



Marriage shall be entered
into only with the free and full
consent of the intending spouses

from the UN's Declaration of Human Rights

You can get support **- talk with someone**

This brochure is available at **www.tvangsekteskap.no** and on the publishers' websites.



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Barne-, ungdoms-
og familiedirektoratet



Information to young people about forced marriage

What can you yourself decide?

- ☐ About having a boyfriend or girlfriend?
- ☐ About getting married?
- ☐ About when to marry?
- ☐ About who to marry?



Sara (18)

Sara has a boyfriend but her parents do not know. She is afraid her parents are planning to marry her off to a cousin.

Sara has a boyfriend whom she likes very much. She has kept this secret from her parents because she knows they would never let her have a boyfriend. Her mother has talked for years about Sara marrying a cousin from their homeland. The summer holidays are just round the corner and the whole family plan to go there to visit relatives. Sara wants to meet her grandparents and the rest of the family. She also wants to work and earn some pocket money but her mother says she must go with them.

What are her parents planning?

Sara is worried. What are her parents planning? Have they found out about her boyfriend? Have they decided it is time she should be married? She finds it difficult to ask them direct. All this is weighing on Sara's mind and



*I was relieved when I
got to talk to someone who
understood my situation*

*Do I have to go with the
family if I'm afraid they
are going to marry me off?*

she is having difficulty concentrating at school. She has problems sleeping and is often depressed. Sara does not want to marry the boy her parents have chosen for her. She hardly knows him and it is she who has to live with him! Then she begins to think about how much she loves her parents, and about all the sacrifices they have made for her. She does not want to see them unhappy, or have problems with her family and relatives. Sara also thinks about a friend of hers who has had a strict upbringing, whose father beat her because she refused to marry the boy he had chosen for her.

Should she seek help?

Sara has many questions: Is it safe to travel to her parents' homeland if she doesn't want to get married? What will happen if she tells her parents about her boyfriend and what she is thinking? Dare she talk with someone else about it? Is help available? Will she be able to get help if she travels to her parents' homeland?

- **Are you in a similar situation to Sara?**
- **What advice would you give her?**
- **What advice would you give her parents?**



Tariq (19)

Tariq wonders if he is homosexual. Will his family accept that he doesn't want to get married to a girl?

Tariq is 19 and works part-time in a kiosk after school. He is often visited at the kiosk by a boy with whom he really likes to chat. They sometimes go for a coffee after work. In recent years, Tariq has often wondered why he isn't interested in girls in the same way as other boys his age. He knows he really likes his friend, but what does this mean? What will happen if he falls in love with a boy? If he doesn't want to marry a girl? What will his parents say? The family? His relatives back home? Will he be able to continue living at home? Will his parents still want to see him? Will he be able to manage without his family? Will someone try to harm him?

Is there someone he can talk to?

Tariq feels confused and has many questions: What should he do? Is there someone he can talk to? Is there someone who can help?



***I think my parents are planning
to marry me off to a cousin.
How can I tell them I don't want to?***

- **Are you in a similar situation to Tariq?**
- **What advice would you give him?**
- **What advice would you give his parents?**

Marriage in Norway

No one can force you to marry. This is laid down in the human rights convention and Norwegian law.

In many societies, arranged marriages are a tradition, where parents take it upon themselves to ensure their children are "properly wed". Arranged marriages are permitted under Norwegian law provided they are entered into voluntarily and it is the wish of both intended spouses.

Rights and laws

The United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses. This means that those entering marriage must do so in full agreement. The age of consent for marriage in Norway is 18 years. Same-sex marriage is also permitted. To pressure or force someone into marriage is prohibited in Norway and punishable by law. This also applies if the marriage takes place abroad and you are domiciled in Norway. A marriage entered into under pressure or coercion can be annulled. When such a marriage is annulled, the parties to the marriage will be registered as single and not divorced.

Mental pressure

Forced marriage does not only involve physical coercion or violence, but often involves mental pressure and a young person's loyalty to his or her parents. Parents might say it is your fault if others in the family are unhappy or ill, or if the family loses face and honour. Perhaps your parents nag a lot, making you think that the easiest solution is to do as they say. Some parents threaten to disown their children if they don't do as they are told. This can give you a bad conscience and make you scared, and is a serious form of mental pressure.

Young people can also feel controlled, pressured and coerced by parents when it comes to their choice of friends, clothes, spare time activities and education. Help is available if you experience such problems.

You decide if you want to marry

That a person shall enter into marriage of his or her own free will means it is up to the individual to decide whether he or she wants to get married, with whom he or she wants to get married, and when he or she wants to get married.



Marriages entered into abroad are NOT recognised in Norway if:

- **One of the parties is under the age of 18 years at the time the marriage is contracted**
- **The marriage is entered into without both parties being present**
- **One of the parties is already married**

These rules apply if at least one of the parties is domiciled in Norway when the marriage is contracted.

When involvement by the family is perceived as pressure or coercion, it is called forced marriage.

No religion accepts forced marriage.

It is possible to obtain help

If you are afraid of being forced into marriage against your will, then visiting relatives in your parents' homeland could be a serious risk. It might be difficult finding help outside Norway. It is therefore important to seek advice before you go.

