



European Commission

MYTH-BUSTING FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM)

February 2024
#EndFGM

Are there any circumstances in which FGM is acceptable?

NO

FGM happens in a context of traditional norms and beliefs – including in Europe. Justifications provided for this practice range from abiding by tradition, to the preservation of virginity, social pressure, alleged reasons of hygiene, the control of women’s sexuality and as a pre-requisite for marriage.

However, NONE of these stated reasons make it acceptable. FGM is a heinous form of **violence against women and girls**. It intentionally alters or injures the female external genitalia for non-medical reasons, and is performed against the will of the woman or girl. **It takes away control over their bodies**, their sexuality, and their right to have basic bodily functions free from infections and pain. In short, it **violates their human rights**.

Are some types of FGM less harmful than others?

NO

ALL forms of FGM cause **long-lasting harm** to women and girls and are a violation of their bodily integrity. All types of FGM affect the lives of survivors with **physical and emotional consequences**.

Is FGM a religious practice?

NO

There are no religions which make FGM a compulsory practice. **Practising a certain religion DOES NOT indicate that someone is practising FGM.** It is linked to traditions and customs based on family history, country and/or ethnicity of origin.

Is FGM a problem in Europe?

YES

Many believe that FGM only happens outside our borders, but it is a **worldwide issue**, which exists in Europe too. It is estimated that **190,000 girls and women are at risk of undergoing the harmful practice in 17 European countries alone** and that **over 600,000 women in Europe** are living with the consequences of FGM.

What is the EU doing to tackle the problem of FGM in the EU?

A LOT

Ending all forms of violence against women and girls - including FGM - is a key aim of the EU’s equality policies. The **EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025** includes actions to work towards this goal. The EU presented a **legal proposal** to prevent and combat specific forms of gender-based violence in 2022 and will adopt a **specific Recommendation** on the prevention of harmful practices in 2024. The **EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child**, covering both internal and external dimension, contains concrete recommendations and actions on how to effectively prevent and put an end to violence against children, including FGM, and ensuring integrated child protection. The EU continues to **provide funding** for projects from NGOs aiming to combat violence against women and girls.

Is it possible to end FGM globally once and for all?

YES

Change is possible - and it is happening. The EU contributes to international efforts to eliminate FGM globally, as outlined in the **EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024** and the **Gender Action Plan III for 2021-2025**. The EU is working on initiatives together with the UN, UNFPA and UNICEF. With all of these actions, there is a strong focus on **knowledge, prevention, prosecution, and protection**.

Through the **Spotlight Initiative** (running in 26 countries and 6 regions all over the world) the EU, the UN and other partners are working together to stop the global injustice of violence against women and girls. The EU will continue working with survivors, affected families and communities, experts, policy makers and NGOs to achieve this goal. We will support the survivors and celebrate their resilience and strength and we encourage both men and women to play a role.

Because FGM is NOT only “a woman’s issue” – it is everyone’s concern.