

# Annual Report 2015



# The End FGM European Network

## Vision

Our **vision** is of a world where women and girls are empowered and free from all forms of gender-based violence, in particular female genital mutilation, where their voices are heard, where they can enjoy their rights and make informed choices about their lives.

## Our Mission

Our **mission** is to create an enabling environment for coordinated and comprehensive action by European decision-makers to end FGM and other forms of VAWG. We facilitate the synergy of diverse national organisations and the active participation of rights holders and affected communities, and we provide a space where member organisations can share their experience and diverse skills.

### Photography

Cover photo by Eric Danhier

P 1: Photo by Eric Danhier

P 2: 'Not with me' by Jonas Lampens

P5: 'The Meringue Project Endless Beauty' by Jean Michel Voge & Anna Michel

P9: 'La bellezza sottratta' by Giuseppe Matese

P11 (left): Aïssatou Diallo by Christophe Smets

P11 (right): 'This little light of mine' by Gynelle Leon

P15: 'Teachers' by Jonathan Zenti



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The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the End FGM European Network and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of our funders.

## Letter from the Director

It is my pleasure to present to you End FGM European Network's first Annual Report. 2015 has been a crucial year for the Network since it was its first year of life after emerging from the End FGM Amnesty International campaign (2009-2014).

Stemming from the identification of a gap in dealing with FGM in the European context, the campaign successfully placed the issue of FGM and violence against women and girls (VAWG) on the agenda of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations. In 2014, the campaign partner organisations decided to continue working together to build on their achievements; the Network was born!



I am pleased to say that, at the end of 2015, the END FGM European Network grew to have 15 member organisations from 11 European countries.

A launch party took place on 27 January 2016<sup>1</sup>, during which the *Building Bridges to End FGM* exhibition was unveiled. It was attended by more than 70 people, including CSOs, EU decision and policy makers, MEPs, journalists, our members and artists from across Europe who had created photographs for the photo exhibition.

Europe is home to an estimated 500,000 women and girls living with the lifelong consequences of FGM. Each year, at least 180,000 girls and women in Europe are estimated to be at risk of FGM<sup>2</sup>. Due to the precarious political and socio-economic context and related challenges, the Network continued pushing for and monitoring the implementation of a holistic approach to ending FGM integrating prevention, protection, provision of services and prosecution and cross-cutting policies and mechanisms, at international, European and national levels.

This Annual Report provides information on the Network and its work and outlines the progress made over the year 2015 in the areas of organisational development, advocacy, communication and capacity building.

### Liuska Sanna

End FGM European Network Director

1 Video of launch event: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SP99LCMzLD8>

2 European Parliament Resolution of 24 March 2009 on female genital mutilation

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# The End FGM European Network

## Objectives

The Network's work is driven by the following **objectives**:

1. Raise public awareness of FGM as a form of VAWG in the EU
2. Increase awareness and understanding of FGM among EU and national decision and policy-makers
3. Increase awareness and empowerment of women, girls and communities affected by FGM
4. Contribute to strengthening prevention and protection mechanisms and provision of quality comprehensive services
5. Promote the elimination of FGM globally
6. Develop a representative and sustainable Network and strengthen the capacity of member organisations.

## What we do

We **INFORM** so that everyone in Europe and beyond is aware of the existence of FGM and of its consequences on women and girls

We **SUPPORT** and build the capacity of our members with training, tools, information and resources

We **EMPOWER** rights holders – they are the true experts and change agents!

We **ADVOCATE** for policies, laws and funding so that those fighting FGM have the proper tools and resources

We **NETWORK** with individuals and organisations who can contribute to end FGM so that they join the movement and take action

We **FACILITATE** development and exchange of knowledge, lessons learned, evidence and promising practices

We are the key **RESOURCE** centre on FGM in Europe for activists, professionals, institutions and citizens

## Organisational Development

The Network's membership has grown from 11 to 15 members with an achieved geographical coverage of 11 European member states. In 2015, the additional members are:

- ▶ Medicos del Mundo, Spain <https://www.medicosdelmundo.org/>
- ▶ Pharos, The Netherlands <http://www.pharos.nl/information-in-english/about-us>
- ▶ Terre des Femmes, Germany <http://www.frauenrechte.de/online/index.php>
- ▶ Excision, parlons en!, France <http://www.excisionparlonsen.org/>

## GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The GA is the governing body of the Network, meeting twice per year in 2015.

