

COUNTRY - CYPRUS

1. LAW: Criminal Law

Is FGM criminalised?

Code*

- **Yes, through a specific provision in the Penal Code**

- **Year of the law:** Cypriot Penal Code Chapter 154

- **Definition of FGM:**

Article 233A defines female genital mutilation as: “The amputation, of all or parts of external female genitalia or partial removal of the labia majora or labia minora or clitoris”.

- **Definition of acts criminalised:**

Art 233A(1): “(a) The amputation of all or parts of external female genitalia or partial removal of the labia majora or labia minora or clitoris”; or “(b) assisting, instigating, advising or provoking the execution by a third party of any of these acts on a woman's body”.

Art 233A(2): “The actions described in 233A are not considered illegal if carried out by a doctor where there is need, either for the physical health of the woman on whom it is carried out, or if carried out on a woman in any stage of labour, or after that in relation to labour. The above actions may only be carried out following consultation with two other doctors”.

Art 233A(3): “The consent of the woman does not constitute a defence or mitigation in the measurement of the sentence”.

- **Penalty:**

Art 233A(5): “Offenses committed in violation of the provisions of the article are punishable with imprisonment of up to five years”.

Jurisprudence: No cases of FGM have been brought before the courts.

*(the coding system is explained on page 21)

Are there limitations/exceptions?

Code

• N/A

Are girls at risk of FGM included in child protection provisions in place?

Yes, girls at risk of FGM are included in child protection provisions. The general legislative framework considers FGM to be a form of violence against women, a violation of a child's human rights, and child abuse.

[The 1999 Law on Children, Chap. 352, amended in 2014](#), prohibits cruelty to children under the age of 16. Article 54 defines cruelty as the “wilful assault, ill-treatment, neglect, abandonment [or] exposure likely to cause the child unnecessary suffering or injury to health, including injury to or loss of sight, hearing, limb or organ”.

Under the 2007 and 2014 [Commissioner for the Protection of Children's Rights Laws](#) (Laws 74(I)/2007 and 44(I)/2014), the Commissioner has investigative powers and can intervene in any issue/case relating to children, in order to represent their interests, in keeping with the 1989 [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#).

Law: Extraterritoriality

Is the principle of extraterritoriality applicable?

Code

• **Yes, depending on the suspect's or victim's connection with the country.**

Art. 233A(4) of the [Cypriot Penal Code Chapter 154](#) applies the principle of extraterritoriality. Cyprus courts are competent to hear a case where the offense has been in violation of the provisions of the article committed by a citizen or non-citizen and committed in or outside the country.

Are there limitations/exceptions?

Code

• N/A

Is FGM grounds for international protection?

Code

- **Yes, it's grounds for refugee status**

A woman or girl who has been subjected to or fears being subjected to FGM on return to her country of origin may apply for refugee status in Cyprus, according to Article 3C of the Refugee Law (L. 6(I)/2000).

FGM is considered a gender-related form of persecution. The application procedure takes into consideration the claimant's country of origin and personal circumstances. FGM survivors are normally granted subsidiary protection in accordance to Article 15(b) of the EU Qualification Directive, if they can prove that they will be subjected to re-infibulation or further mutilation.

Women from a specific ethnic group or region where FGM is commonly practiced may be granted international protection based on her "particular social group" as the practice forms part of a wider pattern of discrimination against girls and women (UNHCR 2002).

Are there limitations/exceptions?

Code

- **N/A**

What are the rights granted to the FGM-affected woman or girl within the international protection status obtained?

Temporary residence

Under Article 18A(2)(a) of the 2000 Refugee Law, those granted refugee status receive a three-year residency permit, which can be renewed for a further three-year period.

Under Article 18A(3), residency permits for family members who do not themselves meet the conditions for recognition of refugee status are valid for less than three years, but they can be renewed. Residency permits are limited to the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus.

The issuing of a residency permit can take months, affecting related rights such as access to healthcare.

