



Norwegian Ministry  
of Justice and Public Security

Action Plan

# The Right to Decide about One's Own Life

An Action Plan to Combat Negative Social Control,  
Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation 2017-2020







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Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation 2017-2020

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**The action plan is a response to requests by the Storting to the Government:**

*“The Storting requests the Government to ensure that the police, schools and other relevant government agencies have sufficient knowledge of forced marriage, female genital mutilation and honour-based violence, including honour killings.”* Resolution No. 437.5 (2015-2016), 12 January 2016. This request has been complied with, and the Government will work continuously to enhance knowledge of the field.

*“The Storting requests the Government to present to the Storting further proposals for measures to counter forced marriage, following further illumination of the subject matter through documentation and scientific research.”* Resolution No. 853 (2015-2016), 6 June 2016. This request has partly been complied with, and the Government will provide additional documentation and research through measures in the action plan.

*“The Storting requests the Government to strengthen its efforts to provide rights information to persons granted a residence permit, in connection with women’s organisations/civil society in the whole country, in keeping with the proposal by the Equality Commission (NOU 2012: 15).”* Resolution No. 944 (2015-2016), 16 June 2016. This request will be complied with through Measure 19 in the action plan.

Color codes for fact boxes

**Information**

**Example**

based on experiences  
from the Expert Team

**Legislation**

**Definitions**

# FOREWORD

Norwegian laws, regulations and values form a framework for everyone living in Norway. Within this framework, each person has the freedom to decide how to live his or her life. For the vast majority of people living in Norway, the right to decide over their own body is a natural and obvious part of life. Many people take for granted the right to decide whom to marry, or the right to terminate a marriage. But that is not the case for everyone.

Immigration to Norway has brought different religious and cultural customs from those we have been accustomed to. Many people adapt to the laws, regulations and values of Norwegian society when they arrive here. However, some girls and boys grow up in Norway without the freedom to decide over their own life, their own body or whom they can marry. In some societies, women are seen as second-class citizens and are subjected to violence, abuse and social control. Domestic violence and abuse affect a large part of the population in Norway. Some girls and women living in Norway have experienced female genital mutilation. This is an immensely painful experience and can be the underlying cause of lifelong health problems. Girls and boys who are deprived of their freedom or who are victims of forced marriage or genital mutilation must be helped. Abusers and people who commit these offences must be prosecuted.

In Norway, there have for several years been efforts to prevent and combat negative social control, forced marriage and female genital mutilation. These efforts have yielded results: an increasing number of people contact and receive help from special services available for people exposed to this violence. But the fight against forced marriage and female genital mutilation must continue. Plural marriage is

another challenge. For several years, there has been immigration from countries where plural marriage is allowed. There is therefore reason to believe that this occurs in Norway. We must continue working to learn more about its extent and address such crimes effectively.

A new generation of young people from immigrant backgrounds are now making their voices heard and fighting for their rights in Norwegian society. They challenge their own families and the communities that are trying to deny them their rights. We need such courageous young adults. They are good role models for other young people whose rights are violated. Attitudes are changing, and more people are questioning the demands and expectations from their community. To support these positive developments, the Government wishes to strengthen cooperation with immigrant organisations. As a society, we must defend the rights of children and young people. At the same time, the communities concerned must also take responsibility for that attitudes change. We must join forces in making an effort to give all children and young people in Norway, irrespective of gender or background, the same freedom and the same opportunities.

With a rise in the numbers of refugees and asylum seekers arriving in Norway in autumn 2015, forced marriage and female genital mutilation gained increased attention. Child marriage became an important issue. The Storting has asked the Government to ensure that all relevant agencies have adequate knowledge of forced marriage, female genital mutilation and honour-based violence. The Government was asked to present to the Storting new measures to combat forced marriage.

This action plan is a comprehensive commitment for four years. It includes operational measures to liberate more children and young people in Norway from negative social control and various forms of coercion. The Government will ensure that the legal protection of the individual is strengthened and that preventative measures are enhanced. Those who see no alternative but to break contact

with their family will receive the support required to cope with the challenges of starting a new life. This plan is aimed at all those whose work relates to negative social control, forced marriage and female genital mutilation, particularly employees in social services, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and policy makers.



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# OVERVIEW OF MEASURES

No.	Measure	Ministry responsible <sup>1</sup>	Page
<b>Priority Area 1: To strengthen legal protection for vulnerable people</b>			
1	To consider stricter provisions in the Marriage Act to combat child marriage and bigamy	BLD	24
2	To consider extending the time limit for the annulment of forced marriage	BLD	25
3	To consider making non-legal and religion-based forced marriage a criminal offence	JD	25
4	To consider making the duty to prevent criminal acts to include forced marriage	JD	25
5	To expand the provision on abuse to include the extended family	JD	25
6	To review legislation and practices regarding plural marriages and transnational serial marriages	JD	26
7	To improve guidelines regarding children left abroad	BLD	26
8	To ensure follow-up dialogue with pupils due to move abroad without their parents	KD	26
<b>Priority Area 2: Strengthening assistance to people who break contact with their family and network</b>			
9	To introduce a mentoring scheme for young people subjected to negative social control, honour-based violence and forced marriage	JD	30
10	To evaluate current child welfare housing for young people under 18 subjected to honour-based violence or forced marriage, and consider new support measures	BLD	30
11	To establish police protection guidelines for victims of threats	JD	30
12	To enhance guidance for victims of violence who move to another municipality	ASD	30
<b>Priority Area 3: Changing attitudes and practices in the relevant communities</b>			
13	To update the curriculum <i>Domestic Violence</i> for adult immigrants	JD	34
14	To develop courses for resource persons from relevant communities	JD	34
15	To continue with dialogue groups against violence for residents of asylum reception centres	JD	34
16	To review training for religious leaders	KUD	34-35
17	To enhance courses in good parenting	BLD	35

1 ASD = Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs  
 BLD = Ministry of Children and Equality  
 HOD = Ministry of Health and Care Services  
 JD = Ministry of Justice and Public Security  
 KD = Ministry of Education and Research  
 KUD = Ministry of Culture  
 UD = Ministry of Foreign Affairs

No.	Measure	Ministry responsible <sup>1</sup>	Page
18	To strengthen information on negative social control, forced marriage and female genital mutilation a) To conduct campaigns b) To continue networks for information exchange and guidance material c) To systematise information on the health consequences of female genital mutilation and enhance information on the right to health care	JD JD HOD	35-36
19	To increase information to the target groups about their rights	JD	36
20	To ensure that relevant education is provided in schools about violence, sexuality and sexual boundaries	KD	36
<b>Priority Area 4: Enhancing knowledge in the support services</b>			
21	To increase knowledge of violence and abuse in the education of health and social care professionals	KD	40
22	To increase knowledge in support services about negative social control, forced marriage, honour-based violence and female genital mutilation a) To include negative social control, forced marriage, honour-based violence and female genital mutilation in competence building across sectors b) To increase knowledge in support services about developmentally disabled people as a vulnerable group c) To increase knowledge on negative social control, forced marriage and honour-based violence among guardianship authorities, other authorities, and guardians.	BLD BLD JD	40-41
23	To strengthen local and regional coordination and cooperation in combating negative social control, forced marriage and female genital mutilation	HOD	41
24	To strengthen the work of the police, schools, family counselling service and Norwegian foreign missions a) To use the risk assessment tool <i>Patriarch</i> in all police districts b) To further develop the minority counsellor service in schools c) To further develop the role of the family counselling service in combating forced marriage and honour-based violence d) To further develop the integration counsellor service at Norwegian foreign missions	JD JD BLD JD	41-43
25	To enhance treatment for victims of female genital mutilation a) Equal quality of treatment for victims of female genital mutilation b) To further develop treatment options for female genital mutilation on the basis of new knowledge	HOD	44
<b>Priority Area 5: Strengthening research and increase knowledge sharing</b>			
26	To strengthen research on negative social control, forced marriage, female genital mutilation and plural marriages	JD	48
27	To strengthen national and international cooperation for the exchange of knowledge and experience a) To increase experience and knowledge exchange between immigrant organisations, resource persons and government agencies b) To increase the international exchange of knowledge and experience	JD JD	48-49
28	To develop an international strategy to combat child and forced marriage	UD	49

All measures are financed within the existing fiscal budget of the relevant Ministries.



**CHALLENGES:**

**NEGATIVE SOCIAL CONTROL**

**FORCED MARRIAGE**

**FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION**

There are children and young people in Norway who grow up in fear of being subjected to negative social control, forced marriage and female genital mutilation. Children and young people who seek assistance include both those born and raised in Norway and immigrants. Young people born or raised in faith based communities or sects may also be victims of negative social control.

Violence and abuse, control and coercion are significant challenges to gender equality, and persistent public health and social problems. Those affected can have serious physical and psychological problems. Many people are living with long-term health problems, which limits their ability to participate in society in terms of education, employment and voluntary work. Such participation is important for a person's sense of belonging to the local and broader community. It also helps to build mutual trust between different groups in society. Efforts to counter violence and abuse, such as negative social control, forced marriage and female genital mutilation are therefore important in preventing social exclusion.

In recent years, the Government has implemented several initiatives to improve knowledge of different types of violence and the needs of particularly vulnerable groups,<sup>1</sup> but much remains to be done. In order to prevent and combat negative social control, forced

<sup>1</sup> These were "A Life without Violence. Action Plan against Domestic Violence 2014-2017", "A Good Childhood Lasts a Lifetime. Action Plan to Combat Violence towards and Sexual Abuse of Children and Young People 2014-2017", "Action Plan against Forced Marriage, Female Genital Mutilation and Severe Restrictions on Young People's Freedom 2013-2016" "Action Plan against Domestic Violence 2012", "Action Plans against Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation 2012", "Action Plan against Forced Marriage 2008-2011" and "Action Plan against Female Genital Mutilation 2008-2011".

marriage and female genital mutilation, the measures must be better targeted to allow the work to develop and meet new challenges.

The Government gives high priority to combating all forms of violence and abuse, and in autumn 2016 it launched the Proposition to the Storting 12 S (2016-2017) "*Escalation Plan against Violence and Abuse 2017-2021*".<sup>2</sup> It was also stated in the White Paper to the Storting No. 30 (2015-2016) "*From Reception Centre to the Labour Market - an Effective Integration Policy*" that all vulnerable children, women and men must receive coordinated, comprehensive assistance and be offered services with expertise in various forms of violence and abuse, including honour-based violence, forced marriage, female genital mutilation and human trafficking. The present action plan focuses on relevance and links to measures in the *Escalation Plan against Violence and Abuse*.

The voluntary sector plays an important role in all areas of the action plan. In the White Paper to the Storting No. 30 (2015-2016), the Government stated that grants allocated to the field of integration would be reviewed to strengthen the work of NGOs. Cooperation between grant awarding bodies will also be enhanced.

<sup>2</sup> Measures in this action plan which refer to the Proposition to the Storting 12 S (2016-2017) "*Escalation Plan against Violence and Abuse 2017-2021*" are subject to final approval by the Storting.

**Negative social control** is understood here as various forms of supervision, pressure, threats and coercion used to ensure that individuals live according to family or group norms. Such control is systematic and may violate an individual's rights under inter alia the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Norwegian law.

