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for social development



Active against Forced Marriage!

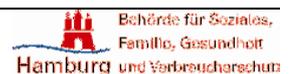
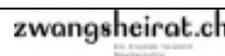
Conference Report

Thursday, 6 November 2008

Conference Centre: Akantes, Amsterdam

Organisation: MOVISIE and the Free University of Amsterdam

Kooperationspartner:



On Thursday the 6 November 2008, the Free University of Amsterdam and MOVISIE organised the first national conference on forced marriage in cooperation with the international EU-Daphne Project "Active against Forced Marriage" and organisations from Germany, United Kingdom, Austria, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey.

The participants and their recommendations

150 experts took part in the conference and the final discussion forum. The conference enabled a wide range of experts involved in the issue to come into contact with each other. Among the participants, representatives included a member of the second chamber of the Dutch Parliament, heads of various national ministries, international partners, academics and researchers, authors and journalists, local administrators and police, lawyers, representatives from regional training facilities (ROC's), social and health care experts as well as representatives from regional and local self-help organisations.

Thanks to the contributions from the speakers and the experts who attended, the conference was able to come up with many recommendations for dealing with forced marriage. The recommendations are to be found in this report.

A special document containing the recommendations will be published soon on the website of MOVISIE, (HYPERLINK "<http://www.movisie.nl>"www.movisie.nl) where also the EU report on dealing with forced marriage will be published in due course. Therefore, keep an eye on this website!

In addition, Talk2Me, a project which brings together young refugees and young people from the Netherlands also took part in the conference.

If you have any questions or comments after reading this report we would be happy to receive them. Please send a mail to Leyla Cinibulak MOVISIE Project Leader. Her e-mail address is: HYPERLINK "<mailto:i.cinibulak@movisie.nl>"i.cinibulak@movisie.nl

We would like to thank all those who attended the conference for their contribution!

Opening Speech: Simone Kortbeek, Head of MOVISIE

The complete text of the opening speech can be found under:
<http://www.movisie.nl.huwelijksdwang>"www.movisie.nl.huwelijksdwang.

In her opening speech, Ms Kortbeek dealt with the difference between arranged marriage and forced marriage.

According to MOVISIE's opinion we can talk of a forced marriage when:

- a) the marriage takes place against the will of one or both of the potential spouses;
- b) when social pressure and mental or physical violence is either used or threatened by the parents, other family members or the community.

In her opening speech Ms Kortbeek emphasized that it is essential to understand all the aspects of this issue as far as possible. Only experts were invited to the conference because they were in the focus of the EU Daphne project. However in order to determine the entirety of the issue, young people and their parents who are affected by the problem should also be invited.

Therefore, MOVISIE will organise a corresponding conference/study day with the participation of young people and immigrant and women's organisations in 2009. Ideas for the organisation of this meeting are welcome. (<mailto:l.cinibulak@movisie.nl>)

Column by Hülya Cidem, Author of De Importbruid

You can download this column from the following link:
http://www.movisie.nl/121012/def/home/weblog/weblog/hulya_cidem_over_huwelijksdwang/

Ms Cidem gave a report of her personal experience of forced marriage and the upholding of family honour. As her account made clear, upholding family honour places young people under enormous pressure.

Her address to participants:

- "Parents have to stop thinking and deciding for their children. They have to give their children the opportunity to discover life for themselves and to make their own mistakes."
- "For many Turkish parents in my community the pinnacle of happiness is that their daughters are virgins when they get married. As if this could be the guarantee for a good marriage and a happy life. Let the girls decide for themselves, let them decide freely about their own bodies and their own lives."

The Dilemma of Women in an Immigration Context: Patriarchy or Progress?

By Naema Tahir, Author and Human Rights Lawyer at the Council of Europe

Ms Tahir also began with her personal story which showed that also boys can be subjected to forced marriage.