During the June 2015 meeting, the GA voted in favour of the accuracy of the activity report and of the financial report as well as the work plan and budget 2015.

## BOARD

The Board met 7 times in 2015, both physically and via Skype. Activities' implementation and finances were regularly reviewed through periodic reports prepared by the Secretariat.

President	<b>Naana Otoo-Oyortey</b> , Executive Director, Forward UK
Vice-President	<b>Clara Caldera</b> , Programme Officer, AIDOS, Italy
Treasurer	<b>Fabienne Richard</b> , Director, GAMS Belgium
Secretary	<b>Christina Kaili</b> , Project Coordinator, Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS), Cyprus
Member	<b>Zahra Naleie</b> , Senior FGM Project Manager, Federation of Somali Associations in the Netherlands (FSAN)
Member	<b>Aur�lie Hamelin-Desrumaux</b> , Project Manager, Equilibres & Populations, France

## SECRETARIAT (2015)

Director	<b>Liuska Sanna</b>
Advocacy and Communications Officer	<b>Natalie Kontoulis</b>
Administrative & Finance Officer	<b>Jean-Philippe Faujour</b>
Advocacy and Communications Intern	<b>Celine Fabrequette</b>



# Advocacy

Our **advocacy work** was developed and implemented bearing in mind the needs of communities affected by FGM across Europe and the gaps identified in the provision of services, policy development and implementation. We called for the implementation of obligations stemming from the EU Action Plan on the elimination of FGM and the Istanbul Convention.

## CONTRIBUTION TO POLICY AND LEGISLATION

By contributing to having in place key policy and legislative instruments in Europe, we have given girls, women, communities and activists powerful arguments to claim for proper and effective protection and prevention measures.

Thanks to European, regional and national involvement, there is a growing awareness of the issue of FGM in the EU compared to previous years, when many Member States perceived that FGM was not common or not practised at all in their country. Several instruments are now in place to put an end to this harmful practice in the EU and globally:

- ▶ Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (otherwise known as the Istanbul Convention)
- ▶ November 2013 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council Towards the elimination of female genital mutilation
- ▶ Asylum Directives (Qualification, Asylum Procedures and Reception Conditions)
- ▶ Directive establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime (otherwise known as the Victims' Rights Directive)

- ▶ European Parliament Resolution of June 2012 on ending female genital mutilation
- ▶ December 2015 Staff Working Document on Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality
- ▶ The new framework for gender equality and women's empowerment through EU external relations (2016-2020)
- ▶ The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Goal 5 on Gender, indicator 5.3

We consider these instruments represent a solid legislative and policy framework, notably at European level. We should now be concerned about their **implementation**. Our policy focus in 2015 was to point out that the existing measures, laws and instruments in place to combat and prevent FGM at national, EU and international level, need to be clearly understood by all actors coming into contact with those affected by FGM. Promises made still need to be acted upon and implemented at national level. We emphasised this requirement in varied presentations, speeches and contributions to meetings across Europe. It was also a priority for Network staff to make this as clear as possible to our members.

The Council of Europe Istanbul Convention takes a comprehensive approach to prevention, protection

and gender-sensitive asylum procedures. If the Member States and the EU were to sign and ratify the Istanbul Convention, this would already go a long way to meeting the targets of the European Commission Action Plan. We called with various means on the EU and Member States to implement the EU Action Plan and to become parties to the Istanbul Convention.

