centrally, data collection may not be obligatory, and access to data from such records is often restricted. As such, there is currently no reliable and comparable data on the prevalence of FGM at EU level.

The objective of this consultation is to advance in the development of a common EU-wide definition on prevalence of female genital mutilation, through views and suggestions for this definition and a common EU approach to this.

Furthermore, EIGE would like to explore common indicators and harmonised methodologies in EU to determine the prevalence.

We are looking forward to your contributions to further the (prevalence) data collection on FGM which could be used by European Union Member States, Civil Society Organisations, and individuals to develop policies, raise awareness and other work.

Stopping FGM requires a joint and coordinated effort. Your contribution can make a difference.

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