What follows is a summary of the points of interest and recommendations which she gave to the participants:

- It is important to realise that young people are confronted by a major dilemma: either the parents decide on the potential spouse or they will lose the contact to their family.
- Talk about and discuss issues such as religious practices (about marriage, marriage with a non-Muslim etc.).
- Broaden your horizons. In the media there is often a connection made between Islam and forced marriage and Islam is often heavily criticised. Look for positive ways to discuss the issue. Keep religion out of the discussion, take as your starting point: immigrant families who live in the Western world and recognise that the first and second generations living in the West are often more traditional than their contemporaries living in the country of origin.
- Take into account the loss of status experienced by the man or father in Western society.
- Traditionally viewed, the father is the protector and dominant, the daughter must be protected and has no demands. Due to the immigration to the West and the emancipation of Western women, women/daughters come more under the father's control. They need however less protection and can help themselves, none the least because the Netherlands has a social welfare system.
- The emancipation process cannot be avoided. However, take into account the fact that as a result, the fathers often feel "not needed" and this affects their feelings of status and honour.
- Men/fathers are confronted with a double loss of status. First the father/man had a clear role in their own country: He provides for the family/the relatives. In the West however, the father/man often finds it more difficult to provide for his family. Secondly, there is a different social context in the West. Women are not dependent for protection on the man/father, they receive protection from others (from the authorities, from the social welfare state).
- The men's reaction to this is either to accept it in silence or to attempt to recover their lost status. The latter means that they hold onto to their traditions very much.
- Both men and women find themselves in a dilemma: the woman in connection with the question as to how she can emancipate herself and develop without impairing the honour of the man/the father, and the man in connection with the question as to how he can preserve his honour without resorting to violence.
- Parents want to protect their children: Take this as the starting point for discussions. What is protection? In what ways can one protect one's child?
- And talk about honour. Honour has its good sides. The fathers/men must redefine honour. For example: real honour is based on the fact that a father has a daughter or that he concedes that women can also feel honour and be strong.

Women's Rights versus Traditional Practices

By Karin Ronge, Women for Women's Rights (WWHR) – New Ways, Istanbul Turkey

WWHR referred to the problems of traditional practices and human rights. The control over sexuality is an important reason for serious violations of human rights (forced marriages, violence in the name of honour) and the oppression of women and girls in the public and private spheres. Forced marriages represent a serious violation of the rights of both sexes, irrespective of religion, nationality, ethnicity or social status.

Ms Ronge underlined the fact that the problem does not only exist in traditional Muslim communities but also in other communities - e.g. in traditional orthodox Jewish communities. Additionally, the phenomenon exists in many different countries from the Middle East to Latin America and within immigrant communities in North Western Europe. The association with honor-related violence is a stigmatising one according to Ms Ronge. The reasons for violence can be religiously motivated but are not necessarily so.

In Turkey offences such as forced marriage, polygamy and violence in the name of honour are forbidden by law. The equality of men and women within marriage is fixed by law. The basis for a marriage is that both the man and woman give their full and voluntary consent to the marriage. Men and women cannot marry before they are 18. Girls who have to marry against their will can initiate court proceedings against the marriage within the first five years after the marriage takes place. However, in Turkey there are no coordinated activities or programmes by the government aimed at prevention, e.g. consciousness raising or informing women of their rights.

Figures from studies in East and South East Turkey: 61.4% of marriages were arranged by the family, 27.4% by the couple themselves. In relation to the marriages which were not arranged by the couple but by others, 47.5% said that the woman/girl's opinion concerning the prospective partner was not asked and 50.8% had to get married against their will. 51.6% had not seen their husband before the wedding. Additionally, the study also makes clear that the woman's educational background plays an important role: the higher the education, the more likely it is that the spouses arrange the marriage themselves. The lower the education the more likely it is that the family arranges the marriage.

WWHR has developed a training programme targeted at the community based on the train the trainer principle. Discussions with women take place in 16 workshops. The programme is especially committed to an exchange of experience and practical tips. Support groups are important. There are also women who are organising their own groups. These training sessions are now taking place in 43 provinces.

These workshops have resulted in many of the women taking up job training or going to work; 63% of the women were able to stop the physical violence taking place at their homes by beginning to talk to their husbands about it; women have realised that they themselves play a role in the education and upbringing of their daughters.

Her Recommendations:

- Get access to information and find out about the legal situation in other countries. Forced marriages are not a problem of a single society, religion or nation. Look for international cooperation. Place the issue in a political context (human rights) and ensure that consciousness in relation to the issue is raised.
- Provide coordinated programmes for girls and boys integrated into the educational system and the economic, cultural and social structures. Increase their powers of resistance, enter into discussions with them

Interview Simone Kortbeek with Kadhija Arib (Member of Parliament Second Chamber, PvdA- parliamentary party)

Although this interview was not foreseen in the programme, the organisers took the opportunity of Ms Arib's attendance to ask for her opinions on tackling forced marriage.

