



NORWEGIAN MINISTRY  
OF CHILDREN AND EQUALITY

Action Plan 2008-2011

# Action Plan against Forced Marriage





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# Foreword

Being able to choose whether to marry and who to marry is a basic human right. Most people in Norway take this freedom of choice for granted, but unfortunately not everybody has such freedom. Even in modern-day Norway, young people are pressured or forced to marry, despite the fact that this is prohibited.

This situation is unacceptable. Preventing forced marriage is high on the Government's agenda, as is emphasised in our political platform, the Soria Moria Declaration. The Government is therefore now presenting this action plan which comprises 40 new and continued measures to combat forced marriage.

Combating forced marriage necessitates a broad-based approach, and good results are particularly contingent on the success of our policy of equality and social inclusion. There is a need for measures that directly address the problem of forced marriage, as well as for a broad focus on strategies and measures to strengthen social inclusion. One of our primary objectives is to strengthen the role played by public agencies in these efforts. Immigrant groups also have a pivotal role to play in efforts to combat forced marriage. At the same time, it is important to establish clearly that forced marriage is a criminal offence in Norway, and that legislation prohibiting forced marriage will be enforced effectively. This action plan contains a broad range of initiatives to combat forced marriage which are designed both to prevent the occurrence of forced marriage and to protect the victims of such abuse.

This action plan focuses especially on the role of upper secondary schools, the role of Norwegian foreign missions, the need for safe places to live and increased public-sector support for and coordination of efforts. More funding will be channelled to voluntary organisations working in this field.

This action plan has been prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, the Ministry of Children and Equality, the Ministry of Health and Care Services, the Ministry of Justice and the Police, the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs, the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry of Children and Equality has the main responsibility for coordinating the Government's efforts to prevent forced marriage.



Karita Bekkemellem

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# Efforts to prevent forced marriage must be intensified

## Background

The right to choose one's own spouse is enshrined in international conventions. Forcing a person to marry is prohibited by Norwegian law and a breach of fundamental human rights.

Arranged marriages are common in large parts of the world. To a far greater degree than in Norway, family members and relatives can constitute an individual's safety net. The support of the family can be decisive for an individual's quality of life. Who a person marries becomes a matter of collective concern rather than the choice of an individual.

Certain minority groups have continued their tradition of arranging marriages for their children or other family members after they come to Norway. Arranged marriages are not contrary to Norwegian law or international conventions. What is a breach of Norwegian law and international conventions, however, is the use of psychological or physical force to coerce one or both parties to marry against their will.

Forced marriage is part of a broader range of issues related to authoritarian upbringing, control and violence. The term "honour-related violence" is often used when referring to this form of violence because it is linked to certain societies' notions of honour and shame. There is reason to assume that there is a connection between a strict upbringing and strong control in adolescence, and subsequent pressure to marry and forced marriage.

Norwegian authorities have sought to combat forced marriage for several years. The first Action Plan against Forced Marriage was launched in 1998 and comprised 40 measures. A further 30 measures were introduced in a renewed campaign to prevent forced marriage in 2002. The 2006 Action Plan for Integration and

### Section 1a of the Marriage Act

*"Women and men have the same right to choose a spouse freely. They shall contract the marriage of their own free will and by their own consent."*

### Section 222, second paragraph, of the General Civil Penal Code

*"Any person who by force, deprivation of liberty, improper pressure or any other unlawful conduct or by threats of such conduct forces anyone to enter into a marriage shall be guilty of causing a forced marriage. The penalty for causing a forced marriage is imprisonment for a term not exceeding six years. Any person who aids and abets such an offence shall be liable to the same penalty."*

### Article 23 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

*"No marriage shall be entered into without the free and full consent of the intending spouses."*

### Article 16 of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

*"Women and men shall be ensured the same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent."*

### Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

*"States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child."*

Social Inclusion of the Immigrant Population also includes measures to combat forced marriage.

The purpose of the measures has been to prevent forced marriage, and to provide assistance and support for young people who have been threatened with, or are victims of, a forced marriage. Funds for emergency action and preventive efforts have been channelled through voluntary organisations. These organisations make a major contribution to combating forced marriage, sometimes without remuneration. Emphasis has been on upgrading public sector expertise to enable support agencies to better assist those in need of help.

Several statutes, including the Penal Code, have been amended with a view to preventing forced marriage. As from 1 June 2007, new rules apply to marriages contracted outside Norway, if at least one of the parties is a Norwegian national or a permanent resident of Norway when the marriage is entered into. Marriages contracted abroad will not be valid in Norway if one of the parties is under 18 years of age when they marry, if both parties are not present during the marriage ceremony or if one of the parties is already married.

These efforts have produced results, but young people are still being forced to marry in Norway or when they visit their parents' country of origin. The Government is therefore presenting this new action plan with 40 new and continued measures to strengthen efforts to prevent forced marriage.

### The extent of forced marriage

There is no accurate information as to how many girls and boys in Norway are forced to marry. There is reason to assume that there are a large number of unrecorded cases.

The incidence of forced marriage cases and related problems dealt with by some support agencies has been investigated in the report entitled *Tvangsekteskapsaker i hjelpeapparatet. Omfang og utfordringer* (Forced Marriage Cases dealt with by Support Services. Incidence and Challenges), which was prepared by the Centre for Women's Studies and Gender Research at the University of Oslo<sup>1</sup>.

According to the report, the child welfare service dealt with 63 children in forced marriage cases in 2005-2006, 83 per cent of whom were girls. In the same period, there were 276 children involved in cases related to authoritarian upbringing and control of girls' sexuality. The organisation *Selvhjelp for innvandrere og flyktninger* (SEIF) (Self-Help for Immigrants and Refugees) recorded 64 "acute emergency" cases. The Red Cross hotline received inquiries from 172 individuals. The Expert Team for the Prevention of Forced Marriage registered 114 cases, including 49 cases in which the Red Cross was involved.

The vast majority of cases concerned young women. Between 67 and 90 per cent of the persons in question were between 15 and 25 years old.

Feedback from various support agencies shows that young homosexuals from certain minority populations are forced to marry or threatened with forced marriage.

### Basis for the measures in the action plan

In connection with the round of consultation on a new Immigration Act carried out in October 2006, the consultative bodies submitted a number of proposals for the continuation and enhancement of existing efforts and new measures to combat forced marriage. The report entitled "Forced Marriage Cases dealt with by Support Services. Incidence and Challenges" has also provided valuable input in this process. The measures in this plan are based on these contributions, supplemented by the experience gained in implementing earlier action plans.

### Relationship to other action plans

Forced marriage is a form of domestic violence. The measures in this action plan must be seen in conjunction with the action plans to combat domestic violence. The Government has decided to draw up a special plan to address the problem of forced marriage because combating forced marriage calls for special measures that target selected groups in society.

<sup>1</sup>Bredal, Anja and Lill S. Skjerven: "Tvangsekteskapsaker i hjelpeapparatet. Omfang og utfordringer", Centre for Women's Studies and Gender Research, University of Oslo, 2007.



“ You either have to do without love or break with your family...” ”

At the same time, it is important to emphasise that it is largely the same support services that are responsible for providing assistance in cases of forced marriage as in other cases of domestic violence. It is important that all support agency staff who deal with domestic violence in general also have sufficient knowledge of and expertise regarding forced marriage and related issues.

This action plan must also be seen in conjunction with the action plan on female genital mutilation that the Government intends to launch in autumn 2007.

### Target groups

The primary target group for the measures in this action plan comprises young people who are threatened with or subjected to forced marriage and their families. This group also includes young homosexuals. The action plan is directed towards employees in public agencies who encounter this problem in their work, as well as towards organisations and groups who work to prevent forced marriage and promote social inclusion.

### Main objectives

The overarching goal of this action plan is to combat forced marriage, by preventing its occurrence and helping those who are victims of such abuse. This requires a broad-based approach, in which the fundamental aim is to build up a well-functioning policy of equality and social inclusion.

The action plan has six main objectives:

1. Legislation prohibiting forced marriage must be effectively enforced
2. Forced marriage must be prevented
3. Expertise and cooperation must be increased
4. Help must be effective and readily available
5. International efforts and cooperation must be intensified
6. Knowledge and research must be reinforced

The authorities have a main responsibility for combating forced marriage, and strengthening public-sector support for this work is an overarching objective. Close coordination of the efforts of schools, the child welfare service, the family counselling service, health and social services, the police, the immigration authorities, foreign service missions and the other

public sector and voluntary services is a basic prerequisite for successfully combating forced marriage. Permanent collaborative structures must be established at local, regional and national levels. At the same time, all those involved in efforts to prevent forced marriage must have relevant knowledge and necessary expertise in this field. Several of the measures in the action plan are aimed at promoting cooperation and increasing expertise in support services.

Individuals and voluntary organisations with a background in different minority groups also play a significant role in combating forced marriage. Some organisations help young people in acute emergencies, while others take active part in preventive efforts in the form of information campaigns and activities aimed at changing attitudes. The authorities are dependent on close cooperation with organisations and groups who can reach the target groups more effectively and in different ways than public agencies. Good communication with the minority groups who are affected by this problem is crucial to the successful prevention of forced marriage.

### Ministries responsible for implementing the action plan

The Ministry of Children and Equality (BLD) is responsible for coordinating the Government's efforts to combat forced marriage. In addition to the Ministry of Children and Equality, the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion (AID), the Ministry of Health and Care Services (HOD), the Ministry of Justice and the Police (JD), the Ministry of Education and Research (KD), the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs (KKD), the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development (KRD) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (UD) are responsible for implementing the measures in the action plan. Each ministry has the main responsibility for measures within its sphere of responsibility, and collaborates on the implementation of other measures. The ministry that is listed first under the description of each measure in this action plan has the main responsibility for implementing the measure.



