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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S COMMUNICATION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (2011-2014)

Amnesty International welcomes the consultation for the upcoming European Commission's Communication on the Rights of the Child (hereinafter referred to as 'the Communication'). Involving civil society in this process is an important step in the development of a holistic and comprehensive EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child.

It is imperative that the Communication – and the following Strategy – is developed in concert with other recent important initiatives also relating to children's rights. These initiatives include:

- **The EU Strategy for combating violence against women (2011-2015).** Violence against children is often gender related, with female genital mutilation (FGM) being a prime example. FGM is usually practiced on girls in the range of 0-15 years. Hence, the practice of FGM violates children's rights as defined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), in particular the right to be free from discrimination (Article 2), the right to be protected from all forms of mental and physical violence and maltreatment (Article 19(1)), the right to the highest attainable standard of health (Article 24) and freedom from torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (Article 37). Furthermore, as the Amnesty International report on rape in the Nordic Countries¹ shows, the vast majority of rapes are committed against girls and young women, thereby necessitating a gender and youth sensitive approach.

¹ *Case Closed – rape and human rights in the Nordic countries*, AI Index: ACT 77/001/2010 September 2008 (<http://amnesty.name/en/library/asset/ACT77/001/2010/en/5ba7f635-f2c3-4b50-86ea-e6c3428cf179/act770012010eng.pdf>)

- The **Commission’s proposal for an EU Directive on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings, and protecting victims**. In this proposal, which repeals the Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA, greater attention is given to the prevention of trafficking and the protection of the rights of trafficked persons, calling for specific safeguards for trafficked children. In the NGO statement of Thursday 10 June 2010², which Amnesty International co-signed, we call for the appointment of an independent, qualified guardian who will act in the child’s best interests. This is particularly important for children who are separated from their families or where there is a conflict of interest between the family and the child.
- The implementation of the **Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors (2010-2014)**. The principle of the best interest of the child must be wholly incorporated in the development of the Common European Asylum System. Unaccompanied minors – or separated children – have specific needs that are often neglected in the asylum process. The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child must therefore be developed in concert with this Action Plan to combat discrimination of children and violation of their rights upon arrival in the EU.
- The implementation of the **Stockholm Action Plan (2010-2014)**. This action plan follows the Stockholm Programme and states that “all policy instruments available will be deployed to provide a robust European response to violence against women and children, including domestic violence and female genital mutilation, to safeguard children’s rights and to fight all forms of discrimination, racism, xenophobia and homophobia.”

The following contribution is reflecting the content and recommendations of two campaigns led by Amnesty International: Fight Discrimination in Europe³ and the End FGM – European Campaign⁴. Fight Discrimination in Europe campaign aims to ensure that all individuals in Europe enjoy effective protection against discrimination, with Roma children representing one particular group facing discrimination across Europe. END FGM is a campaign coordinated by Amnesty International in partnership⁵ with a number of organisations in EU Member States. The campaign aims to put FGM high on the EU agenda and to echo the voices of women and girls living with FGM and those at risk of it.

The contribution is guided by the questions in the Consultation document to address the issue of violence against children and the various justice mechanisms that can be used to protect children’s rights.

² NGO Statement and Recommendations on the occasion of the European Parliament Seminar on Combating and Preventing Trafficking in Human Beings – the way forward, Thursday 10 June 2010, <http://www.amnesty-eu.org/>

³ www.fightdiscrimination.eu

⁴ www.endfgm.eu

⁵ Partner organisations are listed in Annex 1.

1. VULNERABLE GROUPS OF CHILDREN: ROMA CHILDREN

1.1. Human Rights Violations - Roma Children

Roma children represent a group in a situation of particular vulnerability. In countries such as Slovakia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia and Croatia⁶, Amnesty International has documented that many Roma children experience discrimination and segregation in accessing education. For instance research undertaken by Amnesty International in 2007 found that up to 100 per cent of schools are segregated in various parts of eastern Slovakia. The report outlined that in some Slovakian regions Romani children constitute up to 80 per cent of pupils in special schools and only 25 per cent of Romani children receive pre-school education. An Amnesty International report from 2010 on the Czech Republic⁷ estimated that the majority of an estimated 30,000 children attending practical (former special) schools are Roma and at least overall 40 per cent of Romani children attend such practical schools. These practical / special schools are deemed for children with mild mental disabilities. Amnesty International's research has proved that in most cases Romani children are wrongly placed in these schools. A limited curriculum is taught, therefore reducing future chances of further education and employment. Furthermore, it difficulties arise in moving children wrongly placed in practical / special schools back to mainstream schools. The disproportionate number of Romani children placed in these schools was also recognized by the government of Czech Republic, which appreciated Amnesty International's findings and acknowledged it is unlikely that 40 per cent of Roma children are mentally disabled.