**Female genital mutilation** is here understood as an intervention in a woman's genitalia causing damage or permanent change. It is associated with intense pain and bleeding and can lead to infections, chronic pain, sexual problems, psychological problems, birth complications and increased risk of stillbirth. Legal definition found in p. 20.

**Honour-based violence** is here understood as violence triggered by a family's needs to safeguard or restore its honour and reputation. This may occur in families with strong collectivist and patriarchal values. Girls are particularly vulnerable because their sexual behaviour is inextricably linked to family honour, and because undesirable behaviour can inflict shame on the entire family.

**Forced marriage** is here understood as a marriage where one or both of the couple concerned are not allowed to choose to remain single, without being subjected to reprisals. Forced marriage is a form of domestic violence, and in practice may also imply that the individual has no opportunity to choose out of an engagement or marriage, or choosing a partner across the family's wishes, without being subjected to reprisals. Legal definition found in p. 17.

**Child marriage** is here understood as a marriage where one or both of the parties is under the age of 18. Persons under the age of 18 can not marry without the consent of the person or persons who have the parental responsibility and permission of the county governor. The county governor can not grant permission if the person applying is younger than 16 years old.

**Plural marriage** is here understood as bigamy or polygamy, i.e. being married to two or more people at the same time.

### International commitments

Norway, through its adherence to international human rights conventions and participation in the UN, the Council of Europe, the Nordic Council of Ministers and other international bodies, is committed to preventing and combating domestic violence, forced marriage, female genital mutilation and physical and sexual abuse of children.

Norway participates actively in the Council of Europe's efforts to combat violence against women, including forced marriage and female genital mutilation, and violence and sexual abuse against children. Norway is involved in work to develop standards for the fight against forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

Work to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (*the Istanbul Convention*) is in the final stages. The aim of the Convention is to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women and domestic violence, to protect the rights of women who are victims of such abuse and to promote national and international cooperation against abuse.

Articles 33-41 require the parties to ensure that certain specified acts are criminalised. These include psychological violence, stalking, physical violence, sexual violence and rape, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, forced abortion and forced sterilisation. The parties are also obliged to ensure that sexual harassment is subject to sanctions.

Article 32 contains rules for the civil consequences of forced marriage.

Article 42 states that culture, tradition, religion and so-called "honour" must not be reasons for impunity.

Steps are also being taken to ratify the Convention on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (*the Lanzarote Convention*).

### Sustainable Development Goals (the 2030 Agenda)

*"The 2030 Agenda"* contains 17 new sustainability goals, and was adopted by world leaders at a UN summit in autumn 2015. These goals replace the UN Millennium Development Goals from 2000, and provide direction for global, sustainable development cooperation until the year 2030. The 2030 Agenda is based on international human rights obligations. Equality is a key issue in the plan, since "gender equality" is a separate goal (No. 5), it is integrated into targets in several other areas, and it is systematically integrated into the implementation of the entire agenda. Important targets are:

Target 5.2 *To abolish all forms of violence against all women and girls, both in the public and private sphere, including trafficking and sexual and other forms of exploitation*

Target 5.3 *Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation*

The 2030 Agenda forms the background for the Government's action plan for women's rights and gender equality in foreign and development policy "Freedom, Empowerment and Opportunities 2016-2020".

Sixteen-year-old “Linnea” is growing up in a small religious community somewhere in Norway. She is not allowed to have friends or leisure activities outside the community. Her childhood has been ruled by the norms of the congregation. Since she was 12 years old, the congregation leaders have regularly asked in detail about her sexual thoughts and actions. When at the age of fourteen she admitted that she liked a boy, she was asked for details of whether she had “played with” the boy, or whether she had “played with” herself. “Linnea” knows little of life outside her congregation community. She is not allowed to use social media. She dreams of studying, but education is regarded as a waste of time by the congregation. “We should work to serve God, not ourselves,” say her parents.

### Negative social control

It is common practice for parents to set limits for their children as part of their upbringing, but in some cases parents place quite unreasonable restrictions. This may be connected to fear that the family will lose honour if the children do not behave “properly” or are “too Norwegian”, and that the family will be subject to rumours and exclusion from their own community. Negative social control is understood here as various forms of supervision, pressure, threats and coercion used systematically to ensure that individuals live according to the family or group norms.

There is no research on the extent of negative social control, but minority counsellors who work at selected secondary and upper secondary schools report annually on work with individual cases.<sup>3</sup> Since 2013, 787 cases have

3 The work of the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) to combat forced marriage, female genital mutilation and severe restrictions on young people’s freedom. Report for 2016.

been reported, 298 of which have involved “extreme control”. 253 cases were reported as “threats/violence”. Girls from immigrant backgrounds are generally known to be subjected to negative social control, but boys or girls and men or women may be affected. About half of the minority counsellors’ cases concern people over the age of 18, and 19 percent of all cases concern boys. Experience from other support services shows that boys do not readily make contact, and that assistance for boys is not adequately developed. Children and young people who grow up in faith based communities or sects may also experience negative social control. The common feature for every person subject to negative social control, irrespective of gender and social background, is that their freedom is restricted in a way that violates their rights and Norwegian law. Examples are conflicts about the person’s choice of friends, having a boyfriend or girlfriend, or about sexuality, gender identity and sexual orientation.

Negative social control may also apply to children and adults across borders. Families in Norway may be subject to pressure from relatives in their country of origin on issues ranging from education to decisions about marriage. Parental support, advice on good parenting and information about the law and the consequences of breaking it are important measures to assist parents in Norway to resist such pressure.

It also happens that children and spouses are left abroad against their will, often with their money and passport taken from them. They often stay with relatives or others close to the family, and may be kept under strict supervision. In some cases, they are kept in confinement or subjected to other violations and violence. Since 2013, integration counsellors at Norwegian missions abroad have reported 616 cases, 145 of which had “left abroad” as their main issue.<sup>4</sup>

4 Op.cit.

In 142 cases, “fear of forced marriage” was the main theme, and in many of these cases the person may also suffer control, threats and violence. 169 cases concerned “other family-related matters” and included instances of plural marriages, marriages of convenience and the long-term effects on people who have previously been subjected to forced marriage.

In the case of children or adolescents, their family may want to remove them from a bad environment or problems at school, or the family in Norway may have its own problems. The Children’s Act states that children over 12 must be allowed to express their opinion about moving abroad and must give their consent if they are not going to live with their parents. Adult women are sometimes left abroad by their fathers, husbands or relatives, often with their children. If they live under strict supervision and control, it is difficult for them to return to Norway. Some live in areas where it is difficult for a woman to travel on her own, or where social unrest and hostilities make it dangerous to travel in general. When a person does not have Norwegian citizenship or has dual citizenship, and is in a country where the husband has the authority to take decisions on behalf of his wife and children, a travel ban may be issued, preventing return to Norway.

It is a challenge that a woman who is formally divorced, still may be considered as married by the community. There may also be cases where the husband divorces his wife in Norway and then enters into a new marriage in a country where plural marriage is allowed. When the new woman comes to Norway through family reunification, it may be that the husband lives with both women in a marital relationship. Some cases of this form of transnational serial marriages have been discovered where the object was to receive state benefits, and it is unclear to which extent the women have a freedom of choice in these cases.

The consequences may be serious for people subjected to negative social control. Mental health problems and trauma are examples of such consequences. If people are involuntarily left abroad for a long time, they may be deprived of education and knowledge of Norwegian, and find it difficult to access the Norwegian labour market. The victims may need prolonged assistance and support, resulting in considerable economic costs to society. For some, an involuntary stay abroad may lead to the expiry of their Norwegian residence permit.

#### **Lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender and intersex persons (LGBTI)**

People who do not conform to norms of gender and sexuality and grow up in families that exert negative social control are at increased risk of being exposed to physical or psychological violence such as rejection, exclusion, forced marriage or other serious violations of their right to self-determination. LGBTI people may experience pressure to enter into heterosexual marriages. The Government has drawn up an [\*Action Plan against Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression 2017-2020: the LGBTI Plan\*](#). Action 37 in the LGBTI Plan is to improve training and information for minority counsellors and staff of the housing and support scheme for young people over 18 who are victims of forced marriage, violence or restrictions on their freedom, and for people working at the website ung.no. This should be seen in the context of Action 22 in this plan.

“Laleh” is 18 years old. Her parents came to Norway when they were children. Although 40 years have passed since her grandparents arrived in Norway, the ties to her country of origin have remained strong. One day when “Laleh” walks with a boy to town, her mother gets a call from their aunt in their country of origin: “There are rumours that your daughter is with boys in town. Without hijab and in tight trousers. She has no shame!” “So now it was my turn to be observed by a taxi driver,” thinks “Laleh” resignedly. After that, she notices that her family is keeping an eye on everything she does. Her brother is constantly checking her phone and Facebook profile. While her Norwegian friends are celebrating that they are of legal age and will soon go and live by themselves, “Laleh” finds her freedom gradually disappearing.

### Forced marriage

Forced marriage is against the law. Forcing someone to marry is serious abuse. Individuals who are forced into marriage will usually have been subjected to negative social control in childhood. Being forced into marriage the victims are deprived of their basic right to decide over their own lives. Forced marriage take place both in Norway and abroad. If anyone is afraid of being forced into marriage when going abroad, it is important to avoid leaving Norway. There is a danger of being left behind or kept in confinement with relatives or family friends during a trip abroad in anticipation of a forced marriage, and Norwegian authorities have very limited opportunities to help.

If a forced marriage takes place abroad, it often happens that one party applies for a residence permit to establish a family in

Norway. In January 2017, a new regulation came into force in the Immigration Act stipulating that both parties must be at least 24 years old before a residence permit for couple establishing in Norway may be granted. The aim is to combat forced marriage.

A person who breaks out of a forced marriage usually needs long-term psycho-social, health and financial assistance. Shelters are an important emergency service for the victims, and are often the first place they come to. Some choose to break off all contact with their family. Based on a threat assessment, the police may decide whether the person needs to stay at a secret address with security measures. The national housing and support service applies to young adults over 18 years who have been subjected to forced marriage

“Seineb” is a Norwegian citizen on holiday in her country of origin with her 16-year-old daughter, “Ayse”. She contacts the embassy to say that they have escaped from the family home, where they have been held against their will for several weeks. Her daughter was to be married to a cousin. They are in hiding with friends elsewhere in the country. “Seineb” is afraid of her ex-husband (the father of “Ayse”) and does not know where he is. All her travel documents and money have been taken from her, and she asks for help to get to Norway. Via the embassy, “Seineb” and “Ayse” arrive at a shelter. The embassy issues an emergency passport, and a judge in the local family court states that there is no reason why “Seineb” and “Ayse” cannot leave the country. The Expert Team (see below) grants reimbursement of travel expenses to Norway and arranges accommodation in a shelter there. The police conduct threat assessment and mother and daughter now live at a secret address.

or honour-based violence. The police ensure that the housing has adequate security and the flats are suitable for women, men and couples. There is separate housing under the child welfare authorities for those under 18. People who cut off ties to their family and network often have a great need for support and guidance to start a new life.