Permanent residence

Individuals can apply for permanent residence if they have:

1. Resided legally and continuously in the government-controlled areas of the RoC.
2. Stable and regular income sufficient to live without recourse to the social assistance system of the RoC. Income is assessed with the following in mind:
 - Remuneration from full-time employment;
 - Remuneration from other stable and lawful sources;
 - The cost of living, including the rent that applies in the current market;
 - A contract of employment that's permanent or valid for at least 18 months;
 - Shelter for the applicant and their dependent family members, which is considered adequate for a corresponding family residing in the same area and meets the general standards of health and safety, and generally ensures a life of dignity;
 - In case of self-employment, financial sustainability of the business or activity, including skills and experience in the related field.

3. Adequate knowledge of the Greek language and a basic grasp of Cyprus politics and society.

4. Adequate health insurance covering the risks that are usually covered in insurance contracts of Cypriot citizens. A valid medical card issued by the Ministry of Health meets this criterion.

5. Shown not to constitute a threat to public security or public order.

6. Secured residence in the areas controlled by the RoC. Residence must have been secured not as a result of fraud or misrepresentation. ([UNHCR Cyprus: Refugee Rights](#)).

Special treatment for persons in need

Under Article 9 of Refugee Law (L. 6(I)/2000), the authorities shall take into account the special situation of vulnerable persons, including survivors of FGM, in allowing a woman or girl who has either been subjected to FGM or fears being forced to undergo FGM when returning to her country of origin to apply for refugee status.

A woman or girl can claim asylum based on the fact that she belongs to a “particular social group” practising FGM. Nevertheless, the law does not include a specific provision concerning FGM.

Social assistance

Refugees or subsidiary protection beneficiaries registered as unemployed can apply for Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI). To do so, they must be registered as unemployed at their district Labour Office, or be able to prove that they are medically unable to work.

Work permits

Refugees or subsidiary protection beneficiaries can access employment from the date their status is granted. Under the Refugee Law, they have the same rights as citizens regarding remuneration, access to social security benefits, and other conditions of employment ([Ministry of Labour, Social Insurance and Welfare](#); [Department of Labour](#)).

Healthcare

As of June 2019, refugees or subsidiary protection beneficiaries are entitled to healthcare, on the same basis as Cypriot nationals, under the [General Health System \(GeSY\)](#). ([UNHCR Cyprus: Refugee Rights - Healthcare](#)).

Family reunification

Family reunification is only permitted for refugees, and only in exceptional cases for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. There is no waiting period for individuals to apply.

Law: Istanbul Convention

Has the country ratified the Istanbul Convention?

Code

- **Yes, it has ratified it.**

- Signed: 16 June 2015
- Ratified: 10 November 2017
- Entered into force 01 March 2018

The first State implementation Report was published in November 2022 ([GREVIO Baseline Evaluation Report Cyprus](#)).

2. POLICY: National Action Plan

Are there any National Action Plans (NAPs) on FGM?

Code

- **No, there is no NAP including FGM**

There is no National Action Plan for prevention and protection from FGM. However, there is a National Strategy and an Action Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women (2023–2028) that includes actions on FGM.

The Strategy sets out actions to develop protocols for FGM cases and for the recruitment and training of interpreters and cross-cultural mediators.

Is there a proper independent monitoring and evaluation system in place?

Code

- N/A

Is there a proper budget allocated for the NAP?

Point 4.6 under the Second Pillar (Protection of Victims) of the Action Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women (2023–2028) refers to the development of a protocol for asylum seeker survivors of FGM.

POLICY: Multi-agency Coordination Mechanism

Is there any multi-agency coordination mechanism on FGM?

Code

- **No, there is no inter-agency coordination mechanism on FGM.**

-Launched in December 2020, the Woman's House offers support services to women and their children, as well as girls under 18 years of age, who are victims of violence, irrespective of their residency status.

-The Woman's House operates "as a scientific centre, friendly to victims of violence, where professionals from various specialisations and public officers such as clinical psychologists, social workers, specially trained members of the police and others, are working under the same roof aiming to provide protection and specialised support to victims of violence and their families".

