



**End FGM**  
EUROPEAN NETWORK



# ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

**Towards the national implementation  
of the Istanbul Convention as a tool  
to end Female Genital Mutilation**

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## List of abbreviations

<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FGM</b>	Female Genital Mutilation
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence
<b>GBVAWG</b>	Gender-Based Violence against Women and Girls
<b>GREVIO</b>	Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
<b>MS</b>	Member State
<b>SMART</b>	Specific Measurable Achievable Relevant Time-bound
<b>SWOT</b>	Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organisation

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# Introduction

This advocacy toolkit by the End FGM European Network (End FGM EU) aims at outlining how to develop an advocacy strategy to ensure, first of all, full unreserved ratification and subsequently national implementation of the Istanbul Convention, particularly for what concerns female genital mutilation (FGM). To this end, the importance of advocating for the creation of National Action Plans that are consistent and sustainable, and which promote cooperation among relevant actors and coordinated measures to tackle the issue will be particularly stressed.

The present tool was developed by End FGM EU with the aim of supporting its members in advocating for the domestication of the international commitments enshrined in the Istanbul Convention towards the elimination of gender-based violence against women and girls, including FGM, through a holistic and integrated approach. This document wants to be a practical toolkit for End FGM EU members to develop an advocacy strategy for this purpose, with a step-by-step guidance throughout the planning, with concrete tips, clear messaging, lessons learned and monitoring advices.

**End FGM European Network (End FGM EU)** is an umbrella network of 24 national organisations working in 13 European countries who are experts on FGM. End FGM EU is a meeting ground for communities, civil society organisations, decision-makers and other relevant actors at European level to interact, cooperate and join forces to end all forms of FGM in Europe and beyond. We put at the heart of our work grassroots voices to influence European governments and policy-makers to work towards the elimination of FGM. We build our members' capacity, offer spaces to share expertise and develop partnerships.

While being dedicated to being the driving force of the European movement to end FGM, we are equally committed to build bridges and cooperation with all relevant actors in the field of FGM both in Europe and globally. In this sense, we actively promote and foster cooperation between the European movement and movements in other regions of the world.

# What is the Istanbul Convention?



The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (known as the “Istanbul Convention”) is the first legally binding instrument in Europe on preventing gender-based violence against women and domestic violence, protecting victims and punishing perpetrators. It is shaped around the ‘four Ps approach’ (prevention, protection, prosecution and integrated policies) to not only ensure that gender-based violence against women and girls is eradicated in all its forms, but also to address the

underlying causes of gender-based violence rooted in gender inequality in a comprehensive and holistic way. The aims of the Istanbul Convention are: to protect women against all forms of gender-based violence; to contribute to ending discrimination against women; to promote substantive gender equality; to design a comprehensive framework for the protection of and assistance to all victims of gender-based violence against women and domestic violence; and to end impunity for acts of such violence.

## The Istanbul Convention and FGM

Inspired by the WHO classifications of FGM<sup>1</sup>, Article 38 of the Istanbul Convention<sup>2</sup> specifically references and defines FGM, within the obligation to criminalise it<sup>3</sup>:

*“Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the following intentional conducts are criminalised:*

- a) excising, infibulating or performing any other mutilation to the whole or any part of a woman’s labia majora, labia minora or clitoris;*
- b) coercing or procuring a woman to undergo any of the acts listed in point a;*
- c) inciting, coercing or procuring a girl to undergo any of the acts listed in point a.”*

1 See WHO, “Classification of female genital mutilation”, available at [www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/FGM/overview/en/](http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/FGM/overview/en/)

2 Hereafter “the Convention”.

3 The text of the Istanbul Convention is available here: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/090000168008482e>



As it can be seen, the Convention considers FGM as one of the forms of gender-based violence against women and girls<sup>4</sup> towards which States parties<sup>5</sup> must organise their response in a way that allows relevant authorities to diligently prevent, investigate, punish and provide reparation for such acts, as well as to provide protection to women and girls at risk (Article 5). The Istanbul Convention thus requires States to prevent FGM, protect its victims and prosecute its perpetrators, by adopting a comprehensive framework of integrated and coordinated policies involving all relevant actors and agencies in their actions. This aspect is extremely important to take into consideration, since in order to eliminate gender-based violence against women and girls the Convention requires States to take an “integrated and interdisciplinary approach” (Article 7), which entails the need for National Action Plans<sup>6</sup>.

Full implementation of the Istanbul Convention in EU Member States could make an enormous contribution to ending the practice of FGM both within

that Member State and beyond. Thus, advocating for its full unreserved ratification and implementation, including through National Action Plans, by EU Member States must be a priority for the End FGM EU members.

## Ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention

States can sign the Istanbul Convention, showing the intention to comply with its provisions at domestic level, but have to further **ratify** it in order for the Convention to enter into force as a legally binding instrument on their territory. Generally, and depending on the political system of the State, this happens after the government puts forward a proposal of signature/ratification to the parliament and the parliament agrees. The instrument of ratification has then to be deposited by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe. On the first day of the month following the period of three months from the deposit of its instrument of ratification, the Istanbul Convention enters into force for the State party (Article 75).

Once a State decides to become party to a Convention, it needs to adapt its national legal and policy framework to ensure a proper **implementation** of the Convention and its provisions. This, depending on the State, can happen either before or after the ratification, and is a process in which close monitoring by civil society is crucial. This phase of adaptation towards full implementation, which can take various months depending on the speed of the political proceedings in the country, as well as on the priority that the issue has for the government, is the occasion to advocate for the creation of a consistent and sustainable National Action Plan promoting cooperation and coordinated measures among relevant actors to tackle the issue.

4 Including rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment, stalking, forced marriage, forced abortion, forced sterilisation, killings, including crimes in the name of so-called “honour”.

5 A State that ratified the Convention is called “State party” (to the Convention).

6 See the Guide on FGM and the Istanbul Convention realised by Amnesty International End FGM European Campaign and the Council of Europe at: <http://www.endfgm.eu/content/documents/studies/Istanbul-Convention-FGM-guide.pdf>

In order to ensure an independent monitoring of its correct national implementation, the Istanbul Convention established the 'Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence' (commonly known as GREVIO)<sup>7</sup> (Article 66). Such body undertakes periodic revision of State Parties to the Convention and to this purpose engages in dialogue with states and receives information by NGOs and other international and national human rights bodies. At the end of such reviews, GREVIO drafts and publishes reports evaluating legislative and policy measures taken by the Parties to give effects to the provisions of the Convention, points out shortcomings and makes concrete recommendations (Article 68)<sup>8</sup>. In cases where action is required to prevent a serious, massive or persistent pattern of any acts of violence covered by the Convention, GREVIO may initiate a special inquiry procedure. GREVIO may also adopt, where appropriate, general recommendations on themes and concepts of the Convention (Article 69).

## Where We Are

As of May 2019, 34 European countries have ratified the Istanbul Convention, among which 21 EU member states, whilst 12 more, among which 7 EU member states, have signed it but not yet ratified<sup>9</sup> <sup>10</sup>. However, many of those who have ratified the Convention have yet to properly implement its terms. Moreover, the EU signed the Convention on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2017 on two mandates, one on judicial cooperation in criminal matters and the other in asylum and non-refoulement. End FGM EU, together with other European partners, is advocating now for the EU to fully ratify the Convention within its broadest scope. It has to be kept in mind, however, that whenever the EU will ratify the Convention, this

will apply to EU law alone and, therefore, Member States will still need to ratify and implement the Convention themselves.