## The measures in the Action Plan

### Legislation prohibiting forced marriage must be effectively enforced

- Measure No. 1 Improve expertise and organisation in police districts (JD)
- Measure No. 2 Update the handbook for domestic violence coordinators (JD)
- Measure No. 3 Establish a central team of police experts (JD)

### Forced marriage must be prevented

- Measure No. 4 Establish a system of minority counsellors in upper secondary schools (AID)
- Measure No. 5 Develop resource material on forced marriage for use by pupils and teachers (KD)
- Measure No. 6 Improve the socio-educational counselling service in schools (KD)
- Measure No. 7 Use parent networks (KD)
- Measure No. 8 Help to ensure that municipalities have good procedures for following up pupils who fail to return after school holidays (KD)
- Measure No. 9 Update information material adapted to different target groups (BLD)
- Measure No. 10 Establish a campaign website and a question-and-answer service (BLD)
- Measure No. 11 Raise awareness of the issue of forced marriage among participants in Norwegian language training programmes (AID)
- Measure No. 12 Make active use of the parental guidance programme in efforts to combat forced marriage (BLD)
- Measure No. 13 Establish networks of resource persons (BLD)
- Measure No. 14 Assist young people who request help to avoid breaking with their family (BLD)
- Measure No. 15 Involve religious communities in efforts to combat forced marriage (KKD)
- Measure No. 16 Include information on forced marriage in training programmes for leaders of religious communities (KKD)
- Measure No. 17 Increase support for the awareness-raising efforts of voluntary organisations (AID)
- Measure No. 18 Establish girls' and boys' clubs (BLD)

### Expertise and cooperation must be increased

- Measure No. 19 Strengthen and maintain the Expert Team for the Prevention of Forced Marriage (AID)
- Measure No. 20 Increase the regional resource centres' expertise on forced marriage (BLD)
- Measure No. 21 Prepare handbooks and provide training for support agencies (BLD)
- Measure No. 22 Help ensure that health services follow up cases of forced marriage (HOD)
- Measure No. 23 Establish local cooperation projects at the regional level (BLD)
- Measure No. 24 Establish annual network seminars (BLD)
- Measure No. 25 Increase the expertise of National Population Register staff (BLD)

### Help must be effective and readily available

- Measure No. 26 Investigate the quality of current housing and treatment services (BLD)
- Measure No. 27 Establish more accommodation for young people over the age of 18 (BLD)
- Measure No. 28 Establish more accommodation for young people under the age of 18 (BLD)

- Measure No. 29 Continue to provide support to help young people in crisis situations (BLD)  
Measure No. 30 Strengthen the family counselling service in order to increase treatment and counselling services in forced marriage cases (BLD)

### International efforts and cooperation must be intensified

- Measure No. 31 Establish positions for Integration Attachés (AID)  
Measure No. 32 Improve procedures for dealing with forced marriage cases (UD)  
Measure No. 33 Improve competence in the Foreign Service (UD)  
Measure No. 34 Continue to refund the costs of repatriating victims of forced marriage (UD)  
Measure No. 35 Promote cooperation between authorities and voluntary organisations in Norway and in the parents' country of origin (UD)  
Measure No. 36 Bring up the issue of forced marriage in political discussions with other countries (UD)  
Measure No. 37 Strengthen Nordic cooperation (BLD)  
Measure No. 38 Contribute to European cooperation (AID)

### Knowledge and research must be reinforced

- Measure No. 39 Strengthen research and evaluation (BLD)  
Measure No. 40 Establish procedures for systematic registration of forced marriage cases (BLD)

AID	-	Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion
BLD	-	Ministry of Children and Equality
HOD	-	Ministry of Health and Care Services
JD	-	Ministry of Justice and the Police
KD	-	Ministry of Education and Research
KKD	-	Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs
KRD	-	Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development
UD	-	Ministry of Foreign Affairs



## Legislation prohibiting forced marriage must be effectively enforced

### Background

Penal provisions have been incorporated into Norwegian legislation for the purpose of preventing forced marriage. Section 222, second paragraph, of the Penal Code imposes a clear prohibition against forcing a person to enter into marriage. After amendments to the Penal Code in 2003, section 222, second paragraph, now reads as follows:

*“Any person who by force, deprivation of liberty, improper pressure or any other unlawful conduct or by threats of such conduct forces anyone to enter into a marriage shall be guilty of causing a forced marriage. The penalty for causing a forced marriage is imprisonment for a term not exceeding six years. Any person who aids and abets such an offence shall be liable to the same penalty.”*

Section 220 of the Penal Code was also amended in 2003 to prevent children being forced to marry. The provision imposes a penalty on any person who enters into marriage with a child under the age of 16, or who aids and abets such a marriage. The penalty is imprisonment for a period of up to four years. Thus the offence is punishable regardless of whether any form of coercion or threats have been used against the child.

This legislation is meant to have a preventive effect. This effect is reinforced by effectively enforcing these provisions. The police, the prosecuting authority and the courts are responsible for ensuring that breaches of penal provisions are investigated, prosecuted and adjudicated. Cases involving domestic violence, including forced marriage, are subject to unconditional public prosecution.

In 2006, for the first time, the Norwegian Supreme Court considered the issue of sentencing in a criminal case pursuant to the new provision in section 222, second paragraph. A man and one of his sons were convicted of having threatened his oldest daughter with violence in an attempt to force her to marry at the age of 17. The District Court sentenced the two men to imprisonment for ten and eight months, respectively. The case was appealed to the Court of Appeal, which increased the penalties to one year and nine months and one year and five months. The case was further appealed to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court emphasised that forced marriage is a gross violation of an individual’s freedom and independence as well as being, almost without exception, also a gross violation of a person’s right to decide over his or her own body. The father was sentenced to a prison term of two years and six months and the son to a term of two years.

The annual circular to the police in which the Director General of Public Prosecutions sets out priorities states that cases concerning domestic violence against women and children must be given priority. Domestic violence also encompasses forced marriage.

### Protective measures

If a young person breaks with his or her family and risks reprisals, the police must carry out a risk assessment and, if necessary, put in place protective measures. For some persons, the situation may be so dangerous that they will require special protective measures for a short or longer period of time. Use of remand in custody, a ban on visitors, a personal violence alarm, relocation or other protective action must be assessed on a continuous basis while the case is under investigation, during the court case and afterwards.



National guidelines for witness protection have been drawn up. These guidelines are designed for persons involved in the various stages of the penal process and for victims of domestic violence.

#### Need for expertise and an appropriate organisational structure

Effective, high-quality investigation of forced marriage cases requires special expertise on the part of investigators and police prosecutors. Police districts must also have an appropriate organisational structure and good internal communication procedures to ensure that the cases are handled properly.

To help ensure that cases of domestic violence are dealt with in a coherent, uniform manner in accordance with high quality standards, a system of domestic violence coordinators has been established in each of Norway's 27 police districts. The role of the coordinators is to see to it that the police respond to victims of domestic violence and their relatives with understanding, knowledge and insight, both as human beings and as professional police officers. An important task for domestic violence coordinators is to establish good procedures for collaboration with other agencies, institutions and organisations engaged in efforts to address this problem. In 2002 the Directorate of Police published a handbook for domestic violence coordinators, which is due to be revised.

#### Measure No. 1: Improve expertise and organisation in police districts

The Directorate of Police will carry out a study of whether police districts have the necessary organisational structure and expertise to be fully equipped to deal with cases of forced marriage. Instructions for domestic violence coordinators will be reviewed and revised.

*Implementation: 2008*

*Ministry responsible for implementation: JD*

#### Measure No. 2: Update the handbook for domestic violence coordinators

The Directorate of Police will establish a working group to revise the handbook for domestic violence coordinators.

*Implementation: 2008*

*Ministry responsible for implementation: JD*

#### Sharing expertise between police districts

It is important to ensure that the expertise acquired in police districts where efforts have produced good results is communicated to other police districts. The police will establish a central team of experts to promote the exchange of experience in dealing with forced marriage.

#### Measure No. 3: Establish a central team of police experts

A central team of experts will be established to promote the exchange of experience in dealing with cases of forced marriage.

*Implementation: 2008-2011*

*Ministry responsible for implementation: JD*



## Forced marriage must be prevented

### Background

The Government's foremost goal is to prevent forced marriages from taking place. Its general policy of social inclusion and more specifically targeted measures play a crucial role. Information and efforts to change people's attitudes are important elements of this strategy of prevention. Information material and awareness-raising campaigns have been prepared by public agencies and voluntary organisations. The Government will underpin these efforts through various measures in the action plan.

Forced marriage is a serious social problem. By increasing knowledge of forced marriage and related issues in schools and support agencies and among the population at large, this problem can be highlighted and prevented. Providing information to groups at risk about where to obtain help and what kind of help is available will probably result in more people contacting support agencies.

It is important to enter into dialogue with the population groups in which forced marriage occurs in order to change people's attitudes. This applies to both young people and their parents. Reaching the groups in question with the necessary information may pose a challenge. Representatives of minority groups and voluntary organisations play a key role in this respect.

### Minority counsellors in schools

Primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities offer vital arenas for promoting integration and social inclusion. Schools therefore play a pivotal role with a view to reaching young people who may be at risk of being forced to marry. Coordinating the efforts of schools and municipal support services is essen-

tial to combating forced marriage. There is also a need to increase competence on forced marriage in schools.

A system of minority counsellors affiliated with upper secondary schools with a high percentage of pupils with minority backgrounds will therefore be established.

#### Measure No. 4: Establish a system of minority counsellors in upper secondary schools

A team of minority counsellors will be established in upper secondary schools with the aim of preventing forced marriage. Their work must be seen in conjunction with efforts to assist minority pupils to complete their upper secondary education, including pupils who have little knowledge of Norwegian and have lived in Norway for only a short time. The minority counsellors will focus particularly on upper secondary schools where more than 20 per cent of the pupils have a minority background. Efforts will target both individuals and the system, and will include following up the school situation of individual pupils and establishing agreements with relevant cooperation partners at municipal, county and central government level, and with voluntary organisations.

Minority counsellors will help build up competence relating to forced marriage in schools, including schools in which a smaller percentage of pupils have a minority background, as well as in lower secondary schools, if necessary.

