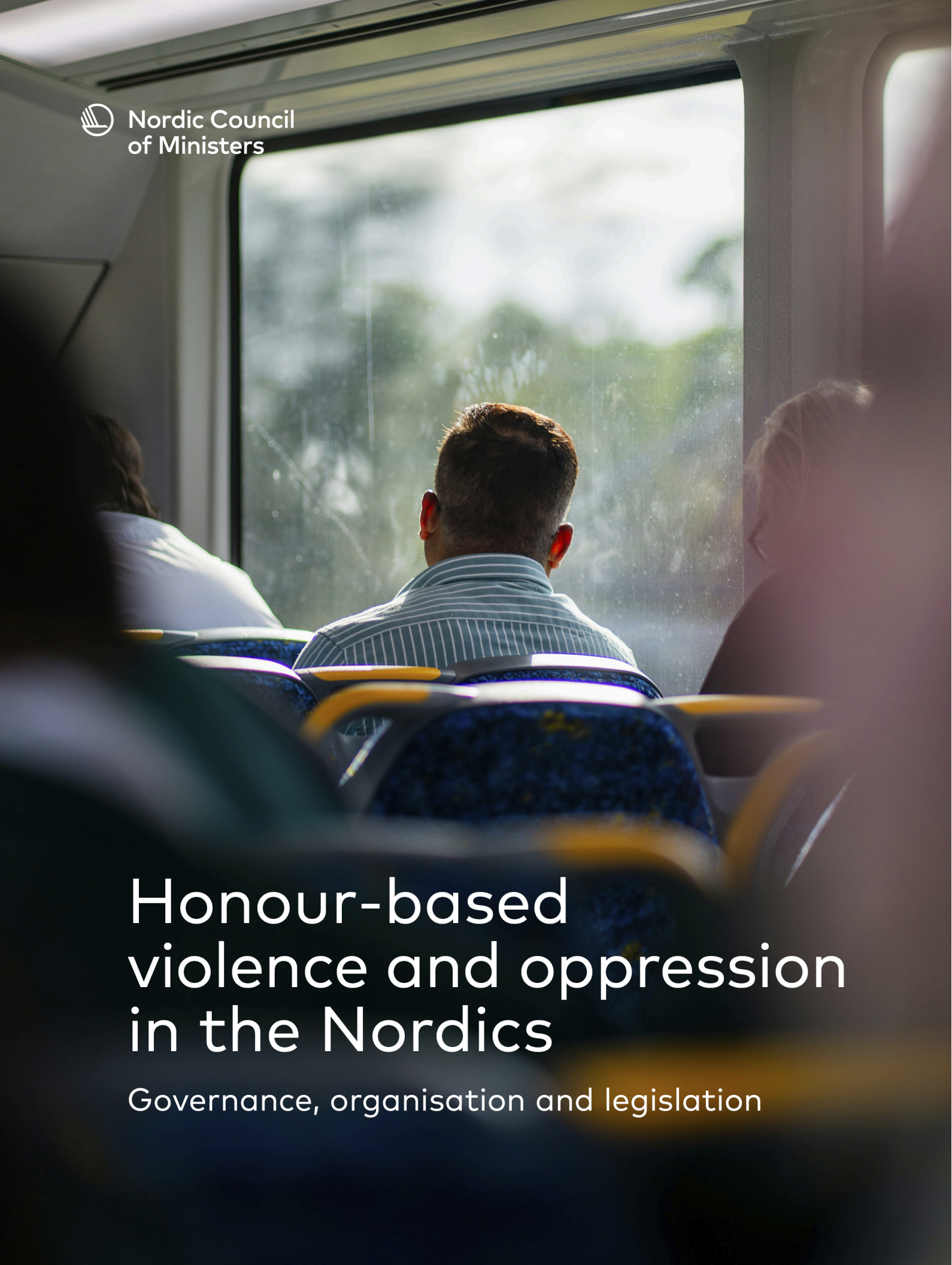


Nordic Council of Ministers

Honour-based violence and oppression in the Nordics

Governance, organisation and legislation

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This publication is also available online in a web-accessible version at:
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The publication in brief

Honour-based violence and oppression constitute a serious violation of fundamental human rights and an obstacle to both gender equality and the full exercise of rights by LGBTI persons. To provide an overview of the work being done to combat honour-based violence and oppression in the Nordic region, the Nordic Council of Ministers has commissioned Nordic Information on Gender (NIKK) to map the research area. The commission resulted in this publication, among other things, which describes how the work to combat honour-based violence and oppression is organised in the Nordic countries as well as in the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland. It focuses on strategic work, use of terminology, steering documents on the vulnerability of LGBTI people to violence, and relevant criminal legislation. The analyses in the publication are based on a review of national strategies, action plans, steering documents and legislation, as well as material from relevant authorities and key actors.

The publication consists of three parts:

- A study of strategic efforts to combat honour-based violence and oppression, focusing on how the concept of honour-based violence and oppression is defined, what problems and challenges have been identified and how efforts to address these challenges are organised.
- An overview and analysis of national steering documents and other relevant material dealing with the vulnerability of LGBTI persons to violence.
- A review and analysis of legislation in national criminal law relating to honour-based violence and oppression.

