

Daily News 05 / 02 / 2018

European Commission and European Court of Auditors meet to discuss their cooperation and the future of Europe

European Commission President Jean-Claude **Juncker** and the College are meeting Mr Klaus-Heiner Lehne, President of the European Court of Auditors, and Members of the Court of Auditors (“ECA”) in Luxembourg for the regular meeting between the two institutions. The meeting will begin with a working lunch chaired by President Juncker and President Lehne, followed by discussions between the Commissioners and the Members of the Court of Auditors that will be structured around the Commission’s Reflection Papers on the Future of Europe. The meeting will conclude with a plenary session chaired by President Lehne and First Vice-President **Timmermans**. *(For more information: Alexander Winterstein – Tel.: +32 229 93265; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

Apply now: Lorenzo Natali Media Prize for outstanding journalism in development

Applications for the European Commission’s 2018 Lorenzo Natali Media Prize, which recognises journalists doing outstanding reporting on sustainable development topics, are open from **5 February to 9 March** for online, print and audio-visual works. Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven **Mimica** said: *“In an era of disinformation, fake news and digital algorithms, we need professional and fact-based journalism more than ever. The important work of journalists is not only crucial for democracy across the globe, but also gives visibility and a voice to those who would otherwise not be heard. Through their stories they inform, inspire, and call for much-needed change. With this prize, we thank them for their determination and encourage them to keep up the fight.”* The Prize has two categories based on age groups and for each category there will be a winner from each region: Africa; the Arab World and the Middle East; Asia and the Pacific; Latin America and the Caribbean; and Europe. A “Grand Winner” will be selected among the regional winners, and an additional thematic prize will be awarded for work focused on the elimination of violence against women and girls. Find more information on the [specific rules and criteria](#) online and in our [press release](#). *(For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Christina Wunder – Tel.: +32 229 92256)*

World Cancer Day: knowing more means helping more

Discussing cancer related issues is never easy. At the same time, given that the disease is still the second leading cause of death in the EU, there is a constant need for a robust, well informed response to it in order to contribute to the prevention, early detection, and adequate treatment. [The European Cancer Information System \(ECIS\)](#) website launched on the occasion of World Cancer Day by the Joint Research Centre (JRC), the European Commission’s in-house science and knowledge service, allows experts and practitioners to explore geographical patterns and trends. It gathers data

from around 150 European population-based cancer registries covering 25 EU Member States and 7 non-EU European countries providing valuable information on how well national cancer programmes are actually working, and address shortcomings. Vytenis **Andriukaitis**, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, highlighted: *“Reliable data is an important aspect of the EU’s approach to cancer, along with tackling risk factors such as tobacco, alcohol, pesticides and pollution, screening for diagnosis and treatment, research, and connecting expertise through the European Reference Networks and joint actions “. “The European Cancer Information System is an excellent example of our support for decision-makers and researchers across the EU and beyond. It allows for the assessment and monitoring of the disease across regions and countries, following trends over time and helping to gather information that could lead to a further decrease of cancer rates.”* explained Tibor **Navracsics**, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sports, responsible for the Joint Research Centre. EU has been supporting research to fight cancer since 1985 through its research and innovation programmes. These efforts focus on developing patient-oriented strategies to prevent, cure and help people live with cancer. With funding totalling €2.4 billion since 2007, European [#cancer](#) research has been leading personalised medicine approaches and efforts to understanding cancer biology as well as better prevention, treatment and care solutions. You can find more information [here](#) and [here](#). Read some of the success stories of EU funded cancer research [here](#). (For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: [+32 229 91269](#); Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel: [+32 22967083](#); Aikaterini Apostola – Tel.: [+32 229 87624](#))

Mozambique joins the Economic Partnership Agreement between the EU and Southern African States

The Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the European Union and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) became the first regional EPA in Africa to be fully operational after its implementation by Mozambique. Mozambique was the last piece of the SADC-EPA jigsaw to fall into place. The other five countries – Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South-Africa, and Swaziland – have been implementing the agreement since October 2016. Implementing the EPA means that Mozambique will not have to pay customs duties on its exports to the EU. The EU is the largest export market for Africa. Exports to the EU represent 22% of SADC EPA countries’ exports. The EU-SADC EPA provides opportunities for SADC countries to create jobs, attract more investment, industrialise, integrate into global value chains. On the EU side, European businesses are increasingly investing in the region. For its part, Mozambique will progressively, over the course of several years, reduce or eliminate customs duties for many of EU exports. Trade between the EU and Mozambique is currently about €2 billion annually. Mozambican exports to the EU include aluminium and raw cane sugar. For more information see [here](#). (For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: [+32 229 56185](#); Kinga Malinowska – Tel: [+32 229 51383](#))

