

Tradition and violence against women

Forced marriage



Imprint

Media owner, publisher and editor:
Federal Ministry for Health and Women,
Dept. IV/5, Minoritenplatz 3, 1010 Vienna
Graphic design: BMGF
Vienna, June 2017

Tradition and violence against women

Forced marriage

Vienna, 2017

Content

| | |
|---|----|
| 1. Forced marriage | 5 |
| 2. Threatened and affected | 6 |
| 3. The effects of forced marriage | 7 |
| 4. Forced marriage is forbidden in Austria | 8 |
| 5. Protecting yourself from forced marriage | 9 |
| 6. Fear of a forced marriage abroad | 10 |
| 7. When dealing with threatened people | 11 |
| 8. Teachers, supervisors and trainers | 12 |
| 9. Shelters in Austria | 13 |

1. Forced marriage

... is a marriage in which the female or male partner or both are forced to assent by massive pressure, threats or the use of force.

... a form of domestic and often sexualised violence. It is not an expression of “cultural or traditional diversity”.

If a girl or young woman refuses to marry, physical, mental or social pressure is directed at her. It generally takes the form of emotional blackmail.

- Social pressure is applied in the form of threats, emotional blackmail, such as the termination of family relationships, or demeaning and controlling treatment.
- In extreme cases, there is also physical or sexual violence, abduction and forcible confinement.

There is no justification for forced marriage.

2. Threatened and affected

... are mostly second- or third-generation minors or young adults with Austrian nationality already living here.

There are also migrants who have spent most of their early years in their country of origin and are forced to marry each other in Austria.

Reasons include:

- maintaining traditions
- family honour
- control of the sexuality and/or independent behaviour of the young woman
- economic grounds such as poverty or material security (for the family as well)
- facilitating immigration and residence
- maintaining bonds to the country of origin
- social or internal family pressure on the parents

3. The effects of forced marriage

... are serious, especially for girls and young women.

- Sexual intercourse within a forced marriage is perceived as repeated rape.
- In most cases, the girls or young women are forced to interrupt their schooling or vocational training.
- This places the wife in a relationship of dependence on the man and financial subservience.
- No school education or completed training means no self-determination.
- Many women in forced marriages become depressed. They harm themselves, are at risk of suicide, or suffer from chronic psychosomatic diseases.

4. Forced marriage is forbidden in Austria

... and is a criminal act, meaning that the public prosecutor's office must pursue it as a criminal offence.

A criminal act can be reported by any person with knowledge of it. The sentence can involve up to 5 years in prison.

It is also a punishable offence to celebrate a forced marriage abroad, even if this is not an offence in a particular country.

The limitation period for criminal prosecution begins when the victim reaches the age of 28. The forced marriage can be dissolved in Austria.

According to the penal code

... anyone is guilty of forced marriage who coerces another person into marriage or partnership through the use of force or serious threat or threat to break off or withdraw family contact,

thus all who

- participate in the forced marriage, i.e. partners, parents, helpers, are guilty;
 - anyone who uses force to make a young person
 - go abroad
 - or pressures them to go abroad
 - or lures them abroad under a pretext

with the intention of them being forced into marriage there.

5. Protecting yourself from forced marriage

is your inalienable right!

However, it is important to seek help as it is difficult to succeed by yourself.

Counselling centres have been established to provide help in this situation because not only you but many other young people are also in a similar situation.

- Contact one of these centres which will look for a solution with you and offer further help.

The women's service point Orient Express in particular specialises in providing advice and support, conflict management and crisis intervention for those threatened with forced marriage. The address is:

1020 Vienna, Schönngasse 15-17 / Top 2

Telephone: +43 (1) 728 97 25

office@orientexpress-wien.com

Emergency accommodation provided by the Orient Express society is also available as a place of refuge.

6. Fear of a forced marriage abroad

Here are some tips if there is a risk of being married abroad:

- give someone you trust the address and phone number of the foreign location.
- copy your passport.
- go to the district court or the place where the passport was issued and ask for it to be notarised.
- take sufficient money (euros/foreign currency) with you.
- obtain a prepaid mobile phone with sufficient credit and which also works abroad.
- take the phone number of the Austrian embassy/consulate with you.

7. When dealing with threatened people

... it is very important to encourage their self-confidence and help them to say “NO”, as they can and should.

- Take the time to talk to the person concerned but do not be too hasty.
- As an outsider, you cannot judge whether a forced marriage is involved; it is down to the personal experience of the person concerned. Discuss with them how to proceed.
- Find out about special counselling centres (addresses over-leaf) and/or contact one of these yourself.
- Even though it is a great help to the person concerned to be able to talk to you, people at these special centres are trained to help and take the responsibility off your shoulders.
- Do not talk to the family of the person concerned – leave that to the specialists at the counselling centres.
- If you suspect that a female friend is to be married against her will and does not want to or cannot discuss it: do not try to help arbitrarily. That can make the situation worse. Find a counselling centre which can help you to find a way of helping your friend.
- Stay in touch with the person concerned. Discuss how you can stay in touch and which means of communication (email, mobile phone, post) to use so no-one else can control it.

8. Teachers, supervisors and trainers

- ... can help by giving the person concerned the opportunity
- to contact a helpline from the school or workplace,
- or, in an emergency, by arranging a counselling session during work/school hours.

9. Shelters in Austria

Orient Express

Counselling, education and cultural initiative for women

1020 Vienna, Schönngasse 15-17, Top 2

Phone: +43 (0) 1 728 97 25

www.orientexpress-wien.com

Online counselling by the Platform Against Forced Marriage for Women

www.gegen-zwangsheirat.at

DIVAN

Women's Counselling Centre for Migrant Women

8020 Graz, Mariengasse 24

Phone: 0676 88015 744

www.caritas-steiermark.at/hilfe-angebote/migrantinnen-fluechtlinge/beratung-betreuung/frauenspezifische-beratungsstelle-fuer-migrantinnen-divan/

Women's Helpline against Violence

Phone: 0800 222 555 (all hours, toll-free)

www.frauenhelpline.at

Intervention centres/Protection against violence centres in all federal states

www.gewaltschutzzentrum.at

Women's service centres and other women's and girls' counselling organisations

www.bmgf.gv.at/home/Frauen_Gleichstellung/Anlaufstellen_Frauenberatung/Beratungseinrichtungen

Fem:HELP-App app to download

www.bmgf.gv.at/home/femHelp_App

www.bmgf.gv.at