-In 2022, the Cyprus Cabinet established a National Coordinating Body for the Prevention and Combating of Violence Against Women responsible for the planning, coordination, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and measures for the prevention and combating of all forms of violence falling within the scope of Istanbul Convention. The body is accountable to the Minister of Justice and Public Order.

POLICY: Relevant professionals' duty to record

Is there a duty to record (register) FGM cases?

Code

- **No, there is no duty to record FGM cases**

The 2019 [Cyprus National Report on Beijing+25](#) highlighted that, due to the large recent influx of migrants, some health facilities have attempted to record FGM incidents; this is a step that can be developed into a tool that will help the government to estimate the extent of the problem.

The effort above does not indicate systematic or regular data collection; there is also no data indicating how many survivors access and use the health services. What data has been collected has also not been subject to evaluation.

Currently, the extent of FGM prevalence remains unknown. However, according to [EIGE's 2018](#) risk estimation, 12–17% of girls living in Cyprus from FGM-practising countries are at risk. The [Joint Shadow Report on Cyprus](#) by MIGS and the End FGM European Network has stressed the need for a data collection system / national register to quantify the women and girls living with FGM or are at risk in Cyprus.

A new initiative and practice commenced in January 2024 regarding data collection. The Cyprus Nursing and Midwifery Council launched a database recording the cases of women who have been victims of FGM and were provided health services at the Makarios Public Hospital (one of the largest hospitals in Cyprus providing healthcare to women and children). Discussions are ongoing to include this initiative in forthcoming NAPs for gender equality, making it compulsory across gynaecological and maternity clinics and hospitals in Cyprus.

Are there limitations?

Code	• Type of professional • Age of the victim • In case of performed FGM • In case of risk • Other
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Only the midwives that work at Archbishop Makarios III Hospital are responsible for recording cases of women with FGM.

POLICY: Relevant professionals' duty to report

Is there a duty to report (notify to the authorities and intervene)?

Code

- **Yes, there's a duty to report**

Guidelines on reporting cases of FGM are not yet in place. However, the duty to report is addressed in the following laws:

1. The Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) Law, 2000

According to Article 35a: Any person who omits to report a case of violence against a minor or a person having severe mental or psychological deficiencies, which came to their knowledge, shall commit an offence and in case of conviction, shall be liable to imprisonment up to two years or to a fine up to one thousand pounds or to both such penalties.

2. The Prevention and Combating of Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence and for Related Matters Law, 2021

According to Article 17: Where a person, in the course of exercising their profession or in carrying out their professional duties, either in the private or in the public sector, has sufficient grounds to believe that an offence of violence against a woman has been committed or that other acts of violence against a woman are expected to be committed and files a complaint with the prosecution authorities, confidentiality rules imposed by any Law in force shall not apply to the complaint, except in the case of information received by an advocate in the course of providing legal advice and/or representation and/or defending a person in criminal or civil proceedings.

Are there limitations?

Code

- **N/A**

POLICY: Protection for persons at risk

Are there prevention/protection measures for persons at risk of being subjected to FGM?

Code

- **Yes, there are prevention/protection measures**

Prevention/protection measures for persons at risk of being subjected to FGM are addressed in the following laws:

- [Violence in the Family \(Prevention and Protection of Victims\) Law, 2000](#)

Contains provisions foreseeing the removal of a minor in a case of violence and their placement in a safe place or under the care of the Director of the Social Welfare Services.

- [The Establishment of Minimum Standards on the Rights, Support and Protection of Victims of Crime Law, 2016](#)

Contains provisions to ensure that victims' needs are addressed in a tailored and non-discriminatory manner through a targeted approach aiming to ensure information on support, and protection for crime victims, including victims of FGM, and to safeguard their procedural rights.

- [The Prevention and Combating of Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence and for Related Matters Law, 2021](#)

Foresees the removal of a victim of an offence of violence against women and their placement in a safe place in the case of a child victim, their placement under the care of the Director of the Social Welfare Services.

There are also general child protection laws that cover girls at risk of FGM:

- [Law on Children Cap. 352 \(the Law on Children\)](#).

