



African
Women's
Organisation

National Plan of Action to Prevent and Eliminate FGM in Austria

2009 – 2011



EU Daphne Project

National Plan of Action to Prevent and Eliminate FGM in Austria 2009 – 2011

Presentation of the National Plan of Action to Prevent and Eliminate FGM in Austria

Tuesday, November 25th 2008

Parliament, Press Centre

Participants

Mag.^a Barbara Prammer, President of the National Council of the Republic of Austria

Mrs. Etenesh Hadis, Chairwoman of the African Women's organisation in Austria and Coordinator of the National Plan of Action to Prevent and Eliminate FGM in Austria;

Dr.ⁱⁿ Schadia Zyadeh-Jinniate, Gynaecologist and Member of the Committee

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

The fight against Female Genital Mutilation and the awareness raising on this cruel harm on mostly young women has been a central focus of my political activities for many years.



First initiatives in Austria were set up during my time as Federal Minister of Women's Affairs. A study which was carried out in 1999 in Austria delivered an insight into the impact of FGM. The political follow-up process of this study resulted in the passing of a law making FGM a criminal act. Newly established rights of victims have since then alleviated the situation of affected women.

As Goodwill Ambassador of the IAC (Inter-African-Committee) I have participated in numerous discussions with affected women. These encounters have touched me deeply and also underlined the need of legal action to be undertaken by all parliaments and governments.

The effective implementation of all established rights, however, can only be guaranteed if the acting parties in all areas of concern, first and foremost the health system, in justice and education, take an active part in providing sufficient information and developing efficient strategies.

Our united efforts, therefore, must be focused on the prevention of FGM in all of its forms. Thus convincing women that the tradition of FGM is a dangerous and cruel practice for their daughters and grand daughters is a major task to be carried at all possible levels, beginning with the families and communities.

National Action Plans containing legal and awareness raising measures are currently being developed in each of the European Member States. Some weeks ago, during a meeting of the coordinators within the framework of the EUROPEAN FGM Network in Vienna, I had the opportunity to discuss the experiences and the networking activities with women of other European Union Member States.

Everyday girls undergo FGM not only in Africa or Asia but also in Europe. Therefore, it is very important for us to swiftly take measures to save girls from the harmful physical and psychological effects.

Defending FGM as a traditional practice and thereby justifying it makes women all across the world suffer every day. Waris Dirie has, once and for all, made it clear when she said “FGM is not culture. FGM is torture.”

In Austria today, there are many women who work with great dedication on this topic. I am most grateful to have the chance of working with my many longstanding companions. Among them, Mrs. Etenesh Hadis as Coordinator for Austria in the EURONET FGM Network, to whom I want to extend my cordial thanks for her endless efforts, energy and great support!

The Chairwoman of the Austrian "Frauenring" (the leading women's network), Dr.ⁱⁿ Christa Pözlbauer, has, as Vice-president of the Committee for the National Action Plan, greatly contributed to the success of this project. Thanks must also go to all the co-workers of the NAP Committee for the voluntary contribution of their expertise.

Let me finish by wishing the National Action Plan much success and expressing my hope that many of its measures will be put into action as soon as possible, bearing in mind that every effort left out will endanger yet another young woman's health.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Prammer', written in a cursive style.

Mag.^a Barbara Prammer, President of the National Council of the Republic of Austria

Appreciation

In the name of the EURONET FGM Network I would like to thank all those that have made the Austrian National Plan of Action to Prevent and Eliminate FGM to become possible. My special thanks go to the President of the Austrian Parliament, Mag. Barbara Prammer, who has since many years been engaged in the fight against FGM and who fosters and supports national and international projects and initiatives to prevent and eliminate FGM. She gave, despite her workload and many commitments, a high priority to the National Action Plan and supported its existence in a great way. Furthermore, I would like to thank Dr. Christa Pözlbauer as well as the leaders and members of the Working Groups for their engagement and commitment. My special thanks go to the team of the office of Mag. Barbara Prammer, President of the Austrian Parliament, especially to Mag. Susanne Üblackner and her team for the good co-operation and their kind efforts.

Etenesh Hadis

EU FGM Coordinator for the National Action Plan of Austria

Background

Since the early 1970s an Austrian who lived in the USA, Dr. Fran Hosken and her group made a comprehensive study about FGM in Africa and founded an international Women Network (WIN) which continuously collects information about FGM.

In 1979 the World Health Organisation (WHO) organised a Seminar on “The Effects of Traditional Practices on the Health of Women and Children” in Khartoum. In this Seminar FGM was officially mentioned for the first time and clear national strategies for its eradication, for the establishment of national commissions and for the access for public education were recommended. This Seminar laid the foundation for the Establishment of the Inter-African Committee (IAC) about “The Effects of Traditional Practices on the Health of Women and Children” through African Women. The IAC is the main voice for the elimination of FGM in Africa in the sense of the recommendation of Khartoum Conference and the IAC 1997 Declaration. The IAC has now partner organisations in 28 African countries as well as affiliated member organisations in Europe and America.

International Organisations like the UNO and regional organisations like the African Union (AU) took up resolutions in their agreements and drew up resolutions which should protect women and children from harmful traditions. This decision was ratified by 171 countries in the II. UNO Human Rights Conference in Vienna in 1993.

Through migration the FGM practice was brought into European countries, the American Continent, to Asia and Australia. Within an EU Daphne Project the International Centre for Reproductive Health in Belgium and the City Göteborg in Sweden organised a Meeting about FGM in Göteborg, in 1999 in which participants from different European countries and also Mrs. Etenesh Hadis from the African Women’s Organisation in Austria were present. Out of this meeting the EUROPEAN FGM Network emerged which is a European wide umbrella organisation of Anti-FGM organisations and initiatives in the European Member States. In the following years several projects to prevent and eliminate FGM in Europe were implemented and some of them were supported by the EU Daphne Programme.