Forced evictions also affect the right to education for Roma children. In countries such as Italy, forced evictions implemented by authorities often affect the access to education of Roma children who are already attending a local school. In the majority of Roma settlements across Europe, children enjoy an unhealthy and unstable lifestyle, which prevent integration with other children, access to education and basic services, and the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living. Amnesty International has documented cases of forced evictions and violations of the right to adequate housing in European countries including Italy, Romania, Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia.⁸

⁶ See: *False starts: The exclusion of Romani children from primary education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia*, AI Index: EUR 05/002/2006 (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR05/002/2006/en>)

Still separate, still unequal: Violations of the right to education for Romani children in Slovakia, AI Index: EUR 72/003/2007 (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR72/001/2007/en>)

⁷ *Injustice renamed: discrimination in education of Roma persists in Czech Republic* AI Index: EUR 71/003/2009 (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR71/003/2009/en>)

⁸ Figures and data relating to these situations can be found Amnesty International reports on Roma. www.amnesty.org

Amnesty International has also documented several cases of violence and hate crime targeting Roma communities across Europe, namely in Hungary⁹ and Czech Republic¹⁰, where children have been involved and suffered injuries, loss of their relatives, and in some cases fatalities.

1.2. Roma Children's Rights: Initiatives and activities by Amnesty International

Amnesty International undertakes various initiatives to promote and contribute to better protection of Roma children. These activities fall within two campaigns, Fight for Discrimination mentioned above and the Demand Dignity campaign that aims to end human rights violations that drive and deepen poverty.

Activities on Roma children include research, campaigning, lobbying and advocacy activities. Within this work Amnesty International encounters various issues are encountered. These issues are primarily related to the issue of discrimination that is often institutionalised. Roma communities encounter discrimination through widespread stereotypes, poverty, and lack of access to education, work and basic services. Although the issues faced by organisations such as Amnesty International vary according to the situation and the country, these issues often result in a subsequent lack of trust of Roma communities. In some instances this lack of trust extends to organisations fighting for Roma rights. To attempt to overcome these issues on the ground Amnesty International works alongside Roma NGOs and representatives to build trust, ensure a better understanding of Romani communities' demands and to assist in empowering Romani communities to claim their human rights.

With the purpose of raising awareness on human rights violations suffered by Roma children, both nationally and internationally and exerting pressure on relevant decision-makers Amnesty International seeks to hold decision-makers accountable and secondly to push for change in current practices with the aim of improving the situation for Roma children. Examples of these actions are the campaigns on equal access to education for Roma children in Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina; and the campaigns on the right to housing in Italy, Romania and Serbia.

For instance, in the Czech Republic Amnesty International is an active member of the NGO coalition 'Together to School,' which engages with the Czech authorities and the Romani community. This coalition intends to continue discussions on the issue of education with the relevant state and educational authorities to express its concerns, and moreover provide constructive recommendations. The coalition also works closely with schools across the country, providing training on human rights.

⁹ *Hungary: Romani woman shot dead*, AI Public Statement (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR27/001/2009/en/d1a2aa15-5450-401b-998f-9b462c357077/eur270012009en.html>) and Web Feature (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/news/romani-woman-shot-dead-hungary-20090804>)

¹⁰ <http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/czech-republic-amnesty-international-support-nationwide-action-against-a>

Within a wider context, under the Demand Dignity campaign, Amnesty International is concerned with improving the economic, social and cultural rights of Roma people living in poverty, including with regard to children. The situation of Roma children is included in the focus points of this campaign. In fact, along with the poverty issue, the Demand Dignity campaign deals in particular with the situation of people living in slums. These communities, characterized by inadequate housing, lack of basic services, overcrowding, and high levels of violence and insecurity, are also places where residents live, work, and raise their children. Yet, many governments are failing in their duty to protect the rights of these people.

In addition to this, when the economic, social and cultural rights of Roma people living in poverty are violated, they in particular face difficulties in accessing justice. Their rights must be protected, respected and fulfilled nationally and internationally.