Question from Ms Kortbeek:

What is your stance on the issue?

Ms Arib indicated that the issue is now the subject of open discussion which lends support to the girls affected by the problem. Ms Kriens, a Rotterdam City Councillor recently started an initiative to tackle the problem.

She went to Great Britain to find out about the activities taking place there. Great Britain has been doing an enormous amount to help the girls affected by the problem. But what is the state doing here? Not very much. Therefore Ms Arib asked parliamentary questions to the Ministries for Housing, Employment and Integration and Justice. There has been no data compiled concerning the numbers of young people who are affected by the problem.

There are warning signs that underage girls are being taken to their countries of origin in order to be married. Teaching staff however have not so far raised the alarm.

Most people think that this is a problem affecting the first generation of immigrants. But it also affects the new generations. One has to provide the girls with support. Ms Arib wants to see a central refuge available to everyone. This would also provide an indication of the numbers of victims. She would like this refuge to also offer active help and support to the girls.

The Forced Marriage Unit of the British Home and Foreign Office is a good example to follow.

Finally, Ms Kortbeek asked Ms Arib to mobilise her parliamentary colleagues in order to tackle the issue.

First Aid and Forced Marriage

By Maggy Belserang, Advisory Commission for Immigrant Issues(ACVZ)

The ACVZ has come up with two recommendations. The first recommendation in 2005: "Forced into Marriage" and the second in 2006 "First Aid in Dealing with Forced Marriage" The second recommendation specifically contains the necessity to embed activities in a political framework as an objective.

The focus of her speech was on the first recommendation from 2005.

Before 2005, there was no discussion of forced marriage in the Netherlands. The discussion started as a result of one of the members of staff in the Ministry of Justice attending a congress abroad. There it became clear to him that other countries were much further on in dealing with the issue and that the Netherlands in this respect had something of a blind spot. Subsequently, Minister Verdonk who was minister at that time asked for advice concerning guidelines, the extent of the problem and the necessary measures to be taken.

Prior to the 2005 recommendation two studies were carried out:

1. one concerning marriage itself (Free University of Amsterdam, 2004) and
2. the legal aspects in relation to forced marriage (Asser Institute, 2005)

With respect to the legal aspects, the question was examined as to what extent legislation offered possibilities to tackle forced marriage. In current legislation there are no specific articles dealing with forced marriage. There are, however, articles which state that the use of force is a punishable offence. But it is difficult to determine or to prove that force has been used.

The study carried out by the Free University of Amsterdam in 2004 provided the first description of the phenomenon and defined forced marriage as follows: a marriage which takes place where one or both of the spouses has no power to over the decision to get married and does not agree to it. Talks were conducted with young people and their parents (Turkish, Moroccan, Hindus) and a website analysis was carried out.

The result: arranged marriages are common. These are not the same as forced marriages. Sometime young people also come up with a potential spouse who meets with their parents approval.

All of the young people were of the opinion that marriage has to be based on free will. Of significance was the point that they knew of people in their communities who had been married against their will. They said that marriages which really take place against the spouses' will are not so frequent amongst themselves. However, one can talk of massive emotional pressure which is linked to communication conflicts between parents and children. Parents have a different understanding of compulsion to their children. The children see interference by their parents as compulsion.

Factors which can lead to a forced marriage:

1. Parents are of the opinion that their child is dysfunctional or shows undesirable behaviour;
2. Parents do not approve of the prospective spouse;
3. Pressure from the country of origin;
4. There is talk of a marriage between blood relatives;
5. A combination of the above factors.

An important finding made by the researchers is that both parents and children find themselves in a process of change. However the parents are changing at a slower pace than that experienced by their children, which results in conflict. It is to be expected that the pace of change in future will be more in step, leading to an improvement in understanding and better communication. Then the phenomenon will decrease of its own accord.

Ms Beserang noted however that the problem still occurs and this requires political recommendations. Apprehending the perpetrators is difficult.