It is difficult to give reliable figures on the extent of forced marriage in Norway. The number of people who approach the support services is increasing, and most of these have a background from Pakistan, Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan, Turkey and Syria. The number of young adult immigrants and those born in Norway with immigrant backgrounds from these countries is rising, but we do not know if that means that the group at risk of forced marriage is also increasing. Most young adults from immigrant backgrounds marry a person who also has an immigrant background or who comes from the same country. Developments in marriage patterns in this group show that fewer get married at a young age than previously, and that few marry a person living in their parents' country of origin.

In recent years, war and conflict in Syria and the surrounding countries has led to a resurfacing of child and forced marriage as a problem. The UN, international aid agencies and local civil society organisations report a negative trend where suffering, poverty and poor future prospects make families marry off their daughters at an earlier age. Research has shown correlations between child and forced marriage, poverty and human trafficking.

When a child marriage is identified, it is a challenge that there is often no documentation of the marriage. There may be doubt about whether the marriage has civil validity in the country of marriage and in Norway. A marriage contracted abroad will not be

recognised in Norway if it is contrary to basic norms underlying Norwegian law and values, the so-called "*ordre public*". Examples of ordre public cases are that the marriage was forced or that the parties are very young.

Some marriages are not contracted legally and are not valid in Norway. Leaders of registered religious communities with the right to perform marriage are responsible for informing the couple that they are being married according to Norwegian law. This also implies that they understand and respect each other's equal right to divorce.

Developmentally disabled people who grow up in families that use negative social control may be particularly susceptible to being married off. Public services may be unacceptable to some families, as this does not conform to their norms of caring for their family members. Marriage may also be a question of finding a caregiver for the disabled person. Developmentally disabled people will often have limited opportunity to access information about their rights. The person who marries the disabled person will often be unaware of his or her level of functioning. That may pose a risk of the spouse and in-laws subjecting the disabled person to violence and abuse.

#### **Norwegian Criminal Code § 253. Forced marriage**

Any person who by force, deprivation of liberty, other criminal or improper conduct or undue pressure forces another person to marry shall be punishable by imprisonment for a term of up to six years. The same penalty shall apply to anyone who entices or otherwise assists a person to travel to a country other than the person's country of residence, with intent that the person will be subjected to the act referred to in the first paragraph.

### **Plural marriage and child marriage are forbidden in § 262. Violations of the Marriage Act**

Anyone who enters a marriage despite being already married shall be punishable by a fine or imprisonment not exceeding one year. Anyone who enters into marriage with a person under 16 shall be punishable by imprisonment for a term of up to three years. A person who was unaware that the victim was under 16 years old may still be punished if he in any way can be blamed for his ignorance. Penalties may be waived if the spouses are about equal in age and development.

### **Age requirement of 24 for establishing a family**

The Act of 17 June 2016 No. 58 introduced an age requirement in the Immigration Act of 24 years for persons wishing to establish a family. This came into force on 1 January 2017. This means that both spouses must be at least 24 years old to be granted a residence permit for establishing a family in Norway. Since this stipulation only concerns family establishment, it does not affect previously established family relationships (family *reunification*). This means that the requirement will not apply if the marriage took place before the date of arrival in Norway of the reference person (the person resident in Norway), or if the parties married in Norway while both had a residence permit or Norwegian or Nordic citizenship. The requirement is intended for general application (including reference persons who are Norwegian citizens), but exceptions may be made if it is clear that the marriage or cohabitation is voluntary. The aim is to combat forced marriage. The idea is that older people, being more mature and having a more independent position in the family, are better able to withstand pressure.

### **The Expert Team for the Prevention of Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (“the Expert Team”)**

597 inquiries to the team in 2016 is a big increase on recent years, in which about 400 inquiries per year were reported. 158 inquiries concerned threats and violence, 139 fear of forced marriage and 123 already enforced marriages. Forty percent of the cases concerned people under 18 years. Most cases concerned people having a background from Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia and Syria.

More reports of child marriages in 2016. The Expert Team has received inquiries about child marriage for many years, but these increased in 2015 and 2016. This was connected to the arrival of many asylum seekers from Syria, including minors who were married. The Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir), the Directorate of Immigration (UDI) and the National Police Immigration Service (PU) collaborate in detecting, handling and following up cases of child marriage. Guidelines have been drawn up for use in the PU and UDI, in addition to a digital guide for child welfare services: see [www.bufdir.no](http://www.bufdir.no)

#### *The Expert Team*

The Expert Team is a national, inter-agency team of experts that advises public service employees in individual cases and provides competence building. The team includes representatives from the Directorate of Labour and Welfare (AVdir), the Directorate of Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir), the Directorate of Health, the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi), the National Police Directorate (POD) and the Directorate of Immigration (UDI).

In 2016, the police recorded eight reports of forced marriage under the Criminal Code §253. Two reports of violations of the Marriage Act regarding minors and two reports regarding bigamy under the Criminal Code § 262.

### Female genital mutilation

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is serious abuse with considerable physical and psychological consequences for the victims. There are different types of female genital mutilation and all are prohibited in Norway. The practice is particularly prevalent in some African countries in a belt around the Sahara and in some Middle Eastern countries. In many places there is a local tradition of FGM among certain ethnic groups, while it is unusual in the rest of the country. Immigrants in Norway from countries where FGM is prevalent come from e.g. Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Sudan and Somalia.

Eighteen-year-old "Sara" goes to see a nurse she knows well. She now has a boyfriend, whose parents are from the same country as her. "Sara" is worried. "My boyfriend thinks that FGM is a tradition that was discontinued long ago. He says that neither he nor his friends want a girl with FGM. I don't know how I can manage to tell him that I'm like that! What will he say when he sees me down there? Will he think I look strange? Will he break up with me? I know my grandmother didn't know any better when she cut me 10 years ago. But I hate her for it. And my Mum, she has a problem and spends hours in the toilet. But even though she now knows that FGM is harmful, she doesn't understand it's the reason for her problems".

It is difficult to provide reliable figures on the extent of FGM in Norway. There are very few reports of FGM performed on girls after arrival in Norway. However, a large number of girls and women have been subjected to FGM before they came to Norway. Girls and women who have undergone FGM may have health problems such as cysts, urinary problems, menstrual problems, sexual problems, and problems during pregnancy and childbirth. This leads to varying degrees of need for physical and mental health care, and sexual counselling. Those who need health care can contact their local health services or the women's clinic at their local hospital. A new diagnostic code for FGM from the World Health Organisation has been included in the Norwegian edition of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD). This will eventually lead to statistics becoming available on the number of women with FGM receiving health care in Norway.

Some studies have shown that attitudes to FGM appear to change after people have lived for a few years in Norway, but the findings are not definitive. Legislation, information and dialogue are important priorities to change attitudes in the long term and prevent new cases. Immigration to Norway will continue, including the arrival of refugees from countries that practise FGM. Researchers assume that increased knowledge of the associated health problems will encourage more parents to refuse FGM for their daughters.

The Directorate of Health has prepared targeted information on health consequences and health care in relation to FGM. It has also prepared a guide, which includes the offer of a meeting between representatives of public health clinics or school health services and girls and parents from relevant countries of origin. The aim of this meeting is partly preventative and partly to identify needs for health care for girls who have already undergone FGM. A voluntary gynaecological examination can also be included. Reopening is also offered to any one with FGM who requests it.

In 2005, the Storting asked the Government to study the possible introduction of clinical observation of every child's genitals during health checks, and to consider the extent of these examinations, and whether they should be compulsory. It was concluded that compulsory genital examination of all girls, or girls in high-risk groups, was not relevant as an anti-FGM measure. Furthermore, there is no political majority for this solution today.

#### **The Norwegian Criminal Code §284.**

##### **Female genital mutilation**

Anyone who performs an intervention in a woman's genitalia that damages or permanently changes the genitalia shall be punishable by imprisonment for up to six years. Performing reconstruction of genital mutilation is punishable in the same way. Consent does not exempt the offender from punishment. A fine or prison sentence of up to one year shall be imposed on professionals and other employees in kindergartens, child welfare services, health and care services, schools, after-school care and religious communities who refrain from attempting to prevent female genital mutilation, on the basis of a report or in any other way. This also applies to leaders in religious communities. The duty to prevent such an act applies without regard to confidentiality. Refraining from acting is not punishable if the genital mutilation is not completed or is not a punishable attempt.

#### **The Norwegian Criminal Code § 285.**

##### **Gross female genital mutilation**

Gross female genital mutilation is punishable by imprisonment for up to 15 years. In determining whether the mutilation is extreme, particular emphasis is placed on whether the procedure has led to a) illness or work incapacity of some duration, cf. § 274, b) an incurable defect or damage, or c) death or significant harm to the person's body or health.

In 2016, two cases of female genital mutilation under § 284 of the Criminal Code were reported to the police.

No cases of female genital mutilation have been brought before the courts in Norway. In 2016, the Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies (NKVTS) was commissioned to prepare a report on cases discontinued by the police and prosecutors. The report will enhance knowledge for better prosecution of such cases.

***Strategy to strengthen international efforts to combat female genital mutilation 2014-2017***

This strategy was launched to intensify Norway's efforts to combat FGM. The ambition is to ensure that no girls are subjected to genital mutilation, and that those already circumcised get the best possible treatment.

One objective is to increase financial support for international organisations and civil society, and in 2015 this was increased from NOK 25 million to about NOK 50 million. Combined with financing to the UN, Norwegian support in 2015 amounted to about NOK 70 million. Ethiopia and Somalia have been identified as pilot countries. NOK 10 million will be allocated annually to a new civil society programme in Somalia in collaboration with DFID for 2017-2019. Improved links between national and international efforts have been an important follow-up measure, and cooperation between ministries has been enhanced. The strategy also strengthens links to other areas of foreign and development policy. Normative work in the UN and other relevant institutions is another key focus area.



PRIORITY AREA 1:  
TO STRENGTHEN LEGAL  
PROTECTION FOR  
VULNERABLE PEOPLE

People with ties to Norway sometimes get into difficult situations when abroad. Such cases may concern children left abroad, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, or involuntary stays abroad. Child marriage and plural marriages often take place abroad, and control or coercion may be involved. These cases offer legal, logistical and security challenges for Norwegian authorities. Support services and the judicial system in Norway must be equipped to help people with ties to Norway out of their difficult situation.

Some marriages are extrajudicial and are not valid in Norway. Such marriages are not covered by the Marriage Act and the Criminal Code § 253 on forced marriage. It is not possible to have these marriages annulled, apply for a divorce or convict anyone of forced marriage under Norwegian law. People who have been married in accordance with the Marriage Act, but who later have dissolved their marriage, will in some cases still be considered as married in their community. The Ministry of Justice and Public Security issued the instructions [GI-13/2016](#) "Minimum age for recognition of marriages contracted abroad" to the UDI and the Immigration Appeals Board (UNE) on 20 December 2016. The aim of these instructions is to ensure that marriages contracted abroad that may offend Norwegian legal order are not recognised when cases are considered under the Immigration Act. The instructions specify a general rule about the age limit to be applied for the immigration authorities to recognise marriages contracted abroad at a time when neither party had any connection to Norway. Both parties must have

been at least 16 years old when the marriage was contracted, with a slight possibility for exceptions. Exceptions may be made on the basis of a detailed assessment which considers the parties' equality in age and development, the parties' age at the time of application, and whether the parties have children together.