The first part of the publication shows that efforts to combat honour-based violence and oppression in the Nordic countries are characterised by a common foundation in human rights and gender equality, while also being marked by significant variations in the use of concepts, problem understandings and organisation. The study shows that concepts such as 'honour-based violence and oppression', 'honour-based conflicts' and 'negative social control' are used in parallel in the Nordic countries but with different emphases. The differences relate, among other things, to how the causes of violence are understood, which groups are considered particularly vulnerable and how the relationship between individual rights and collective norms is described. These conceptual differences have direct consequences for how work is structured at the policy level and which measures are prioritised.

The study shows that certain countries, particularly Denmark and Norway, have developed specific national strategies targeted at honour-based violence and negative social control. In these contexts, the issue is often positioned within the framework of integration policy, with a focus on new arrivals and ethnic minorities. Sweden, Finland and Iceland have mainly integrated the issue of honour-based violence and oppression into broader strategies to combat men's violence against women, violence in close relationships and violence against children. The study shows that this difference in strategic framing affects the division of responsibility between authorities, the degree of specialisation and how preventive, supportive and legal measures are designed.

The first part of the publication presents three main theoretical perspectives that can be identified in the various steering documents analysed: a distinctiveness or cultural perspective, a gender-based perspective on power and an intersectional perspective. All Nordic countries have ratified the Istanbul Convention, which clearly states that honour-based violence and oppression should be understood as a form of gender-based violence and that culture, custom, religion or so-called honour can never serve as justifications for violence. Despite this, a review of steering documents and the reviews of the Council of Europe's expert group GREVIO shows that in several countries there is a tendency to approach honour-based violence and oppression from a cultural or integration perspective, which, according to the study, risks obscuring the gendered nature of such violence and its underlying patriarchal power structures.

The second part of the publication shows that the vulnerability of LGBTI people to violence is highlighted to varying degrees in national steering documents. The overview and analysis of the relevant national steering documents and other materials shows that LGBTI persons are often identified as particularly vulnerable to honour-based violence and oppression, mainly due to heteronormative ideas and norms concerning gender, sexuality and family control. At the same time, the vulnerability of LGBTI persons is rarely addressed in a comprehensive or systematic manner but is instead often included in a general manner in broader descriptions of vulnerability to violence. The analysis shows that there is a lack of specific action plans in the Nordic countries that solely address honour-based violence and oppression against LGBTI persons. Instead, the issue is addressed through a variety of approaches in action plans on LGBTI rights and in general steering documents on violence. Denmark and Norway highlight vulnerability linked to ethnic minorities and negative social control, Sweden addresses the issue within the focus area of violence and abuse, Iceland addresses vulnerability to violence without a specific focus on honour-based violence and oppression and Finland lacks a separate LGBTI action plan but highlights LGBTI people as a risk group. In several cases, there is a lack of concrete measures, follow-ups and in-depth knowledge building, while intersectional dimensions often receive little analytical attention. The analysis

highlights recurring intersectional vulnerability for people with foreign backgrounds, the role of religion in both vulnerability and issues of identity, conversion attempts as a particular expression of violence and control, and challenges related to asylum and integration.

The review of criminal law presented in the third and final part of the publication shows that the Nordic countries mainly deal with honour-based violence and oppression through existing criminal legislation, such as provisions on assault, unlawful threats, unlawful deprivation of liberty, forced marriage, child marriage and female genital cutting. The review shows that Sweden differs from the other Nordic countries and autonomous regions in that it has introduced honour-based oppression as a specific offence and established specific grounds for imposing stricter penalties for honour-based offences. The purpose of these provisions is to better capture the repetitive, systematic and sometimes collective nature of such violence. In the other Nordic countries and autonomous regions, there are no specific, equivalent criminal classifications, and honour-based motives are instead handled within the framework of general criminal legal provisions.

The review and analysis of legislation highlights a fundamental legal challenge that is common to the Nordic countries: honour-based violence is often perpetrated by several people within a collective, while criminal law is founded on individual responsibility. This complicates investigation, evidence gathering and prosecution with regard to crimes characterised by collective control, loyalty bonds and informal sanctions.

Overall, the publication shows that efforts to combat honour-based violence and oppression in the Nordic region are extensive and continually being developed but that they are characterised by differences with respect to terminology, strategic framing and legal regulation. These differences affect how the of the problem is understood, which groups are highlighted, and which measures are prioritised in both policy and practice.

About the publication



About the publication

Honour-based violence and oppression constitute violations of people's fundamental freedoms and rights. These types of violence are based on strongly patriarchal and heteronormative ideas and constitute an obstacle to both gender equality and the rights of LGBTI people. The 2024 Swedish Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers took the initiative to conduct a study to provide an overview of the work being done to combat honour-based violence and oppression in the region. The task was assigned to the Nordic Council of Ministers' cooperation body Nordic Information on Gender (NIKK), which was commissioned to study work being done in the Nordic countries, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland.