Amnesty International implements actions to face Roma children's poverty by promoting the right to adequate housing, education, access to basic services, accountability and freedom from discrimination.

1.3. Protecting the Rights of Roma Children

In regards to the right to education for Roma children, Amnesty International recommends that the EU pushes for a review of procedures related to the assessment of the skills and potential of prospective pupils, particularly in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina. This would enable the relevant Ministries to guarantee fair access to either mainstream and practical / special schools (schools for children with mild mental disabilities) for both Roma and non-Roma children according to their educational needs. Furthermore national legislation must ensure the desegregation of education and promote integration and inclusion among children. These issues must be addressed at the EU-level.

A systematic collection of data on education, disaggregated by gender and ethnicity would support research and attempts to develop good practices. In this regard consultation with both rights holders and stake holders is crucial in raising the protection of Roma children.

For recommendations regarding Roma children please see 3.0 below.

2. VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN: FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM)

2.1. Children's rights and FGM in EU policy

Amnesty International notes and welcomes the fact that the European Commission has addressed FGM in earlier documents on children's rights. In 'Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child' FGM is listed as one of the global challenges facing children today and it states that the Commission will "address children's rights in political dialogue with third countries, including civil society and social partners, and use its other policy instruments and cooperation programmes to promote and address children's rights worldwide". The Commission's initiatives to date include financial support to anti-FGM projects in countries including Egypt and Sudan, as well as funding through the Daphne programme for projects targeting the practice within the EU. As FGM is a cross-border practice, efficient measures need to span across both the external and internal dimensions of EU policy – linking efforts taken through EU development cooperation to initiatives taken within the EU through policy coherence and inter-DG collaboration. To this end, Amnesty International calls for a comprehensive, human rights based strategy that incorporates lessons learned from successful efforts to support the abandonment of this harmful practice.¹¹

2.2. Legislation and child protection

While legislation is crucial in protecting women and girls from this harmful practice, the onus should be put on strong preventive measures, recognising that in the majority of cases mutilation is often instigated by parents or other close family members. In this context therefore it is imperative to recognise the social pressures forcing those affected to conform to tradition that often lies at the core of this practice. There are numerous cases documented of instances where girls residing in the EU who have been mutilated whilst abroad on family holiday¹², as well as anecdotal evidence and criminal cases pointing to the practice being carried out also within the EU.¹³

The majority of EU Member States have criminal legislation which defines the practice of FGM as an offence, either as a specific criminal act or as an act of bodily harm or injury. Specific criminal provisions have been adopted in nine EU Member States: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the UK. In other Member States, FGM can be addressed under general criminal law provisions in the Penal Code.¹⁴ For instance, FGM is deemed a crime under the French Penal code with penalties varying from 10 to

¹¹ For example, see UN report of the Secretary-General, "The girl child", A/64/315

¹² Powell R. et al. Female genital mutilation, asylum seekers and refugees: the need for an integrated European Union agenda. Health Policy 70 (2004) 151–162

¹³ Weil-Curiel, Linda, *Combating sexual mutilation in France through the application of the law*, C.A.M.S., 2002.

¹⁴ Leye E, Sabbe A, *Overview of legislation in the European Union to address Female Genital Mutilation: challenges and recommendations for the implementation of laws*, Expert paper, Expert Group Meeting on good practices in legislation to address harmful practices against women, 25 to 28 May 2009

30 years imprisonment depending on the age of the girl and the severity of the physical consequences (if the practice is fatal it is punishable by 30 years imprisonment). In fact more than 35 cases have been tried in the Assize Court in France since the 1980s.¹⁵

Despite the specific criminal law provisions in nine Member States mentioned, this has not increased the number of prosecutions seen under general criminal laws. The number of cases brought to court has been limited owing to issues around conditions attached to the extraterritorial application of criminal law, the secrecy surrounding the practice within communities, the reluctance of girls to formally implicate parents and the reluctance of professionals to follow through on all complaints and concerns.¹⁶ Factors obstructing an effective implementation of both criminal and child protection laws to FGM include the lack of knowledge and attitudes of both professionals and practicing communities confronted with FGM. Both are influential in terms of the process of law enforcement, specifically in the reporting of cases and investigating or uncovering evidence.¹⁷ The principle of extraterritoriality applies in the relevant FGM criminal provisions in the majority of EU Member States, thus in practice enabling the prosecution of FGM in cases where the practice has been committed outside the EU. However as explained by Leye, “conditions for the application of this principle differ: often, either the offender or victim – or both – must be a citizen or at least a resident of the European country, and sometimes FGM must also be considered an offence in the country where the crime was committed (double incrimination).”¹⁸

