

Feedback to EU LGBTIQ equality strategy for 2026-2030

People affected by female genital mutilation (FGM) are diverse and can be exposed to multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination. Equality and non-discrimination are core components without which FGM survivors cannot be adequately supported, and those at risk cannot be protected. Harmful gender norms that result in discrimination are part of the root causes of violence such as FGM or intersex genital mutilation (IGM)¹.

FGM and LGBTIQ can be intertwined²:

- A central tenant of both FGM and LGBTI activism is bodily autonomy – the right to choose about one's own body and to be protected from gender-based violence (GBV).
- GBV results in significant harm both to those exposed to FGM and to LGBTI people; our work aims to improve protections from GBV and ensure that policies and services benefit both communities.
- FGM can and has been used to control the sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or sex characteristics of LGBTI women, as a form of so-called "conversion therapy".
- Some LGBTI individuals are FGM Survivors and they will face challenges based on both (or more) aspects of their identities. We must create a space for the people at the intersection of FGM and LGBTI issues. [Full infographic produced in cooperation with ILGA Europe in attachment.]

The EU has a key role to play in shaping and implementing equality policies such as the LGBTIQ equality strategy to fulfil its obligations to prevent gender-based violence (GBV) including FGM, in line with the Istanbul Convention and the DIRECTIVE (EU) 2024/1385.

We call on the EC to build on the lessons learnt from the implementation – or lack thereof – of the previous strategy. The EC must ensure that a Commission Task Force on Equality, comprising all Equality Coordinators and relevant staff, is in place and strengthened, to allow for intradepartmental collaboration and monitoring of implementation; the equality task force must work transparently and in close consultation and cooperation with key civil society organizations and networks.

The EU and all Member States must also that professionals (particularly gynaecologists, andrologists, midwives, aesthetic surgeons and paediatricians) receive **training on harmful social and gender norms, stereotypes and human rights** as part of their curricula. For equality strategies to be effective and responsive to real needs of communities, **adequate funding** must be earmarked for their implementation and allocated to national authorities to put systemic civil society engagement mechanisms in place.

¹ IGM is performed in particular in medical setting, and the phenomenon of medicalisation is more and more common for FGM as well. Read our position paper on FGM and Medicalisation:

<https://www.endfgm.eu/resources/end-fgm-network/fgm-and-medicalisation-position-paper/?page=&writer=&document=reports-and-evaluations&topic=>

² Read the infographic #EndFGM4All – FGM and LGBTI rights

https://www.endfgm.eu/editor/0/Infographic_FGM_LGBTI_in_collab_with_ILGA_EU_1.pdf



END FGM
EUROPEAN NETWORK



FGM & LGBTI RIGHTS

WHY SHOULD LGBTI ACTIVISTS AND ACTIVISTS AGAINST FGM WORK TOGETHER?

- A central tenant of both **FGM** and **LGBTI** activism is **bodily autonomy** – the right to choose about one's own body and to be protected from gender-based violence.
- **Gender-Based Violence** (GBV) results in **significant harm** both to those exposed to FGM and to LGBTI people; our work aims to **improve protections from GBV** and ensure that policies and services benefit both communities.
- **FGM** can and has been used to **control** the sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or sex characteristics of LGBTI women, as a form of so-called “conversion therapy”.
- We must create a space for the people at the **intersection of FGM and LGBTI** issues. **Some LGBTI individuals are FGM Survivors** and they will face challenges based on both aspects of their identities.



GLOSSARY^[3]

FGM

Female Genital Mutilation comprises all procedures involving the removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. 200 million girls and women alive today have undergone FGM. It is estimated that around 600,000 women are living with the consequences of FGM in Europe.

INTERSEX

is a term that relates to a range of physical traits or variations that lie between stereotypical ideals of male and female. Intersex people are born with physical, hormonal or genetic features that are neither wholly female nor wholly male; or a combination of female and male; or neither female nor male. Many forms of intersex exist; it is a spectrum or umbrella term, rather than a single category.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

refers to each person's capacity for profound affection, emotional and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender.