In the case of a child at risk of FGM, the most relevant provisions are:

-Article 64(1)(d): Placing the child for a specified period, not exceeding three years, under the supervision of a welfare officer or probation officer.

Article 68(1): Allows for the removal of a child from their home and placing them under the care of an appropriate person, whether a relative or not, who is willing to care for them.

Are there limitations?

Code

- **N/A**

FGM prevention and protection services are not integrated in broader sexual and gender-based violence referral systems between different sectors, including within helplines and shelters.

POLICY: Community engagement

Does the government have a formal system to engage with FGM-affected communities?

Code

- **No, there is no formal system in place**

POLICY: Funding for initiatives to end FGM

Does the government have a funding scheme in place dedicated to activities to end FGM?

Code

- **No, there is no dedicated funding scheme in place/differs at a subnational level**

Limited funding is available for short-term actions within the framework of the National Action Plan 2023-2028 for the Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women.

Are there limitations?

Code

- **N/A**

There is a lack of sustainable funding for women's specialised services and civil society organisations to effectively and comprehensively address FGM.

3. SERVICES: Holistic healthcare services

Is psychological, sexological and gynaecological care available to FGM survivors?

Code

- **No, there is no formal system in place**

According to GREVIO's [Baseline Evaluation Report for Cyprus](#) (2022), since 2016, FGM victims have been able to receive medical support from trained gynaecologists in the Makarios Hospital and psychosocial support from the mental health services and social welfare services. However, there are no formal procedures or guidelines for psychological, sexological, or gynaecological care for FGM survivors.

Are there limitations?

Code

- **Type of service**

There are no official procedures.

SERVICES: Reconstructive surgery

Is it possible to get reconstructive surgery?

Code

- **No, there is no reconstructive surgery available**

While there is anecdotal evidence that surgery to alleviate the health complications associated with FGM are carried out in public hospitals, there is no formal data available.

SERVICES: Reception conditions

Do reception conditions address the needs of FGM-survivors asylum seekers in terms of gender-sensitivity and access to adequate specialised services?

Code

- **No information**

Cyprus has adopted a gender-sensitive interpretation of the grounds for refugee status under the Geneva Convention, which is enshrined in Article 3C of the 2000 Refugee Law (6(I)/2000). Women or girls who have been subjected to FGM or are at risk of FGM may be granted asylum. Cyprus has incorporated the principle of non-refoulement into its national legislation, which is set out in Article 4(a) of the same law.

Are there limitations?

Code

- **N/A**

There is insufficient funding for specialized services for women and civil society organizations aimed at the effective and comprehensive response to FGM.

Asylum procedures and reception centres are gender sensitive, but to a limited degree. For example, female asylum seekers may request a woman interviewer/interpreter (EIGE, 2018).

There is also a mechanism to identify vulnerable asylum seekers; however, women or girls who have been subjected to FGM or are at risk of FGM are considered low vulnerability unless they report health complications due to FGM or they have other indicators of vulnerability, such as mental health difficulties, pregnancy, etc.; in such cases they will be referred to the general health services (AIDA, 2020).

Additionally, there are no specialised services for survivors of FGM at reception centres (Joint Shadow Report on Cyprus, 2021).

SERVICES: Training of relevant professionals

Are professionals trained on FGM?

Code

- Yes, but FGM modules in education/training curriculum of professionals are optional

Training on FGM is not included in mandatory initial or continued training/education of most professionals dealing with individuals affected by FGM. Optional training opportunities are available for health and other professionals, delivered by civil society organisations.

The National Strategy on the Prevention and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence 2023–2028 foresees the systematic training of frontline professionals, including the police, social welfare officers, health professionals, and teachers, on all forms of violence against women, including FGM.

FGM is also covered—albeit briefly—in university curricula relating to Nursing and Medicine.

Are there limitations?

Code

- **Type of professional**
- **Non-mandatory**
- **Other**

- Type of professional and Non-mandatory: Training is available for healthcare professionals and to university students in health sciences.
- Other: Training is not done systematically; to date there has been a one-off initiative by the MoH.