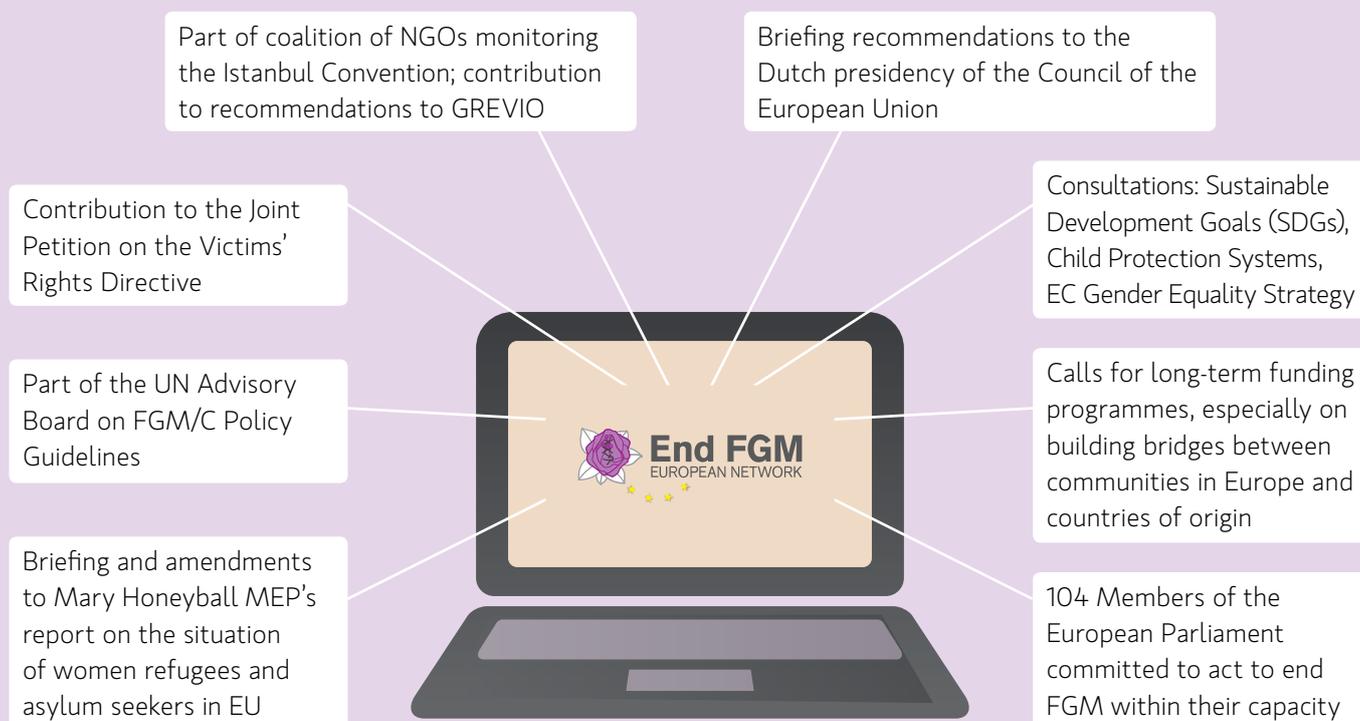
The Network focussed its policy work on two areas which were deemed to be most useful and a priority for our members: **asylum** and **victims' rights**.

Access to justice and the right to asylum for those affected by FGM were a key part of our work in 2015. We created a guide to the EU Asylum Directives to help our members navigate the Directives and know how to support those affected by FGM to know whether they are entitled to seek asylum and how they should be treated as a vulnerable person. We called for EASO to include gender in

its training of asylum case workers and called on member states to train those working throughout the asylum service on how to spot the signs of someone affected by FGM.

The low level of transposition of the Victims' Rights Directive in Member States is leading to women and girls affected by FGM not being provided with the services they need. The role of the EC in monitoring the adoption, enforcement and impact of this framework in collaboration with civil society is crucial. We called upon the European Commission to employ the appropriate mechanisms for monitoring implementation and sharing information with all relevant stakeholders. The Victim's Right's Directive was supposed to be transposed into national legislation by 16<sup>th</sup> November 2015 and we worked alongside other NGOs and civil society actors, led by Victim Support Europe, to remind decision makers that we would monitor the level of implementation closely.