The brief included producing an overview of key actors, assignments and initiatives, investigating how the concept of honour-based violence and oppression is defined and studying identified challenges and how work to address them is organised. The study was also to include a review of national legislation on honour-based violence and oppression. This includes criminal legislation explicitly targeting honour-based violence and oppression as well as legislation considered to be honour-based, for example with regard to genital cutting, child and forced marriage and attempted conversion. The assignment also encompassed LGBTI people's vulnerability to honour-based violence and oppression.

The assignment resulted in this publication, which consists of three parts:

- A study of strategic efforts to combat honour-based violence and oppression, focusing on how the concept of honour-based violence and oppression is defined, what problems and challenges have been identified and how efforts to address these challenges are organised.
- An overview and analysis of national steering documents and other relevant material dealing with LGBTI people's vulnerability to violence.
- A review and analysis of national criminal legislation relating to honour-based violence and oppression.

The first two parts of the publication were written by Alexandra Lebedeva, who holds a PhD in Ethics and is a researcher at the National Centre for Knowledge on Men's Violence Against Women at Uppsala University. The third part was written by Johan Rosquist, who holds a PhD in Sociology and is a senior lecturer in criminology at Linnaeus University. The report was originally written in Swedish and subsequently translated into English. In accordance with the assignment, the writers' work was based on national steering documents, laws and the mandates of key actors as well as their implementation. In addition, experts at government agencies and ministries were consulted. The collection of material for the first part of the

publication was carried out from January to August 2024, for the second part of the publication in spring 2025 and for the third part of the publication from February to May 2025. Material collected or changes made after the respective collection periods are not included in the report.

The publication aims to provide an overview of efforts to combat honour-based violence and oppression in the Nordic region. The sections of the publication are intended to be read in conjunction, to clarify the interaction between political guidelines and legal regulations in the Nordic countries. The result provides conditions for exchange at the policy level and enables strengthened and expanded Nordic cooperation. It is hoped that the publication will contribute to the development of efforts to combat honour-based violence and oppression in the Nordic region.

Strategic work, policy and concepts



Introduction

Study background, aims and method

The concepts of honour-based 'violence and oppression', 'honour-based conflicts' and 'negative social control' are controversial and have received significant attention in public debate. Definitions vary and emphasise different aspects of violence: causes of violence, motives for violence, expressions of violence, and the perpetrators and victims. Professionals who encounter victims of violence often express a need for skills development in issues relating to honour-based violence and oppression. It is also clear that staff in healthcare, social work and the judiciary need greater knowledge to be able to identify victims of violence and provide them with the best support. At first glance, the Nordic countries, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland appear to have a similar understanding and approach to honour-based violence and oppression. The definitions of so-called honour norms that motivate violence and are used to justify it paint a similar picture. At the same time, work in the area is organised in different ways across these countries and autonomous regions, and the use of terminology varies.

This study highlights how the concept of honour-based violence and oppression is defined, what problems and challenges are identified and how efforts to address challenges are organised. To provide an overview, it also outlines key actors and their missions and efforts, including preventive work aimed at various target groups, as well as information on change processes undertaken with perpetrators and knowledge on how to assist vulnerable individuals with support and protection.

The material was collected in collaboration with the Nordic network against negative social control and honour-based violence and oppression. Representatives from each country and the autonomous regions were contacted and asked to assist in identifying and collecting relevant material. They have provided material on strategic work and its implementation, other documents relating to honour-based violence and oppression, and information on key authorities working with these issues. Examples of the collected material include national strategies, action plans and steering documents for authorities, and websites of authorities and volunteer organisations. However, it is important to note that there are more organisations working against honour-based violence and oppression than those mentioned in this study. The selection for the study was made on the basis of the organisations mentioned and referred to in the steering documents and by key authorities. The scope of the material varies between different countries and regions. This is due, among other things, to the scope of the problem and how the issue of honour-based violence and oppression is dealt with at the national level. The empirical material has also been supplemented with relevant scientific articles. The collection

of material was carried out from April to August 2024. Material published after this date is therefore not included in the study.

The study concludes with a critical policy analysis. This examines how the problem of honour-based violence and oppression is presented in the steering documents analysed. For this purpose, Carol Bacchi's critical policy analysis model 'What's the problem represented to be?' (WPR)[1] has been used. The analysis model consists of a series of questions that help in the examination of steering documents and guide a critical analysis of the discourses constructed through their wording. One starting point of the method is to view the problems that the steering documents aim to solve in the light of their social contexts. Bacchi argues that there is a tendency to view problems as if they are independent of context and can be studied outside policy processes. The model has been used here to analyse various linguistic elements, such as key concepts, dichotomies, categories and discourses.[2] The questionnaire in the analysis model has been shortened and adapted to the context of the study. It is formulated as follows:

- How is the issue of honour-based violence and oppression represented in steering documents?
- What assumptions underlie this representation?
- What areas are left out of the representation of the issue?

These questions will be answered in the final section of the chapter with the aim of highlighting the ways in which the problem formulation can influence the work conducted.

Research and previous study

To put the study in context, this section presents:

- Research perspectives on honour-based violence and oppression,
- results from a previous study (2020) of strategies and initiatives for preventing negative social control and honour-based violence and oppression in the Nordic countries and
- a summary of the reviews conducted by the Council of Europe's expert group (GREVIO) on the five Nordic countries' work against honour-based violence and oppression.