The Government wishes to strengthen legal protection for people subjected to forced marriage, female genital mutilation, violence and abuse. The Government will therefore review and clarify current legislation for recognition of marriages contracted abroad, particularly the rules on the recognition of marriages of minors and bigamy. It will be considered whether to make extrajudicial forced marriage a crime. Expanding the duty to prevent criminal acts in the Criminal Code to include forced marriage will also be considered, and whether this duty regarding female genital mutilation should be moved to this provision. A further consideration will be whether the abuse clause in the Immigration Act should be expanded to include people subjected to violence by their in-laws or extended family.

The Government aims to clarify the responsibilities of the public authorities regarding children left abroad and how the authorities can help them. This includes preventative measures as well as how to follow up the children who return to Norway. The guidelines for dealing with children left abroad will be revised, and procedures or guidelines for identifying vulnerable pupils in schools will be developed.

### Plural marriages: bigamy and polygamy

Norwegian law forbids a person to be married to two or more people simultaneously, so-called bigamy or polygamy. It is prohibited to enter into a marriage when a previous marriage is valid, cf. the Marriage Act § 4. It is an offence for a person to enter into marriage when already married, and violation is punishable by a fine or imprisonment of up to one year, cf. the Criminal Code § 262.

Although bigamy is illegal in Norway, the parties may have entered into such a marriage abroad. It will not be recognised in Norway if one of the parties was a Norwegian citizen or permanent resident of Norway at the time of the marriage, cf. the Marriage Act § 18a. However, if both parties so request, such a marriage may be recognised, if there are strong reasons to do so. In the period 2007-2015, no bigamous marriages were recognised in Norway.

In cases where neither party had ties to Norway at the time of marriage, the principle is that a marriage validly contracted under foreign law shall be recognised in Norway. However, if the marriage conflicts with basic Norwegian law and values, so-called *ordre public*, it will not be recognised.

Either spouse may demand the dissolution of a marriage if it was entered into in violation of the bigamy law, but not if the previous marriage has been terminated. If neither party brings an action, the County Governor will institute proceedings to dissolve the second marriage, cf. the Marriage Act § 24. This dissolution will terminate the marriage immediately.

Plural marriage is also governed by immigration legislation. The Immigration Act does not permit family reunification with more than one spouse. A reference person married to more than one person will be eligible for family reunification with one spouse only. If the reference person is already married to a person resident in Norway, family reunification with another spouse is prohibited. Permission may also be refused if the reference person has previously been married to another person and it appears most likely that the former married couple wish to continue their cohabitation (The Immigration Act § 40, seventh paragraph).

### Measure 1: To consider stricter provisions in the Marriage Act to combat child marriage and bigamy

A marriage legally contracted abroad will normally be recognised in Norway, but such recognition does not apply if the marriage would clearly offend Norwegian legal order. The draft marriage law has previously stated that an age of marriage under 15 years would clearly not be acceptable. However, changes in the law and practice in recent years may affect the norms of *ordre public*, so that the age limit previously mentioned does not represent current legal thinking. The instructions

GI-13/2016 from the Ministry of Justice and Public Security to the UDI and UNE now assumes a 16-year limit in immigration cases.

The BLD is therefore examining existing law on the recognition of marriages contracted abroad, particularly regarding recognition of marriages of minors abroad, with a view to changing the legislation if this is shown to be necessary. The rules on recognition of bigamous marriages will also be reviewed.

Ministry responsible: BLD

### **Measure 2: To extend the time limit for the annulment of forced marriage**

The deadline to bring proceedings concerning the validity of forced marriage is currently six months, pursuant to the Marriage Act § 16, fourth paragraph. The BLD will examine whether this deadline should be extended.

Ministry responsible: BLD

### **Measure 3: To make extrajudicial and religion-based forced marriage a criminal offence**

It is not uncommon that forced marriage is entered into through extrajudicial agreements and religious ceremonies, partly because formal marriage can be costly and takes time in government offices or similar. It may also be due to lack of knowledge about the requirements for legal validity of marriage contracts. Such extrajudicial marriages are not covered by the penal provisions on forced marriage. The Ministry of Justice and Public Security (JD) will examine whether the provision on forced marriage should be changed to also cover extrajudicial marriage.

Ministry responsible: JD

### **Measure 4: To expand the duty to prevent criminal acts to include forced marriage**

The Criminal Code § 196 specifies a duty to prevent criminal acts. This provision applies to anyone who fails to try to prevent certain specified offences and their consequences. This duty applies regardless of confidentiality. JD will consider whether the duty to prevent criminal acts should be expanded to include forced marriage. The Ministry will also examine whether the duty to prevent FGM should be moved from § 284 to § 196 in the Criminal Code.

Ministry responsible: JD

### **Measure 5: To expand the provision on abuse to include the extended family**

Persons with a temporary residence permit as a spouse or cohabitant of a person resident in Norway must, as a rule, return to their home country if the relationship is terminated before a permanent residence permit is granted. Persons who have been subjected to abuse in the relationship, and who have held a residence permit as a spouse or cohabitant may apply to stay in Norway after termination of the relationship, cf. the Immigration Act 53, first paragraph, letter b. The abuse may be physical or psychological, but it is limited to abuse by the partner in the relationship.

JD will submit for consultation a proposal for amendments to the Immigration Act § 53, first paragraph, letter b, implying an expansion of the provision to include people who have been subjected to abuse by in-laws or other members of the household in an extended family. Such an expansion would protect people in a difficult situation.

Ministry responsible: JD

“Salida” came to Norway via family reunification, but when she and her husband are visiting a sick relative in the country of origin, her husband leaves her there. Their children are in Norway. The husband divorces “Salida” against her will and without her knowledge to apply for family reunification with his second wife, to whom he is religiously married in their country of origin. “Salida” loses all her rights in Norway, and in practice also custody of the children. “Salida” is ostracised by her family and in-laws in their country of origin because she brings shame on them as a divorced woman.

### Measure 6: To review legislation and practices regarding plural marriages and transnational serial marriages

There is a need to enhance knowledge of the prevalence of plural marriage in Norway to assess its implications, and how it should be identified and addressed within the responsibility of the individual agencies. On this basis, it will be considered whether current legislation and procedures are sufficiently updated to identify plural marriages and deal with offences, including abuse of welfare services.

JD will also assess the prevalence of marriages in which a person with legal residence in Norway marries a foreign national two or more times (transnational serial marriages). JD will conduct a review of current legislation and practices regarding family immigration to determine whether there is a need to introduce a barrier in the immigration legislation to prevent a person who has already been the reference person for a spouse in a family immigration case from bringing a new spouse to Norway.

Ministry responsible: JD

To be implemented in collaboration with: ASD, BLD and UD

### Measure 7: To improve guidelines regarding children left abroad

The guidelines for handling cases of children left abroad (*Q-1038 B*) were published in 2002 by the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development and the Ministry of Justice and the Police. The purpose of the guidelines is to clarify what the Norwegian authorities can do for children who are left abroad, including issues of repatriation/return and possible further support after their return

to Norway. There is a need to revise these guidelines to conform to current legislation and practices. Bufdir, in consultation with relevant authorities, will revise the guidelines for handling cases of children left abroad. The guidelines will include a review of current legislation and the responsibilities of the public authorities, cooperation issues and the possibility to assist these children when abroad, including the question of repatriation/return. The guidelines will also consider how the Norwegian authorities can prevent children being left abroad and what services they will provide for these children if they are returned to Norway.

Ministry responsible: BLD

To be implemented in collaboration with: JD, KD and UD

“Mohammed” is 16 years old. He is a talented dancer, often performs and has plenty of freedom. He is pleased to be accepted to study Health and Social Care in upper secondary school, and dreams of being a child and youth worker. When “Mohammed” explains this to the parents, they stare at him: “You’re going to our country and you’ll go to school there. You won’t become a man the way you’re carrying on here.” “Mohammed” does not understand at all. Can his parents decide just like that? What if he doesn’t want to? He talks to a counsellor and a nurse, but they just say he must talk to his parents. “Mohammed” is at a loss. Nobody understands him. Nobody helps him. He does not want to go to his home country, he does not belong there. But he does not feel that he belongs here any more either.

### **Measure 8: To ensure follow-up dialogue with pupils due to move abroad without their parents**

Schools will have the best opportunity to capture situations where pupils do not want to move abroad, and a procedure or guideline for follow-up dialogue with the pupil may have a preventative effect on negative social control,

forced marriage and female genital mutilation. Schools are obliged to contact the child welfare authorities if there is suspicion of child neglect.

Ministry responsible: KD

To be implemented in collaboration with: BLD and JD

### **International parental disputes and child welfare cases**

Norway has ratified the Hague Convention of 1996. The Convention regulates which country can take measures to protect children. The general rule is that the country where the child normally resides may take protective measures. However, another country where the child is staying may take temporary measures and measures in urgent situations. A case may exceptionally be transferred to another country to which the child has ties, if this is in the interest of the child. The Convention also includes rules about which country's legislation should be applied and rules on the recognition and implementation of measures to protect children which have been decided upon in other countries. The Convention provides for cooperation and information exchange between the contracting states in individual cases. Bufdir is the central authority for cases under the Convention. The child welfare authorities may contact Bufdir in case of need for cooperation and dialogue with other states.

Norwegian accession to the Convention entailed general changes in the Children's Act and the Child Welfare Act. Children older than 12 years must consent to be taken abroad if they will live there without their parents. The child welfare authorities may now take child care transfer cases to the County Board if the child is normally resident in Norway but is staying in another country, regardless of whether it is a Hague Convention country (Child Welfare Act § 4-12).

### **Children left abroad**

Some young people are taken to their parents' country of origin and left there against their will. Some of these are under 18 years. According to the Children's Act, children over 12 years must consent to be taken abroad if they will live there without their parents. In most cases where the reason is negative social control, forced marriage or genital mutilation, the children are left in a country with which Norway does not have cooperation under the Hague Convention. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (UD) provides consular assistance in these cases. The support the foreign service can provide abroad depends on the laws and regulations of the country where the child is staying. There is limited possibility to provide assistance if the child does not have Norwegian citizenship, has dual citizenship or is in a country for which the Norwegian Government has issued travel advice.



PRIORITY AREA 2:

TO STRENGTHEN ASSISTANCE TO  
PEOPLE WHO BREAK CONTACT  
WITH THEIR FAMILY AND NETWORK

Young people who are subjected to forced marriage and honour-based violence may need protection, due to threats from their family. Some have to break off contact with their family and live with security measures at a secret address. People who have broken contact with their family and network often have a great need for support and guidance. This may include various types of financial and practical assistance from public services when moving from one part of Norway to another. To ensure the safety of victims of violence, the local police must have knowledge about threat assessments regarding honour-based violence. One of the main challenges for people who break with their network is loneliness, and for some this can be so difficult that they return to the perpetrators of the violence. Help to build a new network often requires support staff to be available in the afternoons and evenings. Arrangements must be put into place to meet this need and make it easier for victims to get in touch with people who can support and mentor them.