They will also assist in initiating dialogue with parents. Minority counsellors will be affiliated with the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi), but will carry out their day-to-day activities at schools

*Implementation: 2008-2011*

*Ministries responsible for implementation: AID, KD*

#### Preventive action in schools

Primary and secondary education is intended to prepare children and young people for participation in society, based on the principles of freedom and independence. It is important that each pupil achieves an understanding of, and actively supports, fundamental human rights, democratic values and gender equality. Section 9a-1 of the Education Act states that all primary and secondary pupils have a right to a good physical and psychosocial environment that promotes health, well-being and learning. The prevention of forced marriage can be seen as health-promoting action aimed at enhancing vitality, contentment and quality of life. In order to develop effective preventive efforts in schools and help pupils in difficult situations, school staff must have insight into problems that affect the pupils. At school pupils have regular contact with adults whom they can trust. It is important that the school management, other school staff and school health professionals be well informed on the subject of forced marriage in order to be able to help pupils who are threatened with forced marriage.

#### Measure No. 5: Develop resource material on forced marriage for use by pupils and teachers

Arranged marriages and forced marriage will continue to be a topic on which attention is focused in the process of preparing new teaching materials on partnership and sexuality for use in primary and secondary school. The materials will include background information and guidance for teachers, the school counselling service, school management and school owners regarding the action that should be taken if they suspect a

forced marriage. New information will also be developed for pupils and parents on partnership and sexuality, which will include up-to-date information on forced marriage that is specially adapted for the target groups. The material for parents will be translated into relevant languages.

In connection with this material, a training programme will be designed to upgrade the expertise of teachers, school counsellors and the school health service. This programme will also cover such subjects as arranged marriages and forced marriage. The resource material will be prepared jointly by the Directorate of Education and the Directorate of Health and Social Affairs, and will be disseminated to schools and relevant institutions. Minority counsellors affiliated with the Directorate of Integration and Diversity will be involved in this work. Information and links will be continuously updated on [www.skolenettet.no](http://www.skolenettet.no)

*Implementation: 2008-2011*

*Ministries responsible for implementation: KD, HOD*

#### Schools as an arena for helping pupils in difficult situations

Under section 9-2 of the Education Act, primary and secondary school pupils are entitled to necessary counselling on education, vocational and occupational choices and training, and social issues. The counsellor must seek to help pupils with personal and social problems that might affect their schoolwork.

Pupils in difficult situations, such as being forced to marry, may feel a need to talk candidly and confidentially about their problem with an adult. The school counselling service is one of the places a pupil can turn to in such a situation.

As a follow-up to Report No. 16 (2006-2007) to the Norwegian parliament (*Storting*), efforts are being made to improve the school counselling service by dividing the service into two parts: educational and vocational counselling and socio-educational counselling. The functions to be carried out by each part will be defined in official regulations. Recommended

“ My family wants me to get married, but the problem is that I don't want to. They are stubborn and won't give in. They have found a boy and now I don't know what to say... Is it smart not to say anything, or what? ”

requirements as regards counsellors' expertise will also be drawn up, particularly in the field of social education.

### Measure No. 6: Improve the socio-educational counselling service in schools

Knowledge of special circumstances relating to pupils with a minority background, such as forced marriage and honour-related violence, is relevant in the new process of developing criteria for recommended qualifications for the school counselling service.

The socio-educational counselling service must also be seen in conjunction with the school health service and minority counsellors, with a view to upgrading expertise and awareness of agencies that can provide help.

*Implementation: 2008-2011*

*Ministries responsible for implementation: KD*

### Parent-school collaboration

Collaboration between parents and schools will help increase awareness of the role of parents in relation to Norwegian schools, society and their children. Similarly, it is important that teachers be made aware of parents as a potential resource in enhancing their children's learning. Home-school collaboration is general quality development work that can include focus on topics such as forced marriage and honour-related violence. Minority counsellors with special expertise on the problem of forced marriage will be able to contribute to a broader dialogue on such topics.

### Measure No. 7: Use parent networks

Based on a project focusing on minority language parents as a resource for pupils' school education, parent networks (Minority Language Resource Networks (MIR)) are being established in several municipalities. In collaboration with the National Centre for Multi-Cultural Education

(NAFO), the National Parents' Committee for Primary and Lower Secondary Education (FUG), will carry out information activities. Printed material on parental collaboration in multi-cultural education, such as handbooks and brochures produced by FUG will be translated into many languages and used in home-school cooperation. In this type of quality development work, topics such as forced marriage and honour-related violence can be addressed wherever relevant.

*Implementation: 2008-2009*

*Ministry responsible for implementation: KD*

### Children who do not return to school after a holiday

Pupils are sometimes forced to marry while on a trip to their parents' or guardian's country of origin. This may be a reason why they do not return after a school holiday. Children and youth of primary and lower secondary school age who are residents of Norway have the right and the duty to receive primary and lower secondary education, cf. section 2-1 of the Education Act. It is the responsibility of the pupil's parents or another person in whose care the child is placed to ensure that the child attends school, cf. section 2-1, fifth paragraph, of the Education Act and section 30, second paragraph, of the Children Act. The municipality is responsible for fulfilling the right to public primary and lower secondary education of all children residing in the municipality. The municipality therefore also has a responsibility for following up if a pupil does not attend school. The County Governor monitors the activities of municipalities.

### Measure No. 8: Help to ensure that municipalities have good procedures for following up pupils who fail to return after school holidays

School owners are responsible for establishing and following up procedures for dealing with cases where children do not return after school holidays. The Directorate of Education will help



ensure that municipalities have such procedures and follow them up if pupils do not return to school after a holiday.

*Implementation: 2008-2011*

*Ministry responsible for implementation: KD*

#### Information on forced marriage

When the first Action Plan against Forced Marriage was introduced in 1998, brochures were produced containing information on forced marriage for a number of target groups: Youth with a minority background, parents with a minority background and public and private sector employees. Several public agencies and non-governmental organisations publish information on forced marriage on their websites. One example is [www.ung.no](http://www.ung.no)

Today asylum-seekers are given information explaining that female genital mutilation and forced marriage are prohibited. Those who receive this information must sign a form to confirm that it has been received and understood when they are interviewed by the police in connection with their application for asylum. From 2007, the Directorate of Children, Youth and Family Affairs is responsible for implementing a similar system for quota refugees and persons who have come to Norway under the family reunification scheme.

#### Measure No. 9: Update information material adapted to different target groups

Current information material on forced marriage will be updated and adapted to different target groups, including young people in need of help. The material will be distributed through schools, voluntary organisations, immigrant organisations, religious communities, family counselling offices, public health clinics, school health services and reception centres for asylum-seekers. Besides receiving information on legislation and breaches of the law in Norway, newly arrived asylum-seekers in asylum reception centres will be given better, more detailed information on forced marriage, the reasons for

the prohibition, human rights, ethical principles and the equality perspective.

*Implementation: 2008-2011*

*Ministries responsible for implementation:*

*BLD, AID, HOD, JD, KD, KKD, KR, UD*

#### Measure No. 10: Establish a campaign website and a question-and-answer service

A campaign website on forced marriage and related issues will be established on the Government website [regjeringen.no](http://regjeringen.no) under the Ministry of Children and Equality ([www.tvangsekteskap.no](http://www.tvangsekteskap.no)). The websites of relevant public agencies that provide information on forced marriage will also be continuously updated. The Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion will ensure that a new website with a question-and-answer service is established.

*Implementation: 2008-2011*

*Ministries responsible for implementation:*

*BLD, AID, HOD, JD, KD, UD*

#### Information for participants in the Norwegian language training programme

Under the Act on an introduction programme and Norwegian language training for newly arrived immigrants (the Introduction Act), municipalities are responsible for providing Norwegian language training and social studies to all persons who have been granted a permit to reside or work in Norway. Furthermore, each host municipality is responsible for providing up to 250 hours of Norwegian language training for asylum-seekers living in reception centres. The training for all persons who receive a permit to stay in Norway and Norwegian language training for asylum-seekers are based on the National Curriculum for Norwegian and social studies. This programme covers a range of topics: Immigrants in Norway, democracy, welfare and values, health, school, education and the labour market, children and family, the population structure and the natural environment. The topic of forced marriage is addressed with

certain groups of participants when it is natural to do so in connection with the other topics.

The need for information and an educational approach will vary from one group of participants to another depending on the level, intensity and scope of the training and other factors. A study must be carried out of experience acquired in connection with courses on forced marriage based on the new curriculum, and a teaching programme must be developed that municipalities can adapt for use in the training provided for various groups.

#### Measure No. 11: Raise awareness of the issue of forced marriage among participants in Norwegian language training programmes

A training module will be designed for participants in Norwegian language training programmes, and a special guide will be developed for Norwegian language teachers with a view to promoting knowledge-based dialogue on the topic of forced marriage. Human rights and an equality perspective will be fundamental principles in this dialogue, which may also cover the way different religions view the issue of forced marriage. The module will also focus on the consequences of forced marriage.

*Implementation: 2008-2011*

*Ministry responsible for implementation: AID*

#### Parental guidance for families with a minority background

The purpose of the parental guidance programme is to support and strengthen parents in the role they play as caregivers for and in bringing up their children, thereby preventing the occurrence of psychosocial problems among children and youth. The parental guidance programme offers opportunities to meet other parents, share experiences and discuss the joys and challenges of child-parent relationships. The aim is to identify matters of universal concern to both children and parents and to raise parents' awareness of their children's needs. A module of the programme has been adapted for families with a minority background.

Parents meet in groups to talk and share experiences. Conversations largely take place in the participants' mother tongue and are moderated by two persons, one of whom belongs to the same minority group as the participants and one of whom has a Norwegian background.

#### Measure No. 12: Make active use of the parental guidance programme in efforts to combat forced marriage

Topics related to forced marriage will be included in the training course for moderators for the parental guidance programme. Active use will be made of the parental guidance programme for minority families from relevant countries as an instrument in efforts to combat forced marriage.