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of De Nederlandse Energie Maatschappij by Waterland

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of De Nederlandse Energie Maatschappij B.V. by Nuts Groep B.V,

ultimately controlled by Waterland Private Equity Investments B.V. (“Waterland”), all of the Netherlands. Nederlandse Energie Maatschappij supplies electricity and gas to small customers in the Netherlands. Nuts Groep is active in the supply of electricity and gas to small customers in the Netherlands and Belgium. Waterland is an independent private equity firm. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given the companies’ moderate combined market position resulting from the proposed transaction. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission’s [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.8781](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Eurostat: Décembre 2017 comparé à novembre 2017 – Le volume des ventes du commerce de détail en baisse de 1,1% dans la zone euro, en baisse de 1,0% dans l’UE28

En décembre 2017 par rapport à novembre 2017, le volume des ventes du commerce de détail corrigé des variations saisonnières a diminué de 1,1% dans la zone euro (ZE19) et de 1,0% dans l’UE28, selon les estimations d’Eurostat, l’office statistique de l’Union européenne. En novembre, le commerce de détail avait progressé de 2,0% dans la zone euro et de 2,1% dans l’UE28. En décembre 2017 par rapport à décembre 2016, l’indice des ventes de détail s’est accru de 1,9% dans la zone euro et de 2,4% dans l’UE28. Par rapport à 2016, le volume moyen des ventes de détail a progressé en 2017 de 2,6% tant dans la zone euro que dans l’UE28. Un communiqué de presse est disponible [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d’informations: Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tel.: +32 229 55040; Maud Noyon – Tel. +32 229-80379)

Eurostat: Consommation d’énergie en 2016 – La consommation dans l’UE est au-dessus de l’objectif d’efficacité énergétique

L’Union européenne (UE) s’est engagée à réduire sa consommation d’énergie de 20% par rapport aux projections d’ici à 2020. Cet objectif est également connu sous le nom d’«objectif d’efficacité énergétique de 20%». En d’autres termes, l’UE a pris l’engagement de parvenir à une consommation d’énergie primaire inférieure ou égale à 1 483 millions de tonnes équivalent pétrole (Mtep) et une consommation d’énergie finale inférieure ou égale à 1 086 Mtep en 2020. Un communiqué de presse est disponible [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d’informations: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 91269; Nicole Bockstaller – Tel.: +32 229 52589)

STATEMENTS

Joint Statement on International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation

On International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation, High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** and Commissioners Johannes **Hahn**, Neven **Mimica**, and Věra **Jourová**, made the following

statement: "We confirm our firm resolve to put an end to this practice which is painful, traumatic and causes long-term health consequences. A practice that is nearly always carried out on children. A practice that is a fundamental human rights violation and an extreme form of discrimination against women and girls. Despite the efforts of the EU and its partners, 200 million girls are still suffering from this violation, which occurs in all parts of the world. [...] In Europe itself, girls are still today subject to this illegal practice. [...] We have put laws in place, to ensure that there can be no impunity in Europe for this practice. Female genital mutilation is a crime in all EU Member States [...]. At the international level, together with the United Nations, we have launched an unprecedented initiative – the Spotlight Initiative – to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. [...] Through these actions we provide direct and targeted support to the victims of such harmful practices. The EU will [...] continue building strong partnerships through bilateral, as well as multilateral cooperation. [...] We want a society where women are free from violence and free to change the world." Please read the full statement [here](#) and find more information on EU actions to counter Female Genital Mutilation in a memo [here](#). (for more information: Christian Wigand- Tel.: +32 229 62253; Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322)

[Upcoming events](#) of the European Commission (ex-Top News)

[Apply now: Lorenzo Natali Media Prize for outstanding journalism in development](#)

Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven **Mimica** said: *"In an era of disinformation, fake news and digital algorithms, we need professional and fact-based journalism more than ever. The important work of journalists is not only crucial for democracy across the globe, but also gives visibility and a voice to those who would otherwise not be heard. Through their stories they inform, inspire, and call for much-needed change. With this prize, we thank them for their determination and encourage them to keep up the fight."*

The Lorenzo Natali Media Prize is awarded to journalists reporting on issues such as poverty eradication and the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

How to apply

Journalists are invited to [submit their work](#), be it in print, digital, radio or TV broadcast format. Applications are open **from 5 February until 9 March 2018**. Detailed information on the [specific rules and criteria](#) are available

online.