#### **Criminal injuries compensation**

Any person who has suffered an injury detrimental to his or her life, health or freedom as a result of an offence may be entitled to receive criminal injuries compensation from the state. This also applies to victims of forced marriage and female genital mutilation. The case must first be reported to the police. This scheme applies within the borders of Norway, but in the case of criminal injuries occurring abroad, people resident in Norway at the time of the incident may, under certain conditions, also be awarded compensation. See also [www.voldsoffererstatning.no](http://www.voldsoffererstatning.no)

Voluntary organisations and resource persons have, for many years, done important work and performed various tasks not covered by public services. NGOs and shelters are important intermediaries between victims and public support services, and society at large. It is important that the police, child welfare authorities and labour office (NAV) workers have the necessary knowledge to ensure protection and suitable assistance to people who are victims of forced marriage and honour-based violence.

The Government will ensure that people subjected to negative social control, forced marriage and female genital mutilation will get suitable help and necessary protection. Aftercare for people who have broken contact with their family and network will be enhanced. Child welfare housing for young people under 18 will be evaluated, and new support measures will be considered.

#### **Enhanced care for victims**

Inspired by the Support Centre for victims of crime in Trondheim, crime victim support offices will be established in all 12 police districts in Norway, in cooperation with local authorities. They will be on police premises. There are currently 14 Counselling Offices for Crime Victims (RKK), which will be transferred to the police. NOK 28 million has been allocated for this purpose for 2017.

The target group for these offices is victims of crimes against personal integrity, including victims of forced marriage and female genital mutilation. The new crime victim support offices will support victims through the criminal process and help violent crime victims and their families to move on.

### **Measure 9: To introduce a mentoring scheme for young people subjected to negative social control, honour-based violence and forced marriage**

Bufdir will be tasked with developing a mentoring scheme for this group. This will be done in cooperation with voluntary organisations in the field, including the Red Cross helpline for forced marriage and female genital mutilation. The scheme is intended to provide victims with help and support for an independent existence. The Norwegian scheme will be inspired by experiences with a mentoring scheme in Denmark and be based on experiences of aftercare services for people in the national housing and support scheme for young people who are victims of forced marriage and honour-based violence. The safety of victims is a priority in the development and implementation of the scheme.

Ministry responsible: JD

### **Measure 10: To evaluate current child welfare housing for young people under 18 subjected to honour-based violence or forced marriage, and consider new support measures**

The "Action Plan against Forced Marriage 2008-2011" included a national housing and support scheme for young people under 18 who are subjected to honour-based violence and/or forced marriage. Since 2013, this housing has been part of the regular services of the Office for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufetat). The Expert Team reports that this service is not as accessible as desired, and that it is not sufficiently known to local authority child welfare services. There is a need to examine and evaluate the current housing and support scheme, including an assessment of the need for new housing and support measures for this target group.

Ministry responsible: BLD

### **Measure 11: To establish police protection guidelines for victims of threats**

Code 6 is one of the measures the police can use to protect people under threat. This implies that information about the person or persons threatened is hidden in the population register and only available to a limited number of people. The National Criminal Investigation Service is the contact point and advisory body for local police forces. The Government will ensure the establishment of guidelines for police use of Code 6, including cooperation with other services.

Ministry responsible: JD

### **Measure 12: To enhance guidance for victims of violence who move to another municipality**

To ensure adequate social services for people under threat in cases where they must move to another local authority area for reasons of safety, a guideline will be prepared to clarify the principle of place of residence. There will be special emphasis on how victims receiving services can be protected in the best possible way in the transfer from one local authority to another. The Directorate of Labour and Welfare will ensure that employees of the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) are familiar with the guideline.

Ministry responsible: ASD

To be implemented in collaboration with: JD

### **Family and safety work**

Young people who are victims of forced marriage and honour-based violence may need protection due to threats from their family. Some have to break contact with their family and live with security measures at a secret address under the national housing and support scheme. Strict security rules may be perceived as a continuation of the control they escaped from. Many have contact with their family despite threats and a risk of violence. If the family also receives help, this can help to diminish the threats to the young person. Family and safety work have a common goal to strengthen young people's ability to handle difficult situations and make safe choices.

The Enerhaugen Family Counselling Service has trialled in partnership with Oslo Police District by Stovner police station. When a person seeks protection from the threat of forced marriage, the agencies join forces to work with the family. The aim is to provide victims with greater safety in their lives. In the longer term, after a thorough risk assessment, contact between the young person and family may be arranged.

### **The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (Nav)**

Nav offices provide social services to those who need them and represent society's final safety net. Local authorities are responsible for these services. Nav offices provide information, advice and guidance to prevent or resolve social problems. The general aim is to help people cope in life. Nav offices should be aware of domestic violence. Violence, threats and child neglect must be reported to the child welfare authorities. In cases of forced marriage, the victim will be considered as single in terms of social benefits and will, if necessary, be provided with temporary accommodation. In order to prevent people in difficult situations being passed around from one local authority to another, the local authority where the person is currently located is responsible for providing social services, regardless of the registered place of residence.

If a person moves, the new local authority will be responsible, but the Nav office under the old local authority will need to be involved in the organisation of this. In such cases, dialogue between local authorities must take place before the relocation. People under threat have a special need of protection and the local authority has a duty to ensure this. When victims of violence relocate, services provided must continue, particularly in terms of temporary accommodation and help with employment or education. In order to enhance support for victims of violence who relocate, further guidance may be necessary.



PRIORITY AREA 3:  
TO CHANGE ATTITUDES AND  
PRACTICES IN THE RELEVANT  
COMMUNITIES

Norwegian law is the regulatory framework applying to all residents of Norway. Every person should be familiar with his or her rights. Every person should be able to decide over his or her own body and life. This is not the case for everyone today. An increasing number of people are contacting the support services about negative social control and forced marriage. Immigration to Norway from countries that practice FGM will continue. Practices that violate Norwegian law and Norwegian values are unacceptable. In order to change attitudes and illegal practices, all communities involved must contribute and participate.

It is important that immigrants receive information on norms and rules in Norwegian society at different stages of their integration process. Such information should be given to new arrivals as early as possible and it should be repeated and elaborated as immigrants gain a better understanding of Norwegian society. Asylum reception centres are an important setting to reach asylum seekers. In 2017, the Government introduced 50 hours of teaching about Norwegian culture and values for asylum seekers. Communicating the rights and obligations of the individual under Norwegian law is a key aspect of this instruction, which must be provided in a language participants understand. For several years, refugees and migrants who have been granted residence in Norway, and immigrant family members of Norwegian and Nordic citizens, have been given courses in Norwegian and

civics for adult immigrants. Gender equality and combating various forms of domestic violence are part of the civics course and are also a significant element in the Norwegian language course.

Many people meet through religious communities. Leaders of such communities often have significant influence, and are an important target group for information on Norwegian legislation, society and values. Voluntary organisations and resource persons in immigrant communities are in a unique position to promote attitude changes in young people and adults. Parents are an important target group. Schools and kindergartens are particularly important arenas for children and young people to learn about their rights and optimally develop their abilities, regardless of their background and circumstances at home. The role of the school in the prevention of violence and abuse has been strengthened.

The Government wants parents to receive relevant information, help and advice. This will promote good parenting and safe family relationships. The Government also wishes to improve and update information and instruction in Norwegian law and Norwegian values. Information about rights will make it easier for people at risk to seek the necessary help and support. Information will be adapted to different groups and communicated broadly to support service personnel, relevant groups and the general population.

### **Measure 13: To update the curriculum *Domestic Violence* for adult immigrants**

Newly arrived adult immigrants with the right and/or duty to take courses in Norwegian and civics receive instruction based on the curriculum in Norwegian and civics for adult immigrants from 2012. These courses are provided by local authorities, and include 50 hours of civics provided in a language the participants understand. Both the Norwegian language and civics courses include information about female genital mutilation and forced marriage. In the course participants learn that violence against children and other family members, female genital mutilation and forced marriage are forbidden and about the relevant sanctions. The course leaders and teachers are also taught about these topics. Several years ago, Skills Norway developed a curriculum called "Domestic Violence" with a textbook and teacher's manual which is available in 19 languages and is used on the course for adult immigrants. There is now a need to update this.

The content of "*Domestic Violence*" will be updated, the curriculum and teaching resource will be digitalised and will become available in many languages.

Ministry responsible: JD

### **Measure 14: To develop courses for resource persons from relevant communities**

In order to enhance prevention work, the Government will encourage involvement of relevant communities in efforts to change attitudes and practices. The Regional Centres on Violence, Traumatic Stress and Suicide Prevention (RVTS) will be given a task to develop a course for resource persons from the relevant immigrant groups. This course will enable the resource persons to act as agents of change within the relevant communities.

RVTS will cooperate with local authorities and relevant immigrant organisations. There will be courses and meetings for resource persons in all regions of Norway.

Resource persons trained by RVTS can also support teachers of Norwegian and civics when domestic violence is discussed in class. This may help the teachers to address this topic. IMDi and Skills Norway will help local authorities to arrange this.

Ministry responsible: JD

To be implemented in collaboration with: BLD and HOD

### **Measure 15: To continue with dialogue groups against violence for residents of asylum reception centres**

Dialogue groups against violence in asylum reception centres are important in enhancing efforts to prevent violence. Their aim is to reduce violence within and outside the reception centres. Dialogue groups can also make a positive contribution to integration. Residents of the centres learn about the different roles they will play in Norwegian life, as citizens, partners and parents, and about issues such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation, and Norwegian laws and values. The initiative involves training reception centre staff and arranging dialogue groups for residents.

Ministry responsible: JD

### **Measure 16: To review training for religious leaders**

The Ministry of Culture will look into the possibility of local/regional courses for leaders of religious communities, cf. the national course "Being a religious leader in Norwegian society" currently offered by the University of Oslo. Local/regional courses developed in

cooperation with local authorities and local institutions will make it easier for religious leaders to participate, since they can take place in the evenings or at weekends without the need to go to Oslo. In addition, a locally/regionally oriented course may enhance relationships and networks between religious communities and local authorities. It will be a relatively undemanding course that provides a basic introduction to Norwegian society, with particular emphasis on religion-related legislation in Norway and the relationship between secular values and religious values. The course will include an introduction to issues related to negative social control, forced marriage and female genital mutilation. The course ought to involve representatives of the relevant local government agencies who work with these issues.

Ministry responsible: KUD

### **Measure 17: To enhance courses in good parenting**

In 2017, the Government will enhance the grant scheme whereby local authorities may apply for funding for various parental support measures. The Proposition to the Storting 12 S (2016-2017) "Escalation Plan against Violence and Abuse 2017-2021" proposes a continuation of the increased focus on measures to improve interaction between children and parents. Information about the grants will be marketed especially to local authorities providing housing for newly arrived refugees.

*The Escalation Plan against Violence and Abuse* also states that the Government will promote the first national strategy for parental support measures. Implementation of this strategy will ensure equal opportunity to receive parental support services across the country, ensure that the measures have a sound knowledge base, and enhance cooperation and

coordination between the different agencies providing services to parents from pregnancy until children reach the age of 18.

Ministry responsible: BLD

### **Measure 18: To strengthen information on negative social control, forced marriage and female genital mutilation**

This action should be seen in conjunction with actions in the Proposition to the Storting 12 S (2016-2017) "Escalation Plan against Violence and Abuse 2017-2021" concerning information to the public about violence and abuse, digital information on violence and abuse for use in kindergartens and schools and measure 13 in the present plan.

