

Call to criminalise intersex genital mutilation in the EU

[News](#), [Legal Protection](#), [Intersex](#)

ILGA-Europe are calling on the EU co-legislators to take a strong stance against intersex genital mutilation as a form of violence against intersex women and girls

ILGA-Europe are urging the EU to criminalise the practice of IGM against intersex people, particularly intersex women and girls, as part of the proposal for a Directive combatting violence against women and domestic violence.

This call to action stems from the fact that IGM is a harmful practice that violates the human rights of intersex individuals. It is a non-vital or cosmetic medical intervention performed on intersex infants and children without their full, prior, personal, informed consent. International human rights bodies have repeatedly classified IGM as cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, or harmful practices^[1].

IGM is often performed on intersex women and girls with the aim of creating bodies that are capable of heterosexual penetrative sex, frequently long before the individual has the opportunity to express either a gender identity or sexual orientation. This presumption that intersex women and girls will need bodies that look and function in the same way as the bodies of heterosexual endosex^[2] women and girls is enforced without the individuals' consent, frequently irreversibly.

Procedures and treatments performed on intersex infants and children assigned female, such as labiaplasties, vaginoplasties, clitoral "recession" and other forms of clitoral cutting or removal, and gonadectomies, are specifically based on misogynistic beliefs and are aimed at exerting control over their physical appearance and sexuality, which is a form of violence against intersex women and girls.

Moreover, intersex women and girls can also experience "corrective rape" in similar ways to LBT women, because of their physical appearance, which can lead to targeting by perpetrators who believe they do not look "female enough." Rape of intersex persons inside families or by relatives can take the form of punishment, especially in families where the existence of the intersex family member is considered shameful for the family.

The criminalisation of intersex genital mutilation is an important step towards protecting the rights and well-being of intersex individuals, particularly intersex women and girls, who are disproportionately affected by this harmful practice.

- By criminalising IGM, the EU would send a strong message that this practice is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.
- It would provide a legal framework for prosecuting those who perform these procedures, as well as those who facilitate or encourage them.
- It would help to hold accountable medical practitioners who perform IGM, as well as parents or guardians who consent to the procedure.
- Criminalising IGM would also help to raise awareness about the harms of this practice and promote a broader understanding of the rights and experiences of intersex individuals.

- It would demonstrate the EU's commitment to upholding the rights of all individuals, regardless of their sex characteristics.

Incorporating criminalisation of IGM into the proposed directive combatting violence against women and domestic violence is a logical step, as IGM is a form of violence against women and girls. It is consistent with the broader goals of the directive, which seeks to prevent and combat violence against women and girls in all their diversity, and to promote gender equality.

Overall, criminalising IGM is vital to protecting the rights and well-being of intersex individuals and promoting a more inclusive and just society.

[1] E.g. CAT/C/AUT/CO/6, CAT/C/DEU/CO/5, CCPR/C/AUS/CO/6, CRC/C/GBR/CO/5, CEDAW/C/CHL/CO/7

[2] *Endosex*, or *diadic*, are terms that refer to non-intersex people, or people who do not have variations of their sex characteristics.