

**Situation of girls and young women affected
and threatened by forced marriage in Austria
(compiled by Orient Express)**

**Catalogue of demand
with respect to all provinces in Austria**

VEREIN ORIENT EXPRESS

September 2011

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Overview of the last 10 years

Orient Express has recognized the problem of forced marriages in Austria since the year 2000. Based on our own observations and the gradual increase in the number of cases of forced marriage, we were able to identify this form of violence. Forced marriage has been one of our focus areas for over 10 years.

In recent years, we have directed our work at the following levels of society. The main aim was to prevent and eliminate forced marriage with the help of various actors.

- Young people (affected and threatened)
- Multipliers (supporters of these victims)
- Society
- The political level

During the last 10 years of our work, we have implemented a range of projects and campaigns aiming at increasing public awareness and education, as well eliminating the practice of forced marriage:

- Campaign "forced marriage costs you your freedom. LIFELONG! "
- Mother - daughter workshop "Help I don't want to get married yet!":
Discussions about forced marriage.
- School projects: Projects held in schools aimed at combating forced marriages.
- Trainings for multipliers: Introducing possibilities of action for professionals
- Seminars held within the framework of "Aktionstage Politische Bildung" i.e. raising political awareness and education: Seminars for teachers aimed at pointing out the different alternatives for action.



- Raising community awareness and drawing attention to the fact that forced marriage is violence!
- Trainings for multipliers: Trainings held in Austria aimed at conveying the range of possible actions against forced marriage, as well as networking and undertaking a needs analysis in the different Austrian provinces.
- Seminars, workshops and podium discussions–also on the ministerial level–to make sure that forced marriage is discussed at political and administrative levels, as well as ensuring public awareness and support.
 - Organizing discussions, seminars and workshops at the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice.
 - Taking part in conferences in Vienna
 - Conferences, symposiums and workshops held by the Vienna Municipality and the MA 57 (The Ministry of Women’s Affairs)

Over the years, our hard work and effective advocacy and community awareness raising strategies, have proved successful in removing the taboos associated with discussing forced marriages, thus more threatened girls reach us than affected girls. Although there has been a steady rise in the number of threatened girls which contact us, these numbers do not mean there is an increasing number of affected girls, on the contrary, they merely prove that a larger number of girls have taken the decision to take action and fight against a forced marriage. More importantly, it is also proof that these victims have received the needed help, support and trust from us in their fight.

The success we have achieved over the 10 years of work has been great motivation for us; still, this motivation is overshadowed by the unchanging lack of appropriate accommodation facilities/shelters for girls and young women.



Statistics of the past five years

There is no reliable data or statistics on the number of girls and young women affected or threatened by forced marriage.

The figures listed below are based on the internal surveys of Orient Express

Year	Number of clients
2004	26
2005	46
2006	51
2007	57
2008	61
2009	72
2010	79
Total	392
*up to 2005 80 % affected 20 % threatened	
*after 2005 80 % affected 20% threatened	



The legal situation in Austria

Forced marriage is a criminal offence under the 2006 Act Amending Criminal Law.

§ 105 Coercion

(1) Whoever unlawfully with force or threat of serious harm causes a person to commit, suffer or omit an act shall be liable to imprisonment of not more than one year.

(2) The act shall be unlawful if the use of force or threat is declared as inappropriate for the purpose of achieving the desired outcome.

§ 106 Dangerous/ Hard coercion

(1) Whoever practices coercion by

1. Threatening death, mutilation, deformation, kidnapping, arson, threatening to cause harm by using nuclear energy, ionizing radiation, explosives or by threatening to destroy the economic existence or social position of a person

2. Causing the person or any other person against whom this coercion is practiced an agonizing state over a longer period of time

(2) In any case in which force or threat of serious harm inflicted on a person results in a person committing suicide or attempting to commit suicide, the perpetrator shall be liable to imprisonment from one to ten years.

Shall be liable to imprisonment from six months and not more than five years

§ 107 Dangerous threat

(1) Whoever dangerously threatens a person causing fear and unrest shall be liable to imprisonment of not more than one year.

(2) Whoever dangerously threatens a person by threatening death, mutilation, deformation, kidnapping, arson, threatening to cause harm by using nuclear energy, ionizing radiation, explosives or by threatening to destroy the economic existence or social position of a person or causes the person or any other person against whom this coercion is practiced an agonizing state over a longer period of time, shall be liable to imprisonment for not more than three years.

(4) Whoever intentionally under section 1 or section 2 dangerously threatens his/her spouse, relative in first degree, sister or brother or any other relative provided living in the same household, shall be prosecuted only with authorization of the threatened person.