In October 1998 the FGM Topic was for the first time publicly discussed in Austria during Waris Dirie’s Book Presentation “Desert Flower”. Mrs. Etenesh Hadis from the African

Women's Organisation was present and spoke also about this topic. From the audience many questions were raised and it was evident that there was a great demand for clarification and information about FGM in Austria. With the support of the former Women Minister and today's President of the Austrian Parliament, Mag. Barbara Prammer, the African Women's Organisation undertook a Study about FGM in Austria. The results of the study showed that FGM was also practiced in Austria. In the following years a range of projects to prevent and eliminate FGM were carried out in Austria. The former Women Minister and today's President of the Austrian Parliament, Mag. Barbara Prammer, brought the FGM problem into the Austrian parliament which then enacted a law to prohibit FGM in Austria.

The African Women's Organisation in Austria developed within the framework of a two-year EU Daphne Project with partner organisations in the Netherlands and Sweden a FGM Teaching Kit which was distributed in the EU Member States, Africa and worldwide. Furthermore, the African Women's Organisation established with the support of the City of Vienna, the Women Ministry and the Fonds Gesundes Österreich the first FGM Counselling Centre in Austria.

In the EU Daphne Project "Developing National Plans of Action to Prevent and Eliminate FGM in the European Union" which has been organised by the EURONET FGM Network as the Coordinator and which is implemented with partner organisations in 15 EU Member States, and in which the African Women's organisation is a partner organisation, an Austrian Action Plan to prevent and eliminate FGM has now drawn up together with Austrian Ministries, NGOs, religious communities and the media. This Action Plan is valid from 2009 until 2011. Afterwards the implementation of this plan will be evaluated and future strategies will be decided.

Aims of the National Action Plan

In Europe:

- The Prevention and Elimination of FGM in Europe;
- The Coordination of EU wide activities and projects on the FGM topic.

In Austria:

- The Prevention and Elimination of FGM in Austria;
- The Coordination of FGM activities and projects in Austria
- The networking and coordination of Austrian authorities who deal with FGM and NGOs, migrant communities, religious communities and media to organise projects to prevent and eliminate FGM in Austria.

Target Groups

- Religious Organisations;
- Migrant communities;
- Women and Youth Organisations;
- Human rights Organisations;
- Authorities; Government officials
- Health Personnel;
- Social Workers;
- Media Representatives;
- Scientific Personnel.

The Materialisation of the Austrian Action Plan

In 2007 the national communities elected Mrs. Etenesh Hadis to be the FGM Coordinator for Austria. Furthermore an Austrian National Action Committee was formed to establish a National Action Plan under the leadership of the President of the Austrian Parliament, Mag.

Barbara Prammer; Dr. Christa Pözlbauer, the Vice President of the Committee; and Mrs. Etenesh Hadis, the EU FGM Coordinator for Austria.

The National Action Committee consists of Representatives from:

Ministry of Women, Media and Public Services;
Ministry of Interior;
Ministry for Economics and Work;
Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture;
Ministry of Health, Family and Youth;
Ministry of Justice;
Human Rights Commission;
Umbrella Organisation for all Catholic Help Organisations in Austria;
Contact Point for World Religions;
Vienna Institute for Development Corporation;
Austrian Women Ring;
Vienna Integration Conference – Networking Office;
Radio and TV Afrikas;
Arab Women’s Organisation;
African Women’s Organisation.

Five Working groups (Human Rights, Women’s and Children’s Rights, Health, Media, Religion) were formed which met regularly and worked out the National Action Plan.

The Austrian Coordinator of the National Action plan is the African Women’s Organisation with national partners:

Austrian Ministries;
Austrian Cities and Municipalities;
Authorities;
NGOs;
Religious Communities;
Media Organisations.

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Women's and Children's Rights

- Training of Trainers with Interdisciplinary Approach;
- Translation of all training materials in main languages;
- Counselling of victims and persons in danger with interdisciplinary approach;
- Clarification and information events for the broad public and communities;
- Professional help and support with interdisciplinary approach for pupils, students, researchers, experts.

Human Rights

- Clarification work about the topic “Perpetrator” and “Victim”;
- Information and Awareness Raising concerning criminal offence;
- Information and Awareness Raising concerning civil right claims for damages towards parents;
- Information Flyer. Asylum Seekers, Prevention of Violence, Women Counselling Centres;
- Trainings for information and sensibility in the basic education and in the Project “Police as Human Rights Protection Organisation”;
- SGP-Prevention: According to the Security police Law it concerns a “dangerous” attack;
- Trainings for the Criminal Police Counselling Service.

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Media

- Partnership with Medias for a continuous Opinion Building Process. Specific discussions with journalists and single interviews;
- Establishment of a informative Website;
- Mobilisation Spots in Radio, TV and Flyers;
- Brochures, Flyers, Books and Information Sheets;
- Posters;
- Lectures;
- Documentations and films: new productions, broader publicity of existing materials;
- Press Conference, Press Talk as well as front of the fire talks;
- Meetings and Conferences;
- Press Drive (within Austria respectively Europe or Africa);
- Press Releases;
- Journalistic motivation through competitors; journalistic awards;
- Press Networking and programme Exchange;
- South-North: between Austrian and African Medias;
- South-South: between African Medias;
- 14. archive: Documentation of all sorts should be collected.

Religion

- Provision of a multi-lingual brochure with the most necessary information about FGM;
- Information and clarification events about the FGM topic, especially about the fact that it is not justified by religion;
- Trainings for religious leaders.