#### **Measure 18a: To conduct campaigns**

IMDi will continue to conduct campaigns on the themes of this action plan. The campaigns will make use of experience from previous campaigns such as #stoppekstremkontroll and #ikkegreit, but also consider new channels and communication through social media.

Ministry responsible: JD

#### **Measure 18b: To continue networks for information exchange and guidance material**

Bufdir will continue to lead a network involving information and guidance material on the themes of the action plan. This will be implemented in collaboration with IMDi, the Directorate of Health, UDI, POD, AVdir, the Directorate of Education (Udir), NKVTS and RVTS. The Ministry of Culture (KUD) will be represented by a contact in the network.

Ministry responsible: JD

To be implemented in collaboration with: ASD, BLD, HOD, KUD, KD and UD

**Measure 18c: To systematise information on the health consequences of female genital mutilation and enhance information on the right to health care**

Information about the health consequences of FGM will be systemised, and the dissemination of this information and the right to medical care to vulnerable groups will be strengthened. In accordance with Action 19 of the "Action Plan against Forced Marriage, Female Genital Mutilation and Severe Restrictions on Young People's Freedom 2013-2016", NKVTS and the Directorate of Health conducted an assessment of how best to reach relevant groups with good and accurate information in the fight against FGM. This measure will build on the assessment by NKVTS and the Directorate of Health.

Ministry responsible: HOD

**Measure 19: To increase information to target groups about their rights**

Rights information aims to give individuals and groups vulnerable to negative social control, forced marriage and female genital mutilation better control over their lives through access to justice and an understanding of the law. Such information will enable people to gain insight into their rights and opportunities, and thus seek assistance as needed. IMDi has announced funding for this purpose in 2017, in the form of grants for the work of NGOs preventive work against forced marriage, female genital mutilation and severe restrictions on young people's freedom and also for integration projects in asylum reception centres (Chapter 496, Item 71). The measure responds to the request by the Storting No. 944 (2015-2016) to the Government to enhance its efforts to provide information on their rights to female refugees granted residence in Norway.

Ministry responsible: JD

**Measure 20: To ensure that relevant education is provided in schools about violence, sexuality and sexual boundaries**

Sexuality, sexual boundaries, violence and respect, children and young people's rights and gender equality are currently included in several of the competence objectives in school curricula, and teachers must teach these topics on an equal footing with other topics. In the work on revising the curriculum for the Knowledge Promotion Reform of general school subjects, including the upper secondary school subjects discussed in the White Paper to the Storting No. 28 (2015-2016) "*Subjects - In-depth learning - Understanding*", priority will be given to certain overarching themes in school education. One of these will concern public health and life skills.

Ministry responsible: KD

### **Parental support measures**

The parental support programme “International Child Development Programme” (ICDP) is a preventive measure that aims to improve the care and upbringing of children and young people by supporting and sensitising parents. The topics of forced marriage and female genital mutilation are included if the participants have backgrounds from areas where they are relevant. Some local authorities organise support groups for minority parents. In connection with the [Action Plan against Domestic Violence 2014-2017](#), Bufdir has been commissioned to adapt and trial ICDP for parents in asylum reception centres.

### **The Mediation Service**

is a government body that resolves disputes in civil cases and can be used preventively at an early stage of a conflict situation. The Mediation Service can also be used in various stages of criminal proceedings, including after the person is sentenced. The parties involved may contact the Service themselves. Consideration for victims is central to the approach of the Mediation Service. Most cases concern violence and threats. Experience from cases of domestic violence is relevant to cases of forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

Meetings in the Mediation Service allow crime victims to express their experiences and the impact the crime has had on them. Perpetrators have the opportunity to understand the consequences of their actions and take responsibility for them. See also [www.konfliktraadet.no](http://www.konfliktraadet.no).

### **An example of awareness raising work aiming to change attitudes:**

#### **Awareness raising work in practice**

Alna School is run by Furuset Sports Club, and is aimed at young people aged 15-25 years, who have or want a leadership role in their local community in sports, other leisure activities, organisations or volunteer work. The project “A Future Leader: Your Life - Your Choices” aims to give participants the skills to change attitudes regarding forced marriages and severe restrictions on young people’s freedom. It is based on youth-to-youth methodology (peer education). Participants are recruited from the Alna School “youth pool”, with backgrounds from e.g. Morocco, Eritrea, Turkey, Pakistan, Yemen, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. Participants learn about forced marriage, honour-based violence, women’s rights, gender equality, human rights, culture and religion. They attend courses on dialogue as a means to talk about sensitive issues, and gain practice through school visits and discussion groups with teenagers. After consultation with the project management team, they can be mentors for young people in difficulties. Two participants from one course take part in the following course full-time. The project has received funding from IMDi.



PRIORITY AREA 4:

TO ENHANCE KNOWLEDGE  
IN THE SUPPORT SERVICES

There are still many employees in support services who come into contact with vulnerable people but do not have the sufficient skill to recognise signs of negative social control, forced marriage and female genital mutilation. Knowledge is important to be able to ask and understand, and to provide the right help at the right time. One of the goals of the Proposition to the Storting 12 S (2016-2017) "Escalation Plan against Violence and Abuse 2017-2021" is to enhance the competence of all support service staff regarding violence and abuse.

Vulnerable people often need support from different services over some length of time, and the kind of help they receive can be crucial to their future life. The support services have different roles and responsibilities, and together they form a chain of measures. The main challenges in the fight against domestic violence are the quality of services and cooperation and coordination within and between the services. Coordination and cooperation will generally take place at the local level and involve local, county and state services.

The Government has seen the need for vocational education to include topics related to violence and abuse. It is now stated in the curriculum for the education of all teachers, including kindergarten teachers, that students upon completion must have knowledge of violence against and abuse of children and young people, and the skills to take relevant action, in consultation with other professional bodies if necessary. The other basic tertiary courses must follow suit. This also applies to relevant continuing education and training courses.

The ability of support service staff to identify vulnerable people at an early stage is also important in preventing them being taken abroad against their will. Providing consular assistance in such cases has proven to be very challenging in terms of resources and security, and the victim's life and health are often in real and immediate danger. Efforts made abroad in individual cases must be followed up with appropriate measures in Norway, leading to lasting and viable solutions for the victim upon returning home. There exists coordinated cooperation between the police, shelters and the Expert Team for the Prevention of Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation to provide support to people who return, but many require long-term support.

The Government will assist in the development of guidelines which ensure information flow and coordination between the various services and which address the needs of various groups of vulnerable people, including those needing additional protection from threats of violence. Resource centres and advisory bodies provide vital expertise and knowledge, and their efforts will be strengthened locally and regionally. The availability of support and care varies, and there is a need to provide equitable services for all vulnerable people. Important support schemes must be further developed and strengthened, such as minority and integration counsellors.

### **Measure 21: To increase knowledge of violence and abuse in the education of health and social care professionals**

The Government will create a new system for the management of learning outcomes in the basic tertiary courses in health and social care. This proposal is submitted for public consultation from January 20 2017 until April 21.

Knowledge of neglect, violence and abuse are among the topics to be included here. The content of these courses will now be more regularly developed and updated according to the needs of the services. A common, overarching framework for all 19 basic tertiary courses is planned within the new management system. This curriculum will establish common content and goals for all basic tertiary courses. In preparing this, the report by the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions (UHR) "Common Content in Education for the Health and Social Professions" will be followed up. This report proposes to include knowledge of social and behavioural risk factors such as signs of neglect, violence, abuse, substance abuse and other manifestations of physical, psychological, social and socio-economic problems.

Ministry responsible: KD

### **Measure 22: To increase knowledge in support services about negative social control, forced marriage, honour-based violence and female genital mutilation**

#### **Measure 22a: To include negative social control, forced marriage, honour-based violence and female genital mutilation in competence building across sectors**

In the Proposition to the Storting 12 S (2016-2017) "Escalation Plan against Violence and Abuse 2017-2021", the Government announced that it will initiate work on a cross-sector competence strategy to demonstrate

the competencies needed in the fight against violence and abuse, how these can be enhanced, in which services, and how competence should be communicated and quality assured. This also involves a review of existing guidelines and instructions for the support services.

This measure will ensure that negative social control, forced marriage, honour-based violence and female genital mutilation are included in the cross-sectoral competence-building strategy in the *Escalation Plan against Violence and Abuse*.

Ministry responsible: BLD

To be implemented in collaboration with: ASD, HOD, JD, KD and UD

#### **Measure 22b: To increase knowledge in support services about developmentally disabled people as a vulnerable group**

Employees in health and care services and schools need to have adequate knowledge of how to detect and support people who have been subjected to violence, abuse, negative social control, female genital mutilation and forced marriage, including people with developmental disabilities.

Negative social control, honour-based violence and forced marriage will be integrated into the online information "Rights for Persons with Developmental Disabilities" ([bufdir.no](http://bufdir.no)) and *vernmotovergrep.no*, and in the work on TryggEst, a model aimed at protecting vulnerable people from violence and abuse, which is to be piloted in some areas.

Ministry responsible: BLD

To be implemented in collaboration with: HOD and KD

**Measure 22c: To increase knowledge on negative social control, forced marriage and honour-based violence among guardianship authorities, other authorities and guardians**

The county governor is the local guardianship authority and deals with cases initially. Minors without a person with parental responsibility or a functioning guardian, and people over 18 who, for various reasons, cannot look after their own interests, must have a guardian appointed. Persons over 18 years of age must normally consent to guardianship. The county governor also appoints representatives for asylum seekers who are unaccompanied minors. The county governor is to give guardians necessary training, guidance and assistance, and supervise the guardians in their area. The Norwegian Civil Affairs Authority is the central guardianship authority and handles complaints about the county governor's decisions.

This measure will ensure that county governors and relevant guardians have sound knowledge and expertise on issues related to negative social control, forced marriage and honour-based violence. A common guideline will be prepared to improve the flow of information between the courts, police, health services, immigration authorities and guardianship authorities.

Ministry responsible: JD

**Measure 23: To strengthen local and regional coordination and cooperation in combating negative social control, forced marriage and female genital mutilation**

The five Regional Centres on Violence, Traumatic Stress and Suicide Prevention (RVTS) are located in Tromsø, Trondheim, Bergen, Oslo and Kristiansand. They are responsible for teaching, advice, information and networking about violence and abuse,

forced marriage and female genital mutilation, among other topics. The centres bring together experts and have network-based cooperation with relevant actors in the region, including NGOs. Important tasks are to provide advice, knowledge and expertise to various services. RVTS centres also develop and coordinate joint courses and teaching programmes for people working in the field.

One aim of the Proposition to the Storting 12 S (2016-2017) "Escalation Plan against Violence and Abuse 2017-2021" is that the RVTS centres will play a greater role in strengthening local and regional cooperation and the coordination of efforts to combat violence. This measure will ensure that the issues of negative social control, forced marriage, honour-based violence and female genital mutilation are part of this effort. The development and planning of training programmes will take place in collaboration with relevant sector authorities. Regional networks in the fight against forced marriage and female genital mutilation will continue their work. IMDi will continue its involvement in the further development of the regional networks in cooperation with RVTS, which will have primary responsibility.

