

2.4.2020

EU Strategy on victims' rights (2020-2025)

Joint submission

OII Europe

ILGA Europe

One component of work under the Victim's Rights Directive relating to violence against women and girls is combatting female genital mutilation (FGM). In order to also address the human rights violations that intersex infants and children face, the future Directive should also include intersex genital mutilation (IGM) as a key focus.

Intersex genital mutilation (IGM) functions in a very similar way to FGM, but has yet to receive the same broad attention and clear condemnation. These practices are similar in that they i) are both framed in terms of the need for social acceptance, ii) are both motivated by beliefs about what is considered acceptable sexual behaviours, iii) are both motivated by the notion that body parts that are not considered female (or male) enough should be removed or altered, and iv) are both impactful on the person's life and health.¹

IGM happens to intersex infants and children at alarming rates; for example, research into public records in France showed 5,000 surgeries on children under the age of 12 during one calendar year, 2017.² However, while all EU Member States criminalise FGM, only 2 criminalise IGM (Malta and Portugal).³ It is clearly difficult to overestimate the magnitude of these practices in Europe.

Furthermore, the European Parliament last year passed a Resolution on the rights of intersex people⁴, which lays out a clear EU commitment to protection of the rights of intersex people.

As such, it is recommended to refer to IGM as well when discussing FGM, and to provide access for survivors of intersex genital mutilation to reparative treatments on the same coverage terms as those provided for survivors of female genital mutilation.

¹ OII Europe, ILGA-Europe (2019). Protecting Intersex People in Europe: A toolkit for law and policymakers. Available from: https://oiiurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Protecting_intersex_in_Europe_toolkit.pdf

² Moron-Puech Benjamin, Notes relatives à l'audition au Sénat sur l'article 21 bis du projet de loi relatif à la bioéthique adopté par l'Assemblée Nationale en première lecture, Communication au Sénat, Audition du 12 décembre 2019, Paris.

³ See footnote 1

⁴ 2018/2878(RSP). Available from: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2019-0128_EN.html



OII Europe (Organisation Intersex International Europe) is the European umbrella organisation of intersex-led human rights organisations with member organisations in 14 member states of the EU (18 in the Council of Europe region). OII Europe works to end human rights violations intersex people/people with variations of sex characteristics face in the EU and the Council of Europe region and to promote visibility and recognition of intersex people in Europe and worldwide. To this aim OII Europe works with and is regularly consulted by Council of Europe and European Union bodies as well as national governments and other stakeholders, NGOs and professionals.

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ILGA-Europe is the European Region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA). We are an international non-governmental umbrella organisation bringing together over 500 members from across Europe and Central Asia. Our annual conferences are broad events that give our member organisations, politicians and activists the opportunity to strategize together on how to achieve full human rights enjoyment for everyone regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics.

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