This Advocacy Toolkit will guide the End FGM EU members through the development of a strategy, depending upon the situation in individual Member States, focusing either on ratification of the Istanbul Convention or, where already ratified, on its concrete implementation, including through advocating for a National Action Plan.

## Potential Barriers to Ratification and Implementation

There are a few potential barriers that you may face when advocating for the ratification or implementation of the Istanbul Convention, including practical as well as ideological reasons. Indeed, even once ratified the Convention, States can still put forward "reservations" to limited articles of the Convention. It is crucial to know whether your country put forward some reservations<sup>11</sup>, and include in your Advocacy Strategy also actions targeting those reservations in order for them to be withdrawn and ensure the full unreserved ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention.

## Gender-based Violence Against Women is Not Considered a Priority

One of the main barriers that you may face is that governments may not consider gender-based violence against women to be a priority on their agenda. This is especially the case given the current economic crisis and what has been termed the 'immigration crisis'. However, it is important to highlight

7 See <http://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/grevio>

8 To read the full procedure step-by-step visit <https://rm.coe.int/ic-inf-2016-1-rev-eng/168071140e> and [https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/steps-in-the-first-baseline-evaluation-procedure#{"21392012":\[\]}\]](https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/steps-in-the-first-baseline-evaluation-procedure#{)

9 Having a look at the 12 States where End FGM EU has members, we can see that the majority among them has ratified the Convention apart from United Kingdom, which have only signed it.

10 Only 2 out of the 47 Council of Europe Member States did not even sign the Istanbul Convention: Azerbaijan and Russian Federation. See the Istanbul Convention website <http://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/210/signatures>

11 Countries, in which End FGM EU has members, which introduced reservations upon ratification are: Cyprus (30, 44, 59), Finland (55), France (44), Germany (44, 59), Greece (44, 78), Ireland (30, 44, 78), Switzerland (78).

how gender-based violence against women affects a vast proportion of a European nation's population and costs 226 billion euros each year in Europe<sup>12</sup>. In regard to FGM, it is crucial to demonstrate that it happens in Europe and is an internationally recognised gross violation of human rights. Further to the economic, developmental and social arguments used to support the ending of gender-based violence against women, it is also a State's obligation to do so given its commitments to pre-existing Conventions. Such barriers are best tackled by raising awareness and convincing decision-makers directly about the importance of the issue, if possible with available national data.

## The Definition of Gender and Gender-Based Violence

Some States might have issues with the definition of gender and, thus, gender-based violence, which is used in the Istanbul Convention. The definition is as follows:

- c *“gender” shall mean the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men;*
- d *“genderbased violence against women” shall mean violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately;*

Certain States have reservations regarding the definition of gender as socially constructed or believe that domestic violence is part of the domestic sphere and is, therefore, not the responsibility of the state to protect women from it. This is a fundamental contradiction of the Istanbul Convention itself and poses a great barrier. When faced with this situation, it is very important to focus the advocacy towards the relevant governmental bodies on the notion of gender, gender roles and stereotypes, power relations to finally end up talking about gender-based violence against women.

## The Istanbul Convention carries too many obligations for a country's Asylum System

Some States have expressed concerns about the fact that the Istanbul Convention entails provisions related to asylum claims and processes. They are concerned about a greater influx of asylum claims under fear of gender-based violence, including of FGM. If this is the situation in your country, it is still important to highlight that States have obligations regarding protection of vulnerable groups and those suffering human rights violations which are already in force, through other international treaties among which the Geneva Conventions, as well as through EU law within the Asylum Directives (Qualification, Procedures and Reception). Member States are already supposed to enforce these instruments, therefore the ratification of the Istanbul Convention would not create any extra burden on this specific aspect.

## Implementation of the Istanbul Convention will require allocation of human and financial resources

Many States will use the financial argument to delay ratification or implementation, particularly following the recent economic crisis. To counter this obstacle, besides the already mentioned human rights arguments, there is also another strong economic argument: gender-based violence against women, including medical and psychosocial accompaniment for women and girls affected by FGM, already costs the EU Member States around 226 billion euros each year<sup>13</sup>. Therefore, addressing the root causes of the issue in order to eliminate it, would actually bring on the long term a decrease, rather than an increase, in public expenses.

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<sup>12</sup> See EIGE study, which derived such number applying proportionately to the whole EU population the results of a case study in the UK which estimated the costs of GBV against women in that country to 28.5 billion euros: <http://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/eiges-studies-gender-based-violence/estimating-costs-gender-based-violence-european-union>

<sup>13</sup> See above EIGE study.

# What is Advocacy?



Based on its vision and values, the End FGM European Network has adopted the following definition:

*A deliberate, strategic and non-discriminatory human rights-based process, formed around evidence and the experiences of rights-holders, aimed at influencing decision-makers and other relevant stakeholders in order to hold duty-bearers to account, achieve change in policy and practice, and thus contribute to the ending of the practice of female genital mutilation.*

## What do we mean by ‘deliberate and strategic’?

In order to be effective, advocacy must consist of organised actions that build upon each other to achieve the overall impact of change. This is why it is necessary to create an Advocacy Strategy to reach our goals.

## What do we mean by ‘non-discriminatory’?

Advocacy seeks change for all rights-holders without discrimination on any ground such as sex, gender, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, state of health, disability, marital status, migrant or refugee status, or other status.

## What do we mean by ‘human rights-based’?

FGM is a violation of human rights and, therefore, End FGM EU’s advocacy efforts take a human rights-based approach. This means recognising that

women’ and girls’ enjoyment of their rights is affected by existing policies and practices and, therefore, ensuring that the fulfilment of these rights is a driving force behind calls for change. In addition, human rights-based advocacy achieves these outcomes through a non-discriminatory process that reflects human rights values and, therefore, it becomes an objective in and of itself. Furthermore, a human rights-based advocacy aims at ensuring that national laws and policies comply with international human rights instruments.

## What do we mean by ‘process’?

The advocacy process consists of a set of actions that will be analysed in the present guide and includes the development of an Advocacy Strategy and its implementation through concrete steps. By seeking change in policy and practice, the advocacy process addresses the deeper, underlying causes of the practice of FGM and seeks to hold duty-bearers to account for their role in the fulfilment of women’s and girls’ human rights. Moreover, the process of advocacy itself can be a self-fulfilling objective, as it ensures democratic and coordinated decision-making led by rights-holders. Finally, it is a long-term process that must be continuously assessed and reviewed, to check its efficacy, and then developed and adapted according to the circumstances or any changes that have occurred.

## **What do we mean by ‘formed around evidence and the experiences of rights-holders’?**

### **► Evidence:**

In order for an advocacy message to be effective, it must be seen as credible; people need to trust it and value what the advocate has to say. It is important that advocacy is rooted in reliable, accurate and relevant evidence which both demonstrates the problem and supports the call for change. Compelling evidence alone is not enough to achieve change and must, therefore, be communicated to decision-makers via advocacy and used to offer viable alternatives.

### **► Experiences of rights-holders:**

This means rooting advocacy in the needs and desires of those affected by the issue: the rights-holders. It is necessary to recognise that women and girls are actors of change and must be involved in developments that affect them. Therefore, on the one hand, advocacy actions must be shaped by the situation on the ground and, on the other, the advocacy process must directly include the meaningful participation of women and girls, as this represents also their fundamental right as citizens. In this way, advocacy can also become a tool for empowerment and a way to achieve sustainable change.

## **What do we mean by ‘decision-makers and relevant stakeholders’?**

### **► Decision-makers:**

Those with the power to shape policies and practices, e.g. governmental bodies and other public institutions. States’ governments are also duty-bearers under international law, meaning that they are subject to international law obligations to respect, protect and fulfil human rights and to abstain from human rights violations.