*Implementation: 2008-2011*

*Ministry responsible for implementation: BLD*

#### Changing attitudes through resource persons

One means of combating forced marriage is to disseminate information in relevant minority groups on the legal and social premises for family life and parenthood in Norway. Experience shows that the information has greater impact if it is communicated by resource persons with the same background as the target group. Several non-governmental organisations and some family counselling offices, including the Sentrum Family Office in Oslo (the Rainbow project) and the Aker Family Office in Oslo, currently organise various groups and networks that have activities aimed at changing attitudes.

#### Measure No. 13: Establish networks of resource persons

Financial support will be provided to establish networks of resource persons from relevant minority groups. The knowledge and expertise gained in existing programmes and projects will be further developed and disseminated to other potential resource groups.

*Implementation: 2008-2011*

*Ministry responsible for implementation: BLD*

### Helping young people to avoid breaking with their family

Seeking help to avoid a forced marriage does not necessarily mean breaking with one's family. There is a need to reinforce the assistance available to young people who fear that they will be forced to marry, but who do not want to break with their family. The primary task of the family counselling service is to provide treatment and guidance when a family experiences difficulties, conflicts or crises. The family counselling office must be the natural place to seek assistance in tackling problems that arise in personal partnerships and family relations. Within this framework, family counselling offices will provide adequate services for young people with a minority background who request help in resolving conflicts related to forced marriage. Minority groups know little about the family counselling service, and are often unaware of its existence and the help that it can offer.

#### Measure No. 14: Assist young people who request help to avoid breaking with their family

Family therapists' cultural understanding and knowledge of various minority groups will be strengthened to enable the family counselling service to respond to the needs of young people who fear they will be forced to marry and their families with relevant guidance and assistance. Better, more targeted information on the family counselling service will be provided to increase awareness of the service and the help that is available.

*Implementation: 2008-2011*

*Ministry responsible for implementation: BLD*

### The role of religious communities

Religious communities are important players and

disseminators of information. By raising awareness of Norwegian legislation on forced marriages, religious communities will be able to play a positive role in changing attitudes among their members.

Under section 1 of the Act on Religious Communities, etc., everyone is entitled to engage in religious activities alone or together with others and to establish a religious community if this does not violate the law or normal standards of decency. Financial support for religious and life stance communities is provided through a rights-based grant scheme. Grants are conditional on the activities of the individual community taking place in compliance with current legislation and generally accepted ethical standards in our society. A general financial report on the use of such grants is required, which must show that the grant is being used for religious activities. There are around 1,200 approved leaders of religious communities in Norway. New leaders are registered by the county governors every year. It is important that leaders of religious communities have adequate knowledge of Norwegian legislation, including an understanding of the provisions of the Marriage Act.

#### Measure No. 15: Involve religious communities in efforts to combat forced marriage

Religious communities will be encouraged to actively promote attitude changes and prevent forced marriage. In the grant allocation letter from county governors, religious communities will be asked to disseminate information at events at which the parents' generation in particular is represented. The letter will also emphasise that Norwegian law must be observed. Religious communities will be asked to inform their members that every person has a right to decide over his or her own life, including making their own decision as to whether and whom they wish to marry.

*Implementation: 2008-2011*

*Ministry responsible for implementation: KKD*

### Measure No. 16: Include information on forced marriage in training programmes for leaders of religious communities

The Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs will start a training programme for new leaders of religious communities, in which forced marriage will be a key topic.

*Implementation: 2008-2011*

*Ministry responsible for implementation: KKD*

### Support for voluntary organisations and groups

Some voluntary organisations that work to prevent forced marriage receive funding from the budgets of the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion. The aim is to support organisations that work to ensure that everyone has the same opportunities, rights and duties as regards participating in society and making use of their own resources. Furthermore, certain organisations receive project support from the Ministry of Children and Equality to carry out information and awareness-raising activities aimed at combating forced marriage.

Voluntary organisations have the possibility of building networks and offering services and opportunities to participate in activities in a different way than public services and agencies, thereby helping to prevent groups from closing themselves off from society. A broad-based, inclusive range of organisations thus promotes integration.

### Measure No. 17: Increase support for the awareness-raising efforts of voluntary organisations

In addition to the funding currently provided, a scheme will be established under the auspices of the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi), to which voluntary organisations can

apply for support for efforts to combat forced marriage.

*Implementation: 2008-2011*

*Ministry responsible for implementation: AID*

### Raising awareness of personal choices

It is important that there are meeting places for girls and boys with a minority background, where they can get together with other youth with a similar background. Young people experiencing family conflict, control and coercion may benefit from help and support from girls and boys with similar problems.

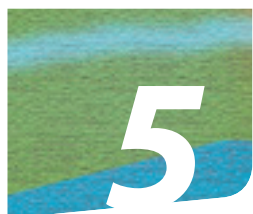
### Measure No. 18: Establish girls' and boys' clubs

Financial support will be provided to establish several girls' and boys' clubs for young people with a minority background. The objective is to give young people the strength to make their own choices by enabling them to meet other youth in similar situations. Professional counsellors will be attached to the clubs.

*Implementation: 2008-2011*

*Ministry responsible for implementation: BLD*





## Expertise and cooperation must be increased

### Background

One of the primary objectives in efforts to combat forced marriage is to provide help for those who are or have been forced to marry, or who have been threatened with forced marriage.

Several young people have received emergency assistance from voluntary organisations and public support agencies. Voluntary organisations have made a major contribution to the battle against forced marriage and will continue to play a key role. At the same time, one of the main objectives of this action plan is to ensure that assistance is more strongly rooted in the public sector. If support agencies are to be able to provide coherent, readily available assistance, it is essential that procedures be developed and inter-agency collaboration be established between the education sector, the health and social welfare sector, the child welfare service, the family counselling service, the police and voluntary organisations, at both the national and local levels.

Combating forced marriage calls for insight and understanding. To be able to help young people who have married or are at risk of having to marry against their will, it is crucial that all relevant support agencies have the necessary knowledge and expertise to address this issue.

There is a great deal of expertise available in this field, but it is dispersed and should be coordinated to a greater degree so that it will benefit more people. The entire range of support services must be better equipped to see and understand the problems faced by the young people in the target group.

### The Expert Team for the Prevention of Forced Marriage

The Expert Team for the Prevention of Forced Marriage is primarily a consultative body for front line services dealing with specific cases of forced marriage. It also deals with associated problems related to honour-related control or violence when such problems are linked to the issue of forced marriage.

The Expert Team covers all of Norway, but is based in Oslo. The network of professionals in outlying regions is therefore important, and team representatives make use of the respective authorities' local resources, such as the police, child welfare service, social services and schools. Developing a guidance methodology is part of the team's responsibilities. The experience it gains will be passed on to relevant agencies and stakeholders, as well as to the public authorities. The Directorate of Immigration (UDI) is responsible for heading the Expert Team and for the administrative part of its work. The Expert Team consists of representatives of the immigration authorities, the police and prosecuting authorities and the authorities responsible for children and family affairs.

### Measure No. 19: Strengthen and maintain the Expert Team for the Prevention of Forced Marriage

The Expert Team for the Prevention of Forced Marriage will be maintained and strengthened by allocating resources to upgrade expertise and increase regional collaboration. The role of the Expert Team in upgrading expertise will be reinforced by allocating further

“ I can't marry the man my family has found for me until I know whether I like him. It's really too much to expect me to sign a marriage contract without ever having seen or met him... ”

funding for human resource development in public administration, preferably in cooperation with the Directorate of Children, Youth and Family Affairs, the Norwegian Centre for Studies on Violence and Traumatic Stress (NKVTS) and the Norwegian Centre for Minority Health Research (NAKMI). The Expert Team will help to develop information and guidance materials, which must be seen in conjunction with and as separate from Measure No. 21.

Regional cooperation on preventing forced marriage will be intensified. This applies to collaboration with NKVTS, the regional resource centres for violence, traumatic stress and suicide prevention (RVTS) and the regional offices of the Directorate of Children, Youth and Family Affairs.

*Implementation: 2008-2011*  
*Ministries responsible for implementation:*  
*AID, BLD, HOD, JD*

### Regional resource centres

Five regional Resource Centres for Violence, Traumatic Stress and Suicide Prevention (RVTS) were established in 2006 and 2007. The purpose of the centres is to develop specialised expertise, serve in an advisory capacity to the public and voluntary sector and promote cross-sectoral collaboration. In 2007 the Ministry of Health and Care Services strengthened the regional centres to enable them to combat forced marriage and female genital mutilation more effectively. There is a particular need to ensure that mental health care is included in the follow-up offered to victims of forced marriage and honour-related violence

#### Measure No. 20: Increase the regional resource centres' expertise on forced marriage

The regional resource centres will be strengthened to enable them to assist relevant sectors in building expertise and help promote greater regional collaboration on forced marriage and associated problems. Mental health care will be an important part of this work.

*Implementation: 2008-2011*  
*Ministries responsible for implementation:*  
*BLD, AID, HOD, JD*

### Developing the expertise of support agencies

Many people working in support agencies express a need and desire for training in dealing with forced marriage and related issues. A high level of expertise and efficient procedures for coordinating the activities of the various support agencies are essential if young people are to receive the help they need and to which they are entitled. It is therefore necessary to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies and to further develop cross-agency collaboration.

The Norwegian Centre for Studies on Violence and Traumatic Stress (NKVTS) has carried out a human resource development project on work with women with a minority background who are victims of violence, including women with problems relating to forced marriage. The target group has been crisis centre staff and their partner agencies. Based on the lessons learned from this project, the NKVTS is preparing a guide for crisis centres and the support agencies with which they collaborate.

#### Measure No. 21: Prepare handbooks and provide training for support agencies

Handbooks will be prepared containing relevant, up-to-date information, good routines and network overviews to explain how support agencies must deal with cases concerning forced marriage. The handbook(s) will be adapted to the various groups of professionals such as the police, child welfare service, social services, school health service, regular general practitioners, crisis centres and the family counselling service, and will be based on the work of the NKVTS, the Expert Team for the Prevention of Forced Marriage and other relevant players. Training in use of the handbook will be provided in each region.