Prize categories

The prize has two categories based on age groups: 21 to 26 years, and 27 years plus. For each category there will be a winner from each region: Africa; the Arab World and the Middle East; Asia and the Pacific; Latin America and the Caribbean; and Europe.

A “Grand Winner” will be selected among the regional winners, and an additional thematic prize will be awarded for work focused on the elimination of violence against women and girls.

The selection will be carried out by a “Grand Jury” composed of renowned journalists from across the world. This year’s jury members include Bruce Shapiro from the Columbia School of Journalism, Peruvian reporter and founder of “Panorámica Lationamericana” Isabel Recavarren, New Delhi-based journalist and President of the Commonwealth Journalists Association Mahendra Ved, Le Soir’s Maroun Labaki, and Mary Harper, the BBC World Service’s Africa Editor.

All 11 winners will receive their awards at a ceremony during the [2018 European Development Days](#) in Brussels this June.

Background

Established in 1992, this media prize is awarded in memory of Lorenzo Natali, who served as a European Commissioner for 12 years. He was responsible among others for the international cooperation and development affairs portfolio between 1985 and 1989. He was a staunch defender of the freedom of expression, democracy, human rights and development.

For more information

[Lorenzo Natali Media Prize](#)

[Application](#)

[European Development Days](#)

Hashtag: #NataliPrize

[Questions and Answers about Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting \(FGM/C\)](#)

[STATEMENT/18/601](#)

What is Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C)?

Female genital mutilation consists of the intentional partial or complete removal of the external female genitalia, or other injuries to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. There are several types of procedures, including partial or complete removal of the clitoris, of the labia minora and majora, the narrowing of the vaginal opening through the creation of a covering seal, leaving only a small opening for urine and menstrual fluids, and any other non-medical injury such as scraping, incising, pricking or burning. Female genital mutilation causes pain, infection, sexual problems, urinary problems, problems with childbirth, and death.

It is estimated that at least 500,000 women in Europe have undergone FGM/C and 200 million women worldwide.

What does the EU do?

The European Union tackles FGM/C in various ways in its internal and external action, which includes better legal protection and improved access to support for victims, instilling social change and capacity building of practitioners. The actions are based on the focus areas of the [Communication](#) towards the elimination of female genital mutilation (2013), on fighting harmful practices such as FGM/C, as violence of any kind against women and girls, as well as on the [Gender Action Plan from 2016- 2020](#):

1. Prevention

Effective Prevention relies on sustainable societal change, as FGM/C is often rooted in communities' societal and social norms, causing social pressure on parents to have their daughters cut. Sometimes, it is claimed that undergoing FGM/C will be beneficial for the girl and preserves her honour.

Commissioner Věra Jourová dedicated 2017 to the fight against violence against women. The actions included the funding of [projects](#) that deal with FGM/C, as well as an awareness campaign, a dedicated website [NON.NO.NEIN – Say No, Stop Violence against Women](#) provide the main platform. This campaign is extended and intensified during 2018.

Through the Commission's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme, projects aimed at combating gender-based violence and supporting its victims are funded. This includes projects focusing specifically on combatting FGM/C and supporting its victims ([see for example](#)). Additionally, a specific call for transnational projects aiming to prevent, inform about and combat violence against women, young people and children, linked to harmful practices funded [nine projects](#) (4.5 million euros).

In February 2017, a [web-based platform](#) on female genital mutilation was launched to train judges, nurses, asylum officers, doctors, teachers, police officers and other professionals who are in contact with girls at risk and women who have undergone FGM/C, and to better equip them to prevent it and support these women. The Commission also funds [projects to strengthen national child protection systems](#), for instance through the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme, including projects promoting integrated approaches

to child victims, such as children's houses.

Further, training packages for health professionals were developed, to improve the quality of and access to health services for migrant and ethnic minorities. FGM/C is a specific topic in the online [training modules](#).

2. Prosecution

FGM/C is a crime in all EU Member States and in most of them, prosecution for conducting FGM/Cs abroad is possible, following the principle of extra-territoriality.