### **► Relevant Stakeholders:**

In this context, relevant stakeholders are all those actors involved in policies and practices concerning FGM and, more generally, gender-based violence against women and girls, e.g. inter-governmental institutions, research centres, health centres, asylum centres, academia, judiciary, law enforcement agencies, etc.

## **What do we mean by ‘hold duty-bearers to account’?**

A principle aim of advocacy is to monitor the work of duty-bearers and ensure that they are held accountable for their actions and the impact that the policies and practices they are responsible for have on rights-holders.

## **What do we mean by ‘change in policy and practice’?**

Advocacy seeks institutional change in order to have a real-life impact for rights-holders. In this specific case, advocacy seeks a change in policy to enable the ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention with the overall aim of ending the practice of FGM within the broader goal of eliminating gender-based violence against women and girls.

# Developing an Advocacy Strategy



The End FGM European Network will enumerate in this chapter for its members the steps to develop an Advocacy Strategy to advocate for either ratification or implementation of the Istanbul Convention at national level, keeping in mind the ultimate aim of establishing National Action Plans on gender-based violence against women and girls, including on FGM, in order to provide a comprehensive policy framework for putting an end to such human rights violations.

## Where are we acting? Analyse the context

The analysis of the specific context of each Member State is the first step to shape an effective and impactful advocacy strategy. This must be done through considering two main aspects: the legal and policy framework as well as the practice through available data concerning gender-based violence against women and girls, including FGM, in that specific situation.

Concerning the national level, it is important to know whether there is a national legal and policy framework on ending gender-based violence against women and girls, including a National Action Plan towards this end, and whether there are specific provisions (including criminal ones) concerning FGM. *[A Checklist for members to complete regarding their country's national legal and policy framework can be found in the Annexes.]*



## ANALYSIS OF THE LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

It is very important to analyse the **international, regional and national legal framework**, since the country might already have committed to similar international and regional obligations through other relevant instruments than the Istanbul Convention. Identifying these is crucial for planning your Advocacy Strategy, since it can show a clear willingness of the State and a predisposition towards ending gender-based violence against women and girls, including FGM. Moreover, it is always very important to use the language used in international instruments to define advocacy messages in order to ensure accuracy. *[A full list of the relevant international instruments can be found in the Annexes, together with a Checklist for members to complete regarding their country's position in relation to international and regional instruments.]*

Since the ultimate aim of any advocacy concerning the Istanbul Convention should be to see the international commitments taken by our governments concretely implemented in practice, it is important to always stress the added value that a **National Action Plan** involving different governmental sectors can bring, especially in terms of holistic approach and as a vehicle to ensure the 4<sup>th</sup> P of the Convention on integrated policies. An **inter-agency structure** (inter-ministerial, inter-parliamentarian, with participation of professional and civil society organisations and extended to affected communities) with a centralised coordinator has proven to have a promising impact in tackling in an integrated and multi-sectorial way gender-based violence against women and girls, including FGM.

## ANALYSIS OF THE PRACTICE: IMPORTANCE OF EVIDENCE COLLECTION

In order to have the full picture of the national context, it is equally crucial to gather information from primary and secondary sources that can illustrate the problem. Having a clear view on the issue will be fundamental to propose solutions in a second phase.

When crafting an Advocacy Strategy, **evidence collection** is a primary step in both choosing priorities and later supporting advocacy messages. Its inclusion in advocacy helps to add credibility and authority to the organisation and its calls for change. Moreover, the Istanbul Convention itself stresses the importance of data collection in preventing and combating gender-based violence against women and girls. Furthermore, policy-making should be rooted in evidence.

It is particularly useful to use evidence that is reliable and relevant to the interests of specific decision-makers or other relevant stakeholders targeted by the advocacy process, and that is collected regularly to ensure the advocacy strategy remains relevant and up-to-date. When analysing data for use in an Advocacy Strategy, it is necessary to consider the overall picture that the evidence paints and how this relates to existing policies and practices, in order to identify possible existing gaps. Moreover, it is important to ensure that evidence or its significance is not exaggerated and that findings are not overstated. Transparency in the methodology used to collect evidence is also key to ensuring credibility.

When gathering evidence, there are many existing sources that you can reference. These can include general sources, which contain data potentially relevant to your cause, such as national health statistics, or sources specifically researched with your issue in mind, for instance by research institutes or national (and international) organisations. *[A list of existing sources of evidence on FGM and gender-based violence against women and girls can be found in the Annexes.]*

However, it is often helpful to collect your own data and evidence, of course depending on availability of resources from your side. This is might be the case when:

- ▶ There is a gap in available data about FGM in your specific Member State;
- ▶ You are approaching advocacy from a specific issue surrounding FGM that has not been significantly researched;
- ▶ You are tailoring your evidence-based advocacy to the interests of a particular decision-maker or around a topical issue in order to achieve maximum impact.

It is important that all quantitative and qualitative data is collected accurately, according to correct protocols and standards, and without discrimination. There are several types of evidence, both qualitative and quantitative, which are useful for shaping an advocacy strategy and that can be used in different parts of the advocacy process:

- ▶ **Scientific research** – Hard facts, statistics, peer reviewed
- ▶ **The power of stories** – To illustrate, inspire, provoke
- ▶ **Hearing from rights-holders** – Their view of their world and what needs to change
- ▶ **Budget analysis** – Numbers and trends. How a government spends its money
- ▶ **Public opinion polls** – What the electorate wants, what it will accept

*[Please find an Evidence Worksheet in the Annexes that will help you to shape your advocacy priorities based on evidence collected.]*

## What do we want? Impact, Priorities and Objectives



### IMPACT

Once you have analysed the problem and its context within your individual Member State, it is time to devise a solution to the problem. This will become your main advocacy impact and will shape your whole Advocacy Strategy.

When choosing your **impact**, it is important to bear in mind the following questions:

- ▶ How will it effectively contribute to ending FGM in your country and beyond?
- ▶ Does it fall under your organisation's overall strategies and aims? Does it enable you to fulfil your vision and mission?
- ▶ Are other groups aiming for the same impact?
- ▶ Is the impact realistic? Does it have clear objectives and timeframes?

- ▶ Is it relevant to all groups affected by FGM? Will the impact be extensive and widely felt?
- ▶ Will it provide empowerment opportunities for women and girls in your country?
- ▶ How will it link to other current national concerns and topics?

You should ask yourself what your maximum and minimum demands are. On what points are you willing to compromise? Your ideal demand should become the driving force behind your Advocacy Strategy, your long-term goal, while your desired impact in practice must be something concrete and more 'limited'. A common method for ensuring you have an achievable impact and objectives is to use the **SMART analysis**:

<b>Specific:</b>	<i>What exactly do you want to happen? By whom?</i>
<b>Measurable:</b>	<i>Will you know when you have achieved it?</i>
<b>Achievable:</b>	<i>Is it realistic or even possible to achieve given your resources and time alongside the environment in which you are advocating?</i>
<b>Relevant:</b>	<i>Is it relevant and appropriate to all stakeholders, and to the problem itself?</i>
<b>Time-bound:</b>	<i>By when do you want it to happen?</i>

In this specific case, after analysis, the End FGM European Network has concluded that the unreserved ratification and/or implementation of the Istanbul Convention by all EU Member States and by the EU would be a major step in helping to achieve our Network's long-term goal of ending the practice of FGM in Europe and beyond. Therefore, this is the common impact we should all aim at when we plan our Advocacy Strategy.