*Implementation: 2008-2011*

*Ministries responsible for implementation:*

*BLD, AID, HOD, JD, KD*

### Municipal health services

Municipal health services, such as regular general practitioners, public health clinics and school health services, may encounter young people who are threatened with or victims of forced marriage or other forms of honour-related violence. It may also be relevant to seek help from other low-threshold, municipal mental health services to deal with psychological problems that arise in such situations. It is important that municipal health services be aware of the signs of such situations and how they should be followed up, to ensure that the persons concerned are noticed and receive proper assistance.

#### Measure No. 22: Help ensure that health services follow up cases of forced marriage

The Directorate of Health and Social Affairs will, in collaboration with relevant centres of expertise, such as the Norwegian Centre for Minority Health Research (NAKMI), the Norwegian Centre for Studies on Violence and Traumatic Stress (NKVTS) and the five regional Resource Centres for Violence, Traumatic Stress and Suicide Prevention (RVTS), contribute expertise to municipal health services in connection with measures targeting persons who are forced to marry or threatened with forced marriage. This measure must be viewed in conjunction with Measures No. 20 and No. 21.

*Implementation: 2008*

*Ministry responsible for implementation: HOD*

### A national, inter-agency pilot project on honour-related violence

In 2007, Drammen Municipality established a three-year, cross-sectoral, inter-agency pilot project aimed at preventing honour-related violence, including forced marriage. The project is based on the SLT

model, which entails coordination of local crime prevention measures. The experience gained in this project will be a valuable contribution to efforts to combat forced marriage in other regions of Norway.

#### Measure No. 23: Establish local cooperation projects at the regional level

The Drammen project is a three-year project which will continue to receive funding in 2008 and 2009. In collaboration with the regional Resource Centres for Violence, Traumatic Stress and Suicide Prevention (RVTS), similar local projects will be established in the four other regions based on the lessons learned from the Drammen project. To be eligible for a special grant, projects must be based on inter-agency, cross-sectoral collaboration and be binding on the participating services.

*Implementation: 2008-2011*

*Ministries responsible for implementation:*

*BLD, AID, HOD, JD*

### Transfer of experience

Many different public agencies and non-governmental organisations all over Norway, which possess a broad range of expertise and experience, work to prevent forced marriage. There is a need for a national arena where knowledge can be shared and effective procedures for cooperation and ways of dealing with cases can be discussed.

#### Measure No. 24: Establish annual network seminars

The Ministry of Children and Equality will take the initiative to establish annual network seminars for public and non-governmental agencies that work to prevent forced marriage.

The purpose of these seminars is to build competence, transfer lessons learned, establish cooperation procedures and develop best practices for following up forced marriage cases.

*Implementation: 2008–2011*

*Ministries responsible for implementation:*

*BLD, AID, HOD, JD, KD, KKD, UD*

### Official verification of compliance with conditions for marriage

In 2004, responsibility for verifying that the conditions for marriage are fulfilled was transferred from the persons solemnising the marriage to National Population Register offices. The intention was to ensure better, more uniform control of compliance with the conditions for marriage, thereby reducing the number of forced marriages. A marriage that is entered into without a valid certificate of verification issued by the National Population Register will not be valid. Strengthening this control procedure will help prevent a person from being forced to marry in Norway with a person who is not lawfully resident in the country. Before the new system came into force, all the National Population Register offices received in-depth training in applying the new rules, provided jointly by the Ministry of Children and Equality and the Directorate of Taxation. Three years have now passed since the new rules entered into force. The National Population Register offices need to further upgrade their expertise and share the experience gained in this period.

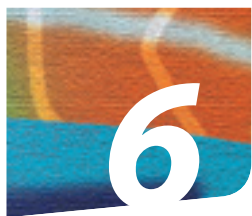
#### Measure No. 25: Increase the expertise of National Population Register staff

Training seminars will be arranged for National Population Register staff with a view to increasing their expertise and promoting the exchange of experience.

*Implementation: 2008-2009*

*Ministry responsible for implementation: BLD*





## Help must be effective and readily available

### Background

The public authorities are responsible for ensuring that young people who are forced to marry or threatened with forced marriage are offered effective, accessible help by solution-oriented, responsible support agencies. Their services must be coherent, readily available and adapted to the needs of the individual who seeks help.

It is important to take into account the fact that the young people who are forced to marry or threatened with forced marriage are individuals from different backgrounds with different experiences and different needs for help. Some break away from their families and need emergency assistance, psychological help and social services. Others want help to avoid breaking their ties with their families. It will be important to follow up the family, with special consideration for siblings who may find themselves in a difficult situation after a break-up. Support measures must be viewed in conjunction with the competence-building measures outlined in Chapter 5.

### Accommodation and treatment for young people over the age of 18 who break with their family

Young people who come into conflict with their family due to forced marriage or the threat of forced marriage may have to break with the family for a short or a longer period of time. They need housing that is adapted to their needs and psychological and social services. The crisis centres provide a temporary overnight refuge for women over the age of 18 who have been victims of domestic violence, maltreatment or abuse. Consequently, women who are at risk of being forced to marry or who live in a forced marriage have the possibility of seeking refuge in a crisis centre. The crisis centres can also help to establish contacts with other support agencies.

The crisis centres offer temporary accommodation. Sometimes young men are victims of forced marriage and need protected accommodation. At present there is one crisis centre that offers overnight accommodation for men. Young couples may also seek help together.

On a national basis, 10-12 emergency dwellings have been established for young people who are threatened with or the victims of forced marriage. Financial support for these dwellings is provided by the Norwegian State Housing Bank, which is also responsible for coordination and guidance with respect to the dwellings. The municipal authorities administer this housing service, while the non-governmental organisations Self-help for Immigrants and Refugees (SEIF) and the Norwegian Red Cross are responsible for the allocation and use of the dwellings.

The aim is to establish a housing collective linked to the Oslo Crisis Centre in 2007. The collective will provide accommodation for women from minority groups who are fleeing from their families due to coercion, threats or violence. This includes forced marriage, either before or after the marriage has been solemnised. The collective will also run information and competence-building activities.

It has been maintained in several quarters that the current housing services are inadequate and it is necessary to establish more accommodation adapted to the needs of people who break with their families.

“ I am a girl of 21. I was forced to marry a man when I was 18. I did not know him. We had never spoken to each other... Please. Can anyone help me? ”

### Measure No. 26: Investigate the quality of current housing and treatment services

A study will be carried out of how young people over the age of 18 who break with their families can be ensured appropriate accommodation that meets their security, social and psychological needs. This will include investigating whether young people living in emergency housing today receive adequate follow-up. The study will also investigate whether responsibility for the allocation and use of emergency housing should be transferred from non-governmental organisations to a public agency.

*Implementation: 2008*

*Ministries responsible for implementation: BLD, AID, HOD, JD, KR D*

### Measure No. 27: Establish more accommodation for young people over the age of 18

At least 20 new housing and treatment places will be established for young people over the age of 18. They will include suitable accommodation for boys and young couples.

*Implementation: 2008-2011*

*Ministries responsible for implementation: BLD, AID, HOD, JD, KR D*

### Accommodation for young people under the age of 18

The Child Welfare Service is independently responsible for protecting young people under the age of 18 who are threatened with forced marriage or who flee from a forced marriage. The Child Welfare Service currently has access to the emergency services provided by the child welfare offices in the largest towns, places in institutions that are not specially adapted for this purpose and similar non-specialised emergency homes and foster homes.

### Measure No. 28: Establish more accommodation for young people under the age of 18

Appropriate accommodation will be established for young people under the age of 18 under the auspices of the state Child Welfare Service in each of the five regions. The possibility of establishing specialised emergency and foster homes for these young people will be investigated.

*Implementation: 2008-2011*

*Ministries responsible for implementation: BLD, JD, HOD*

### Support through organisations for young people in a crisis situation

The public authorities are responsible for ensuring that young people receive assistance when they seek help because of pressure to marry against their will. The authorities have collaborated with certain voluntary organisations for several years in order to be able to provide help quickly in difficult situations. For example, the Oslo Red Cross runs a forced marriage hotline at the request of the Ministry of Children and Equality. Collaboration between public agencies and voluntary organisations provides good opportunities to help young people when the need arises. One important task is to transfer the experience gained by voluntary organisations to public agencies.

### Measure No. 29: Continue to provide support to help young people in crisis situations

Funds will be allocated to enable voluntary organisations to help young people in a crisis situation and pass them on to relevant public agencies.

*Implementation: 2008-2011*

*Ministry responsible for implementation: BLD*

### Strengthening family counselling services to increase efforts in the field of conflict management

Young people who have been forced to marry or threatened with forced marriage may need subsequent help, follow-up and support. There must be focus on security. In some cases the young person must be protected from his or her family. However, parents and siblings may also need help to deal with their reactions, for example if the young person chooses to break away from the family. The type of help that is provided will depend on how the event has affected the parties concerned.

#### Measure No. 30: Strengthen the family counselling service in order to increase treatment and counselling services in forced marriage cases

The family counselling service will be strengthened in terms of its professional competence, financing and personnel in order to be able to expand its services in forced marriage cases. Services will include counselling and help in managing conflicts between family members. To a limited extent, it will be possible to offer help for individual conversation therapy on trauma-related issues, among other things with a view to identifying any need to refer the case to another support agency.

*Implementation: 2009-2011*

*Ministry responsible for implementation: BLD*



## International efforts and cooperation must be intensified

### Background

Most forced marriages that involve Norwegian nationals or other persons legally resident in Norway are solemnised abroad. Norwegians who seek help from Norwegian Foreign Service missions will be offered consular and practical assistance. The Foreign Service will also be able to assist Norwegian authorities and organisations by providing information and practical assistance in specific cases.

Norway aims to ensure that human rights, which include efforts to combat forced marriage, remain high on the agenda in multilateral forums, such as the UN Commission on Human Rights, the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the UN Commission on the Rights of the Child and the UN General Assembly. The Foreign Service may also put forced marriage on the agenda in bilateral discussions and cooperative forums where this is a relevant issue.