- Criminalisation of FGM/C is also required under the [Istanbul Convention](#) and its victims also fall under the scope of the Convention's prevention, support and protection measures, in those Member States that have ratified the Convention (the criminalisation of FGM/C is a Member State competence). On 13 June 2017, the Istanbul Convention was [co-signed](#) by the Commission and Council Presidency on behalf of the EU. The terms of the Conclusion and the related code of conduct on the respective roles of implementation of EU and Member States are currently negotiated in the Council of the EU.
- A correct and timely implementation of the [Victims' Rights Directive](#) ensures that victims of FGM/C are able to access free confidential specialist support services, including trauma support and counselling, as well as shelters in emergency situations. It also puts measures in place to protect victims against any physical or emotional threat during criminal investigations and trial. In addition, children will be subject to specific protection measures taking into account of their age and maturity. The Victims' Rights Directive applies to all victims of crimes without discrimination and regardless of their residence status, ensuring that it also applies to individuals such as undocumented migrants.
- The Commission also provides training materials on FGM/C to legal practitioners, through the [European e-Justice Portal](#). The e-learning course 'United against female genital mutilation' addresses the issue of FGM/C in the context of health and asylum services. It provides an introduction to understanding FGM/C as a human rights issue and as a specific form of gender based violence, and its implications in the area of asylum.
- An [analysis of European court cases](#) related to FGM/C was published in 2016, in an effort to identify what has allowed states to effectively prosecute.

3. Protection

Girls at risk of FGM and women who are victims need particular support when they arrive in the EU. EU legislation is in place: a woman or a girl at risk of suffering FGM is eligible for international protection and her specific needs should be taken into account.

- Under the recast Asylum Procedures Directive and the recast Reception Conditions Directive, Member States have an obligation to identify

applicants with special procedural and reception needs, due to their gender or as consequence of serious forms of sexual violence. If such needs are identified, Member States need to provide adequate procedural and reception support to these vulnerable applicants.

- Relevant provisions of the Asylum Procedures Directive provide, for instance, that personal interviews shall be conducted by persons competent to take into account, among other things, the applicant's cultural origin, gender and vulnerabilities. In addition, Member States should, wherever possible, select an interviewer and interpreter of the same sex of the applicant if the latter requests it.
- The Reception Conditions Directive also provides that victims of female genital mutilation should receive the necessary medical and psychological treatment, and staff working with victims of female genital mutilation should have appropriate training.
- The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) has made available an online tool on the identification of persons with special needs which provides practical support and specific guidance on gender-related needs in the asylum and reception context. EASO is also providing trainings for asylum officers and other immigration officials on gender, gender identity and sexual orientation, including on the applicable legal framework. The first training took place in 2015 and since then 281 participants have completed this training module. A train-the-trainer session is scheduled for autumn 2018. □

The reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) put forward by the Commission in May and July 2016 aims to reinforce the protection safeguards available to persons with specific needs, including unaccompanied children seeking asylum in Europe. They mention that specific needs of female **applicants who have experienced gender-based harm** should be taken into account. This includes ensuring access, to medical care, legal support, appropriate trauma counselling and psycho-social care at different stages of the asylum procedure.

4. Knowledge

- Estimates show that there may be as many as 200 million victims of FGM/C worldwide, including at least 500,000 in the EU. There is however no official data available on the number of victims and girls at risk. Therefore, improving data collection has been a priority.
- In 2016, a [study](#) funded under the Commission's Daphne III programme, was carried out to develop a common definition and methodology on FGM/C prevalence. It shows that over half a million first-generation immigrant women and girls in the EU, Norway and Switzerland had undergone FGM/C before their arrival. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) has developed a [common methodology and indicators](#) to estimate the number of girls at risk of FGM. This includes methodological recommendations for all EU Member States.
- On 6 February 2017 the Advisory Committee on equal opportunities for women and men has published [an opinion on combating FGM/C](#) and other harmful practices containing recommendations to the European Commission

and to the Member States.

5. External actions

Fighting against harmful practices including FGM/C is a priority for EU external action, as recognised both under the [EU Action Plan for Human Rights and Democracy 2015-2019](#), and the [Gender Action Plan II “Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020”](#). The European Union has put women’s and girls’ rights at the core of its foreign policy and has consistently worked to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, as well as to attain their full empowerment, including their active and meaningful participation in all spheres of public and private life.

This commitment is reflected in the [EU guidelines on Violence against Women and Girls and combating all forms of discrimination against them](#), and the recently revised [EU Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child](#).

The EU has increased its support for the elimination of FGM/C globally, including through its international cooperation. The issue is addressed in human rights and political dialogues with partner countries and in annual dialogues with civil society organisations.