## PRIORITIES

Although our common impact is the ratification and/or implementation of the Istanbul Convention, each member will have their own particular **priorities**, depending on the context analysis conducted in each Member State explained above. Thus, it is necessary to analyse which are the priority aspects of the Istanbul Convention on which it is more important to focus from your contextual perspective, in order to, on the one hand, ensure ratification and prevent possible reservations, and, on the other hand, push for implementation of the Istanbul Convention in the area that you feel most neglected.

Remember, your advocacy priorities must be strictly connected to your contextual analysis, in legal and policy terms, as well as in practice.

To identify your national priorities, go through the Guide on FGM and the Istanbul Convention realised by Amnesty International End FGM European Campaign and the Council of Europe<sup>14</sup>. You have to link the provisions included in the Istanbul Convention and your country situation and ask yourself the following question:

*“What does the Istanbul Convention foresee that is not happening in my country?”*



### EXAMPLE 1:

If your country still didn't ratify the Istanbul Convention since first it wants to adapt its domestic legislation to the provisions included in the convention, it would be crucial to focus your advocacy strategy on calling upon the State authorities to address the existing legal gaps in order to clear the obstacles for ratification (e.g. introduction of national protection framework for women and girls from crimes committed abroad).

### EXAMPLE 2:

If your focus is lack of implementation of the Istanbul Convention, your evidence-based analysis will have determined which are the critical areas in which State action needs to be strengthened in order to fully comply with the Convention. Focus on those and make them your advocacy priorities (e.g. need for more training for professionals). An overall priority that you should always keep in mind, in case not yet in place, is the creation of a National Action Plan.

Once identified your priorities, and depending on their amount, you can decide to plan your Advocacy Strategy over one year or multiple years, and to focus on one or a limited number of priorities per year. Also the ranking of your priorities will depend again on your contextual analysis, and specifically on a number of factors, such as: political opportunities and hooks, likelihood that it will happen sooner than later, urgency of the matter, and so on.

<sup>14</sup> Available here: <http://www.endfgm.eu/content/documents/studies/Istanbul-Convention-FGM-guide.pdf>

## OBJECTIVES

With an impact and clear priorities in mind, you can begin to set **objectives** that need to be achieved in order to reach your priorities and thus produce your overall desired impact. These are essentially what you are asking decision-makers to do as part of the process of ratifying and/or implementing the Istanbul Convention. These will be specific to different countries, decision-making bodies and stages of the ratification and/or implementation process.

### Example Objectives for Ratification

- ▶ Objective 1: The ratification of the Istanbul Convention is on the agenda
- ▶ Objective 2: A parliamentary debate / vote for ratification is set
- ▶ Objective 3: A timetable on adapting relevant domestic legislation in view of ratification is adopted
- ▶ Objective 4: A yearly governmental progress report to the parliament following signature is agreed upon

### Example Objectives for Implementation

- ▶ Objective 1: The implementation of the Istanbul Convention is on the agenda
- ▶ Objective 2: The government reports timely to GREVIO and meaningfully engages with it concerning State dialogue, country visits, recommendations and follow-up
- ▶ Objective 3: A comprehensive and integrated National Action Plan on ending gender-based violence against women and girls, including FGM, with periodic progress reporting is established
- ▶ Objective 4: Training on gender-based violence against women and girls and FGM is available and accessible for professionals in different areas, including health, asylum, law enforcement, judiciary, social work, child protection and media.
- ▶ Objective 5: A meaningful engagement and cooperation between the government and civil society organisations on the Istanbul Convention implementation is in place

Your specific advocacy activities will all be focusing

on your objectives, which are linked to the priorities you set for your country. There may be smaller aims within each objective and it is important to celebrate the successes of these when achieved. Once you establish your objectives, you can decide to rank them in an order depending on your contextual analysis, urgency, likelihood of achievability due to current political debates, etc.

#### IMPACT

Full implementation of the Istanbul Convention

#### PRIORITIES

Need for a comprehensive action to tackle GBVAWG and FGM

#### OBJECTIVES

A comprehensive and integrated National Action Plan on ending GBVAWG, including FGM, with periodic progress reporting is established

## Who can help us? Target Audiences

With a clear idea in mind of what needs to be achieved, it is important to consider who can help you achieve your goals. The **target audiences** of your Advocacy Strategy are the stakeholders and institutions that you need to influence in order to ensure your impact is achieved and are strictly connected with your objectives. Each objective you set for your advocacy strategy will have one or more target audiences. This step is a key component in what makes an Advocacy Strategy successful given that target audiences are those with the power to effect real change. Often, highly successful advocacy campaigns devote a lot of time to understanding the intricacies of each target audience to gain a good understanding of how to influence them.

### PRIMARY TARGET AUDIENCE

The **primary target audience** consists of the people and institutions who can directly help to achieve your advocacy objectives. They are often the primary duty-bearers and those with the most power. However, as a result, they are sometimes the hardest to reach and influence. Thus, it is necessary to consider the following factors when selecting a primary target audience:

#### 1. How much expertise does the audience have on your issue?

In this case, how much expertise does the audience have not only on the Istanbul Convention but also on women's, children's and human rights, gender-based violence against women and girls, and FGM. When aiming for specific objectives related to concrete fields of action, it is also important to consider a target's own area of expertise, even if seemingly unrelated to the above issue. For example, if the objective is pushing for implementation of gender-sensitive asylum procedures, it might be best to target the Minister of Home Affairs, in charge of immigration policies, rather than the Minister for Equal Opportunities, in charge of the gender portfolio.

#### 2. How much influence does the audience have on your issue and its objectives?



It is important to target those who have a principal role in the decision-making process and, thus, have the most power to achieve your advocacy impact in the areas of concern to the Istanbul Convention.

#### 3. What is their attitude to your issue and the ways you seek to achieve it?

If possible, it is important to identify a target audience's attitude to the Istanbul Convention and FGM. To some extent, this can be inferred from their previous work and priorities, if not explicitly obvious. Often, those who share your ideals will become key allies in your advocacy process, whilst those who are undecided on the issue will become key advocacy targets. It is important to consider issues of resources, time-scales and efficiency when analysing whether to target someone who is clearly against the Istanbul Convention and your priorities. It is of course very important to start engaging with them, but it might be better to start with awareness-raising activities instead of relying on them for achieving your advocacy objectives. This could instead be planned in a second phase.

#### 4. To whom are they accountable?

It is important to gain a full picture of your target audience's position, credibility and accountability in order to formulate a suitable advocacy strategy. Who are they responsible for? To whom do they respond of their actions? These are key questions you need to ask yourself before choosing a target.

#### 5. How can you access the target audience?

Consider whether your organisation, your national partners, any other End FGM European Network member, or the Network Secretariat have existing links or ways of access to your target audience. It is necessary to factor in existing protocols for accessing the target audience, as well as ideas for how you could potentially reach them in new ways.

## SECONDARY TARGET AUDIENCE

A **secondary target audience** has no direct power to make decisions but has influence over your primary target audience and can offer a point of access to them. A secondary target audience is essentially the messenger, the person who is most appropriate to deliver your messages to the primary target audience, for instance the political advisor, a parliamentarian assistant, a recognised expert, or a well-known media. Moreover, it can also be useful to select a secondary target audience who has a stake in the issue and can act as your champions at a level of influence. Some of the strongest messengers are rights-holders who can deliver advocacy messages from a personal point of view. When identifying secondary target audiences, it is important to consider the following:

### 1. What level of influence does the messenger have over the primary target audience?

This can be in terms of direct influence, such as a political advisor or an expert, or indirect influence, such as the media or public opinion. Different messengers will be suited to different target audiences and to achieve different objectives.

