

Renewed initiative against forced marriage Spring 2002



BARNE- OG FAMILIEDEPARTEMENTET

RENEWED INITIATIVE AGAINST FORCED MARRIAGE SPRING 2002

Forcing someone to marry against his or her will is illegal in Norway and is punishable by up to three years in prison. Forced marriage is an offence against the right of individuals to choose their own spouse. This right laid down in international conventions.

The Government will continue its efforts to work against forced marriage and, in this leaflet, put forward 30 new measures in several different areas. Combating forced marriage is a community concern and also therefore a community responsibility. Individuals cannot, however, be absolved of responsibility and ultimately it is the ones who use force or cause force to be used that are responsible. Good routines are vital during a crisis but long-term planning is no less important.

Preventive work requires a contribution from the community at large, including institutions such as the social and child-welfare services, women's shelters, the police, educational and health services etc. If all who come to Norway are to receive the necessary information, we are dependent upon the immigration authorities and the municipalities having good routines for the dissemination of this information. The Government will ensure that all relevant public agencies receive the necessary training, such that young people are not met with incomprehension. It should not be forgotten that people and organisations with roots in the immigrant communities play a significant role in this respect, both by helping to change attitudes internally and by lending their understanding of the community to the relevant public services. The Government wishes to underline

Telephone information on forced marriage

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Oslo Røde Kors Internasjonale Senter

the importance of having good communication with those communities affected by the problem. As a step towards this the Prime Minister has taken the initiative to arrange a major conference on the 21st of August 2002.

Young people in danger of forced marriage need help. Some organisations have taken this problem seriously. Some of these young people need a lot of support over a long time and the Government will therefore prioritise supporting those organisations that have shown a commitment to helping young people in crisis.

Young people who must break with their families need a place to live, often with one or more adults who can give both psychological and social help. Women's shelters can meet this demand in the short term, but are of course reserved for women. Young men who are threatened with, or in danger of, being married against their will and young people who have entered relationships against their parents wishes, have few or no places to live that give the necessary degree of protection. The Government will, therefore, in dialogue with the municipalities, assess possible accommodation alternatives that could help to improve the lot of young people in danger of being forcibly married.

All in this country shall have equal rights and duties, and shall have the freedom to uphold their own systems of values, follow their own culture and traditions, and practice their faith. The framework for this shall be Norwegian law and fundamental human rights. This also means that they shall have the freedom to make their own decisions regarding their own bodies and lives. An important premise for all the country's citizens having these possibilities is that we succeed in the general work of integration as a whole. This begins with basic tuition in the Norwegian language. The Government will shortly commence introduction programmes for all newly arrived refugees. The Government wishes further that participation in Norwegian language and social studies courses shall become obligatory and is considering possible sanctions against those who do not participate.

The work against forced marriage in Norway also demands an emphasis on international co-operation. Many young people find that they are being taken to their parents' home country to be forced into marriage there. To ensure that these young people receive help and protection the Government is working to establish contacts with the authorities in relevant countries in order to handle individual cases.

MEASURES

Crisis help for young people

1

Measure 1

The Government will continue to prioritise support to those organisations that have experience of offering help to young people in crisis.

*Responsible for implementation:
Ministry of Children and Family Affairs*

Measure 2

The Government will support the establishment of a central competence team and take the initiative to establish advisory groups in the larger towns.

Responsible for implementation: Ministry of Children and Family Affairs

Measure 3

The Government will, in dialogue with the municipalities, assess possible alternatives for alleviating the accommodation situation for young people who are threatened with forced marriage.

Responsible for implementation: Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development

Measure 4

The Government will ensure that public servants in relevant services in the larger towns receive in-service training in the issues raised by forced marriage. Relevant services will include social and child-welfare services, health stations, schools, the educational and psychological counselling service, the children and young people's psychiatric service, and the police.

Responsible for implementation: Ministry of Children and Family Affairs

2 Regulations

Measure 5

The Government will propose changes to the provisions of the immigration regulations concerning the requirement for maintenance during application for family reunion on the basis of marriage. In particular, the question of whether or not there shall be imposed tougher requirements for maintenance than at present when the applicant is under the age of 23 shall be considered. Proposals for changes shall be put forward in August 2002.

Responsible for implementation: Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development

Measure 6

The Government will work towards a more systematic use of interviews during application for family reunion on the basis of marriage. Routines, both in Norway and in Norwegian embassies and consulates, will be assessed.

Responsible for implementation: Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development

Measure 7

The Government will reintroduce the County Officers' right to test the legitimacy of a marriage before the courts. Where public authorities (Public Register of Births and Marriages, Directorate of Immigration etc.) are in doubt about the legitimacy of a marriage, the case can be given over to the County Officer who assesses whether or not there are reasons to challenge the marriage's legitimacy. The Government will put forward further changes to the law and regulations that will make it simpler to dissolve forced marriages.

Responsible for implementation: Ministry of Children and Family Affairs

Measure 8

The Government will introduce unconditional public prosecution in cases involving forced marriage, and make clear in the General Civil Penal Code that the illegal use of force also includes forced marriage, and that the more stringent sentence of up to 6 years in prison may be employed in such cases.

