

IMPROVING FORCED MARRIAGE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN FRANCE

**Dr Khursheed Wadia, University of Warwick, and
Professor Gill Allwood, Nottingham Trent University**

About this briefing

This policy brief is based on a two-year research project funded by the British Academy that sought to investigate the intersection between gender-based violence, particularly forced marriage, and policy in France.

Context

Associations in France are the lone providers of prevention and protection services for gender based violence, and are funded almost exclusively by the state. They have a wealth of experiential knowledge which is vital for the maintenance of effective services. However, funding cuts have decimated smaller organisations, including many migrant women's associations, with serious implications for whose voice is being heard.

Some cities now have well established coordinated networks of elected representatives, civil servants, social workers, lawyers, police, educators, health workers and civil society organisations. These networks provide services including training for professionals, awareness raising, and helping victims or potential victims of violence and forced marriage directly. They also are an important conduit between practitioners and policymakers, with all actors agreeing that networks improve the implementation of policy on gender equality, violence against women and forced marriage.

WHAT DO WE NEED TO PREVENT FORCED MARRIAGE?

► Coordination

Forced marriage networks do great work in protection and prevention. They bring together key actors, raise awareness and train professionals.

► Participation

Associations channel the voice and experience of women and girls affected by forced marriage and at risk of it. Associations need adequate and sustainable funding to continue their work.

► Transformation

Violence against women is both a cause and a consequence of gender inequality. The fight to eradicate all forms of violence against women goes hand in hand with the fight for gender equality. Preventing forced marriage will contribute to greater gender equality and achieving gender equality will reduce forced marriage.

The research findings

- Forced marriage networks only exist in a few cities across France;
- Forced marriage networks work well, bringing together elected representatives, civil servants, social workers, lawyers, police, educators, health workers and civil society organisations. These networks are effective providers of protection for women and girls in forced marriage, or at risk of forced marriage;
- Smaller civil society organisations as well as larger ones report that their voices are heard by policymakers and that their input is recognised in policy decisions;
- Successful networks are dependent on highly committed and dynamic individuals who may leave their post;
- Civil society organisations, large and small, are under constant threat of funding cuts.

'We lobby on the basis of our expertise gathered on the ground and take this to the Ministry for Women's Rights...The idea is to co-create policy so that the Ministry is not working alone.'

'Our voices are heard by decision makers, and it's important that migrant voices are heard in these white institutions.'

'The users- women who are victims- do not participate directly in the formulation and implementation of policy, but their testimonies make us think and expose things that aren't working.'

FURTHER INFORMATION

This briefing is based on: Allwood and Wadia (2020) 'Forced Marriage and Gender Transformation in France: Feminist State and Civil Society Networks at the Local Level', French Politics, March-June.

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The views contained in this briefing do not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Warwick or Nottingham Trent University



Recommendations

This research shows that the best way to address violence against women is through coordinated networks of state and non-state actors, which include the voices of those affected.

Above all, we recommend increased and targeted funding for associations which are key actors in prevention and protection.

1. Adequate and sustainable state funding should be provided, including for smaller associations which operate in economically deprived neighbourhoods with large vulnerable populations.
2. More resources for associations to help them raise awareness of forced marriage and advocate on behalf of victims/survivors, to directly provide or signpost to counselling, legal support, and services to protect and support victims/survivors such as accompanying to trial, and the provision of safe accommodation.
3. The incorporation of forced marriage awareness raising as part of violence against women and girls awareness in schools for school children, as well as mandatory training for teachers, social workers and other frontline staff including immigration officers. This will ensure that victims/survivors who are in forced marriages or abusive relationships do not face deportation, destitution or a forced return to gender related violence in their country of origin.
4. Creation of a separate category of repatriation funding for victims/survivors of forced marriage who are taken overseas so that they do not have to compete for the same repatriation funds as other French nationals, e.g. those stranded by natural disasters.
5. Implementation of human rights conventions and declarations, including the Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Istanbul Convention.

Contact the researchers

- ✉ **Dr K Wadia:**
Khursheed.Wadia@warwick.ac.uk
- ✉ **Professor G Allwood:**
Gill.Allwood@ntu.ac.uk