Both the 2020 study and GREVIO's reviews highlight key perspectives on honour-based violence and oppression and its underlying causes. It is therefore helpful to begin by taking a closer look at how these perspectives are addressed in research.

1. Bacchi, Carol: *Analysing Policy: What's the Problem Represented to be?*, Pearson, Midland 2009.
2. Bacchi, Carol: *Analysing Policy: What's the Problem Represented to be?*, Pearson, Midland 2009, 3.

Theoretical perspectives

Firstly, it is important to note that there is disagreement both in political debate and in research about how honour-based violence and oppression, as well as its causes and underlying mechanisms, should be understood, which also has implications for which solutions are considered most appropriate. In 2010, the National Centre for Knowledge on Men's Violence Against Women at Uppsala University in Sweden presented the report *Honour-based Violence – a Knowledge and Research Report* focusing on Swedish research on honour-based violence and oppression as well as arranged marriages and forced marriages. The report also includes influential international research. The report shows that in Swedish research on honour-based violence and oppression, three theoretical perspectives have emerged that present different explanatory models for the emergence of honour-based violence and oppression – the distinctiveness or cultural perspective, the gender power perspective and the intersectional perspective.[3] Although it has been almost 15 years since the report was presented, this division is still relevant and can serve as a way of structuring different approaches to the subject. In addition to representing theoretical perspectives, they can also be identified in contemporary political and legal practices, i.e. how the problem is understood in different countries and the consequences this has for the strategies chosen to combat honour-based violence and oppression.

One of the most central questions concerns whether honour-based violence and oppression should be regarded as a distinct phenomenon or as a form of men's violence against women, violence in close relationships or gender-based violence. Proponents of a distinctiveness or cultural perspective assert that honour-based violence and oppression is motivated by and expressed in the cultural norms and values of ethnic minorities. They argue that honour-based violence is a distinct phenomenon that differs from other forms of violence (men's violence against women). The cultural perspective also focuses on potential conflicts that arise within families, between parents and children, and the surrounding community (traditional conservative norms versus liberal values regarding sex, marriage, abortion, etc.)[4]

In response to the cultural perspective, advocates of a gender power perspective argue that honour-based violence and oppression should be understood as a form of men's violence against women based on global patriarchal structures. Proponents of this perspective are critical of the use of culture as an explanatory model, as it is only applied in relation to cultures identified as 'Others' and tends to present honour-based violence and oppression as more severe and significantly different from violence perpetrated by Western men. From a gender power

3. National Centre for Knowledge on Men's Violence Against Women: *Hedersrelaterat våld och förtryck – en kunskaps- och forskningsöversikt*, Uppsala 2010.
4. National Centre for Knowledge on Men's Violence Against Women: *Hedersrelaterat våld och förtryck – en kunskaps- och forskningsöversikt*, Uppsala 2010, 6.

perspective, it is more important and tenable to analyse the similarities between honour-based violence and oppression and men's violence against women. Honour should be understood as one of many strategies used to legitimise men's control and power over women. Even in cases where women in a family perpetrate violence in the name of honour, it is linked to the superior position of men.[5]

An intersectional perspective, on the other hand, constitutes a holistic societal analysis of honour-based violence and oppression that encompasses a variety of power structures (including gender power structures) and their interaction. An intersectional analysis is used to highlight the multitude of vulnerabilities to honour-based violence and oppression based on gender, class, religion, ethnicity, disability, gender identity and sexuality. Proponents of an intersectional perspective argue that there should also be a focus on analysing the treatment of victims of violence and the consequences of measures against honour-based violence and oppression.[6]

Previous research on honour-based violence and oppression has raised several important questions about how honour-based violence and oppression and its causes should be understood. Should it be treated separate from or together with other forms of violence? And how should work against honour-based violence and oppression be conducted in a non-discriminatory way?

Nordic study 2020

In 2020, the consulting firm Rambøll conducted a study of strategies and initiatives for preventing negative social control and honour-based violence and oppression in the Nordic countries on behalf of the Nordic Council of Ministers. The aim was to provide a comprehensive overview of strategies and legislation and the organisation of work in the region. The study presents a summary of how the terms 'negative social control' and 'honour-based violence' are used. These terms are examined in relation to other terms such as 'domestic violence' and 'violence against women'.[7] The 2020 study shows that the use of different terms and how they relate to the area of men's violence against women varies across the Nordic countries. It also shows how this affects strategic work and the policy areas in which honour-based violence and oppression are positioned: violence against women, violence in close relationships or integration. The study also highlights differences in how work against honour-based violence and oppression is organised at a strategic level in the Nordic countries. According to the study, Denmark and Norway are taking direct measures focusing on honour-based violence and negative social control and have specific national-level specific strategies focused on

5. National Centre for Knowledge on Men's Violence Against Women: *Hedersrelaterat våld och förtryck – en kunskaps- och forskningsöversikt*, Uppsala 2010, 23.
6. National Centre for Knowledge on Men's Violence Against Women: *Hedersrelaterat våld och förtryck – en kunskaps- och forskningsöversikt*, 27.
7. Rambøll Management Consulting: *Strategier og initiative til forebyggelse af negative social control og æresrelaterat vold i de nordiske lande*, Study. Copenhagen, 2020, 7.

honour-based violence and oppression. Strategic work in Sweden, Finland and Iceland, on the other hand, is characterised by more indirect measures. Honour-based violence is included in broader strategic initiatives, which encompass work to combat men's violence against women and violence in close relationships.