*[You can find a comprehensive list of examples of target audiences both for ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention in the Annexes.]*

In order to evaluate the best target audiences/stakeholders for our advocacy activities, it can be useful to fill in the following table.

Target	Level of expertise on FGM	Level of influence to bring about the change we want	Position/attitude – how close is it to your vision?	Ways to reach out to the target	Expectation – what can we expect from the target?

### 2. How credible does the primary target audience consider the messenger to be?

This is essential to ensure effective influence over the primary target audience. In cases such as this, experts and advisors are probably considered the most credible. Rights-holders have a credible voice, especially if they are somehow known to the public, but their authority in terms of policy-making processes may be limited. However, with their intervention, they can help putting the desired issue on the political agenda. The media can be a credible representation of public opinion, but this is often cast into doubt.

### 3. Can the messenger deliver your advocacy messages with clarity, accuracy and empathy?

The most effective messengers are those who not only deliver your messages precisely, but those who personally invest in them and deliver them with passion. It is important to consider the risks of involving a secondary target audience and the possibility of your message being misrepresented or delivered ineffectually. Furthermore, it is important to fully equip, involve and inform messengers when briefing them.

## What to say? Advocacy Messages



### HOW TO STRUCTURE AN ADVOCACY MESSAGE?

A key component of an Advocacy Strategy, is the message conveyed to target audiences in order to bring about change. An **advocacy message** sets out what you need your audience to understand, remember and do. It differs from other communi-

cation messages because it contains an action desired from your target audience that acts as a solution rather than simply an explanation of the problem. The message should appeal both to what is right and to the audience's self-interest.

The following is a common template used for constructing **primary advocacy messages**:

- ▶ **Statement** – This is the central idea which sets out the cause of the problem and highlights why change is important
- ▶ **Evidence** – The relevant evidence and data, which supports the statement. This should be conveyed using tailored language
- ▶ **Example** – A real life example that adds a human element to the message and appeals to the emotions
- ▶ **Goal** – The overall objective that you hope to achieve
- ▶ **Action Desired** – The solution to the problem which your target audience can carry out

**Secondary advocacy messages** are additional messages that are tailored to specific target audiences in order to clarify the situation and explain in detail how various objectives will be met. They can detail the specific actions required by certain individuals and draw upon the objectives set out in your Advocacy Strategy.

In order to be effective, advocacy messages must be simple and clear with a balance between the rational and emotional. Ideally, they should be free of jargon, to ensure that they are accessible to your target audience, and it is useful to include a timeframe for when you wish to achieve your objective. Often, it is necessary to repeat the message via various advocacy methods so as to ensure it is memorable and the action desired is actually carried out.

### Examples of Advocacy Messages for the Istanbul Convention

An advocacy message targeting the European Union for the ratification of the Istanbul Convention within the context of FGM would be the following:

- ▶ **Statement** – FGM is a human rights violation, which affects women and girls throughout Europe. It has long-term physical and psychological consequences for women and girls and its practice, along with other forms of GBV against women and girls, needs to end.
- ▶ **Evidence** – The European Parliament has estimated that 500,000 women and girls in Europe are currently living with the life consequences of female genital mutilation, with further 180,000 are at risk of it every year.

- ▶ Example – [case study, personal story]
- ▶ Goal – In order to contribute to the eradication of this harmful practice, we would like to see the European Union ratify the Istanbul Convention, which is the first legally binding instrument recognising that FGM happens in Europe. It provides a clear framework for prevention, prosecution, protection and integrated policies to put an end to all forms of gender-based violence, including FGM.
- ▶ Action Desired – We call upon the Council Rotating Presidency to ensure that negotiations lead to the EU unreserved full ratification of the Istanbul Convention within the semester of its mandate. Furthermore, ensure that a clear, specific and detailed Code of Conduct is adopted as a framework for EU and Member States' actions. Finally, ensure that an EU Coordinator on ending gender-based violence against women is appointed within the European Commission to overview the implementation.

*[To have further concrete examples of targeted advocacy messages, please consult the Annexes.]*

## How to do it? Advocacy Methods

Once defined the messages, there are a range of different **methods** that can be used to convey your messages within your advocacy strategy. When deciding which methods to use, it is necessary to consider the following factors:

- ▶ How does your target audience normally receive messages?
- ▶ Which method will have the biggest impact for that specific message?
- ▶ What skills and contacts does your organisation already have?
- ▶ What has worked in the past?
- ▶ How can your different advocacy methods combine and complement each other and how do they co-ordinate with methods of other organisation dealing with similar topics?

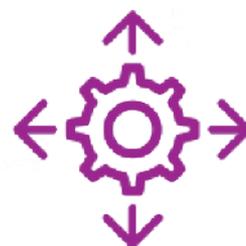
The key to an effective Advocacy Strategy is not only to shape your methods depending upon the message and target audience, but also to repeat your messages in creative ways that really place your issue on the agenda. Another crucial issue to maximise the impact of your message is the **timing** of your advocacy actions during which you will deliver your message. Therefore, it is very important to identify key dates (at international and national levels) that bring attention to the specific issue of your advocacy action/message (gender-based violence against women and girls, FGM, health, children, refugees and migrants, etc) and which can be strong allies in your advocacy efforts by creating a momentum and a greater echo around your demands and calls for action. *[A list of international key dates can be found in the Annexes.]*

Here below we will analyse the different advocacy methods, their characteristics, advantages and disadvantages in specific situations.

## LOBBYING

The main advocacy method is lobbying, and, to a certain extent, all other methods are conducted to ensure lobbying is as effective as possible.

**Lobbying** is about gaining access to and influencing key decision-makers that have the power to affect a policy change on the issue of your concern. The idea is to build a relationship with decision-makers, being seen as both a reliable source of quality analysis and a representative of stakeholders, in order to share information on your issue and persuade them to take action.