In November 2017, the EU hosted in Brussels the yearly meeting of the Donor Working Group on FGM/C gathering key governmental and intergovernmental organisations and foundations committed to the abandonment of FGM/C, leading for the extension and sustainable momentum around abandoning FGM/C including contributing resources towards plans of action, policies and programmes at the local, national and international levels. Back-to-back the EU sponsored the European Forum to build bridges on FGM/C, organised by End FGM EU.

The EU also supported and participated to the inter-parliamentary consultation “Upholding the rights of the girls, ending Female Genital Mutilation and Child Marriage” organised by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development (EPF) in Morocco on 2-3 October 2017. The goal of the initiative was to foster a corps of Members of Parliaments from European, Arab and African countries dedicated to accelerate the ending of harmful practices.

In September 2017, the High Representative/Vice President Federica Mogherini and Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven Mimica launched together with the United Nations the [“Spotlight Initiative”](#) to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. With an investment of €500 million, the Spotlight Initiative will be put into action in five regions of the world: Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Pacific, working to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. FGM/C is one of the forms of violence against women and girls which will be addressed by the Spotlight Initiative.

The EU is currently supporting eight projects implemented by civil society organisations in non-EU countries (Uganda, Tanzania, Guinea-Bissau, Eritrea,

Egypt, Gambia, Sudan and Ethiopia) to put an end to FGM/C. Moreover, the EU is one of the main contributors to UNICEF-UNFPA Joint Programmes on the Abandonment of FGM/C: accelerating change (€11M) which aims at:

- supporting the 17 programme countries to enact legal and policy frameworks with appropriate resources and implementation for eliminating FGM/C;
- providing timely, appropriate and quality services to girls and women at risk of or having experienced FGM/C in select districts in programme countries, and;
- supporting activities so that a majority of individuals, families and communities in programme areas accept the norm of keeping the girls intact.

Results of EU action against FGM/C

As first results achieved, 12 of the targeted countries have established national budget lines to put an end to the practice. Countries are incrementally strengthening and improving the implementation of legislation as an important step towards ending impunity for perpetrators. More than 1.5 million girls and women received services for protection and care related to FGM/C. The programme has also galvanised community movements towards social change through the encouragement of more than 3,000 communities representing 8.5 million individuals to make public declaration of abandonment. A strong partnership has been established with the African Union and the Pan African Parliament to champion the fight against FGM/C. Regional and national networks of faith-based organisations have been established in the Arab states to counter the practice. [Further information can be found online.](#)

EU efforts also include support towards the elimination of FGM/C in our southern Neighbourhood. In Egypt, a programme jointly implemented with the United Nations, from December 2011 to June 2017 with an EU contribution of €3.8 million, supported the Egyptian government's efforts towards abandoning FGM/C.

The EU's projects and strategies address the issue of FGM/C at all levels and in coordination with a variety of partners and stakeholders. Such action can contribute to the necessary change of attitudes: engaging with justice, health, religious and political authorities and practitioner – from communities at grassroots level to national level – and to change social norms by engaging with women, men, and girls and boys.

The European External Action Service provides specialised training on FGM/C in cooperation with Amnesty International. The EU also works closely with the African Union and African group in the UN Human Rights Council to end the practice.

What happens next?

The Commission will continue implementation of measures set out in the Communication [Towards the elimination of female genital mutilation](#) and use appropriate instruments to eradicate FGM/C and build on this experience to

tackle other harmful practices.

Under the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme T funding will continue for Member States' and civil society-led projects tackling gender-based violence, including FGM/C., The last call (circa €9.7 million) closed in November 2017, while a new call (around €10.6 million) will open on 8 March 2018.

The Commission will continue its [“No.Non.Nein. – Say no! Stop violence against women”](#) campaign throughout 2018 to ensure the spread of successful initiatives throughout the European Union, educate about gender-based violence, and keep this topic at the top of the political agenda.