In Denmark and Norway, negative social control and honour-based violence are included in the scope of violence in close relationships, while Finland, Iceland and Sweden include honour-based violence and oppression in the scope of men's violence against women and violence in close relationships.[8] Men's violence against women is a broader area that includes both interpersonal violence (violence in close relationships) and structural violence (patriarchal structures and norms as well as violence against women in public spaces).

In addition, work against honour-based violence in Norway, Denmark, Finland and Iceland is included in the area of integration, with a focus on ethnic minorities and closed religious communities. According to the study, there is a degree of ambiguity in Sweden in terms of how the problem is viewed by different actors: as belonging to the area of integration or as a separate area. The study noted that Sweden's official steering documents contained no explicit references to immigrant groups or ethnic minorities.[9]

The study also highlights organisational differences in how preventive work, outreach and intervention efforts are organised. Different countries place varying degrees of emphasis on these three areas, and there are varying degrees of coordination between strategic work and practical measures, as well as between the actors involved. This study will tie in with the results presented in the 2020 study, which focused on the use of concepts and problem formulations.

The Istanbul Convention and Grevio reviews

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) is an international convention that aims to combat violence against women and violence in close relationships.[10] The Convention has been ratified by all Nordic countries. The purpose of the Convention is to protect women and girls against all forms of violence, including honour-based violence and oppression, and to prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence against women and domestic violence. The Convention establishes that violence against women is an expression of unequal power relations. According to the Istanbul Convention, honour-based violence and oppression are understood as a form of gender-based violence.

8. Rambøll Management Consulting: *Strategier og initiative til forebyggelse af negative social control og æresrelaterat vold i de nordiske lande*, Study. Copenhagen, 2020, 77.
9. Rambøll Management Consulting: *Strategier og initiative til forebyggelse af negative social control og æresrelaterat vold i de nordiske lande*, Study. Copenhagen, 2020, 78.
10. The Council of Europe: *Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*, Istanbul 2011. Available: https://rm.coe.int/1680462544

Honour and honour-based violence are addressed in the Convention in the following context: The preamble states that "crimes committed in the name of so-called 'honour'...constitute a serious violation of the human rights of women and girls."[11] Furthermore, Article 12 states that Parties to the Convention "shall ensure that culture, custom, religion, tradition or so-called 'honour' shall not be considered as justification for any acts of violence covered by the scope of [the] Convention."[12] Article 42 states that "Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that, in criminal proceedings initiated following the commission of any of the acts of violence covered by the scope of [the] Convention, culture, custom, religion, tradition or so-called 'honour' shall not be regarded as justification for such acts. This covers, in particular, claims that the victim has transgressed cultural, religious, social or traditional norms or customs of appropriate behaviour."[13] In other words, all parties are encouraged to prohibit any attempts to justify crimes on the basis of so-called honour.

The Council of Europe's expert group GREVIO[14] serves as the monitoring mechanism for the Istanbul Convention and is tasked with regularly reviewing the compliance of countries that have acceded to the Convention. The following section summarises GREVIO's reviews of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden in relation to honour-based violence.

Denmark was reviewed in 2017 in a so-called Baseline Evaluation Report. The general criticism concerned Denmark's gender-neutral approach to issues of violence, which results in less specialist support for women only. According to the review, gender-based violence has been replaced by gender-neutral concepts and terminology, such as 'bi-directional violence', 'negative social control' (a concept that only seems to apply to people with immigrant backgrounds) and the use of the term 'patient' or 'client' instead of 'woman'.[15] In relation to honour-based violence, GREVIO writes that Denmark's action plans present an understanding of "honour-related conflicts and negative social control" that is not based on a gendered understanding of violence. GREVIO believes that approaches that focus on culture rather than gender power relations obscure the root causes of honour-based violence as a form of gender-based violence to which women are subjected because they are women, not just because they belong to a particular ethnic group. This prevents a broader perspective on the various manifestations of violence against women. It can also contribute to the perpetuation of stereotypes about ethnic minorities that results in them being discriminated against.[16]

11. The Council of Europe: *Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*, Istanbul 2011. Available: https://rm.coe.int/1680462544, 4.
12. The Council of Europe: *Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*, Istanbul 2011. Available: https://rm.coe.int/1680462544, 8.
13. The Council of Europe: *Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*, Istanbul 2011. Available: https://rm.coe.int/1680462544, 16.
14. Note: GREVIO – Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.
15. GREVIO: *Baseline Evaluation Report on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, Denmark*, 2017. Available: https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/denmark, 7.
16. GREVIO: Baseline Evaluation Report, Denmark: 16, 59.