Her Recommendations:

- Focus on preventative work and information.
- Involve various experts: schools, authorities, professionals, embassies, the press, police.
- Develop action guidelines for professionals (with respect to recognising the problem and what they can do against it). The measures should be structurally anchored and provide for coherent projects instead of separate projects. The issue of forced marriage should be embedded in the of Violence in the Name of Honour and Domestic Violence Programme.
- The recommendations have served as a catalyst: now is the time to take vigorous action at a political level.
- Link up with the domestic violence refuges.

The Choice of a Spouse: Study relating to the Choice of Partners by New Amsterdammers by Edien Bartels, Cultural Anthropologist and University Lecturer, Free University of Amsterdam

The study which Ms Bartels is presenting today and was carried out with the cooperation of Ms Oka Storms is a continuation of the above mentioned study by the Free University of Amsterdam of 2004. In addition, a number of new points have been taken into consideration.

The objective was to investigate how the choice of a spouse takes place within immigrant groups in Amsterdam with particular consideration given to forced marriage. It therefore is a study which concerns Amsterdam, and perhaps the conclusions cannot be applied generally to the country as a whole.

120 people in the age range of 16 to 65 were interviewed. Contact came about in particular through the women's self-help organisations. The focus was on the viewpoint of those affected, with the starting point being that groups are not passive.

There was much diversity between the groups and also within them. Simply put, on the one extreme there is the free choice of a future spouse and on the other extreme forced marriage (no choice). The study however showed that the reality is more complicated than this. There is a grey zone. The Free University of Amsterdam differentiates between 4 forms with respect to the choice of spouse: planned, delegated, joint initiative, own initiative. However, a clear demarcation is not always possible. If a child, e.g. does not have the confidence to say no, can one then talk of compulsion? Compulsion is not a clear concept. To what degree is the choice free, to what degree are marriages experienced as forced marriages?

In contrast to the study from 2004, the researchers found there to be more openness, above all in the Turkish and Moroccan communities. Forced marriages were opposed by all interviewees. In particular the choice of spouse is now taken more for granted.

Also within the Kurdish and Hindu population there has been some development. In discussions relating to honour the interviewees referred to the importance of a positive approach.

Forced marriage is not limited to Islamic cultures, this phenomenon also exists amongst orthodox Christians and Hindu countries and also previously in the Netherlands itself (e.g. within the aristocracy, so-called "moetjes" that means that one had to get married when one became pregnant, Catholics versus Protestants).

Mixed Marriages: Those interviewed saw more differences between themselves and people from the country of origin. A long-lasting marriage and homogeneity (similar partner) was felt to be the ideal. In the Netherlands there are increasing numbers of mixed marriages between different ethnic groups (e.g. marriages between Turks and Kurds living in the Netherlands) In the Netherlands the separation between Allochthonen (foreigners) and Autochtonen (native citizens) is becoming blurred.

The common religion (Islam) is however still an important factor/a dividing line for/against a marriage.

The choice of a spouse is becoming more individualised, education and the degree of independence playing a major role. Young people are increasingly resistant when a choice is forced on them. The free choice of a spouse, however, is interpreted differently amongst second generation immigrant youths as opposed to Dutch young people. Thus second generation immigrant young people perceive it to be their free choice if they are in favour of the marriage in order to maintain family ties. For this reason they agree to a partner who the family approves of.

The length of residence is equally significant: if the parents have been longer in the Netherlands there is more acceptance. The issue plays more of a role amongst groups who have only recently come to the Netherlands (e.g. Afghanis). Parents also fear conflict with the grandparents and thus themselves feel under pressure. If the grandparents are alive or not is equally a factor which can play a role (age of the grandparents)

A further important factor is communication. Young people often do not say at all or do not say clearly enough that they do not desire the marriage. Most parents come to terms with their children's decision, a small core refuse to do so.

Her Recommendations:

- Provide information and initiate discussions concerning self-help organisations, this is important.
- Get into contact with the refuges for Violence in the Name of Honour and Domestic Violence. In Amsterdam there is a refuge which is linked to the advice and counselling agency for domestic violence.
- A national refuge has already been proposed.
- Use best practices. Consider SPIOR, SSR and the national working group Mudawwanah.

Concerning the issue of it being a punishable offence, there are discussions about this in the Netherlands, in other countries very few have been sentenced. Many interviewees did not say if they would desire it to be punishable by law. They ask the question who would wish their own parents to be prosecuted. In the appendix to the study report there is a description concerning the legislative situation with regard to forced marriage by the lawyer Ms A.M- van Gelder.