New Amendments to the Settlement and Residence Act (NAG) in force since 01.01.2010

An increase in the minimum age of spouses to 21 years is imposed on family reunifications in order to better combat forced marriages.

§ 30a NAG forced marriages and forced partnerships

If a person is forced against her will to marry or register a partnership with another person, neither spouse nor partner has the right to appeal for obtaining or maintaining a residency permit, neither has she/he the right to acquire a residency permit based on the right to common residence for spouses and partners § 69a Abs. 1 Z 3 .



Status QUO

Since the begin of our work we have demanded the setting up of specialized protection and crisis accommodation facilities / shelters for girls and young women affected and threatened by forced marriage. We continue to emphasize this need. Our primary concerns are protection, location anonymity and intensive psychological support.

Fact 1) Accommodation for girls and young women affected and threatened by forced marriage is organized in crisis facilities and women's shelters. This accommodation however, is not suitable for the needs of these victims, mainly because they require special care and support.

Fact 2) In most cases it is frightening and confusing to be accommodated in a crisis facility or a women's shelter. Especially in such cases, victims require immediate intensive support, care and expert advice.

Fact 3) The victim should ideally be supported and taken care of by a person who is able to develop contact to the victim based on trust.

Fact 4) In cases in which more than one member of the family is threatened by forced marriage, for example two sisters, both have the right to stay together and be put up in the same accommodation, since it is also possible to house sisters in different age groups apart from one other. It is particularly important in such situations that the sisters support each other and mutually strengthen one another.

Fact 5) In the case of minors, improvements in the Youth Welfare Act are necessary to ensure victims are fully protected and safe. It is advisable not to inform the parents where the child is staying.

Fact 6) Minors who are accommodated in youth crisis facilities are to avoid confrontation with parents during the initial stages of their stay; the current legal situation does not guarantee that this confrontation does not take place, in many cases this confrontation takes place shortly after the victim leaves home and results in the victim's return to home. This has in many cases fatal consequences.

Fact 7)

Leaving one's parental home is a challenge for victims of forced marriage as well as young girls threatened by forced marriage. Getting adjusted to their new



independent life, their new surroundings and all the new faces they will encounter is not an easy task and should not be undermined.

Fact 8) Crisis and prevention work is being carried out for young girls and women affected and or threatened by forced marriage, however it lacks a concrete plan regarding accommodation facilities for these victims! Furthermore, it should be possible to accommodate these victims in another province in Austria in case it is needed for their protection. Nowadays that is almost impossible!

Fact 9) Currently, social workers and social advisors are facing a huge obstacle in their field of work. For many it is very time-consuming to arrange an adequate and suitable accommodation for minor victims, and this is the reason why Austria is in need of suitable accommodation facilities coupled with an intervention centre for minor victims of forced marriage.

Statistics also prove that not only Vienna but other provinces in Austria are in need of such facilities. In Austria there is a lack of appropriate advisory services as well as resources and accommodation facilities.

There are **no** suitable **accommodation facilities/shelters** in any other **provinces** in Austria!

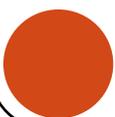
In Austria we have reached a point where action, not words are needed!

We have to momentarily collect our voices, gather our strengths and demand for action to be taken.

The goal is to eradicate forced marriage! Girls and young women have a right to an independent life and we are to strengthen them to reach that goal!

We urgently call for

Adequate accommodation facilities / shelters with long term social care for young girls and women affected and threatened by force marriage.



Counselling and Counselling Centers in Austria

Orient Express was over the last 11 years the only counselling center in Austria who was focusing on forced marriages. As a result of networking in Austria during the last years we are happy to report that;

- Caritas Graz has implemented counselling about forced marriages. The counselling center named DIVAN and working in cooperation with Orient Express.

Contact/Office

DIVAN – Caritas Graz–Seckau

Leonhardstraße 116, 8010 Graz

Phone: +43-676/88015 744

Fax: +43-316/325706-440

E-Mail: divan@caritas-steiermark.at

Homepage: www.caritas-steiermark.at/hilfe-einrichtungen/fuer-migrantinnen/beratung/divan/

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ORIENT EXPRESS Beratungs-, Bildungs- und
Kulturinitiative für Frauen
Frauenservicestelle

Schönngasse 15-17/Top 2
A-1020 Wien

ZVR –Zahl: 959713444
BA-CA BLZ 12000 Konto 09593153100



Tel: +43 (1) 728 97 25
Fax: +43 (1) 728 97 25-13
www.orientexpress-wien.com
www.gegen-zwangsheirat.at