Furthermore, GREVIO notes that responsibility for the various national action plans is divided between the Ministry of Justice, Department of Gender Equality within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Integration and Immigration (violence in close relationships) and the Ministry of Immigration and Integration (honour-based violence). Without any obvious links and structures for cooperation, such coexistence of different national action plans can easily lead to fragmentation and the division of policies that can stand in the way of consensus and continuity in the work against violence.[17] GREVIO also criticises Danish media coverage for its tendency to portray incidents of violence against women in a sensationalist manner, attributing violence to a particular migrant community or trivialising violence by referring to it as a 'family tragedy'. These problematic portrayals of violence risk obscuring the power dynamics behind violence and its gendered nature.[18] This criticism is not directed at the state's work to combat violence, but it is nevertheless relevant to raise in relation to the problem itself.

Finland's work against violence was reviewed in 2019. GREVIO notes and criticises a similar tendency to that seen in Denmark, namely gender neutrality in relation to issues of violence, which runs counter to Finland's strong political tradition of working for equality between men and women.[19] GREVIO writes: "Without an in-depth understanding of the gendered nature of all forms of violence against women, underlying issues of power and control and its impact on victims, investigations and case-building will be lacking in quality."[20] GREVIO has also requested that violence against ethnic minorities and women with migrant backgrounds be given greater prominence, for example through studies of violence and special initiatives. GREVIO also states that the gendered nature of violence should be emphasised, including in cases of honour-based violence.[21]

Iceland's work to combat violence against women was reviewed in 2022. GREVIO urges Iceland to promote awareness-raising campaigns and conduct research on forms of violence that are currently less explored in Iceland, such as stalking, female genital cutting, forced marriage, forced sterilisation, forced abortion and violence in the name of 'honour'. In Iceland, there were no specific steering documents or action plans for combating these forms of violence. GREVIO acknowledges that the lack of specific steering documents is due to the relatively low frequency of incidents and reporting, but at the same time notes that this may have a negative impact on women belonging to migrant

17. GREVIO: Baseline Evaluation Report, Denmark: 16.
18. GREVIO: Baseline Evaluation Report, Denmark: 30.
19. GREVIO: *Baseline Evaluation Report on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence*, Finland, 2019. Available: https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/finland?p_p_id=56_INSTANCE_hXkoY75OGWcN&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=column-4&p_p_col_pos=1&p_p_col_count=2, 6.
20. GREVIO: *Baseline Evaluation Report on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence*, Finland, 2019. Available: https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/finland?p_p_id=56_INSTANCE_hXkoY75OGWcN&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=column-4&p_p_col_pos=1&p_p_col_count=2.
21. GREVIO: *Baseline Evaluation Report on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence*, Finland, 2019. Available: https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/finland?p_p_id=56_INSTANCE_hXkoY75OGWcN&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=column-4&p_p_col_pos=1&p_p_col_count=2, 51.

groups.[22] Another criticism raised concerns the lack of measures to combat intersectional discrimination, to which women with a migrant background, for example, are exposed or at risk of exposure.[23]

Norway underwent a review in 2022, the same year as Iceland. In its review, GREVIO criticises Norway's approach to dealing with negative social control, violence in the name of so-called honour, forced marriage and female genital cutting from a cultural perspective. GREVIO writes: "negative social control, violence related to 'honour', forced marriage and female genital mutilation which appears to regard the issue as a cultural one instead of adopting a gendered understanding of violence committed in the name of 'honour'".[24] GREVIO welcomes Norway's efforts to address the issue of honour-based violence but believes that approaching the problem from the view of culture and integration risks overlooking the root causes of honour-based violence. It may also contribute to reinforcing stereotypes of ethnic minorities.[25] GREVIO opposes the construction of violence in the name of honour and violence that occurs within families with migrant backgrounds as different phenomena. Another criticism raised concerns the tendency towards a gender-neutral approach to the problem of violence, both in the private and public domains. This renders the gender equality perspective invisible in relevant laws, steering documents, data, etc.[26]

Sweden was reviewed in 2018. On the one hand, it is praised for clearly recognising the gendered nature of violence in its steering documents, measures and educational materials. On the other hand, it is noted that comprehensive political measures taken to combat violence against women sometimes fail to cover certain groups, namely women belonging to national minorities, women with disabilities, women with migrant backgrounds and other women who are exposed to inter-sectional discrimination.[27] GREVIO also writes that criticism has been levelled at the discourse on honour-based violence and how it is reflected in key steering documents and material used by schools. 'Honour-related' value systems and their consequences for girls and boys seem to be discussed exclusively in relation to people born outside Sweden and as something that only occurs among non-ethnic Swedes. As a result, preventive work within the school system is criticised for singling out ethnic minorities. The focus is more on children's membership of a

22. GREVIO: *Baseline Evaluation Report on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, Iceland*, 2022. Available: https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/iceland, 13.
23. GREVIO: Baseline Evaluation Report, Iceland: 18, 76.
24. GREVIO: *Baseline Evaluation Report on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, Norway*, 2022. Available: https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/norway, 17, 74.
25. GREVIO: *Baseline Evaluation Report on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, Norway*, 2022. Available: https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/norway, 18.
26. GREVIO: *Baseline Evaluation Report on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, Norway*, 2022. Available: https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/norway, 74.
27. GREVIO: *Baseline Evaluation Report on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, Sweden*, 2018. Available: https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/sweden, 7.