The study was handed over at the end of the conference by Ms Bartels to Ms Simsek from the Amsterdam City Council.

Government Policy on Forced Marriage

**By Léon Poffé, Programme Manager, Violence in the Name of Honour Programme,
Ministry of Justice, VROM, VWS, OCW und BZK**

Mr Poffé informed the conference about current policy. From a political perspective this issue is high on the agenda.

The political starting point is that no one should be coerced. The Dutch government sees this issue as an integral part of other political areas: Violence in the Name of Honour, Housing Policy, Integration and Immigration Policy.

Violence in the name of honour and integration are issues which are of major interest from a political and social perspective. In relation to the issue of forced marriage we are still at a stage of finding out about the problem. Recently there was a debate about wives being left behind in the country of origin, this has a connection to the issues mentioned.

Consciousness of an issue is more important than definitions. Studies concerning the forms and extent of the problem are currently being undertaken, both nationally and regionally. The government would like more information on the form and extent of the problem and to help combat it.

These initiatives have already been undertaken:

1. The two recommendations from AVCZ:
2. There are initiatives from the second chamber of the Dutch parliament to find an effective approach and a comprehensive policy with respect to the issue violence in the name of honour. Forced marriage is included in these initiatives.
3. The project "Safety Begins with Prevention" (domestic violence and violence in the name of honour incl. forced marriage) are specifically mentioned here, see [HYPERLINK "http://www.veiligheidbegintbijvoorkomen.nl"www.veiligheidbegintbijvoorkomen.nl](http://www.veiligheidbegintbijvoorkomen.nl)).

The political institutions attach great importance to more information concerning the forms and extent of the problem. The second chamber has received approval to continue with these studies (in the Netherlands and internationally) The Beke office is currently carrying out a study.

In addition, State Secretary Albayrak commissioned a study from the Ministry of Education as to how many children of school age have been left abroad(e.g.) in Egypt. Here the National Centre for Expertise on Violence in the Name of Honour have been researching in how many cases forced marriage played a role. The study is still ongoing but the first impression is that this will be difficult to establish.

The police take action when there is a threat of violence, however the underlying problem is less of a priority for the police. However the police do register these cases (threat of violence).

In addition the programme "Violence in the Name of Honour" carries out visits abroad in order to learn from other projects. At the beginning of 2009, many of these results were compiled and passed on to the second chamber.

Representative figures cannot be presented at the moment (the question is also if this is necessary). The problem remains hidden and often comes to light only after a great deal has occurred. Prevention is important, the stress now being especially on the aspect of violence (incl. accommodation for girls who fear violence in the name of honour).

The measures which the government has already undertaken are perhaps not visible enough to the public. However recommendations have been taken on board; support for expert knowledge is necessary, the connection with domestic violence is being researched (advice and support facilities for domestic violence) and adequate support must be provided at local levels. The programme "Violence in the Name of Honour" is also pursuing these objectives.

There is an National Expertise Centre for Violence in the Name of Honour based at Police Offices in Haaglanden. Recently the expertise centre in cooperation with the police succeeded in promptly bringing someone back from Turkey. Is there a connection with the necessity to give a definition or information on the numbers of victims? This is not the case. Registering warning signals and knowing that the issue plays a role is what is of importance. Then taking action when they detect any anomalies and dealing with them.

Measures which have been or are currently being implemented:

- Support for self-help organisations and initiatives
- Contacts to embassies.
- Possible return to the Netherlands of people who are being kept against their will abroad. (difficult to organise).
- Independent residence permits for women/men, who end a relationship which came about as a result of force.
- Keep an eye out for children/young people who are taken off the housing register by their parents.
- Look at countries where forced marriage is a punishable offence: what can we learn from them?

New Recommendations:

- A hotline for schools with a central number.
- Look into whether criminal proceedings can be effective.
- Attach importance to support at local levels. Involve the councils and communities: ensure cooperation at local levels.

Finally, Mr Poffe informed participants that Mr Andy Clijnk (also attending) would take over his post.