For More Information

Website: [NON.NO.NEIN – Say No! Stop Violence against Women](#)

Website: [“Spotlight Initiative”](#)

Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: [Towards the elimination of female genital mutilation](#)

Joint Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: [Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy \(2015-2019\)](#)
[“Keeping human rights at the heart of the EU agenda”](#)

[Gender Action Plan II “Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020”](#)

[EU guidelines on Violence against Women and Girls and combating all forms of discrimination against them](#)

[Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019](#)

[Istanbul Convention](#)

Energy consumption in 2016 – Consumption in the EU above the energy efficiency target – 4% gap for primary energy consumption and 2% gap for final energy consumption targets

The **European Union** (EU) has committed itself to reducing energy consumption by 20% by 2020 compared to projections. This objective is also known as the

20% energy efficiency target. In other words, the EU has pledged to attaining a primary energy consumption of no more than 1 483 million tonnes of oil equivalent (Mtoe) and a final energy consumption of no more than 1 086 Mtoe in 2020.

[Full text available on EUROSTAT website](#)

Joint Statement on the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation

On the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission **Federica Mogherini**, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, **Johannes Hahn**, Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, **Neven Mimica**, and Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, **Věra Jourová**, joined together to reaffirm the EU's strong commitment to eradicate Female Genital Mutilation and made the following statement:

"On International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation we confirm our firm resolve to put an end to this practice which is painful, traumatic and causes long-term health consequences. A practice that is nearly always carried out on children. A practice that is a fundamental human rights violation and an extreme form of discrimination against women and girls.

Despite the efforts of the European Union and its partners, 200 million girls are still suffering from this violation, which occurs in all parts of the world. It is estimated that the same number of girls are at risk of undergoing this practice by 2030.

In Europe itself, girls are still today subject to this illegal practice. The Commission works on its prevention by training professionals, such as judges, asylum officers or doctors who are in contact with girls at risk. We have put laws in place, to ensure that there can be no impunity in Europe for this practice. Female genital mutilation is a crime in all EU Member States and in most of them a person, who bring girls outside the EU to be mutilated can be prosecuted. Finally, the victims of such practices benefit from a high level of protection in the EU.

At the international level, together with the United Nations, we have launched an unprecedented initiative – the Spotlight Initiative – to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. Through this initiative, we will focus in particular on our efforts to fight female genital mutilation in Sub-Saharan Africa, a region where this practice is

still prevalent. Through these actions we provide direct and targeted support to the victims of such harmful practices.

The European Union will continue to work with all those determined to abolish female genital mutilation: parents, activists of all ages, including young girls, doctors, teachers, healthcare professionals, child rights and human rights advocates, judicial authorities, political, community and religious leaders and governments.

We will also continue building strong partnerships through bilateral, as well as multilateral cooperation. All UN bodies and Special Representatives of the UN Secretary-General, all regional organisations – in particular the African Union – and civil society are our partners in the shared efforts towards a safer world for women and girls, which will lead to more resilient, peaceful and inclusive societies.

We want a society where women are free from violence and free to change the world.”

Background

Female genital mutilation/ cutting affects the lives and health of girls and women inside and outside the European Union, every day. Medical evidence shows that this practice can seriously impact many normal body functions, increases maternal and infant mortality, and can also cause lifelong trauma beyond the physical damages. Such forms of physical violence prevent women and girls from meaningfully participating in public life to the same extent men do. Female genital mutilation/ cutting has huge costs for societies.

Effective change to this practice requires prevention work at community level. This is why the EU is actively supporting social change in local communities, and networks operating regionally and internationally. We facilitate learning between stakeholders, including governments, on prevention, victim support, prosecution and asylum for victims, through providing methodologies on measuring prevalence and risk, and by offering practical tools for professionals via a web-based platform.

The EU also provides a continuous support to UNICEF – the UN International Children’s Fund – and UNFPA – the UN Population Fund – to accelerate change in 17 countries. This action is instrumental in accompanying partner countries to adopt national action plans and budget lines to put an end to the practice. At the same time, it provides support to more than 1.5 million girls and women to access protection and care services, and encouraging more than 3,000 communities representing 8.5 million individuals to make public declaration of abandonment.

We remain committed to the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which addresses female genital mutilation through its Goal number 5 on Gender Equality and specific target 5.3 on the elimination of harmful practices.

For More Information

To find out more about Female Genital Mutilation and what the European Union is doing to eliminate this practice, see the [Q&A](#) and the website of an [EU-wide training platform](#). To promote the platform and explain more about Female Genital Mutilation, the European Commission releases [a series of videos today](#): one for professionals and five short clips for the general public.

The [NON.NO.NEIN.campaign](#) (see #SayNoStopVAW) aims to share information and showcase success stories about the important work that is being done in this field across the EU.

[Spotlight Initiative](#)– a new, global, multi-year initiative of the EU and UN focused on eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls.

More information is available on the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) [website](#).