### Assistance from Norwegian Foreign Service missions for young people who are victims of forced marriage

Norwegian Foreign Service missions have been instructed to provide assistance in specific cases relating to forced marriage. The Directorate of Immigration (UDI) has drawn up a special guide for Foreign Service missions and their follow-up of young people in this type of situation. Forced marriage is also a topic that is addressed on courses for employees of Foreign Service missions prior to their assignment abroad. In some cases, the Norwegian authorities' possibilities for providing assistance may be limited, for example in cases of dual nationality. The same applies in countries where Norway is not officially represented or where local legislation requires the father's consent for departure from the country.

The Government wishes to strengthen efforts to

combat forced marriage at Foreign Service missions that are located in areas where there is significant emigration to Norway or where forced marriage occurs.

### Measure No. 31: Establish positions for Integration Attachés

Positions will be established for Integration Attachés whose functions will include helping to improve the information that is provided to Foreign Service missions and strengthening administrative procedures in cases concerning forced marriage or other family-related issues. The Integration Attachés will also help to enhance the administration's competence concerning countries of origin. This service will be mobile so that it can be moved at any time to the Foreign Service mission where the need is greatest. The Integration Attachés will report to the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) and will attend a competence-building programme under the auspices of the IMDi.

*Implementation: 2008-2011*

*Ministries responsible for implementation: AID, UD*

### Measure No. 32: Improve procedures for dealing with forced marriage cases

The guide for Foreign Service missions drawn up by the Directorate of Immigration will be updated and distributed to all relevant Foreign Service missions. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' internal instructions relating to forced marriage will thereafter be reviewed with a view to necessary updating.



Implementation: 2008  
Ministries responsible for implementation:  
UD, AID

### Measure No. 33 Improve competence in the Foreign Service

Personnel who are to serve at relevant Foreign Service missions will be informed about forced marriage, current guidelines and institutions that can provide help in Norway and the Nordic region. On the basis of inputs from the Foreign Service missions that have the most competence in this area, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will draw up and distribute a special memorandum concerning the lessons learned so far.

*Implementation: 2008-2011*  
*Ministry responsible for implementation: UD*

### Expenses related to the repatriation of victims of forced marriage

In some cases, girls and boys who are the victims of forced marriage or of attempts to force them into marriage in the country of origin seek help from Norwegian Foreign Service missions. Some of these young people have difficulty in covering the cost of their return journey to Norway themselves. The individual Foreign Service missions have not made special financial provisions for this purpose. In 2007, the Ministry of Children and Equality has made a provision for repatriation in such cases.

### Measure No. 34: Continue to refund the cost of repatriating victims of forced marriage

The system of refunding the cost of repatriating young victims of forced marriage or attempts to force them into marriage in the country of origin will continue.

*Implementation: 2008-2011*  
*Ministry responsible for implementation: BLD*

### Cooperation with the authorities in the country of origin and in Norway

The Foreign Service is dependent on good cooperation with both the authorities of the countries concerned and Norwegian actors in order to be able to act rapidly and effectively in specific forced marriage cases. Norwegian Foreign Service missions will often be the intermediary between the Norwegian authorities and the authorities of the country concerned in such cases.

### Measure No. 35: Promote cooperation between authorities and voluntary organisations in Norway and in the parents' country of origin

The Foreign Service will seek to further develop good cooperation between authorities and voluntary organisations in countries where forced marriage is a relevant issue in order to ensure that specific cases are handled well. In this connection, initiatives for an exchange of experts between Norway and relevant countries of origin to promote mutual competence-building will be considered. Good cooperation with other Norwegian authorities and organisations to ensure that cases in which the Foreign Service missions are involved are followed up will also be important in this respect.

*Implementation: 2008-2011*  
*Ministry responsible for implementation: UD*

### Forced marriage on the international agenda

In efforts to combat forced marriage, promoting greater awareness of this issue on the part of the authorities of other countries is especially important. Today, the Foreign Service missions concerned are urged to put forced marriage on the agenda and address this issue in their discussions with authorities at various levels in an appropriate manner.

Norway and Pakistan signed an agreement on the establishment of a Norwegian-Pakistani advisory board on matters relating to marriage, family and children arising out of migration between the two states (known as the Family Protocol) in December 2005. Pursuant to Article 3 of the Family Protocol,

further work on the agreement will help ensure the right of men and women to marry of their own free will. Forced marriage will be addressed at future meetings on the Family Protocol.

### Measure No. 36: Bring up the issue of forced marriage in political discussions with other countries

In bilateral political discussions with the authorities of other countries, and in connection with visits by political and professional delegations, forced marriage should be brought up in an appropriate manner in countries where this is a relevant issue.

*Implementation: 2008-2011*

*Ministries responsible for implementation:  
UD, AID, BLD*

*Implementation: 2008-2011*

*Ministries responsible for implementation:  
BLD, AID, JD*

### Measure No. 38: Contribute to European cooperation

Norway will bring up in relevant forums the challenges that arise for national and local authorities when couples/persons who are victims of forced marriage with a residence or settlement permit in a Schengen country need security and a temporary subsistence allowance in another country, cf. Measure No. 37 on cooperation at the Nordic level.

*Implementation: 2008-2011*

*Ministries responsible for implementation:  
AID, BLD, JD, UD*

### Nordic and European cooperation

The Nordic countries face many of the same challenges with respect to the socialisation and inclusion of children and young people with minority backgrounds and problems relating to forced marriage and honour-related violence. In 2006 the authorities arranged a Nordic seminar in Oslo on efforts to combat forced marriage and honour-related violence. At the seminar, papers were presented on the efforts of the Nordic countries in this area, the experience gained by individual countries and recommendations for future work. Various instruments and possible ways of reaching the various target groups were discussed.

It will also be necessary to consider forms of cooperation at the European level.

### Measure No. 37: Strengthen Nordic cooperation

The Norwegian authorities will take the initiative for annual Nordic conferences on combating forced marriage and honour-related violence. Nordic cooperation on protective measures will continue.

“ Does consideration for family honour have to take precedence over feelings such as love and passion? ”



## Knowledge and research must be reinforced

### Background

Efforts to combat forced marriage must be based on insight and understanding. The people who are involved in these efforts must have relevant, up-to-date knowledge and competence in this area. This knowledge will partly be based on experience, but there will also be a need to strengthen research in this area.

The aim is to further develop knowledge relating to this area through cooperation between the people involved in practical work and researchers. Such cooperation will help to promote best practices among the agencies and organisations that deal with these cases.

To ensure that these efforts have a positive effect, it is also crucial that the measures that are implemented are evaluated so that necessary adjustments can be made.

In future, it will be important to have a better overview of the total incidence of forced marriage.

### Research and evaluation

There is a need for further knowledge about and research into forced marriage and related issues in Norway. Improving knowledge and evaluating the measures that are implemented can contribute to better prevention and follow-up of young people who are threatened with or the victims of forced marriage.

### Measure No. 39: Strengthen research and evaluation

The Government will strengthen research and studies on forced marriage and related issues and will evaluate measures that are implemented.

*Implementation: 2008-2011*

*Ministries responsible for implementation:  
BLD, AID, HOD, KD, UD*

### Registration of forced marriage cases

There are currently no national registration routines or statistics that show the incidence of forced marriage. This is partly due to the fact that forced marriage is not registered systematically by official agencies or other organisations working in this field. To be able to work effectively on forced marriage cases, such cases must be registered in a comparable manner by all agencies, county authorities, municipal authorities, neighbourhood authorities and public and non-governmental organisations working in this area.

### Measure No. 40: Establish procedures for systematic registration of forced marriage cases

National procedures will be introduced for registering information, as statistical data, relating to forced marriage cases.

*Implementation: 2008-2011*

*Ministries responsible for implementation:  
BLD, AID, HOD, JD, UD*



## Appendix: The roles and responsibilities of the various actors

### Background

A large number of public agencies and non-governmental organisations are involved in efforts to combat forced marriage. Below is a brief description of the individual actors and their roles and responsibilities in connection with forced marriage and related issues.

### Basic education

Basic education comprises primary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools. Basic education aims to prepare children and young people for a life in the community that is based on freedom and independence.

Pursuant to section 15-3 of the Education Act, personnel working in schools must take note of circumstances which may entail measures on the part of the child welfare service. Personnel must inform the child welfare service when there is reason to believe that a child is being ill-treated at home or that other forms of serious neglect are occurring. The Ministry of Education and Research distributes information to schools each year to prepare them to deal with matters such as forced marriage, with reference to the above section of the Act.

School owners (i.e. municipal and county authorities) are charged with drawing up routines for dealing with cases where pupils do not return to school after school holidays. The school is responsible for clarifying the reason for the absence. It is important that schools are aware that pupils may be forced to marry during holidays in their parents' or guardians' country of origin and that this may be a reason why the pupil is absent from school.

### The Directorate of Education

The Directorate of Education is the executive arm of the Ministry of Education and Research. The Directorate of Education is responsible for revising and

preparing new material on partnership and sexuality for school personnel, pupils and parents, which includes the topic of forced marriage. This material is distributed to schools and educational institutions. The Directorate is also responsible for ensuring that this material is published and updated on the school website [www.skolenettet.no](http://www.skolenettet.no). The Directorate is responsible for coordinating the activities of important partners and administering the flow of information. The Directorate of Education has a special responsibility for considering measures that affect schools in conjunction with each other.

### The municipal health service, including the school health service

Pursuant to the Municipal Health Services Act, municipalities are responsible for public health clinics and school health services, which provide services for children and young people (aged 0-20) and for pregnant women. They are charged with promoting mental and physical health and good social and environmental conditions, and with preventing illness and injury. The services for children and young people include medical examinations, vaccination, counselling, guidance, information and preventive psycho-social work. The health clinics and school health services focus particular attention on children and young people with special needs and on vulnerable groups and groups at risk.