Child protection laws and measures exist in all EU Member States. Some States have adopted specific measures applicable to girls at risk of being subjected to FGM which include voluntary child protection measures (providing information, hearings with the family, counselling and warnings to the family) and compulsory child protection measures (suspending parental authority, removing the child, withdrawal of travel permission).¹⁹ In a number of EU Member States, FGM specific child protection protocols and/or guidelines have been developed including in the UK, France, Spain, Sweden and the Netherlands.²⁰ In addition to these in order to strengthen preventative capacity of social services, prosecutors and child protection officers awareness of FGM and knowledge-sharing on outreach to practicing communities is needed. Professionals in the education and health care sectors are other groups who would benefit from FGM training and capacity building. Amnesty International agrees with the findings of a recent report funded under the Daphne programme that reporting is a main area of

¹⁵ Leye E, Sabbe A, *Responding to female genital mutilation in Europe – Striking the right balance between prosecution and prevention*, 2009, Daphne Programme

¹⁶ Leye E, Deblonde J, García-Añón J, Johnsdotter S, Kwateng-Kluytse A, Weil-Curiel L, Temmerman M. An analysis of the implementation of laws with regard to female genital mutilation in Europe. *Crime Law Soc Change* (2007) 47:1-31.

¹⁷ Leye E, et al (2007), op cit.

¹⁸ Leye E, Sabbe A, *Overview of legislation in the European Union to address Female Genital Mutilation: challenges and recommendations for the implementation of laws*, Expert paper, Expert Group Meeting on good practices in legislation to address harmful practices against women, 25 to 28 May 2009

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid

concern. “The duty of professionals to report is an important element, but then again, without clear guidelines and protocols explaining the level of risk and the different steps in the reporting process, it leaves space for arbitrary decisions based on emotions and personal attitudes of professionals, rather than on facts.”²¹

Amnesty International welcomes the EU study launched in 2009 which is researching the possibilities of harmonising Member State legislation in relation to violence against women and girls. This is an important initiative as differing legal measures on violence against women and girls can lead to inequality and discrimination of women and girls within the EU.

Legal reform in relation to FGM must be shaped by the knowledge and experience of relevant stakeholders. This would ensure that the wider context of FGM is taken into account, namely that FGM is a practice based on traditional values and social context. As highlighted in the UN Secretary General’s report on the Girl Child:

“Innovative processes of legal reform are taking into consideration the degree of social acceptance of the practice, aware that if support for the practice is high, legal measures that are solely punitive cannot be enforced. In countries of prevalence as well as in countries of immigration there are now examples of legislation that complement punitive measures with educational activities designed to promote a process of consensus towards abandonment and to provide appropriate services for those affected by the practice. In countries of immigration they include training for health and social workers who may come into contact with women that have been subjected to the practice or girls at risk. [...] There is also increasing attention to ensuring consistency and complementarity between domestic measures and international cooperation policies.”²²

Furthermore, to facilitate exchange of information and best practices and to shape a common EU approach to child protection policies, cooperation at the EU level is necessary. This cooperation should include Member State judiciaries as well as other competent authorities such as police, social and health services, and school administrations. Additionally, the Commission could facilitate cooperation and coordination between organisations and professional staff working in the EU and in countries of origin, to protect girls who may be at risk of mutilation whilst abroad.

2.3. Protection of children’s rights - Asylum

Women and girls who suffer from gender based violence in third countries can seek protection in the EU when their own states fail to prevent persecution, to offer adequate protection and effective remedy. The 1951 Geneva Convention outlines the definitions of refugees and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has further clarified when refugee status should be granted for these women and girls

²¹ Leye E, Sabbe A, *Responding to female genital mutilation in Europe – Striking the right balance between prosecution and prevention*, 2009, Daphne Programme

²² UN report of the Secretary-General, “The girl child”, A/64/315

through their guidelines on gender related persecution.²³ “There is no doubt that rape and other forms of gender-related violence, such as dowry-related violence, female genital mutilation ... are acts which inflict severe pain and suffering – both mental and physical – and which have been used as forms of persecution, whether perpetrated by state or private actors.”²⁴