Ministry responsible: HOD

To be implemented in collaboration with: BLD and JD

**Measure 24: To strengthen the work of the police, schools, family counselling service and Norwegian foreign missions**

**Measure 24a: To use the risk assessment tool Patriarch in all police districts**

In the Proposition to the Storting 12 S (2016-2017) "Escalation Plan against Violence and Abuse 2017-2021", increased use of Patriarch has high priority. This is a tool to assess risk in

cases of honour-based violence. It has a two part checklist, one on risk factors in the potential perpetrator(s) and one for the potential victim(s). The risk factors are based on research literature on risk in general and honour-based violence in particular, but are mostly taken from *SARA:SV* (Spousal Assault Risk Assessment Guide: Short Version). *SARA:SV* is a checklist to assess risk in cases involving domestic violence, and was developed in Canada and Sweden.

All police districts have completed training in the use of the tool and all have a SARA coordinator. This action will ensure that police districts receive training in *Patriarch* and use it in cases of honour-based violence.

Ministry responsible: JD

#### **Measure 24b: To further develop the minority counsellor service in schools**

Since 2008, minority counsellors at selected schools have provided advice and guidance to vulnerable pupils. Many young people do not seek help themselves, but depend on teachers, counsellors, other adults and friends noticing and acting on signals that something is wrong. Preventive measures, such as promoting awareness and attitude change through discussion groups and other activities with pupils and parents, have been an important aspect of the work of minority counsellors. They have considerably enhanced the competence of school staff and support services, and have also cooperated with voluntary organisations.

The Government will further develop and strengthen the system of minority counsellors. It will consider changing the present scheme to a grant scheme for counties, which will then be able to apply to IMDi for the necessary funding to employ a minority counsellor. The

aim is to enhance multicultural knowledge and expertise in schools, particularly in relation to negative social control, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

Ministry responsible: JD

To be implemented in collaboration with: KD

#### **Enerhaugen Family Counselling Service**

is a national competence centre for family counselling to combat domestic violence. The centre ensures the development of evidence-based practice in the field, and assures the quality of practices at family counselling offices. The family counselling service has expertise in mediation, conflict resolution and family therapy, and plays an important role for young victims of violence and their families.

A number of projects have been implemented by the family counselling service to draw attention to minority groups, including efforts to combat forced marriage, such as the *Rainbow Project* (2003-2007), *the Bridge Building Project* (2007-2009) and the programme "*A Culture- and Trauma-sensitive Approach to Combatting Forced Marriage and Honour-based Violence*" (2010-2011). A survey from 2015 shows that few family counselling offices around the country adapt their services to immigrant families, and that these families are still underrepresented as users of the services. There is a need for more systematic work in this area.

**Measure 24c: To further develop the role of the family counselling service in combating forced marriage and honour-based violence**

The Ministry of Children and Equality (BLD) has, in recent years, enhanced the work of the family counselling service in combatting domestic violence, partly through the Proposition to the Storting 12 S (2016-2017) *“Escalation Plan against Violence and Abuse 2017-2021”*. Work to combat forced marriage and honour-based violence should also be seen in this context. Specific challenges related to honour-based violence will be included in guidelines and training programmes currently being developed. The collaborative project between Stovner Police and Enerhaugen Family Counselling Service will be evaluated and will be further developed if deemed successful.

Ministry responsible: BLD

**Measure 24d: To further develop the integration counsellor service at Norwegian foreign missions**

Integration counsellors are special envoys at selected Norwegian foreign missions. IMDi is the agency responsible for these counsellors. They deal with cases of people subjected to negative social control, forced marriage and female genital mutilation, and work within the framework of the foreign service for consular assistance. Integration counsellors enhance the competence of staff in the foreign service and of support service staff in Norway on the basis of their experience of working on cases of victims abroad. Knowledge of developments in immigrants’ and refugees’ countries of origin and the neighbouring areas is also important to improve reception and integration work in Norway.

The scheme will be further developed to strengthen the transfer of knowledge from the work of the integration counsellors to other foreign missions, support services in Norway and immigrant communities. The counsellors’ mandate and job description will be revised in line with this action plan and will include work to combat negative social control, forced marriage, genital mutilation and other cases of domestic violence. The guidance provided by the counsellors to foreign missions in their region will be clarified. They will regularly travel to Norway to contribute to competence development. A plan will be drawn up for the guidance and competence development they provide. This plan will be linked to the cross-sector competence strategy, see Action 22a.

Ministry responsible: JD

To be implemented in collaboration with: UD

Project November was set up in November 2015 to provide co-located services for victims of domestic violence. It includes employees from the police, social services, child welfare authorities and psychologist service, and is located at Stovner Police Station in Oslo.

## Measure 25: To enhance treatment for victims of female genital mutilation

### Measure 25a: To ensure equal quality of treatment for victims of female genital mutilation

A preliminary survey by the Directorate of Health shows that the availability of treatment for women and girls with FGM varies between health authorities. Health authorities are responsible for ensuring comprehensive and satisfactory health care, and must ensure equal quality of treatment for this patient group.

Ministry responsible: HOD

### Measure 25b: To further develop treatment options for women with FGM on the basis of new knowledge

A new diagnostic code for FGM from the World Health Organisation has been included in the Norwegian edition of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD). This will eventually lead to statistics becoming available on the number of women with FGM receiving health care in Norway. It will provide new knowledge on the use of treatment for FGM in Norway, which will form the basis for the further development of health care for this group of patients.

Ministry responsible: HOD

### Public health clinics and school health services

Public health clinics and school health services come into contact with young people who are, or are at risk of, being subjected to negative social control, forced marriage, honour-based violence and female genital mutilation. Health care services must have the expertise to identify and deal with this. Clinics and school health services provide information, individual and group counselling, and preventive psycho-social work. Work to revise the regulations on public health clinics and school health services started in autumn 2016. Their responsibility for detecting and preventing violence and abuse is included in this. The Directorate of Health is currently developing national guidelines for health promotion and prevention in public health clinics, school health services and youth health clinics.

In 2014-2016, local government revenue increased by NOK 668 million, due to the need to develop public health clinics and school health services. The 2017 budget proposes a further increase of NOK 50 million, which brings the total up to NOK 734 million in 2017.

In 2016, NOK 100 million was earmarked for the development of public health clinics and school health services. Through the budget compromise for the Proposition to the Storting 1 S (2016-2017), an additional NOK 150 million was allocated, making a total of NOK 251.3 million in 2017.

### **0-24 Cooperation**

All staff who come into contact with vulnerable children and young people in public health clinics, school health services, kindergartens, child welfare services, schools and NAV must cooperate better to enable the various services to function smoothly. The scheme "0-24 Cooperation" will enhance this work, so that more people aged 0-24 can do well at school, complete upper secondary education and find employment. A number of ministries and directorates are collaborating to remove obstacles in the regulations, coordinate actions and instruments, and do more of what works.

**The Children's Houses and adapted interrogation methods** help to strengthen legal protection for children and other particularly vulnerable groups who may have been victims of violence, sexual abuse, forced marriage and female genital mutilation. Here it is important to ensure that police interrogations do not cause unnecessary strain and that the further support provided is effective and coordinated. The children's houses ensure that victims and caregivers receive high-quality services in a secure setting. Competent personnel are gathered in one place, which reduces the need for the victim to repeat his or her story. A further aim of children's houses is to enhance professional development and provide advice and guidance to public and private actors. This expertise will be developed in collaboration with RVTs. There are currently 11 children's houses in Norway.

**Consular assistance** is provided within the framework established in the White Paper to the Storting No. 12 (2010-2011) "Consular Assistance to Norwegians Abroad". The assistance Norwegian authorities can provide for Norwegian citizens abroad depends on the laws and regulations of the country concerned. The most important international agreement governing the possibilities for Norway to safeguard the interests of Norwegian citizens abroad is the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations of 24 April 1963. Where Norway is represented by an embassy, this may be contacted for information and advice. See also the [\*Travel Information from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs\*](#) at [regjeringen.no](http://regjeringen.no).



PRIORITY AREA 5:

TO STRENGTHEN RESEARCH AND  
INCREASE KNOWLEDGE SHARING

The fight against negative social control, forced marriage and female genital mutilation should be evidence-based and developed in line with new knowledge and practical experience. There is limited knowledge of the extent of domestic violence in immigrant families. There is also little knowledge of what leads to attitude change. Plural marriage in the Norwegian context is another area we know little about. There is a need for more comprehensive knowledge of domestic violence in Norway. The Government has allocated NOK 50 million for 2014-2019 for a research programme on domestic violence, to be divided between NKVTS and the Social Research Institute NOVA-HiOA (NOVA), funded by JD. NKVTS will receive an additional NOK 2 million annually for research on the health consequences of domestic violence and has since 2008 developed knowledge on female genital mutilation.

Meeting places and networks play an important role in information and knowledge transfer between public authorities and NGOs, both in Norway and across borders. The support system receives reports that children and young people with ties to Norway are subjected to social control, forced marriage and female genital mutilation in the country of origin of their family. Meetings between immigrant groups, various agencies in Norway and actors in the country of origin have proved to be useful for the sharing of experiences. This work will be further developed.

The Government wants research on negative social control, forced marriage and female genital mutilation to be included to a greater extent in ongoing research on domestic violence, and will promote larger projects and more interdisciplinary research, as recommended by the specialist agencies involved. New knowledge and data will help to enhance treatment and ensure a sound knowledge base.

Experiences from Norwegian efforts to combat negative social control, forced marriage and genital mutilation will increasingly be communicated in relevant international arenas. For several years, Norway has contributed to the fight against child and forced marriage and female genital mutilation in countries where this occurs. Experience and knowledge gained from this work is relevant to efforts in Norway. The Government will encourage further sharing of knowledge and experience between actors in Norway and in the countries of origin.

**Measure 26: To strengthen research on negative social control, forced marriage, female genital mutilation and plural marriages**

From 2017, research on negative social control, forced marriage and female genital mutilation will be incorporated into the Research Programme on Domestic Violence (The Violence Programme) under NKVTS and NOVA. Interdisciplinary cooperation on major projects is encouraged. The *Strategy for Research and Knowledge Development: Forced Marriage, Female Genital Mutilation and Severe Restrictions on Young People's Freedom (2015)* is a key document which provides suggestions for research topics, but it is not exhaustive.

The research will examine experiences from other countries, including the use in the UK of civil protection orders in connection with involuntary travel abroad, the so-called "Forced Marriage Protection Order" (FMPO). In the UK, an FMPO can aim to prevent an act, such as a departure abroad, or it can be used to order an action, such as bringing home a person left abroad. Non-compliance with the order is a punishable offence. The general aim is to prevent relevant departures abroad and/or forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

There is also a need for increased knowledge about plural marriage in the Norwegian context. Status of knowledge will be ascertained and further knowledge will be developed, including the extent of plural marriage in family reunification cases.

The measures in this plan will be subject to real-time evaluation in order to demonstrate ongoing developments and challenges.