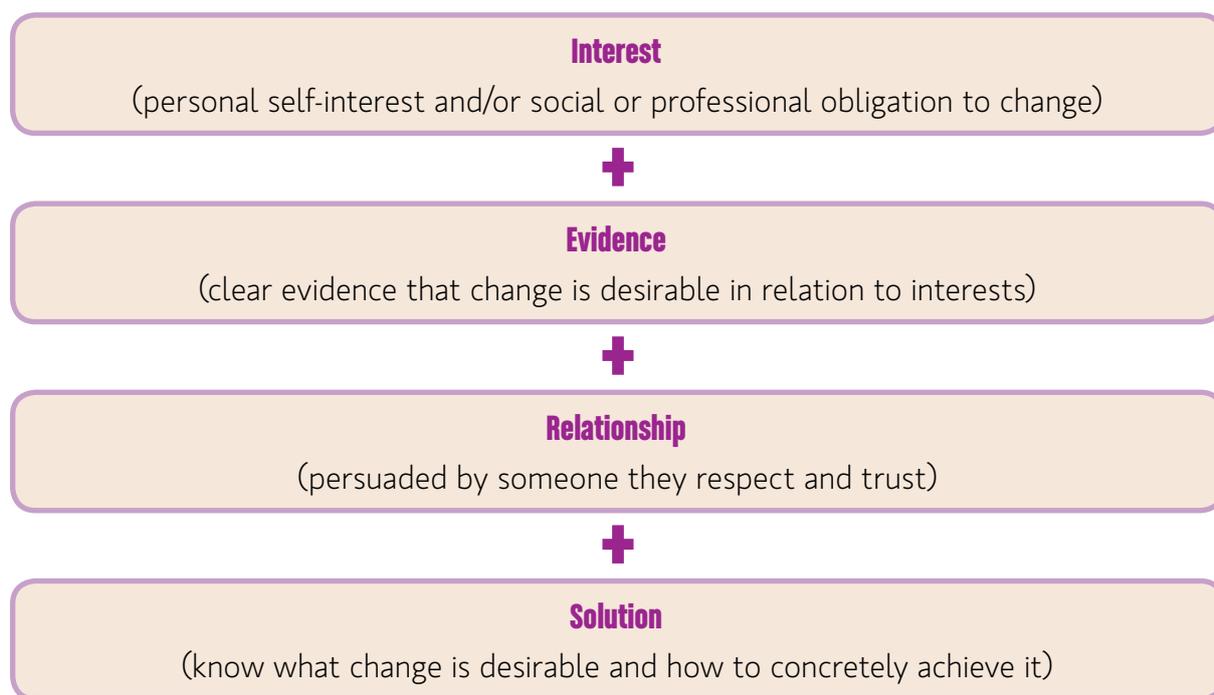


Lobbying most commonly involves face-to-face meetings and briefings with decision-makers and their staff. It can also involve experts sharing the

newest information on the issue. All contact with decision-makers should be supported by **evidence** and be shaped around clear action points and a few **concrete recommendations**. It can also be useful to support your arguments with petitions, large event turnouts or statements of support from opinion leaders and national and international experts.

When meeting decision-makers, it is important to **build trust** and to be prepared for counter-arguments to your cause. It is useful to leave decision-makers with relevant briefings, brochures and factsheets for future reference and to follow up meetings with both 'thank you' messages and further actions either by email, phone or face-to-face meetings. The most important aspect of a successful lobbying strategy is to keep the lines of communication open between your organisation and the decision-maker and to develop a mutually beneficial and constructive relationship.

There are **4 key factors** that usually persuade people to promote change:



Therefore, it is important to frame your demands within specific policy agendas and to offer something in return, whether that be simply knowledge or credibility to the decision-maker’s public profile.

Make it clear that you are willing to provide information and support if the decision-maker agrees to carry out actions to help achieve your objectives.

Pros	Cons
Direct contact with those with power and establishment of a trust relationship	Decision-makers can use your meetings to claim they are listening to stakeholders even when they are inactive
Ensuring direct communication between rights-holders and decision-makers	
Entails and encourages a direct action for change	

## NEGOTIATING

**Negotiating** follows a similar vein to lobbying but entails presenting a position and debating with an opposition in order to achieve change. It is often conducted with decision-makers who have different priorities and a compromised agreement is usually the aim.

It may seem to be a counter-productive method, when compared to lobbying, but sometimes it is the only option to achieve any change. It is also important to bear in mind that the decision-maker may have a valid point that needs to be addressed, and therefore discussing the issue with other stakeholders can help give you a fresh perspective and see alternatives.

Therefore, it is necessary to have analysed the situation fully before meetings so that you can **counter arguments** and are fully secure on your organisation’s position regarding various points. This enables you to make an informed decision on whether to compromise on under terms you have initiated or to walk away.

Negotiating may be necessary when States have reservations about certain articles in the Istanbul Convention. Thus, you would need to decide on your key points, which are non-negotiable, and those on which you are willing to compromise, as part of your Advocacy Strategy.

Pros	Cons
Enables communication even with those who have opposing priorities	Sometimes a compromise cannot be reached, and this might result in frustration
Ensures a pragmatic approach that enables real, even if not ideal, change	Can result in a change that is not strong enough, which might be counterproductive for final goal
The preparation for negotiation enables you to create watertight arguments for your cause	It can be a waste of time and limited resources if little progress is made

## ADVISORY ROLE

The expert nature of civil society organisations is often valued by decision-makers, as well as by the public and media, and, therefore, organisations can use their **advisory role** as a method of advocacy. This means that your own agenda and objectives should be at the forefront of any advice you are invited, or you request, to give.



As regards the Istanbul Convention, there is a particular opportunity to produce substantial input into the monitoring of the implementation of the Convention and its articles by States parties, as part of the periodical review mechanism established by GREVIO. Indeed, such independent expert monitoring body foresees a reporting cycle for every State party to the Istanbul Convention, to analyse its implementation at country level<sup>15</sup>. In parallel to this report, which every State party needs to produce according to a timetable, GREVIO also welcomes further input by national and international civil society organisations, which are invited to contribute to the revision process by producing **shadow reports**, giving their expert perspective on the State's implementation progress. This is absolutely a key area for national advocacy towards the correct implementation of the Istanbul Convention, because it offers organisations the opportunity to engage directly with GREVIO

experts and bring to them their own perspective (and counter-narrative compared to the official governmental one) on what works and what not in their government strategy to tackle gender-based violence against women and girls, including FGM. Very often governments delegate service provision to the civil society sector, especially concerning gender-based violence against women and girls, including FGM, therefore NGOs are best placed to raise concrete challenges and obstacles to their daily work and put forward concrete recommendations to improve the situation. GREVIO knows that, and its experts value enormously civil society's contributions to the review process, in order to have a comprehensive and complete picture of the situation at national level.

This exercise is also crucial, since based on all the inputs received, GREVIO questions directly States (as part of the Official Dialogue with the State Delegation in Strasbourg), conducts follow-up field missions in the country to verify the issues raised (and also to meet with civil society and service providers working in the field), and finally publishes its report with recommendations<sup>16</sup>. In this sense, the first baseline GREVIO report 2016-2020 (produced within the first reviewing period for each State party) is the most important, comprehensive and detailed one. It is an all-encompassing report that will serve as a basis for all future periodic reviews, which will be smaller updates focused on the gaps and shortcomings highlighted in the first one. Therefore, it is extremely important for civil society to participate, in order to make GREVIO aware of key national issues with details and concrete recommendations for improvement, since this will be the basis for any future GREVIO work on your country. The GREVIO monitoring body has to be seen as a strong ally that advocates from a European authoritative level for the correct and full implementation of the Istanbul Convention at national level, and thus which ultimately shares your same advocacy goal, and which can help you achieve it.

<sup>15</sup> See above in this same document for explanation on the process.

<sup>16</sup> GREVIO's First (Baseline) Evaluation Procedure for the Istanbul Convention can be consulted here: <https://rm.coe.int/16806b7b77>

In order to ensure the representation of the issue of FGM in the GREVIO reports and recommendations to your countries (since unfortunately it is not guaranteed that governments will highlight it in their reports, not being often their key priority), it is crucial to ensure that the issue is well described in the shadow reports by civil society. End FGM EU is committed to assist its members in drafting these Shadow Reports when their Member State undergoes revision<sup>17</sup>.

Pros	Cons
Allows to be seen nationally (and internationally) as an expert	Preparing thorough expert contributions can be very time- and resource-consuming (unless the material is not yet ready for a previous research)
The preparation for expert contributions produces a deeper and enriching understanding of a specific topic, which can benefit the organisation's future work	
In case the contribution is written, another material is produced that can be used again as basis for further advocacy meetings	

## CAMPAIGNING

Governments and decision-makers are ultimately accountable to their citizens, therefore it is important in order for your advocacy to be effective, to build a movement around your asks, so that they are not only supported by you but also by a wide range of population to increase the pressure on your target audience to comply with them. This is the main objective of **campaigning**, which is an advocacy method intended to mobilise wide **public support** in order to bring about social change and raise awareness among both the broad public and the target advocacy audiences on a certain issue and make them your allies. An advocacy campaign uses democratic tools both offline and online, including: peaceful protest, demonstrations, rallies, petitions, public actions (such as flash mobs, stalls), events (performances, exhibitions), online awareness raising through social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube). The more people are involved,



the more visible the advocacy message will be, the more called to answer on their accountability the decision-makers will feel.