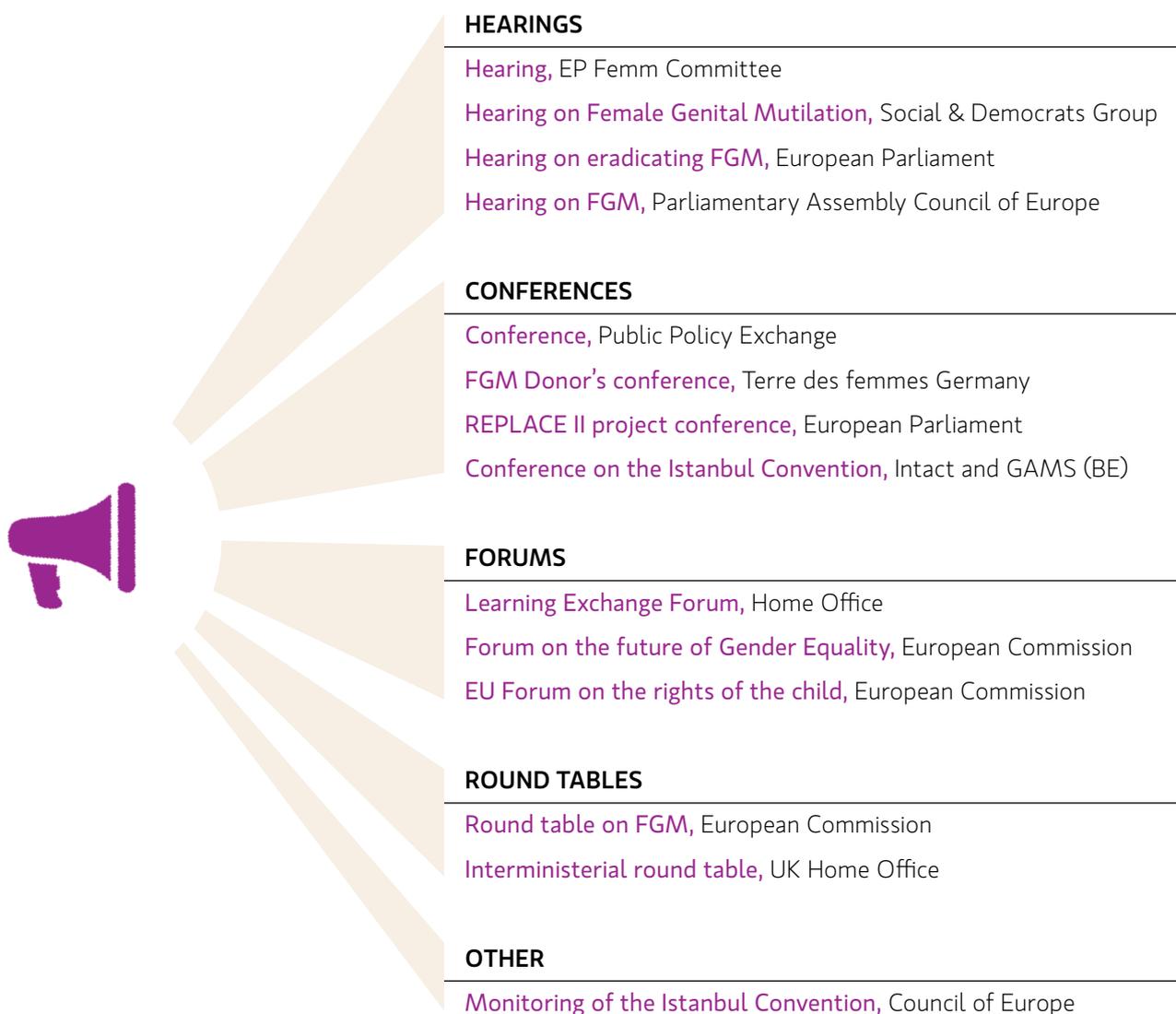
## RECOMMENDATIONS AND BRIEFINGS<sup>3</sup>



