Resolution on an EU strategy to put an end to female genital mutilation around the world

2019/2988(RSP) - 12/02/2020 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 612 votes to 7, with 32 abstentions, a resolution on an EU strategy to put an end to female genital mutilation around the world.

The resolution was tabled by the EPP, S&D, Renew, Greens/EFA, ECR and GUE/NGL groups.

Members recalled that female genital mutilation - internationally considered a gross and systematic violation of fundamental human rights, a form of violence against women and girls and an embodiment of inequality between men and women - is now recognised as a global problem affecting at least 200 million women and girls in 30 countries, according to statistical reports published by Unicef, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the WHO.

According to 2018 UNFPA data, if current population trends continue, 68 million girls worldwide will be at risk of undergoing female genital mutilation by 2030.

Ending female genital mutilation/cutting

Parliament reaffirmed its determination to end female genital mutilation worldwide, a practice that is a form of gender-based violence and leaves very long-term physical and psychological scars on women and girls, in some cases even resulting in death.

Members stressed that the main objective should be the prevention of this practice, through a sustainable transformation of society and education and information campaigns creating the conditions for the economic empowerment of women and girls. The protection and aftercare of survivors of FGM must be a priority.

The resolution stressed the importance of:

- involving men and boys actors in the process of reshaping gender relations, changing their own behaviour and supporting the empowerment of women and girls;
- convincing community leaders to participate in the eradication of female genital mutilation, since the practice is transmitted through tradition and culture;
- adopting an intersectional and holistic approach that addresses the root causes of gender inequalities that underlie all forms of gender-based violence against all women and girls;
- explicitly outlawing the ‘medicalisation’ of female genital mutilation, a phenomenon that is increasingly widespread in some countries - including where the practice is illegal.

EU Strategic Framework

The Commission and the Member States were invited to:

- ensure that the future EU budget takes account of the need for greater flexibility between the internal and external action funding programmes, in order to promote budgets that can cope with the complexity of the problem and cross-border interventions to eradicate female genital mutilation throughout the world;
- ensure that all Member States implement the Victims' Rights Directive to ensure that survivors of mutilation have access to specialised and confidential support services, including post-traumatic support and counselling, as well as shelters, in emergency situations in the EU;
- ensure that, in the context of the reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), the highest standards of international protection are applied consistently across the EU in terms of eligibility, reception conditions and procedural rights, in order to facilitate enhanced cooperation between Member States, in particular with regard to vulnerable female asylum seekers who have undergone female genital mutilation;
- launch a review of the 2013 communication entitled ‘Towards the elimination of female genital mutilation’ in order to ensure the scaling up of actions against the practice worldwide, and that work is done to tackle the disparities in laws, policies and service provision between the Member States, so that women and girls affected or at risk of FGM can access equal standards of treatment throughout the EU;
- ensure that the next European Strategy for Gender Equality includes measures to eradicate female genital mutilation and to provide care for survivors and that it contains strong commitments and clear indicators in all areas of EU competence;
- ensure that the next EU Action Plan on Gender Equality always includes the eradication of female genital mutilation and the provision of care for survivors among its priority actions;
- mainstreaming the prevention of female genital mutilation in all areas, in particular in health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, social protection, asylum, education, employment, law enforcement, justice, child protection, media, technology and communication;
- create platforms bringing together a variety of stakeholders to better coordinate cooperation and ensure that structured mechanisms are in place to involve representatives of communities affected by female genital mutilation and local women's organisations;
- ensure that the negotiation and review of EU trade and cooperation agreements with third countries take into account respect for international human rights standards, including the eradication of female genital mutilation as a systematic violation of fundamental rights.

Parliament reiterated its call on the Council to urgently finalise the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) and to encourage its ratification by all Member States.