Resolution on the Commission communication entitled ‘Towards the elimination of female genital mutilation'

2014/2511(RSP) - 06/02/2014 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution tabled by the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality on the Commission communication entitled ‘Towards the elimination of female genital mutilation’. Noting that female genital mutilation (FGM) was a **brutal practice and a form of violence against women and girls**, which was in breach of the principles laid down in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, Parliament welcomed the Commission’s communication undertaking to use EU funding to prevent FGM and improve support for victims, including protection for women at risk under EU asylum rules. It also welcomed the Commission’s commitment to facilitating the exchange of good practices on FGM issues between Member States, NGOs and experts, and emphasised the need to continue to closely involve civil society, including that of third countries.

Members noted that according to the UNHCR, around 20 000 women and girls from FGM-practising countries sought asylum in the EU on a yearly basis, of whom 9 000 might be already mutilated. Estimates of the number of women who had undergone FGM or were at risk within Europe ran up to 500 000, whilst prosecutions of the crime were still rare. Parliament stated that **cultural and traditional values should under no circumstances be used as an excuse to practice FGM on children, young girls or women**, and it emphasised the need for the Commission and the EEAS to take a **firm stance on third countries which did not condemn FGM.** Furthermore, the prevention of FGM was an international human rights obligation for every Member State under General Recommendation No 14 of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women on Female Circumcision and Directive 2012/29/EU on supporting victims of crime, which recognised FGM as a form of gender-based violence.

Under these circumstances, Parliament reiterated its call on the Commission to submit, without delay, **a proposal for an EU legislative act** to establish prevention measures against all forms of violence against women (including FGM) and, as indicated in the Stockholm Programme, a comprehensive EU strategy on the issue, including further structured joint action plans to end FGM in the EU.

Considering the need for a **harmonised approach to gathering data on FGM,** the resolution called on the European Institute for Gender Equality to involve demographers and statisticians in the development of a common methodology, in order to guarantee the feasibility of comparison between individual Member States. For their part, Member States should use existing mechanisms, in particular Directive 2012/29/EU, to **pursue, prosecute and punish any resident who has committed the crime of FGM,** even if the offence was committed outside the borders of the Member State concerned. Parliament wanted **the principle of extraterritoriality to be included in the criminal law provisions of all Member States** so that the offence could be punishable to the same extent in all 28 Member States.

The EU and those Member States which have not yet ratified the Council of Europe’s **Istanbul Convention** on preventing and combating violence against women must do so without delay so that the EU’s commitment complied with international standards promoting a holistic and integrated approach to violence against women and to FGM.

Lastly, Parliament called on the Commission to **designate 2016 as the European Year to End Violence against Women and Girls.**