<sup>3</sup> <http://victimsupport.eu/news/european-ngos-call-on-eu-governments-to-implement-euvictims-directive/>

## CONTRIBUTION TO PUBLIC AND POLICY DEBATES

We attended more than 20 events, speaking more than 10 times to mainstream the elimination of VAWG and FGM and to circulate our key messages and recommendations.



## KEY PLAYER IN THE GLOBAL MOVEMENT TO END FGM

The Network has made progress in establishing itself as the European focal point in the global movement to End FGM. In 2015, we were involved in key global initiatives:

Level of action	Contribution
United Nations - Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Inclusion of FGM as an indicator under Goal 5 - Gender equality
European External Action Service (EEAS)	Training of EEAS officials working in EU delegations across the world, including in countries such as Malaysia. Enhancement of EU internal and external policy cohesion on FGM
United Nations - UN Women	Coordination of positions (e.g. messages on common methodology for disaggregated data collection, funding streams)



# Communications

Our **new website** [www.endfgm.eu], launched at the same time as our celebration event and the unveiling of our **photo exhibition** on *Building Bridges to end FGM* has allowed for **higher visibility** of the issue of FGM in Europe amongst national, EU and international decision makers, professionals, CSOs and communities affected by FGM. Our website constitutes a reference for institutions, organisations, researchers and individuals acting in the field of FGM worldwide. Public mobilisation was

encouraged through social media and supported by visuals, infographics and images of artwork created specifically for the network.

We have worked hard to ensure our members, professionals, academics and the public are aware of **developments on FGM and VAWG at local, national EU and international level** by using various communication tools.



► 1 infographic on the Istanbul convention



► 1 infographic on FGM and the asylum directives



► 1 infographic on the Victims' rights directive

## ACHIEVEMENTS

Europe & Me article, 1st October 2015  
<http://www.europeandme.eu/30baby/1672-fgm>

Forced Migration Review Special Edition on FGM and Asylum in Europe May 2015  
<http://www.fmreview.org/climatechange-disasters/petipas-nelles.html>

FGM: The wrong of cultural rites produced by Council of Europe, featured the President of the Network, Naana Otoo Oyor, August 2015

## NEWSLETTERS

Our internal and external newsletters have been well received by different types of stakeholders and we have received positive feedback from NGOs in Africa stating that they found the information extremely useful. This has also helped us to build a relationship with organisations that we might have found hard to reach otherwise, which is vital to organise a coordinated approach at a global level.



To effectively monitor the news, we have set up the FGM in the News template [<http://us11.campaign-archive1.com/?u=cb55a4beafdde08706cadc994&id=56f825d8e5>] and distribution list. In 2015, we sent a round-up of articles in the press which featured FGM, called *FGM in the news*, twice per week when possible. This went out to over 50 recipients, including our members, other NGOs working on the issue of FGM, decision makers, professionals and experts. We have received feedback from members, professionals, survivors and other CSOs that *FGM in the News* is seen as a very useful way of monitoring media coverage and developments on FGM both within Europe and across the world.

<http://www.endfgm.eu/news-en-events/newsletters/>

## EMPOWERING LANGUAGE AND VISUALS

Girls, women, communities and activists can count on the **positive and empowering visuals, narrative and language** provided by our communications when confronted with stigmatisation. Our collection of positive, empowering images through art work and photography, notably through the Photo Exhibition on *Building Bridges to End FGM* has encouraged those affected by FGM to reach out to us and express their thanks and their willingness to engage, when not faced with stigmatising imagery.



Our use of non-stigmatising and empowering language has encouraged professionals, journalists and activists to change their use of language in measures and debates.