LGBTI

Abbreviation for “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex.”

GENDER IDENTITY

Refers to each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms.

NON-BINARY

is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity is not encompassed or represented by ‘man’ or ‘woman’. Non-binary identities are varied and can include people who identify with some aspects of binary identities, while others reject them entirely.

TRANS

is an inclusive umbrella term referring to people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differ from the sex/gender they were assigned at birth. Trans men are people who were assigned female at birth and identify as men.

SEX CHARACTERISTICS

is a term that refers to a person's chromosomes, anatomy, hormonal structure and reproductive organs.

LIVING AT THE INTERSECTION OF LGBTI COMMUNITIES AND FGM-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES:

There is a **lack of research and data on LGBTI Survivors of FGM**. Their experiences and challenges lack visibility in both anti-FGM and LGBTI activist spaces.



In a study on the sexual and reproductive health rights of FGM Survivors [1], our Belgian Member Gams Be interviewed **two lesbian FGM Survivors: Asma and Samira**.



SAMIRA

I would like to speak with someone like me, who lives the way I live. Sometimes I get discouraged.

ASMA

When I first started being in the LGBT community, I saw that [being cut] was kind of a drag. In fact, there was a victimisation of cut women: "Ah poor thing, she's cut ..." Yet the people [to whom] we must ask questions and demand accountability are the people who excised them, and not the people who have been cut! [...]

NOT ALL FGM SURVIVORS ARE WOMEN!

In a podcast on FGM and Intersectionality [2], Scarlet Udaan interviewed a **queer non-binary FGM Survivor, Dena Igusti**.

DENA

There isn't much conversation that deals with how, for anyone within the LGBTQ community [who is an FGM Survivor], you are tied to cis-straight womanhood in this particular way [...] The statistics that we know of FGM only talk about women and girls and there is not much conversation about the fact that non-binary people and trans men also fall into this statistic.



SOURCES

[1] Gams Belgique, February 2021 - Besoins et demandes en matière de santé et droits sexuels et reproductifs des femmes concernées par les mutilations génitales féminines en Région de Bruxelles-Capitale.

[2] Scarlet Udaan, November 2020 - Podcast on FGM and Intersectionality with Dena Igusti.

[3] Sources: End FGM EU "What is FGM?", FGM in Europe Map, ILGA-Europe Glossary, European Commission Legal Gender Recognition study.

Infographic in collaboration between the End FGM European Network and ILGA-Europe.
Read more on FGM on www.endfgm.eu. Find out more about LGBTI rights on www.ilga-europe.org.



Additional resources:

SAYIHO A Quiet Violence: Navigating Female Genital Cutting as an LGBTQ+ Survivor

<https://sahiyo.org/sahiyo-blog/a-quiet-violence-navigating-female-genital-cutting-as-an-lgbtq-survivor.html>

About End Female Genital Mutilation European Network (End FGM EU)

The End FGM European Network (End FGM EU) is an umbrella network of 42 organisations working in 16 European countries who are expert on female genital mutilation (FGM). End FGM EU operates as a meeting ground for communities, civil society organisations, decision-makers and other relevant actors at European level to interact, cooperate and join forces to end all forms of FGM in Europe and beyond. We put at the heart of our work grassroots voices to influence European governments and policy-makers to work towards the elimination of FGM. We build our members' capacity, offer spaces to share expertise and develop partnerships.

While dedicated to being the driving force of the European movement to end FGM, we are equally committed to build bridges and cooperation with all relevant actors in the field of FGM both in Europe and globally. In this sense, we actively promote and foster cooperation between the European movement and movements in other regions of the world.

For any further information, please contact Xheni Dani, Policy & Advocacy Coordinator, at xdani@endfgm.eu.

Our website <https://www.endfgm.eu/>