Responsible for implementation: Ministry of Justice

Measure 9

The Government wishes to have regulations preventing "child marriage". It may do this by defining marriage involving a child under a certain age as forced marriage. The Government will investigate this question, including the age of consent to marry, in more detail.

Responsible for implementation: Ministry of Justice

Measure 10

The Government will work towards transferring the assessment of the terms of a marriage to a public body.

Responsible for implementation: Ministry of Children and Family Affairs

Measure 11

The Government will look more closely into registration offices' practice regarding the registration of marriages entered into abroad.

Responsible for implementation: Ministry of Children and Family Affairs in co-operation with the Ministry of Finance

Measure 12

The Government will improve registration and control routines to prevent incorrect payment of child benefit in connection with periods of residence abroad. Limiting the right to child benefit during periods of residence abroad will also be considered.

Responsible for implementation: Ministry of Children and Family Affairs

Measure 13

The Government will consider changing the Child Welfare Act to allow the child welfare service to help young people up to the age of 20 if they so agree, and, if the case is reported to the service before they reach the age of 18.

Responsible for implementation: Ministry of Children and Family Affairs

Measure 14

The Government intends that the Children Act shall include provisions forbidding the arrangement of marriage on behalf of minors.

Responsible for implementation: Ministry of Children and Family Affairs

The education sector

Measure 15

The Government wants schools to address the various aspects of forced marriage as part of the teaching in Norwegian language and social studies so that pupils come to know what rights they have and where they can get help.

Responsible for implementation: Ministry of Education and Research

Measure 16

The Government wants municipalities to be prompt in investigating cases where pupils are taken out of school without proper explanation, and where there is a suspicion regarding forced marriage.

Responsible for implementation: Ministry of Education and Research

Measure 17

The Government wants adult education centres to address forced marriage as part of their Norwegian language and social studies courses.

Responsible for implementation: Ministry of Education and Research

Measure 18

The Government will ensure that the subject of "multicultural understanding" is included in the new syllabuses for teacher training and training of health and social workers, which are now under development.

Responsible for implementation: Ministry of Education and Research

In-service training

Measure 19

The Government will strengthen the role of family-welfare services in the work against forced marriages and will, therefore, ensure that they receive the necessary training to fulfil this role.

Responsible for implementation: Ministry of Children and Family Affairs

Measure 20

The Government will increase the competence of the health and social services via in-service training. Key services such as social and child-welfare services, health stations, schools, family-welfare services, the educational and psychological counselling service, the children and young people's psychiatric service, and the police shall have a general culture-specific competence in addition to knowledge of problems concerning forced marriage. The Government will consider making this training the responsibility of the County Officers.

Responsible for implementation: Ministry of Children and Family Affairs in collaboration with Ministry of Social Affairs and Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development by Directorate for Immigration Affairs

Measure 21

If leaders of religious communities aid in, or sanction, forced marriage or female genital mutilation, and by so doing break Norwegian law, they can have both their state subsidies and their right to perform marriages removed.

Responsible for implementation: Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs

Measure 22

The Government will consider stipulating that religious community leaders should complete a course in Norwegian language and social studies as a condition for residence permits pursuant to the Immigration Act.

Responsible for implementation: Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development

Information and work to improve attitudes

Measure 23

The Government will set aside funds that voluntary organisations and other groups can apply for in connection with information campaigns, work to improve attitudes, and advice and guidance that can help prevent forced marriage.

Responsible for implementation: Ministry of Children and Family Affairs

Measure 24

The Government will work to prevent forced marriage by making information available at health stations and school health services.

Responsible for implementation: Ministry of Health

Measure 25

The Government will ensure that appropriate information is given to political-asylum seekers in asylum reception-centres. Reception centres' staff shall always be aware of the problem of forced marriage.

Responsible for implementation: The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development by Directorate for Immigration Affairs

Measure 26

The Government will produce a brochure designed for parents from minority cultures in connection with the Parent Guidance Program. Questions concerning forced marriage will be addressed in this brochure.

Responsible for implementation: Ministry of Children and Family Affairs

Measure 27

The Government will, as part of the Parent Guidance Program, begin research with parent guidance groups, for parents from minority cultures at selected schools and health stations in Oslo.

Responsible for implementation: Ministry of Children and Family Affairs

Measure 28

The Government will support networking between young people who want to work with problems connected with forced marriage and the right of individual choice.

Responsible for implementation: Ministry of Children and Family Affairs in collaboration with The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development

International co-operation

Measure 29

The Government will enter into and pursue bilateral agreements with individual countries with the aim of achieving a fast and effective handling of individual cases.

Responsible for implementation: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Measure 30

The Government will take the initiative for a Nordic conference in 2002 to exchange experiences regarding the problem of forced marriage.

Responsible for implementation: Ministry of Children and Family Affairs in collaboration with other relevant Ministries

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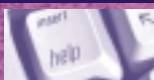
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