Female genital mutilations

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Elena VALENCIANO MARTINEZ-OROZCO (PES, E) on female genital mutilation (FGM), describing it as a serious violation of human rights and an act of violence against women which directly affected their integrity as people. By denouncing the brutality of this "traditional practice" the committee hoped to break the silence surrounding the issue and give voice to the many victims of FGM. MEPs believed that to convince members of the communities or groups concerned of the need to eradicate the practice, the communities themselves must be involved. The committee called on the Member States to classify any form of FGM as a crime and to prosecute and punish any EU resident who had taken part in it, even if the offence was committed outside its frontiers. It wanted the Member States' authorities to have the right to intervene, where there was a risk of FGM, to take girls into care or, for example, to suspend social benefits. The Member States were asked to devise programmes to educate communities at risk and to assist the victims. Consulates of EU countries should, when issuing visas, provide information which was comprehensible to often illiterate people, explaining the consequences under criminal law of practising FGM. This information should also be provided on arrival in the host country. Health professionals, social workers and teachers should also be instructed to provide such information. The Commission, Council and Member States were asked to take measures to issue residence permits to and ensure the protection of victims of FGM, and to recognise that people at risk of being subjected to this practice had a right to asylum. Combating FGM should also be made an integral part of the Union's development policy. Lastly, the EU was called upon to make its voice heard within the United Nations to ensure that the reservations expressed by many countries (in the name of "tradition") regarding the Convention on the Elimination of Violence Against Women were withdrawn.