SERVICES: Advice and Support

Helplines

- Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family (SPAVO): Helpline – 1440; SMS Helpline – 99984042
- Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family (SPAVO) and “Hope For Children” CRC Policy Center (HFC): Helpline - 116111
- Cyprus Family Planning Association: 1455

Government authorities

- Cyprus Police: 112 /119, police@police.gov.cy
- Asylum Service, Ministry of Interior: +35722445245 or +35722445265, info@asylum.moi.gov.cy
- Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Domestic Violence (Nicosia): +35722775888
- Gynaecological and Obstetric Outpatient Department, Makarios III Hospital, Nicosia, Cyprus: +35722 05000 (call centre)
- Commissioner for the Rights of the Child: 22 873 200, childcom@ccr.gov.cy, <http://www.childcom.org.cy/>

NGOs/Civil Society Organisations

- UNHCR Representation in Cyprus: +35722359057/43/ +35722660164, cypni@unhcr.org, <https://www.unhcr.org/cy/>
- Cyprus Refugee Council (Nicosia): +35722205959
- Caritas (Nicosia, Larnaca, Paphos): +35722662606, administration@caritascyprus.org, <http://caritascyprus.com/>
- Hope for Children (UNCRC Policy Centre): +35722103234, info@uncrcpc.org, <https://uncrcpc.org.cy/en/>
- Cyprus Stop Trafficking (Nicosia): +35797853767 / +35722771063
- KISA Migrant and Refugee Center (Nicosia): +35722878181 / +35799098189
- Generation for Change CY (Nicosia): +35722100794

4. DATA: FGM prevalence

Are there limitations?

Are there surveys and/or estimations to calculate the FGM prevalence in the country?

Code

• No

Are there limitations?

How was the data collected?

Code

• N/A

DATA: Risk of FGM

Are there surveys and/or estimations to calculate how many girls are at risk of FGM in the country?

Code

• Yes

European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (2018), [Estimation of girls at risk of female genital mutilation in the European Union](#)

-As of 2018, 132 women and girls living in Cyprus are at risk of FGM.

By whom was the data collected?

Code

• EIGE

DATA: National register on FGM cases

Is there a national register centralising all FGM cases?

Code

• No

- There is no national register centralising FGM cases in Cyprus.
- Unofficial data is collected by the Gynaecological and Children's Department of the Makarios III Hospital around FGM survivors who were provided services in 2023. Only two cases of women with FGM were recorded. Both cases had sought healthcare services for delivery. One was categorised at Type 1 and the other with Type 3 FGM. There is no information on FGM cases for outpatient services.

DATA: FGM asylum requests/cases

Is there a data collection system put in place to record asylum cases requested and/or granted on grounds of FGM?

Code

• No

5. MILESTONES & GOOD PRACTICES:

Milestones

Are there any milestones in ending FGM in the country that may have not been covered in the above sections?

Code

• Yes

1. Legislation passed in 2003, specifically criminalising FGM: Cyprus Penal Code Chapter 154 (amendment 48 (I)/2003).
2. The Istanbul Convention was signed in 2015 and ratified in 2017. It entered into force 1 March 2018.
3. Following ratification of the Istanbul Convention, Cyprus passed Law 115(I)/2021 on the Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and Related matters.

Good practices

Code

• Yes

The END FGM E-Campus: E-Learning for Professionals in Europe is a free European e-learning platform for professionals dealing with individuals affected by FGM. The platform offers modules in health, prevention, protection, and community engagement and is available in five languages, including English and Greek.

The Woman's House

The Woman's House offers support services to women and their children, as well as girls under 18 years of age, who are victims of violence, irrespective of their residency status. It functions as an interdisciplinary, survivor-friendly space, where professionals from various specialties (e.g. clinical psychologists, social workers, specially trained members of the police, etc.) collaborate to provide protection and specialised support to victims of violence and their families.

CODING SYSTEM

- Green (Yes)
- Blue (Yes, but it is partially/not covered by the health insurance)
- Orange (Yes, but it is partially/not covered)
- Purple (subnational level)
- Red (No)
- Grey (No information)