collective than on more comprehensive attempts to identify children who may be exposed to violence and control or witness to violence in the home.[28]

In November 2024, the first thematic review of Sweden was published, titled *Building trust by delivering support, protection and justice*. In its review, GREVIO welcomes Sweden's new legislation in the area, including the criminalisation of honour-based violence and oppression. However, the committee expresses concern about the ethnic perspective that dominates the country's work against honour-based violence and oppression. Among other things, they criticise the association of honour-based violence with specific groups of migrants that are perceived as patriarchal, which risks contributing to the marginalisation of minorities. Furthermore, the significance of patriarchal structures in relation to other forms of violence against women is undermined due to a gender-neutral perspective on violence.[29]

In summary, the Istanbul Convention, together with the GREVIO review committee, asserts that honour-based violence is a form of gender-based violence and that the gendered nature of this violence risks being obscured when focus is directed on culture as the root cause. At the same time, a gender-based understanding does not exclude the need for specially targeted measures for different groups. GREVIO welcomes the fact that several countries are all separately addressing the problem of honour-based violence but is critical of integration perspectives and the portrayal of honour-based violence as something that only occurs among ethnic minorities. A key development observed in several countries is the tendency to adopt a gender-neutral approach to violence against women. The dominant cultural understanding of honour-based violence is linked to and can be seen as an expression of this development. Honour-based violence is considered patriarchal, while other forms of violence against women are presented as gender-neutral.

Delimination

Due to the study's aims and methodology, certain limitations need to be clarified. Firstly, it does not identify cases that can be viewed as successful examples or effective methods. Given that it is based on a critical policy analysis, it is beyond the scope of this study to investigate or measure strategies and initiatives that produce the best results. Such an assessment would require a different study design, for example involving the collection of statistical data and conducting of interviews.

28. GREVIO: *Baseline Evaluation Report on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, Sweden*, 2018. Available: https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/sweden, 28.
29. GREVIO: First thematic evaluation report *Building trust by delivering support, protection and justice*, Sweden, 2024. Available: https://rm.coe.int/first-thematic-evaluation-report-on-building-trust-by-delivering-suppo/1680b29c62, 12–13.

Secondly, although the study covers several countries and autonomous regions, it does not aim to compare between them how work is conducted.

At the same time, different countries and autonomous regions will be related to each other based on the questions being answered. As previously noted, the scope of material varies between the different countries and autonomous regions, which also makes comparison difficult.

As stated, the study material consists of various types of documents, such as national strategies, action plans and steering documents for authorities. By its very nature, such material is subject to change based on political and legal developments. Therefore, a time limit was set for the collection of material. The collection of material took place during spring, ending in August 2024. Processing and analysis were carried out during the autumn of 2024. As such, any changes made to existing material or new material published after August 2024 is not included in the scope of the report.

Disposition

The introductory section presents the background, purpose, methodology and limitations of the study. The subsequent section describes research perspectives on honour-based violence and oppression, previous studies of strategies and initiatives for preventing negative social control and honour-based violence in the Nordic countries, and GREVIO's reviews of the Nordic countries. This is followed by a study of how work against honour-based violence and oppression is organised in the Nordic countries and in the autonomous regions, with a focus on concepts, strategic documents and actors that guide the work against honour-based violence. The concluding section provides a critical analysis of the studied material.

Study

This section presents a study of how work against honour-based violence and oppression is organised in the various Nordic countries and autonomous regions. The following questions are addressed:

- How is the issue of honour-based violence and oppression understood in the various Nordic countries at the policy level? What other terms are used and how?
- How is work against honour-based violence and oppression organised in the various Nordic countries at a strategic level? What are the main actors, tasks and initiatives that can be identified?

Denmark

In the government document *Ansvar for Danmark: Det politiske grundlag for Danmarks regering* (Responsibility for Denmark: The Political Basis for the Government of Denmark), the government of Denmark expresses zero tolerance for violence against women and negative social control. It is noted that women with immigrant or refugee backgrounds in particular are overrepresented in women's crisis centres in the country. The government also expresses its desire to strengthen preventive work by improving support and assistance for victims of violence. A desire is expressed for a greater and more persistent focus on work against negative social control.[30]

Concepts and their usage

Honour-based conflicts

In Denmark the concepts 'honour-based conflicts' and 'negative social control' are used. The term 'honour-based crime' is also used in the judicial system. Honour-based conflicts are understood as conflicts that arise within close family relationships based on a perception that the family's honour has been damaged. Family honour is in turn linked to the idea that the interests of the family are paramount and that the actions of the individual affect the family as a whole (the collective) and its honour. The term 'honour-based' refers to the underlying cause of conflict – a perception that the honour of the collective or family has been damaged. The term 'conflict' is used to highlight incompatible attitudes, interests, beliefs and values among the parties involved in relation to the perceived act of dishonour, with the focus centred on the conflict of interest.