Choice of Spouse and Forced Marriage in the Hindu Community

By Pandit Attry Ramdhani, Shri Ram Mandir Den Haag

Mr Ramdhani reported that 150,000 Hindus are living in the Netherlands. As an example, he reported of a girl from the Hindu community who had a Dutch boyfriend. She claimed she was threatened by a forced marriage and using this argument had obtained help so as to escape from her family surroundings. Mr Ramdhani rarely encountered cases of forced marriage. Why then is this issue being discussed? Probably because the study drew more attention to the issue and after this people have felt themselves to be victims, which previously they had not been conscious of.

His Recommendations:

- It is better to discuss the issue within the community rather than at a meta level - i.e. instead of talking about the groups - talk about the issue. One does not reach the communities by approaching them critically, this ensures more of a division.
- What is coercion? We can only talk about arranged marriages.
- Focus studies on more target groups and do not allow them to be one-sided, attach importance to nuances.
- Pay attention to the fact that girls live in a system where they are unable to develop their own individuality.
- Bollywood films are very influential on the dichotomy of thinking within the Hindu community (I want all or nothing, my partner has to be ideal just like in the films). This dichotomy of thinking is internalised. Mr Ramdhani made a call for more importance to be placed on giving meaning at the individual level.

Hand in Hand against Forced Marriage: from Local Initiatives to European Campaigns

By Marianne Vorthoren, SPIOR (Foundation Platform Islamic Organisations Rijnmond)

SPIOR states that forced marriages exist. The number of victims is difficult to determine due to the nature of the phenomenon; there is a grey zone as has already been mentioned.

In Rotterdam there were 109 cases of violence in the name of honour in 2009, more than half of these concerned forced marriage. This is not only a matter of imported marriages as is often reported in the media. It also does not *only* concern Muslims, but rather *also* Muslims. SPIOR in its role as an Islamic umbrella organisation is conscious here of its responsibility.

SPIOR works together with the community, Imams and organisational partners. They have organised meetings for boys, meetings for both boys and also girls, meetings with young people and their parents and also meetings in other towns. SPIOR has published a book: "Hand in Hand against Forced Marriage" which can be ordered from them. The book is available in a number of languages.

Her Recommendations:

- Ms Vorthoren asked that the focus be placed on prevention and that attention should be paid to the grey zone (as a child one can say no, but then one is a disgrace to the family; or one can say no, but only under certain conditions).
- Be conscious of the right to make one's own decision (choice).
- Use Islam as a strategy. Islam forbids forced marriage. The core message of the Imam in the SPIOR project is that forced marriage is forbidden. Marriages are only valid when both partners agree on the basis of their own free will to the prospective marriage. One has to respect one's parents, but that is not the same thing as obeying their wishes. Particularly not when this violates one's own rights. Marriage is a contract between two people.
- Make the connection to human rights.
- It is important who delivers the message: use key personalities.
- It is not only a question of knowledge but also skills. The communication between parents and children is important. Offer alternatives, a clear message which is not condemnatory.
- There is talk in the Netherlands of a situation of transition, as Ms Bartels has already mentioned. Opinions change.
- Be clear that parents are also put under pressure/force from their own family/community or by the grandparents.
- Let us learn from each other, nationally and internationally.

Finally, Ms Vorthoren reported that SPIOR together with the Rotterdam Council and Professor Tariq Ramadan started a European campaign against forced marriage in 2008. This campaign was initiated in Rotterdam; work has been carried out with partner organisations from other countries aimed at getting the Muslim Community themselves to put the issue on the agenda.

How can we effectively and energetically combat forced marriage together?

Discussion chaired by Prem Radhakishun (PREM)

PREM chaired a lively discussion. First of all he asked members of the forum how they would define forced marriage:

- Ms Cecilia Perez (Refuge Coordinator Violence in The Name of Honour, Amsterdam): everyone who tries to force the choice of a spouse on someone, it need not be a family member.
- Ms Karima Ouchan (Trainee Supervisor ROC Twente): One can speak of forced marriage when the choice is made by someone else (within or outside of the family).
- Ms Leyla Cinibulak (Project Leader with MOVISIE): A marriage made against one's own free will. Under social pressure or subject to physical violence, determined by the parents, the community, brothers or sisters.
- Ms Mariet Molenaar (Project Leader Domestic Violence and Violence in the Name of Honour, Police Amsterdam): There is no law concerning forced marriage. However, there are laws pertaining to coercion, threats, kidnapping rape etc. One can be arrested for threatening behaviour, however the question is how can one prove it took place, this is often difficult. With regards to the definition: forced marriage is the lack of freedom to choose one's own spouse or to make one's own decision concerning marriage.
- Ms Kadhija Arib (PvdA Second Chamber Parliamentary Group): One can then begin to speak of a forced marriage when girls and boys are put under pressure and are forced against their will to get married.