FGM is a form of gender-based violence that inflicts severe harm, both mental and physical, and amounts to persecution. The UNHCR Guidance Note on Refugee Claims relating to Female Genital Mutilation clarifies this point in stating that FGM constitutes a form of gender-based violence amounting to gendered persecution and child specific persecution. The UNHCR guidelines on child asylum claims further calls for a gender and age sensitive interpretation of the refugee definition, stating that FGM can be seen as a form of child-specific persecution.²⁵

Despite these guidelines there is great variation amongst Member States in the recognition of refugee status for girls at risk of gender based and child specific persecution in their country. Possible reasons include the lack of explicit laws and guiding policies nationally, and inadequate provision of legal support and other services.²⁶ Asylum interviewing and questioning techniques require gender sensitive and child sensitive measures to ensure that women and girls do not face further stigmatisation upon arrival in the EU. Furthermore, measures should be employed to prevent violence against women and girls in the asylum procedure including within reception conditions, detention facilities and throughout the treatment of their applications.

The Irish Ombudsman for Children’s Office has issued a recent report titled “Separated children living in Ireland”.²⁷ This report raises several concerns regarding the discrimination facing separated children who consistently receive lower standards of care than other children in the mainstream care system, including their lodgings in unregistered hostels without the support and supervision of qualified staff. The report outlines how children reported their experiences in the asylum process, namely that it was very stressful and not child sensitive. The recommendations include the allocation of an independent guardian/advisor to support separated children and an effective communication and complaint mechanism to enable children to express their concerns.

²³ Guidelines on International Protection: Gender-Related Persecution within the context of Article 1A (2) of the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees HCR/GIP/02/01 7 May 2002, UN website.

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Guidelines on International Protection: Child Asylum Claims under Articles 1(A)2 and 1(F) of the 1951 Convention and/or 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, 22 December 2009, HCR/GIP/09/08

²⁶ Leye E, Sabbe A, *Responding to female genital mutilation in Europe – Striking the right balance between prosecution and prevention*, 2009, Daphne Programme

²⁷ The report can be accessed on the Ombudsman for Children’s Office website www.oco.ie

2.4. Activities and initiatives

The European Commission funded Daphne programme has specifically dealt with the issue of FGM, and between 1997 and 2007 financed 14 projects on FGM in the EU with a budget of €2.4million. It has contributed to the creation of the European Network for the Prevention of FGM, the evaluation of existing legislation on FGM in the EU, development of tools for prevention and the formulation of recommendations for policy makers.²⁸ The current Daphne programme has commissioned a study on traditional harmful practices which will map existing legislation in the EU, the implementation of the relevant laws and proven relevant practices. This study should develop indicators to evaluate the actions taken to end harmful traditional practices.²⁹

Amnesty International is working with a number of NGOs as part of the END FGM Campaign. Through our network we came across activities and initiative in the field. We therefore recommend the Commission undertakes an evaluation of activities explained below and corresponding to its findings, it could commence with duplication of successful initiatives and/or increase resources and capacity accordingly.

- The London Safeguarding Children Board launched an FGM Resource Pack in November 2009 with the aim for it to be a key tool in the fight against FGM. The primary audience consists of professionals who work with children, including midwives and other health professionals, social workers, teachers and police officers. The pack includes information on FGM, guidelines on how to detect abuse and girls at risk, and questions that midwives can ask women attending health clinics. The pack further contains advice on how community groups can assist in the prevention of FGM.³⁰
- GAMS, a French-based NGO conducts trainings for prospective judges at the National School of Magistracy and has also trained lawyers specialising in asylum matters as well as emergency medical forensic experts on issues relating to FGM.³¹
- Project Azure is another UK based initiative in which the London Metropolitan Police Service joins forces with partner agencies to reach out to families from FGM practising communities. Project Azure aims to educate parents and families about the health and legal implications of female genital mutilation while simultaneously empowering children at risk of the practice. It has also produced guidance tools to investigations in relation to FGM.³²

²⁸ Report of the International Conference on FGM and forced marriages. 2007, Euronet-FGM. A list of existing projects is available on the Daphne webpage.