# Capacity-building

Thanks to our **capacity-building activities tools and communications**, our members are better equipped both to act at national level and to influence the EU environment.



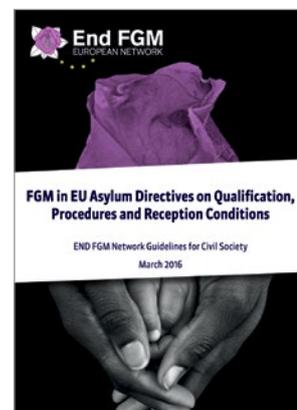
We provided access to **intelligence** on the issue of FGM and other harmful practices, violence against women and girls (VAWG), women's rights, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and migrant rights with a gender and human rights-based approach. The Network kept members abreast of all policy and legislative developments at EU level, and of key initiatives and resources that came into play.

Members also had the opportunity to participate in the biannual meetings, conferences, workshops and training sessions to support their capacity building. We held a **capacity-building event** on how to use the **Istanbul Convention** as a tool to end FGM, which was led by an expert from the Gender Equality Unit of the Council of Europe who had contributed to writing the Istanbul Convention. Our **knowledge-sharing seminar** focussed on the best interests of the child in FGM-related cases. Speakers were from EU institutions and agencies, civil so-

ciety and professionals who have to face FGM cases in their work. These events further strengthened the understanding of members on **key instruments**, such as the Istanbul Convention, the FRA Handbook on Children's Rights and the European Commission Ten Principles on Child Protection.

Members were offered many opportunities to exchange ideas, experiences, learning and good practices in the field of FGM. The Network also sends newsletters and updates on reports, research, tools, studies and EU funding opportunities relevant to the members' work. We have also trained the members on how to use social media for mobilisation purposes.

The guides produced this year on the EU Asylum Directives and on the Victims' Rights Directive supported the grassroots work of our members across the European Union to monitor the implementation of these policy measures at national level and to better know what services should be provided within their national context.



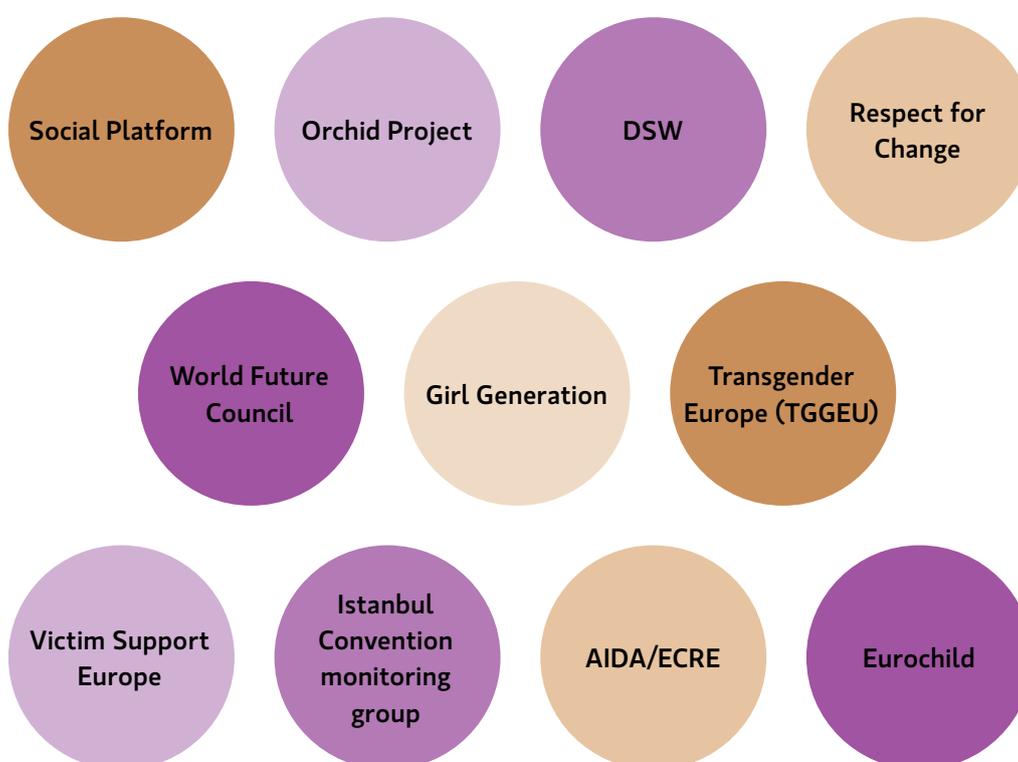
- ▶ **Guide on FGM in the EU asylum directives**, in conjunction with UNHCR, the Council of Europe and a gender expert.
- ▶ **Q&A on the Victims' Rights Directive** in conjunction with our Belgian member INTACT and a gender expert
- ▶ **Guide on the Istanbul Convention**