Who has any suggestions to prevent forced marriage asked Prem. Many points were mentioned which were more or less supported by the participants.

Here is a summary of the points mentioned:

- Promote the dialogue within the communities.
- Work on the communicative skills of young people and parents. Promote reflection. This is possible with groups who have lived in the Netherlands for a longer time, take into consideration that such discussion with groups who have not been that long in the Netherlands may be more difficult.
- Talk to the family. Take action not only at the macro level but also at the micro level.
- Empowerment, emancipation is important in connection with prevention (for both girls and boys).
- Take into account the fact that it can be very difficult for young people to say no; e.g they do not want to lose the contact to their families, they may be afraid of the consequences or find it difficult to decide for themselves instead of letting their parents decide. Attach importance to quality of life.

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- Take up contact to the educational system. Draw attention within the education system to the ways and methods young people use to make decisions, draw attention to discussions on quality of life. Attach importance to the consequences of decisions. Young people often tend to think in the short-term (e.g. about the wedding) but do they also have an overview of the long-term consequences? Before one can speak of a choice of partner, one has to discuss it, however this does not happen.
 - Draw attention to the fact that it is a problem which cuts across many cultures.
 - Discuss the question how far can the society/community go to limit/determine the decision of the individual. However, also take into consideration the fact that one can not view the individual independently of their community, as one participant mentioned.
 - Carry out discussions as to what is healthy and unhealthy interference.
 - The discussion with respect to the interference of the community in individual decisions touches on the question of human rights. Draw attention to human rights and the EU human rights.
 - Focus discussion on the question what qualities young people find important in their partners.
 - Make sure that the problem is not minimalised demanded one of the participants.
 - Teach young people negotiating skills (ROC'S educational facilities).
 - Keep more of a view on traditional or religious marriages and register them. Especially in connection with the forced marriage of juveniles. Juveniles are not allowed to marry according to Dutch law, however this can happen in the case of a traditional/religious marriage. A suggestion was for the Ministry of Justice to carry out a possible study on this. Or monitoring by umbrella organisations?
 - Use best practices and publicise them nationwide. Pay attention to non-subsidised projects.
 - Make a list of best practices from studies and compile these so that others can make use of them.
 - Also draw attention to international projects, e.g. in Great Britain. Also in relation to legislation.
 - Choose a positive approach to the issue e.g. in connection with the issue of honour. Approach all parties with equal respect and look for common connecting points (universal values). Teach people to use honour in the right context. Parents and children do not want to lose each other.
 - Involve the Imams, Islam can also be utilised against forced marriage. Use positive religious messages in connection with marriage, raise these in discussions.
 - Involve local organisations.
 - And do not target only girls/women but also boys/men.
 - The police recommend reporting such cases to them.
 - Ensure (permanent) consciousness raising and that the issue is placed on the agenda.

- Point out to parents the damaging consequences of a forced marriage. Take the health and welfare of the family as the starting point.
- Make the issue a discussion topic with women and through this also reach their children. Make contact to self-help organisations.
- Give helpers guidelines for dealing with the issue.
- Make a connection to universal values. Discuss the definition of love (within marriage). Give parents the confirmation that they feel love for their children and that is why they wish to choose a partner for them, but speak about the consequences of this.
- Work together with organisations in the country of origin and work together with embassies, also ensure cooperation with organisations which represent the affected immigrant groups.
- Focus on empowering professional groups and their help in terms of expertise and consciousness raising.
- Avoid thinking that the problem will disappear of its own accord in the future: there are always new groups of immigrants coming to the Netherlands for whom this issue plays a role.
- Draw attention to the taboo in relation to homosexuality.
- Ensure that a refuge is set up.
- Ensure that a law forbidding forced marriage is passed.
- Compile further information and expertise and disseminate it.
- Facilitate talks both at an individual level and within the community/society.
- Maintain contact when there is talk of forced marriage.

MOVISIE will compile further tips and suggestions on evaluation forms (in the meantime mails with a link to the evaluation forms have been sent out).

The organisers wish to thank all those who attended for their contributions to this conference!