Pursuant to Regulations No. 450 of 3 April 2003, which concerns the promotion of health and preventive work of health clinics and school health services, services must be focused on individuals, population groups and the population as a whole. Through interdisciplinary collaboration, the service must help to create a good environment for children and youth through measures to strengthen parents' ability to cope with their parenting role, promote the learning environ-



ment of children and youth, and help to promote a good psycho-social and physical working environment in schools. Services must be adapted to the needs of children and youth from multi-cultural backgrounds. Parents from minority backgrounds should receive guidance to deal with the challenges they face in bringing up children in Norway, and help to understand what growing up with a multi-cultural background in Norway entails. Signals to health clinics and school health services that young people are under pressure to enter into forced marriage must be taken seriously and followed up.

### Mental health care

Mental health care means the examination and treatment by the specialist health service of people suffering from mental illness, and the nursing and care this entails. The mental health care service will be an important actor in cases where circumstances relating to forced marriage have caused individual trauma that is so serious that it requires specialist treatment. The mental health care service will also be an important partner and provider of expertise for municipal mental health services in following up the victims of forced marriage in cases where this has caused mental illness or serious problems for the individual.

### The social services/NAV

Young people who are forced to marry or threatened with forced marriage and have to break with their family for a short or longer period of time may receive help from the social services. The Social Services Act covers everyone who is legally resident in Norway. Section 10-1 of the Act defines the responsibility of the municipality where a person is residing. The social services must provide services pursuant to the Social Services Act to everyone who is resident in the municipality. The social services have an obligation to provide information, advice and guidance that can help to resolve or prevent social problems, or to arrange contact with others who can provide advice on the case concerned (section 4-1).

Section 5-1 of the Social Services Act sets the parameters for subsistence benefits. Persons who cannot support themselves through work or by exercising their financial rights are entitled to financial support. Such support should aim to make the person self-

supporting. Decisions by the social services concerning support may be appealed to the County Governor. The appeal process must take place in writing and the County Governor's decision is final (section 8-6).

### The child welfare service

The task of the municipal child welfare service is to ensure that children and young people who live under conditions that may be harmful to their health or development receive necessary help and care at the right time. Each municipality is required to have an administration headed by a person who is responsible for tasks pursuant to the Child Welfare Act. The administration is required to carry out ongoing, day-to-day tasks, which include:

- providing advice and guidance
- passing resolutions pursuant to the Act and, where appropriate, recommending resolutions
- preparing cases for processing by the County Board
- implementing and following up measures.

County Governors are responsible for the supervision of children and young people in institutions and of municipalities' administration of the Child Welfare Act. Through such supervision, they must ensure that measures and services comply with the statutory requirements.

The Norwegian Agency for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufetat) was established on 1 July 2004 and is responsible for the operation of child welfare institutions, foster home services and technical assistance for municipalities in connection with locally-based measures, family-based child welfare measures and difficult child welfare cases. The Agency comes under the Ministry of Children and Equality and consists of a central unit, the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir), the state child welfare institutions, the family counselling offices and five regional units. Each regional unit has several teams of experts that are responsible for direct contacts with municipal child welfare services. A total of 28 teams of experts have been established in Norway. The County Governor is the state child welfare authority at county level. The County Governor has a special

duty to supervise child welfare activities in each municipality.

When young people are threatened with or the victims of forced marriage, the child welfare service is responsible for ensuring that they do not live in conditions that are detrimental to their health and development. The child welfare service has responsibilities in several areas: to provide protection from abuse, to provide help in the form of voluntary measures, such as participating in conversations with the family, and to cooperate with other agencies working to promote the best interests of the child. In special cases, the child welfare service may protect young people by utilising the emergency provision in the Child Welfare Act (section 4-6)

### Crisis centres

There are 50 crisis centres in Norway, which are publicly financed (20 per cent municipal and 80 per cent state). The crisis centres provide 24-hour, low-threshold services for women and children who are victims of domestic violence. Services include accommodation and 24-hour crisis counselling, and guidance, in person or by telephone. The crisis centres help victims to contact other support agencies and work closely with the police, lawyers, health and social services, national insurance offices, family counselling offices, child welfare services, etc. The crisis centres also run information and awareness-raising activities aimed at preventing domestic violence.

Some of the people who apply to stay in crisis centres have been threatened with or are victims of forced marriage. The crisis centres provide the same services for women who are victims of forced marriage as for other women who are victims of violence. A few crisis centres also provide services for men.

### The Family Counselling Service

The Family Counselling Service is a specialised service that deals with family-related problems. Its activities are regulated through the Act relating to family counselling offices. Family counselling offices provide advice and treatment for couples and families who experience family-related conflicts or crises. The service is free of charge and clients do not have to be referred from elsewhere. The Family Counselling

Service is the only part of the welfare service that works primarily with families and is specialised in helping couples. The Family Counselling Service has a high level of competence in dealing with relationship conflicts, mediation and preventive work with families. All contacts between clients and family counselling offices are voluntary.

The family counselling offices are responsible for mediation pursuant to section 26 of the Marriage Act and section 51 of the Children Act. Family counselling offices should also engage in external activities on family-related topics, which may include guidance, information and education for the support agencies and the public at large. The roles and responsibilities of the family counselling service in efforts to combat forced marriage must be defined on the basis of the characteristics of the service and its statutory responsibilities.

- In connection with advice and treatment, the role of the family counselling service is to offer a meeting place where the family members concerned can receive help to resolve conflicts relating to forced marriage. To a limited extent, it may also be able to offer subsequent services, in the form of individual conversations with young people who have been the victims of or threatened with forced marriage.
- In mediation pursuant to the Marriage Act or the Children Act, the family counselling office may provide information about parents' rights and duties in respect of their children and on legislation and standards relating to "Norwegian parenthood", and may help parents to reach agreement on contracts relating to their common children.
- In their preventive, outreach activities, family counselling offices may participate in local, inter-agency cooperative bodies, engage in information activities, give lectures in relevant forums, etc.

### The police and the prosecuting authority

The Directorate of Police is responsible for the professional leadership, management and development of the police force. The Directorate is not responsible for dealing with criminal cases. These come under the Director General of Public Prosecutions, who is the head of the prosecuting authority.

The police force is divided into 27 police districts, which are in turn divided into police station districts and lensman (district sheriff) districts. Criminal cases relating to forced marriage are investigated by the police.

A system of family violence coordinators has been established in each of the country's 27 police districts. They are responsible for ensuring that victims of violence and their relatives are met with understanding, knowledge and insight on the part of the police – from both a human and a police point of view. One important responsibility of the family violence coordinators is to establish good cooperative routines with other agencies, institutions and organisations working in this area.

The prosecuting authority has three levels: the Director General of Public Prosecutions, the public prosecutors and the police prosecuting authority. The prosecuting authority is responsible for dealing with criminal cases, i.e. investigation, indictment and prosecution. Most cases are decided by the police prosecuting authority, but in the case of serious crimes, such as forced marriage, prosecution is the responsibility of the public prosecutor.

### Organisations and agencies working with immigrants

The Norwegian Red Cross, Self-help for Immigrants and Refugees (SEIF), the MiRA Resource Centre for Refugee and Immigrant Women (MiRA-Senteret) and the Human Rights Service (HRS) all work actively to combat forced marriage. The Red Cross, SEIF and MiRA engage in preventive work and also provide emergency assistance to individuals in need, and they receive support for this work from the Ministry of Children and Equality. Preventive work consists of publishing reports, brochures, booklets and teaching aids and arranging lectures, seminars, courses and “theme evenings”. Their target groups consist of young people and parents in communities that practice arranged marriage and schools, youth workers, child welfare services and others who come into contact with this problem in the course of their work. In crisis cases, the NGOs provide advice and guidance, find alternative accommodation if necessary, follow the young people up and help them to establish a new

life for themselves. The NGOs work closely with the child welfare service and the crisis centres.

The International Health and Social Group (IHSG), Utrop, the Minhaj Conflict Board, groups at the Primary Medicine Workshop, the International House Foundation, the Resource Centre for Pakistani Children and the Iraqi-Kurdish Organisation for Asylum-Seekers and Refugees in Norway (IKAF) have all received support from the Ministry of Children and Equality to engage in information and awareness-raising activities.

Organisations such as African Youth, SOS Racism and the Anti-Racist Centre report that forced marriage is a topic at meetings and seminars for young people. The young people are concerned about this issue, which affects many of them. If individuals have problems or are in a crisis situation, these organisations will refer them to others who have more expertise in this field.

The role of the Organisation against Public Discrimination (OMOD) is primarily to detect and raise awareness of discrimination and a lack of diversity perspective in public services. Among other things, the organisation monitors what various ministries have done with respect to action plans against forced marriage. If the organisation receives enquiries from individuals, it refers them to others. Christian Intercultural Work (KIA) also states that it refers individuals to other agencies if they need follow-up in connection with forced marriage.

### The forced marriage hotline (815 55 201)

The forced marriage hotline has been in operation since 2000. It is run by the Oslo Red Cross at the request of the Ministry of Children and Equality. The line is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday. The caller may remain anonymous and the person who answers has an duty of confidentiality. The target groups are young people who are the victims of forced marriage or threatened with forced marriage, persons wishing to help friends or fellow pupils and other agencies that need advice and guidance. The hotline provides advice and guidance on matters relating to forced marriage and information about Norwegian marriage legislation, self-help groups, individual conversations and participation in network-building.



### Municipal refugee services or similar agencies

The purpose of the introductory programme for newly-arrived immigrants is to promote the participation of newly-arrived immigrants in working and social life. Refugees and relatives who have joined them under the family reunification scheme have a right and duty to participate in an introductory programme. The municipality is responsible for adapting the introductory programme to individual needs and has a special responsibility for coordination.

Since 1 September 2005, adult immigrants with a residence permit that gives grounds for a settlement permit also have a right and duty to 300 hours of Norwegian language training and social studies. Municipalities have a duty to provide such training. The programme must include 50 hours of social studies in a language the participants understand, and such tuition must be provided within the first three years of the person's residence in Norway. This programme covers more individuals than those who have a right and duty to participate in the introductory programme, but it also includes the latter.