On the next pages you will find an overview of who you can contact if you are subjected to pressure, control or violence, or if you are afraid of being forced to marry against your will.

- **You decide if you want to marry**
- **Talk with someone if you are having trouble at home**
- **Seek advice before leaving Norway if you are worried about being “married off”**

Where can you get help?

The Norwegian Red Cross helpline for forced marriage and genital mutilation

The Norwegian Red Cross helpline is a nationwide information service where you can obtain professional advice, as well as assistance in getting in touch with the right support agency.

Tel.: **815 55 201** (Mon-Fri 09.00-17.00),
e-mail: info.tvangsektenskap@redcross.no

School nurse/counsellor

At lower and upper secondary schools you can approach the school nurse or counsellor for help and advice. They can also help you get in touch with other help services. You can also contact a juvenile health centre. For more information about your nearest health centre and other useful services go to: www.ungghelse.no

The Child Welfare Service

If you are below the age of 18 you can contact the Child Welfare Service. The Child Welfare Service helps children and juveniles who have problems at home. Every municipal authority has a child welfare office (see www.barnevernet.no). The health officer at your school can help you get in touch with the Child Welfare Service. You can also find information on the local authority's website or by ringing the local authority direct.

Crisis Centre

All municipal authorities have crisis centres for men and women over the age of 18. You can contact your local authority or nearest crisis centre direct. The centres are open 24/7 and offer counselling services, as well as temporary residence, protection and following up.



Emergency call line for children and youth (Alarmtelefonen for barn og unge)

The emergency call line is a free emergency telephone service that is open when the child welfare service is closed from 15.00 to 08.00 and round-the-clock at weekends.

Tel.: **116 111** (from outside Norway 00 47 95 41 17 55),
SMS **41 71 61 11**, e-mail: alarm@116111.no

The Child Welfare Emergency Service

The Child Welfare Emergency Service is open when other offices are closed. You can contact them if you have problems and need help quickly. Ring **116 111** and you will be transferred to your local Child Welfare Emergency Service. If there is no emergency service or the office is closed, you will be connected to the emergency call line for children and youth (Alarmtelefon for barn og unge). For more information and an overview of where in Norway you can find the Child Welfare Emergency Service go to: www.barnevernvakt.no

The Police

If you fear for your own safety or if you wish to report someone for using pressure, force or violence against you, you can always go to the police. Here you can get help to obtain a secret address, a defender alarm and other personal security measures, even without having to report the circumstances. Tel.: **02800**. The police emergency number is **112**.

Legal Aid

If you are being pressured or coerced into getting married, you are entitled to free legal aid from a solicitor even though you might not want to report the matter. You can obtain information and help with protection. If you wish to report the matter to the police, you can receive legal advice or legal aid (representation) from a solicitor free-of-charge.

Local offices for children, youth and family affairs

Teenagers who are in conflict with their family may contact their local office for children, youth and family affairs. If you wish, the Office can help arrange a discussion with your parents, or you can come by yourself and discuss the problem alone. To find out where your nearest office is located go to

www.bufetat.no

Accommodation and support

Accommodation and support is available for young people who are exposed to forced marriage or honour-related violence. The offer is for young people who are exposed to threats or who are in serious conflict with their family and who need protected accommodation and a period of following up. If you are under 18 you can contact the Child Welfare Service. If you are over 18 you can contact an Expert Team against forced marriage, Monday-Friday 09.00-16.00, tel.: **47 80 90 50**, e-post: kompetanseteamet@imdi.no. If you are over 18 and in acute need of help, contact your nearest crisis centre.

Staff at asylum centres

If you are staying at an asylum centre, you can approach the staff if you need help or someone to talk to. They can give you advice and help you get in touch with the right support agency for help.

Skeiv Verden / Queer World

Skeiv Verden / Queer World offers advice and support to persons with minority backgrounds who are attracted to persons of the same sex.

E-mail: info@skeivverden.no, website: **www.skeivverden.no**

Help abroad

If you are abroad and need help you can seek assistance at a Norwegian Embassy or Consulate. Go to **www.norway.info** for the e-mail address and telephone number of your nearest embassy or consulate. Alternatively you can ring + **47 23 95 13 00** and the duty officer will put you in touch with the nearest embassy or consulate.

If you are worried that you might be forced into marriage during your family holiday abroad, then you are advised not to travel. The Norwegian authorities may have difficulty helping you in certain countries, but if you do travel there are a number of precautions you can take:



SEIF – Self-help for immigrants and refugees

SEIF offers information and advice to immigrants and refugees. They can help you get in touch with the right support agency. SEIF has offices in most Norwegian towns, tel.: **22 03 48 30**, e-mail: seif@seif.no, website: **www.seif.no**

Ask questions anonymously

At **www.ung.no/oss** you can ask questions anonymously about forced marriage.

Websites with useful information:

www.tvangsekteskap.no

www.ung.no/tvangsekteskap/

- talk to a school counsellor, health nurse or someone else you can trust before travelling to visit relatives abroad
- give someone you trust the name, address and telephone number of whoever you are visiting
- give someone you can trust a copy of your passport and instructions to report to the police that you need help if you do not return to Norway at the agreed time
- take with you some extra money and a copy of your passport
- take with you the address and telephone number of the nearest Norwegian Embassy or Consulate to where you are staying