# Alliance-building

In 2015, in order to establish itself as an **independent Network and build new partnerships** with organisations dealing with fundamental rights, VAWG and FGM, the Network had initial meetings with organisations it had not yet had contact with and also built on relationships already established with many different types of organisations. The coordinated recommendations and actions which stemmed from these alliance-building meetings and exchanges contribute to the voices of those affected by FGM being heard and understood by more actors across Europe.

The aim of the Network is also to support the development of a strong, sustainable civil society presence. It took an active part in two different informal monitoring CSO-led Networks – one on monitoring the **Istanbul Convention** (led by the World Future Council) and one on monitoring the implementation of the **Victims' Rights Directive** (led by Victim Support Europe).

## Meetings with CSOs and intergovernmental organisations



# Projects

## UNITED TO END FGM: EUROPEAN KNOWLEDGE PLATFORM FOR PROFESSIONALS DEALING WITH FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM)

This project builds upon a very successful pilot-project e-learning course “United to END FGM” [www.uefgm.org]. Over 1600 people all over the world registered for this course from 90 countries and 5 continents, from 280 different companies/organisations.

It seeks to improve the public and professional knowledge on female genital mutilation (FGM) to better prevent and address this specific form of violence against women and girls as defined in the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). The overall aim of the project is the creation and development of a web-based knowledge platform that will serve as a resource and education centre on FGM. It will cover seven learning streams with thirteen modules on a wide range of professionals’ topics, which will cater to the needs of a diverse range of professionals in 8 languages, to make it as accessible as possible. This comprehensive tool, which will be available in several EU languages, will be instrumental in training a vast array of professionals on how to provide services to those affected by FGM and to detect those at risk.

The project started in late 2015 and therefore most of the work done was around coordination and preparation of activities. The Network is in charge of the dissemination and endorsement work and of developing the media training module and contributes to the communication strategy.

## THE CHANGE PLUS PROJECT

In late 2015 we received news that the project was awarded a grant to kick off in 2016.

CHANGE Plus aims at raising awareness, changing attitudes and promoting behavioural change on female genital mutilation (FGM) in practising African communities in five EU Member States (Germany, Netherlands, Portugal, Italy and France) through community assessment, capacity development, mutual learning, exchange of good practices and empowerment of community members. The project directly involves active community members as change agents



The Network leads the **communication and dissemination work** of the project and several Network’s members are also project partners doing the work with communities.



## Main results in 2015

- ▶ Increased awareness and knowledge on VAWG and FGM in Europe among the general public and representative stakeholder organisations who play a key role in the sector
- ▶ Increased capacity of END FGM members on influencing the relevant EU and national agendas
- ▶ Sustained cross-sectoral information flow and knowledge-sharing through tailor-made communication tools and activities and development of resources
- ▶ FGM is well present in EU legislative and policy framework
- ▶ Improved effectiveness of the Network's operations through management and governance procedures and processes
- ▶ Sustained growth of the Network through expansion of membership

## Members







design: www.breizepub.com



**End FGM**  
EUROPEAN NETWORK

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