<sup>17</sup> The timetable for GREVIO's First (Baseline) Evaluation Procedure for the Istanbul Convention can be consulted here: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/timetable>

In order to plan an advocacy campaign, it is important to clearly define in advance its **objective**, **timeframe** (possibly planning actions around key dates to maximise their impact), **target population**, **mediums** to reach it, concrete **actions** and **resources** needed. For example, if the objective is raising awareness among the broad public on the importance of the implementation of the Istanbul Convention to end gender-based violence against women, including FGM, in your country, it might be helpful to create a social media campaign, which

can virtually reach thousands of users and greatly amplify your message. Create on Twitter an easy but powerful hashtag which clearly spells out your key message. While tweeting, you can also tag decision-makers to hold them directly into account and conduct virtual advocacy, as well as well-known persons close to your cause who could potentially become your “champions” and make your message go viral. Remember, it is very important for an advocacy campaign to spread positive messaging, in order to inspire and encourage people to take action!

In 2017, the End FGM European Network ran a ‘Building Bridges to End FGM’ travelling Art Exhibition Campaign, which entailed sending especially commissioned art focused on FGM to four different European countries (UK, the Netherlands, Belgium and Cyprus) where End FGM EU members are present. The objective of this art campaign was to raise awareness and create dialogues on the topic of FGM amongst communities, public and national authorities, by portraying non-violent, creative and holistic imagery. The campaign also operated alongside the larger scale objectives of End FGM EU’s long-term agenda to foster more productive and empowering narratives around FGM that focus on less stigmatising language and support more carefully used terminology with the aim of a more inclusive and coherent movement to end FGM. Moreover, the campaign was in line with End FGM EU’s annual theme ‘Building Bridges’, and included art featuring different geographical zones, both in Europe and Africa, and different sectors, such as asylum, health, child protection, in order to foster a cross-cutting, cross-border and multi-sectorial dialogue on FGM.

Pros	Cons
Allows to become known nationally (and internationally) as a key actor on a specific issue	Risks to oversimplify the message
Makes your cause well known to the public and increases the public support to it, making your advocacy messages more powerful	Common enthusiasm for a public campaign can lead to setting up too high and non-achievable objectives, which might finally end up in frustration
A well-developed campaign targeting multiple stakeholders might bring new funding opportunities	

## WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

Engaging with **journalists** working on both printed and online press, can help you spread your advocacy message and enable you to reach out to your target audience through yet another channel. However, this is not as easy as it may sound, because journalism has its own working rules which need to be considered in order to establish a fruitful cooperation that is beneficial to everyone.

Pillars to be kept in mind are:

- ▶ **Position/attitude:** how close is the journalist and the newspaper to your vision?
- ▶ **Deadlines:** journalists usually work to tight deadlines, therefore it is important to approach them well in advance
- ▶ **Timing:** is there a time-hook, a key date? why would it be important to publish an article on that date?
- ▶ **News:** is the topic newsworthy? Is the topic new, interesting, relevant to the journalist's audience? In case these characteristics are difficult to match with your message, things that can make it newsworthy are: telling it through a human story, involving a celebrity to talk about it or choosing an anniversary or key-date to publish it.

When you engage with journalists, make sure to establish in the long term a personal relationship of mutual trust, since they will be your allies in spreading your message, not only your mediums to do so. In this way, you can meaningfully engage them on your topic, including by inviting them at events and seminars, and it will be easier and more pleasant

to work together and to be on the same page in terms of messaging and language. Concerning this latter, it is very important to engage openly with journalists in a discussion on empowering messaging concerning FGM, and encourage them to use accurate and empowering terminology in a sensitive and non-stigmatising way.



In 2017, End FGM EU published 'How to Talk about FGM'<sup>18</sup> – a position paper specifically targeting the media community addressing the issue of the language used when referring to FGM. The paper highlights the benefits of the more productive methods of spreading awareness through the media by empowerment, accuracy and non-stigmatization. The publication has been widely disseminated in the media community as well as at events and EU level meetings. This knowledge sharing on the issue of language as it addresses FGM has been a productive and positive way in which End FGM EU acts to work with the media.

18 Available here: [http://www.endfgm.eu/content/documents/reports/How-to-Talk-about-FGM\\_FINAL\\_-position-paper\\_v4.pdf](http://www.endfgm.eu/content/documents/reports/How-to-Talk-about-FGM_FINAL_-position-paper_v4.pdf)

Pros	Cons
<p>Allows your advocacy message to be spread and multiplied to reach a bigger audience</p>	<p>Your message can be misrepresented, distorted from its original meaning and misused to support positions which are very different from your advocacy objectives</p>
<p>The media can be a great secondary target audience channelling your advocacy message and directly calling upon decision-makers and politicians to act</p>	<p>The language used can be stigmatising, trivialising, non-accurate, insensitive, full of graphic details which can trigger re-traumatisation of FGM survivors, and therefore not in line with and even undermining the idea of an empowering messaging</p>

## PARTNERSHIPS

A very important advocacy method is to form **partnerships** with other organisations also advocating for the same goal, in this case for the ratification and/or implementation of the Istanbul Convention. It is crucial, since helps creating synergies, combining strengths and talk with a common voice, which has a greater weight before decision-makers. Such partnerships can be formed with other FGM-related organisations or those dealing with different aspects of gender-based violence against women and girls. Equally, it may be useful to collaborate with organisations seemingly dealing with completely different subject matters, including those working on development, education, asylum and migration, discrimination, health, depending on the issue you are focusing on.

The idea would either be to form a partnership around the ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention and to shape an advocacy strategy together, sharing expertise, resources and responsibilities, or to involve partners in the dissemination of your advocacy message already formed as part of your Istanbul Convention Advocacy Strategy. Thus, a partner could work with you to reach target audiences in different ways or could simply promote your issue as part of a coordinated effort. Either way, it is important to formalise the relationship in some way and to communicate fully about potential collaboration and actions.

The End FGM European Network is part of the European Coalition to end violence against women, co-ordinated by the European Women’s Lobby, which consists of a pan-European network of organisations working in areas related to gender-based violence against women and girls. It was launched within the Year to End Violence Against Women, as 2017 was declared by the European Commission, with the main advocacy priority being the EU ratification of the Istanbul Convention. As part of the advocacy process towards this goal, the members of the coalition have worked together to draft recommendations to EU Commissioners and parliamentary reports, as well as provide direct input into lobbying activities with the EU rotating Presidencies and Member States.

When choosing a potential partner organisation, it is important to consider the following factors:

- ▶ Do you share the same principles and values?
- ▶ Do you share the same objectives?
- ▶ Does this partnership add something to your advocacy efforts? (This can be both in terms of adding credibility and effectiveness to the strategy and adding expertise and resources. It is important to choose a partner whose strengths and abilities are complementary to yours)
- ▶ Do they have a national presence, and can they influence the target audiences?
- ▶ Would this partnership add to, or compromise, the work and status of your organisation?

Moreover, an **effective cooperation** requires to recognise common working grounds, joint agendas and define mutual expectations, as well as identifying respective roles and responsibilities. It is also very important when entering a partnership to recognise and respect different fields of expertise, skills and resources, including different working styles and cultural backgrounds, which can enrich the cooperation and provide fruitful and constructive complementarities.