From 1 September 2007, Norwegian language training for asylum-seekers in ordinary reception centres has been re-introduced. Those who are granted a residence permit will be able to participate in working and social life in the municipality more rapidly than they do today if they can already speak some Norwegian. Asylum-seekers are entitled to up to 250 hours of training. Training will end if the application for asylum is refused. Those whose application is granted will continue their training as a result of their right and duty to Norwegian language training and social studies pursuant to the Introduction Act. This programme is also based on the National Curriculum.

The role of the municipal refugee service in efforts to combat forced marriage is primarily to address this issue as a main topic in connection with the 50 hours of social studies. In addition to this, as part of the work of following up individuals, the refugee service may arrange contacts with other support agencies for participants who wish for or need such contacts.

### The Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi)

The Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) is a state administrative body under the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion. The aim of the IMDi is to promote equal living standards and diversity through work, integration and participation. The IMDi was established on 1 January 2006 to be a centre of competence, promote integration and diversity, and implement central government policy in this area. The IMDi is responsible for providing guidance and supervising municipalities and their work on the introductory programme.

The IMDi facilitates competence-building and the dissemination of best practices in the field of integration and diversity. The Directorate collaborates with immigrant organisations and immigrant communities, municipalities, government agencies and the private sector. Its instruments include information and grants for immigrant organisations and other voluntary organisations, including operating grants for immigrant-related organisations working on issues of a national nature. Forced marriage is one of the areas focused on by several of these organisations.

### Reception centres for asylum-seekers

All reception centre residents over a certain age must participate in an information programme and receive other relevant information relating to their stay in the reception centre, adapted to their own situation. The main goal of information activities in reception centres is to give residents a realistic picture of Norwegian society and an understanding of the fundamental values on which it is based. Residents also receive information about their rights, opportunities and duties.

The information programme is intended to help ensure that residents have a minimum of knowledge about important areas. The reception centre residents must be informed about their rights, possibilities and duties in the asylum process and possible repatriation or settlement, and also about health and education services. They also need to be informed about Norwegian society and Norwegian law. The main topics in this respect are the rule of law, the consequences of contravening Norwegian law in general and, especially for non-nationals, family violence



(women and children), the Act against female genital mutilation, the Marriage Act, the Penal Code (cf. prohibition against forced marriage), the Gender Equality Act and anti-discrimination legislation, and regulations and legislation relating to weapons, alcohol, traffic, prostitution and human trafficking.

### Expert Team for the Prevention of Forced Marriage

The Expert Team for the Prevention of Forced Marriage is an advisory body for front-line services working on specific forced marriage cases. Its work includes associated issues linked to honour-related control/violence when they are related to forced marriage.

The purpose of the Expert Team is to help improve the intensity, quality and competence of the work that is done with respect to forced marriage and other honour-related violence in Norway. The Expert Team works closely with the police, other public agencies and support agencies that come into contact with victims of forced marriage, and aims to increase cooperation between them.

The Expert Team covers the whole country but is based in Oslo. The Directorate of Immigration (UDI) is responsible for heading the team and for the administrative aspects of its work. The team consists of representatives of the immigration authorities (UDI), the police and prosecuting authorities and the child welfare authorities (the Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs). The team also has a resource and reference group consisting of the education authorities (Directorate of Education) the health and social welfare authorities (Directorate of Health and Social Affairs) and the integration authorities (Directorate of Integration and Diversity).

### The Directorate of Immigration (UDI)

The Directorate of Immigration (UDI) is the main executive and administrative organisation for immigration and refugees in Norway. UDI is charged with implementing and helping to develop the Government's immigration and refugee policy. This includes implementing the provisions relating to forced marriage in immigration legislation. No-one has the right to a visa for or a permit to reside in Norway for the purpose of

family reunification if the marriage has taken place under coercion. If, during the administrative process at UDI, it becomes clear that a person has been or will be a victim of forced marriage, he or she will be offered help, usually by being referred to other support agencies.

UDI is also charged with helping to coordinate the efforts of the various bodies involved in immigration administration (Foreign Service missions, police, reception centres) with regard to combating forced marriage. UDI also heads the Expert Team for the Prevention of Forced Marriage.

### The Immigration Appeals Board (UNE)

The Immigration Appeals Board (UNE) deals with appeals against decisions of the Directorate of Immigration pursuant to the rules in the Immigration Act, including the provisions relating to forced marriage. In most of the cases that are dealt with by UNE, where the applicant is threatened with or a victim of forced marriage, the applicant will either be assisted by a lawyer or will have received assistance from UDI at a previous point in time, cf. the section above. The person's needs with respect to the issue of forced marriage will therefore have been met by others. If it does not become clear until the case is processed by UNE that the applicant is, or is at risk of becoming a victim of forced marriage and this person has not been helped by other agencies, UNE will inform the applicant about the support agencies to which she/he may apply for help.

### The Foreign Service

The Foreign Service comprises the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and 104 Foreign Service missions, which include embassies, representative offices, delegations and consulates general.

The task of the Foreign Service is to promote Norway's interests abroad, which includes providing help, advice and protection for Norwegian nationals in their dealings with foreign authorities and providing assistance for Norwegian nationals abroad.

When requested to do so, the Foreign Service missions must provide assistance in specific cases relating to forced marriage. Such assistance may vary, but will

often consist of practical help in repatriating to Norway persons who have been, or are in danger of being, forced into marriage. Such assistance may only be provided for Norwegian nationals, and the possibility of providing assistance will often be limited if the person has dual nationality.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will help to combat forced marriage by bringing up this issue in an appropriate manner in relevant forums in the most relevant countries.

### Religious communities

Pursuant to section 1 of the Act relating to Religious Communities, etc. everyone is entitled to engage in religious activities alone or together with others and to establish a religious community if this does not violate the law or normal standards of decency.

The spiritual or administrative leader is the representative of the religious community in dealings with the public authorities as well as being the person who performs statutory functions. In practice, this means that this person is authorised to solemnise marriages. Section 26 of the Act relating to Religious Communities, etc. states that the spiritual or administrative leader of a registered religious community has the same responsibility as a public servant with regard to duties enjoined on him by or pursuant to statute.

In 2006 approximately 8 per cent of the population were members of a religious or life stance community outside the Church of Norway. More than half of these persons were members of Christian communities, while just over 20 per cent were members of life stance communities. Approximately 19 per cent were members of Islamic religious communities. Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism accounted for around 4 per cent.

Due to their different beliefs and cultural backgrounds, religious communities face different challenges. Religious communities whose members mainly come from minority backgrounds also have a role to play as bridge-builders between their members and Norwegian society. Religious communities are important actors and disseminators of information. By raising awareness of Norwegian legislation relating to forced marriage, religious communities can play a positive role in influencing the attitudes of their members.

### The Norwegian State Housing Bank

The Norwegian State Housing Bank is charged with implementing state housing policy. In recent years, it has changed from a housing bank to a welfare agency. It is a centre of competence for housing policy, and both the financial instruments and the knowledge the Bank passes on to its users and partners are intended to contribute towards the achievement of housing policy goals.

Through its activities, the Norwegian State Housing Bank must enable municipalities and their partners to implement a coherent, locally adapted policy to provide housing for disadvantaged persons in the best possible way. The main target groups are the homeless, refugees, persons with disabilities and persons in a weak financial situation.

The Norwegian State Housing Bank is responsible for coordinating and providing guidance relating to emergency housing for young people who are threatened with or the victims of forced marriage. The Housing Bank covers the rent for such houses when they are unoccupied and is responsible for fixtures, fittings, furnishings and management. The Housing Bank may also cover investments in new housing for this group by providing loans and grants.

### The Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies (NKVTS)

The Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies (NKVTS) was established on 1 January 2004. The establishment of the centre was supported by the Ministry of Children and Equality, the Ministry of Justice and the Police, the Ministry of Health and Care Services, the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion and the Ministry of Defence.

The purpose of NKVTS is to improve knowledge and expertise relating to violence and traumatic stress. It is charged with gathering and strengthening expertise relating to children and youth, violence, family violence and sexual abuse, refugee health and forced migration, coping with stress and collective stress situations. The centre is responsible for:

- research and development
- education and human resource development

- guidance and advice
- dissemination of information

NKVTS plays a pivotal role in the Government's efforts to improve competence in connection with domestic violence with respect to children, women and abusers.

NKVTS collaborates with regional centres of expertise working in the area of violence and traumatic stress and with relevant clinics, research institutions and professional bodies. The centre does not engage in clinical work but its activities must be based in the practical field.

### Regional Resource Centres for Violence, Traumatic Stress and Suicide Prevention (RVTS)

Regional Resource Centres for violence, Traumatic Stress and Suicide Prevention (RVTS) have been established or are currently being established in all regions as the result of a joint effort by the following ministries: the Ministry of Health and Care Services, the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, the Ministry of Children and Equality and the Ministry of Justice and the Police. The purpose of this measure is to permanently improve regional expertise in the field of violence and trauma. The regional resource centres are charged with contributing to improved, more coherent services by assisting the support agencies with human resource development, information, guidance and the establishment of networks between relevant partners in each region. Existing regional measures in the field of violence and trauma will be incorporated into these groups.

### The Norwegian Competence Unit for Minority Health (NAKMI)

The purpose of NAKMI's activities is to contribute to the development of equal health services for the whole population. NAKMI is charged with improving knowledge relating to minority health and the development of health services for minority groups with refugee and immigrant backgrounds by acquiring, collating and disseminating interdisciplinary knowledge and competence and facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experience. The goal is to ensure

that all NAKMI's work is concentrated on multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary issues and cross-cultural communication. The knowledge that is available in this field is currently spread across different professional disciplines, a number of smaller groups and individuals. NAKMI is to be a focal point for national expertise, where research and development, network-building and dissemination of knowledge play a key role. The target groups are primarily health personnel and others working in the field of minority health.

The quotations in this Action Plan are taken from an Internet debate forum.





Published by: Ministry of Children and Equality

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Publication number: Q-1131 E  
Design and illustration: Gjerholm Design AS  
Printed by: Zoom Grafisk AS - 10/2007  
Impression: 2000