Ministry responsible: JD

**Measure 27: To strengthen national and international cooperation for the exchange of knowledge and experience**

**Measure 27a: To increase experience and knowledge exchange between immigrant organisations, resource persons and the Government**

In collaboration with the Directorate of Health, Bufdir, Udir and UD, IMDi will hold meetings and seminars with immigrant organisations and resource persons, in order to enhance the exchange of experience and knowledge from work being done in Norway, in countries of origin and internationally to combat child marriage, forced marriage, female genital mutilation and children and young people left abroad. Information will also be provided on the roles and follow-up procedures of the various agencies involved, including the framework for consular work abroad. One aim is to explain the importance of travel advice for certain countries, in order to prevent travel and longer stays in risk areas where the ability to provide consular assistance is limited.

Ministry responsible: JD

To be implemented in collaboration with: BLD, HOD, KD and UD

**Measure 27b: To increase the international exchange of knowledge and experience**

Norway's contribution to international knowledge and experience sharing will be strengthened. This will be achieved through participation in international networks between governments and civil society for the fight against negative social control, forced marriage and female genital mutilation. Under the Norwegian presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers, a conference will be held in 2017 on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. It will be considered how the articles which specifically deal with forced marriage and female genital mutilation can be included in this conference.

Ministry responsible: JD

**Measure 28: To develop an international strategy to combat child and forced marriage**

In the "Action Plan for Women's Rights and Equality in Foreign and Development Policy 2016-2020", Norway has pledged to support the work of multilateral actors to reduce child and forced marriage, in addition to the work of national actors. Norway already supports the efforts of multilateral actors, such as UNICEF, and of civil society organisations, such as PLAN, to reduce child and forced marriage. Combating these harmful practices also forms the basis for the Government's commitment to education for teenage girls, and must be seen in the context of its work to combat violence against women and to provide other humanitarian assistance in the countries of origin and surrounding areas. This work will continue. The Government's ambition is to ensure that this practice is abolished within one generation, as stated in the UN sustainability goal 5.3. In order to illuminate the connection between work at home and abroad, a strategy will be developed for Norway's work to combat child and forced marriage which emphasises the connection between national and international efforts, based on the model of the "Strategy to Strengthen International Efforts to Combat Female Genital Mutilation for 2014-2017". The aim is more long-term and systematic knowledge development, exchange of experience and cross-border cooperation between actors in the countries of origin and those in Norway who work to prevent this type of abuse (civil society organisations, immigrant organisations and the Government).

Ministry responsible: UD

To be implemented in collaboration with: JD

# IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN

## The Coordinating Body: responsibilities and cooperation

This action plan is the result of cooperation between seven ministries and their agencies. Implementation of the measures will be specified in the management dialogue between the ministries and the relevant directorates. In order to ensure a meaningful collaboration between the various measures in this plan and other relevant plans, a coordinating group consisting of IMDi, Bufdir and the Directorate of Health will be established. IMDi will be responsible for coordinating the action plan, and will lead the coordinating group.

The coordinating group will:

- hold regular meetings and create a schedule for the joint coordination of the action plan.
- ensure that the work on the measures in the *“Action Plan to Combat Negative Social Control, Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation 2017-2020”* is considered in conjunction with the Proposition to the Storting 12 S (2016-2017) *“Escalation Plan against Violence and Abuse 2017-2021”* and the action plans *“A Life without Violence. Action Plan against Domestic Violence 2014-2017”*, *“A Good Childhood Lasts a Lifetime. Action Plan to Combat Violence towards and Sexual Abuse of Children and Young People 2014-2017”* and *“Safety, Diversity and Openness. Action Plan against Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression 2017-2020”*. The implementation of the plan will also be included in the *“0-24 Cooperation”*.
- conduct regular meetings with responsible directorates or ministries about progress and to exchange information and experience.
- establish a reference group consisting of representatives from NGOs and resource persons, and conduct regular meetings to exchange experiences, report on progress and provide input on the implementation of the plan.
- participate in relevant national and international forums for knowledge and experience sharing.
- IMDi will report on the status of work on the action plan in its regular annual reports to JD. IMDi will collect reports from other ministries responsible for actions and will be responsible for presenting their joint status and making this publicly available.

### **The Expert Team for the Prevention of Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation**

The Expert Team is a national inter-agency team of experts that assists the support services in specific cases of forced marriage, female genital mutilation and other forms of honour-related violence.

#### **The Expert Team includes representatives from the following directorates:**

**AVdir**, which consists of the state Labour and Welfare Service and those parts of local government services included in the NAV offices. The Directorate of Labour and Welfare is responsible for directing, leading and developing the Labour and Welfare Service. The Directorate is also professionally responsible for local authority social services, which are society's final safety net for people who have no other possibility to provide for themselves. The Directorate is underlying the ASD.

**Bufdir**, which specialises in the fields of child welfare, child and youth upbringing, adoption, family counselling, gender equality, non-discrimination and domestic violence and abuse. Bufdir manages Bufetat, which is responsible for the state child and family counselling and welfare services. Bufdir is underlying BLD.

**The Directorate of Health**, which specialises in public health, living conditions and health and care services. The Directorate provides normative guidance and interprets and applies legislation and regulations in the health care sector. It is responsible for achieving set targets and priorities and is underlying HOD. The Directorate of Health prepares information specifically aimed at the provision and availability of health care.

**IMDi**, which implements integration policies and is underlying JD. As an executive agency and centre of expertise, IMDi enhances the competence of local authorities, sectoral authorities and other partners in matters of integration and diversity. IMDi cooperates with local and sectoral authorities on settling refugees and enabling them to study and find employment, and administers various grant schemes for local authorities and voluntary organisations.

**POD**, which is the highest management level in the police, is underlying JD. The National Police Directorate implements government policies on the basis of letters of allocation and assignment, and administers regulations and subsidies. The Directorate provides professional advice to JD and the Police, other government agencies, partners and the general public. The task of POD is to lead, manage, organise and develop the police force.

**UDI**, which implements and develops the Government's immigration and refugee policy. The Directorate of Immigration facilitates desired and lawful immigration and ensures that those who fulfil the conditions for immigration are allowed to come to Norway. UDI also has a control function. It processes applications for asylum and residence and work permits, and is underlying JD.

**UD and the Directorate for Education and Training, which have representatives in the team.** **The mandate** of the Expert Team is to remain up to date with compliance of the guidelines in this action plan and the advice and guidance needs of the services involved.

# APPENDIX

## Relevant support services

*Emergency helpline for children and young people*

Telephone: 116 111 – Email: [alarm@116.111.no](mailto:alarm@116.111.no)

*The Expert Team for the Prevention of Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation*

Telephone: 47 80 90 50 – Email: [kompetanseteamet@bufdir.no](mailto:kompetanseteamet@bufdir.no)

*The Crisis Centre (shelter)*

*Hjelpeskilden* Provides help and support to people in problematical processes of leaving religious communities.

Emergency line every Tuesday from 19:00 to 21:00: 69 28 35 10

Email: [info@hjelpeskilden.no](mailto:info@hjelpeskilden.no)

*The Red Cross helpline for forced marriage and female genital mutilation*

Telephone: 815 55 201

Email: [info.tvangsekteskap@redcross.no](mailto:info.tvangsekteskap@redcross.no)

Chat: [www.aeresrelatertvold.no](http://www.aeresrelatertvold.no)

*SEIF – Self-help for Immigrants and Refugees*

Telephone: 22 03 48 30 – [seif@seif.no](mailto:seif@seif.no)

## Online resources

[tvangsekteskap.no](http://tvangsekteskap.no) is a Government website about forced marriage and honour-based violence.

[www.ung.no](http://www.ung.no) is a public information website for young people, which also covers domestic violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation. It has an anonymous question and answer service.

[www.dinutvei.no](http://www.dinutvei.no) is a national guide on domestic violence, rape and other sexual abuse. It has an anonymous question and answer service.

*Kjønnslemlestelse (KLL): En veiviser* is a website providing information for people whose work involves contact with girls or women who are victims or at risk of female genital mutilation.

*Online course for GPs about domestic violence.*

*Skills Norway's curriculum and teaching resource about Domestic Violence, is available in 19 languages.*

## Relevant national legislation and international conventions

### National laws

*Act Relating to Children and Parents (The Children Act)*

*Act Relating to Child Welfare Services (The Child Welfare Act)*

*Act Relating to Marriage (The Marriage Act)*

*Act Relating to Primary and Secondary Education (The Education Act)*

*Act Relating to Municipal Shelter Services (The Shelter Act)*

*Act Relating to the Strengthening of the Status of Human Rights in Norwegian Law (The Human Rights Act)*

*Act Relating to Punishment (The Penal Code)*

*Act Relating to Religious Communities, etc.*

*Act Concerning the Entry of Foreign Nationals into the Kingdom and their Presence in the Realm (The Immigration Act)*

### International conventions and resolutions

*The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948*

*The European Convention on Human Rights of 1950*

*The UN Convention on Consent to Marriage of 1962*

*The UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966*

*The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979*

*The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989*

*The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence of 2011 (The Istanbul Convention)*

The UN General Assembly resolution on child, early and forced marriage of 2014:

*Resolution 69/156. Child, early and forced marriage*

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## Measures in the Action Plan against Forced Marriage, Female Genital Mutilation and Severe Restrictions on Young People's Freedom 2013-2016

<b>Education</b>		
Action 1	Continued use of minority counsellors in schools	To be continued as Action 24 B
Action 2	Resource materials on forced marriage and female genital mutilation and methods of cooperation with parents will be provided to teachers, schools and colleges	To be continued in Action 22
Action 3	To enhance the competence of counsellors in schools	Implemented
Action 4	To enhance the competence of the Educational and Psychological Counselling Service (PPT)	Implemented
Action 5	A knowledge conference aimed at employees in kindergartens, primary schools and asylum reception centres	Implemented
<b>Participation by children and young people and the work of NGOs</b>		
Action 6	Annual Nordic conference for youth	Implemented
Action 7	Event and campaign: a common front against severe restrictions on young people's freedom	To be continued in Action 18
Action 8	Continuation of the prevention and attitude-changing activities of NGOs	To be continued in Action 19
<b>Enhancement of local expertise and coordination</b>		
Action 9	To strengthen, continue and ensure sustained competence building in the police	To be continued in Actions 11, 22 and 24
Action 10	To enhance competence on forced marriage and female genital mutilation in the child welfare services	To be continued in Action 22
Action 11	To strengthen local ties through regional coordinators	Implemented

<b>Education</b>		
<b>Information</b>		
Action 12	An information phone line on forced marriage and female genital mutilation	To be maintained on a regular basis
Action 13	Further development of Tvangsekteskap.no	To be continued in Action 18
Action 14	Joint information material for agencies on forced marriage and female genital mutilation	To be continued in Action 18
<b>Migration: intensification of efforts aimed at cross-border cases</b>		
Action 15	To prepare guidelines and procedures for cases that start abroad	Implemented
Action 16	To systemise knowledge reporting by integration counsellors	To be continued in Action 24
Action 17	Summaries of knowledge and a strategy for knowledge development	Implemented
Action 18	To continue the national anti-FGM competence-building function established at NKVTS	To be continued in Action 26
Action 19	To assess how best to reach relevant groups with good and accurate information in the fight against FGM	Implemented
Action 20	More knowledge about forced marriage and people with developmental disabilities	Implemented
Action 21	To map environmental therapy work in housing and support schemes	Implemented
Action 22	Evaluation of the action plan	Implemented





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