Partnerships can generate great momentum for change and resonate more strongly with decision-makers and the public. However, working alongside others brings also enhanced risk and, therefore, it is necessary to fully analyse the situation and carry out a risk-assessment beforehand.

Pros	Cons
Strength in numbers with a powerful voice	May be dominated by one powerful organisation
Pooling of financial and human resources	May reduce the credit individual organisations receive for achievements
Reduces duplication of effort	Can reduce credibility of organisations if not thought-out properly – Lack of control of others' actions can always lead to unexpected actions with negative results
Enhances credibility of advocacy campaigns or organisations themselves	Cooperation is time-consuming
Enables you to target a wider audience	May have to compromise on certain issues if it is difficult to find a common objective and vision – Opponents may be able to exploit differences between the partners
Can ensure advocacy on all aspects of the Istanbul Convention – Calls for specific actions are given more legitimacy if partner is an expert in that area	

## How to plan and monitor it? Analyse the Strategy



In order to build an efficient and effective Advocacy Strategy, it is crucial to plan it carefully in advance and continuously monitor its implementation and evaluate its impact.

To this end, a comprehensive and frequently used method to analyse organisational strategies is the so-called **SWOT Analysis**, measuring internal

(attributed to the organisation) and external (attributed to the context) helpful and harmful factors which result in Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Here below you can find some examples of answers you might want to put in your SWOP analysis.

	HELPFUL	HARMFUL
INTERNAL FACTORS	<p><b>STRENGTHS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Being part of a European network gives more credibility and weight to our advocacy and provides us a platform for sharing lessons learned and promising practices</li> </ul>	<p><b>WEAKNESSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Resources allocated to advocacy activities are limited</li> <li>▶ Advocacy is not the main focus of my organisation</li> </ul>
EXTERNAL FACTORS	<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ There is a good international momentum with the SDG target 5.3 to the elimination of harmful practices</li> </ul>	<p><b>THREATS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Eliminating FGM is not a top priority for the EU and its Member States, including my own government</li> </ul>

The SWOT analysis can also help you reshape your priorities or decide to include in your plan some actions in order to address some weaknesses and manage some threats you might face. After this, an important part of the planning is to draft an **advocacy workplan** with objectives, activities/outputs, target audiences, responsible people and timing (taking into consideration the relevance of some key dates as previously mentioned).

Objective	Activity	Output	Target	Person responsible	Timing

### ANALYSE AVAILABLE ADVOCACY RESOURCES

Moreover, it is crucial to be aware of **human, financial** and **material resources** at your disposal, including your own staff, partners, budget allocated to advocacy activities you decided to carry out, as well as materials produced by your organisation on which you can base your evidence-based advocacy efforts. Making sure that the resources that you have are adequate to your objectives, and therefore to your planned activities and outputs is key to ensure the realistic implementation, as well as the effectiveness and efficiency of your advocacy strategy.

### ANALYSE AND MANAGE RISKS

Once the **risks** (possible internal and external harmful factors) are identified through the SWOP analysis there is the need to analyse them in order to be able to manage them. In order to do this, it is important to assess for each risk encountered its probability (how likely it is to happen), importance (how much impact would it have on your strategy in case it may occur), the total risk level (probability x importance), and finally identify mitigation strategies in order to address it. It is crucial to do this both for internal and external factors, in order to have under control all possible risks.

It might be useful to fill in this table.

Risk	Probability (1 - 5)	Importance (1 - 5)	Total Risk Level (1 - 25)	Mitigation
<b>Internal</b>				
Reduction of core funding	3	5	15	Need to diversify funding sources with different private donors/foundations
<b>External</b>				
Negative outcome of EU/MS elections	2	4	8	Find individual champions/allies on FGM within generally adverse political parties

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

It is crucial to continuously reflect on and assess the work done within your advocacy strategy in order to adjust it in case needed. To this end, **monitoring** is the process targeting daily activities and outputs which must be carried out continuously and on an ongoing basis; **evaluation** is the periodic overall review of impact which is carried out in key phases (usually mid-term or at the end of the advocacy plan). Monitoring and evaluation help assessing the effectiveness, efficiency and impact.

In order to ease the monitoring and evaluation, it is useful to set a number of concrete and SMART<sup>19</sup> indicators of progress based on your planned activities/outputs (measure of effort and work), outcomes (measures of effect and achievement of your objectives) and general impact. Moreover, to monitor and evaluate also broader issues, including the external context in which the advocacy is conducted, it is useful to set questions such as: what worked, what didn't and why? what went better than expected and why? what could be improved and how? which risk was not sufficiently managed and represented a barrier for success? were there unexpected opportunities/obstacles?

**Now that you read this Toolkit, you are ready to plan your Advocacy Strategy!** To help you do so, we have prepared this overview table that you can fill in. You can get inspiration through the following already filled-in example.

For practical examples and concrete exercises, please also consult the Annexes to this Toolkit, which are available on our website: [www.endfgm.eu](http://www.endfgm.eu).

<sup>19</sup> See before in this Advocacy Toolkit.

## OVERVIEW TABLE TO PLAN YOUR ADVOCACY STRATEGY

<b>IMPACT</b> Overall goal of your advocacy	<b>PRIORITY(IES)</b> Steps to achieve your impact	<b>OBJECTIVE(S)</b> Specific asks to achieve your priorities	<b>TARGET(S)</b> Those who have the power to fulfil your asks	<b>MESSAGE(S)</b> Structured communication to support your asks	<b>METHOD(S)</b> Way(s) to deliver your message	<b>RESOURCE(S)</b> What you have/ need	<b>M&amp;E INDICATORS</b> How you measure success

## Already filled-in example

<b>IMPACT</b>	<b>PRIORITY(IES)</b>	<b>OBJECTIVE(S)</b>	<b>TARGET(S)</b>	<b>MESSAGE(S)</b>	<b>METHOD(S)</b>	<b>RESOURCE(S)</b>	<b>M&amp;E INDICATORS</b>
	Steps to achieve your impact	Specific asks to achieve your priorities	Those who have the power to fulfil your asks	Structured communication to support your asks	Way(s) to deliver your message	What you have/ need	How you measure success
EU full and unreserved ratification of the Istanbul Convention	The European Parliament need to agree	European Parliament resolution in favour of EU accession to the Istanbul Convention	Co-Rapporteurs of the report on EU accession to the Istanbul Convention Parliamentary assistants	Ensure that a strongly worded report and resolution are adopted by the EP to agree for the accession of the Istanbul Convention	Partnership Lobbying (meetings with co-rapporteurs, amendments to the EP report)	27 NGOs, Factsheet	EP resolution
	The Council of the EU need to agree	The Council of the EU adopts the decision to ratify the Istanbul Convention	FREMP Chair EU rotating Presidency Perm Rep in Brussels	We call upon the Council Rotating Presidency to ensure that negotiations lead to the EU unreserved full ratification of the Istanbul Convention within the semester of its mandate.	Partnership Lobbying (meetings with Perm Rep)	27 NGOs, Factsheet	Council decision
	The European Commission need to put in place a comprehensive strategy	The European Commission must put in place a Code of Conduct, a Coordination body	DG JUST Commissioner DG JUST Gender Equality Unit	Ensure that a clear, specific and detailed Code of Conduct is adopted as a framework for EU and Member States' actions.  Ensure that an EU Coordinator on ending gender-based violence against women is appointed within the European Commission to oversee the implementation.	Partnership Lobbying (meetings with DG JUST Gender Unit officers)	27 NGOs, Factsheet	Code of Conduct EU Coordinator on VAW EU VAW Strategy



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