²⁹ "Brussels: Study on Harmful Traditional Practices" 2009/S 75-107903, 18 April 2009, Tenders Electronic Daily website

³⁰ London Safeguarding Children Board website

http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/files/2010/resources/fgm/london_fgm_resource_pack.pdf

³¹ <http://www.federationgams.org/>

³² UK Metropolitan Police Service website

http://www.met.police.uk/scd/specialist_units/fgm_reward.htm

- GLOBE, The All Ireland Training Programme for Immigrant Parents is a cross-border, inter-agency initiative that supports immigrant parents throughout Ireland. It includes a resource pack with information on health and social services, the education system, the legal system and pertinent resources/facts on living in Ireland. It also delivers seminars for practitioners working with immigrant parents, including public health nurses, support workers and child care workers.³³
- Children's participation in decisions affecting their life is crucial to their empowerment and the respect of their human rights. The Children's Parliament in France has been an annual event since 1994 at which 577 children, aged 10-11 years old, are elected by their classmates to serve as junior MPs in each of the parliamentary constituencies in France and French territories overseas. Each junior MP writes a proposed law, under the guidance of their teachers, on a topic of their choice. These bills – all 577 of them – are then voted upon in their National Assembly which is held once a year in partnership with the Ministry of Education. This initiative fosters greater insight for the children in the role of citizens in a democracy and serves to empower them in voicing their concerns.³⁴

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Amnesty International recommends that the following specific actions are included within the European Commission's Communication and subsequent Strategy on the Rights of the Child:

- Take into account the particular vulnerability of Roma children within the Communication and subsequent Strategy on Children's Rights, with a special focus on the cycle of poverty and discrimination that Roma children experience.
- Address the current practices towards Roma in Member States, by for example promoting the condemnation of any human rights violation suffered by Roma and Roma children, including the widespread discrimination experienced.
- Establish assignment criteria for the EU Structural Funds that ensure that EU funding is not used to fuel discrimination and segregation of Romani children in education.

³³ <http://www.ispcc.ie/Parents/The-All-Ireland-Programme-for-Immigrant-Parents.aspx>

³⁴ <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/juniors/mondial/pmeenglish.htm>

- Address particular vulnerability of Roma children within relevant initiatives in the Framework of the EU 2020 Strategy, such as the future flagship project on poverty.
- Support successful initiatives at national and cross-border level by promoting their exchange in relevant fora, such as the EU Roma Platform
- Develop a comprehensive, human rights based FGM strategy at EU level that incorporates lessons learned from successful initiatives taken to support the abandonment of this harmful practice.
- Ensure all legal reforms in relation to FGM are underpinned with the knowledge and experience of relevant stakeholders and specifically with the understanding of FGM as a practice based on traditional values and social context.
- Facilitate the exchange of information and best practices to end FGM with the goal of shaping a common EU approach to child protection policies. EU level cooperation includes Member State judiciaries as well as other competent authorities such as police, social services, health services and school administrations.
- Facilitate cooperation and coordination between organisations and professional staff working in the EU and in countries of origin, with the aim of protecting girls who may be at risk of mutilation whilst abroad.
- In accordance with UNHCR guidelines on gender specific and child specific persecution, the recognition of refugee status in EU Member States is gender and age sensitive. Furthermore, a coordinated and harmonised approach at the EU level is taken to ensure that asylum interviewing and questioning techniques are gender and child sensitive, to avoid further stigmatisation of women and girls upon arrival in the EU. Similarly, measure are undertaken to prevent violence against women and girls in the entire asylum process.
- Compile already collected data (acquired through the Daphne Programme and the recent study on Harmful Traditional Practices (HTP)) in an accessible format. The compilation is presented and discussed in a stakeholder meeting with civil society to ensure transparency and presented to the Commission, Council and Member State representatives with a view to taking concrete actions based on its recommendations.

ANNEX 1

Partner organisations of the END FGM – European Campaign

COUNTRY	ORGANISATION	WEBSITE ADDRESS
Austria	FGM-Hilfe	http://www.fgm-hilfe.at/
Belgium	Groupe Pour L'Abolition Des Mutilations Sexuelles (GAMS)	http://www.gams.be
Cyprus	Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies	http://www.medinstgenderstudies.org/
France	Groupe Pour L'Abolition Des Mutilations Sexuelles (GAMS)	http://www.federationgams.org/
Ireland	AkiDwA	http://www.akidwa.ie/
Italy	AIDOS-Italian Association for Women in Development	http://www.aidos.it/
Lithuania	Women's Issues Information Centre	http://www.lygus.lt/
Netherlands	Federatie van Somalische Associaties	http://www.fsan.nl/
Portugal	Associação para o Planeamento da Família	http://www.apf.pt/
Sweden	Female Integrity	http://www.femaleintegrity.se/index.htm
UK	Foundation for Women's Health, Research and Development (FORWARD)	http://www.forwarduk.org.uk/