30. Government of Denmark: *Ansvar for Danmark: Det politiske grundlag for Danmarks regering*, 2022, 44–45.

The description of honour-based conflicts emphasises this collectivist dimension (a collectivist outlook on life) as being incongruous with individuals' right to self-determination. According to the collectivist worldview, individuals are expected to adapt to the collective (the family) and patriarchal honour norms. The family is presented as having the right to control and limit individual family members' ability to make decisions about their close relationships, education, clothing and so on. The immediate and extended family (including grandparents, uncles, aunts) are part of the collective. Control of individual family members serves two functions: to punish dishonourable behaviour and to prevent such behaviour. In this way, the concept of negative social control is used as a strategy alongside physical and psychological violence, sexual violence, economic violence, isolation, re-education trips and involuntary stays abroad. Honour killings and female genital cutting are described as the worst examples.[31]

Negative social control

Violence and control are used both to punish those who violate norms and behaviour that the family or community considers decent (honourable) and to prevent behaviour that may be perceived as a violation of norms. Negative social control is one of the strategies used, alongside other forms of violence such as physical, psychological, economic and sexual violence. Specific examples include re-education trips, involuntary stays abroad, female genital cutting and honour killings.[32] The discussion surrounding negative social control refers to women and girls with immigrant backgrounds and promotes the argument that they should have the same rights as ethnic Danish women and girls. At the intervention level, there is also a focus on the dual position of men and boys as perpetrators and victims, respectively, as well as on LGBTI individuals and religious apostates as particularly vulnerable target groups.

Work against honour-based violence and oppression

Efforts to combat honour-based violence in Denmark involve a number of sectors, with state authorities, municipalities, voluntary organisations and specialist units working together to prevent and combat violence. The Danish strategy focuses on protecting those at risk, training professionals and raising awareness of the problem in society.

Work at the strategic level

In recent years, the Government of Denmark has adopted several action plans containing specific measures against honour-based violence. These action plans include preventive measures, protection and support for victims of violence, and training and skills development for professionals.

31. Danish Agency for International Recruitment and Integration (SIRI): *Hvad er æresrelaterede konflikter?*, 2021
32. Danish Agency for International Recruitment and Integration (SIRI): *Hvad er æresrelaterede konflikter?*, 2021

Responsible ministry/ department	Ministry of Immigration and Integration (Department of Migration and Integration)
Actors at the national level	Nationalt Center mod Æresrelaterede Konflikter (MÆRK; National Centre against Honour-based Conflicts) Sikkerhedskonsulenterne (The Security Consultants) Koordinationsenheden mod genopdragelsesrejser og ufrivillige udlandsophold (Coordination unit against child abduction and disciplining trips) Ligestillingsministeriet (Department for Gender Equality) Danish Health Authority Danish Authority of Social Services and Housing National Social Appeals Board The Agency of Family Law STUK – Danish Board of Education and Quality (Ministry of Children and Education) SVÆV–teams – specialised teams for cases involving domestic violence, rape, stalking and honour-based crimes within the police force VISO – Den national Videns og Speci-aliseringsorganisation (The Danish Knowledge and Specialisation Organisation)
Strategic steering documents	*Et frit liv i Danmark – Regeringens styrkede indsats mod negativ social kontrol og parallelsamfund 2025–2028* (A free life in Denmark – The Government's strengthened efforts against specified honour crimes and parallel societies 2025–2028)[33] *Barnet lov: Kommunale beredskabsplaner for æresrelaterede konflikter og negativ social kontrol* (The Child Act: Municipal contingency plans for honour-based conflicts and specified honour crimes) *Børnene Først* (Children First) reform: • Intervention team • Family treatment *National handlingsplan mod partnervold og partnerdrab 2023–2026* (National action plan against violence in close relationships and intimate partner homicide 2023–2026) *Plads til forskellighed i fællesskabet – LGBT+ handlingsplan 2022–2025* (Room for diversity in the community – LGBT+ action plan 2022–2025)[34]

33. The action plan was launched in January 2025 but in falling outside the scope of the report has not been included in the analysed material. Available: https://uim.dk/media/wpjfgjd2/et-frit-liv-i-danmark-januar-2025.pdf
34. The action plan is analysed in the in-depth section.

The *National handlingsplan mod partnervold og partnerdrab 2023–2026* (*National action plan against violence in close relationships and intimate partner homicide 2023–2026*) was developed in 2023 and contains several initiatives, including the 'development of a systematic screening tool for healthcare professionals when meeting pregnant women and new parents' to identify the occurrence of violence in close relationships, including honour-based violence and negative social control.[35] In connection with the government's national action plan, the Danish Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the Danish Agency for International Recruitment and Integration and the National Centre Against Honour-based Conflicts, has produced documentation for professionals to help them detect violence in close relationships, including honour-based conflicts. This includes handbooks aimed at municipal employees, maternity care providers, healthcare practitioners and general medical practitioners in Denmark.[36]

In May 2024, the National Board of Health and Welfare, together with the Danish Agency for International Recruitment and Integration, produced a handbook for detecting violence in close relationships among pregnant women, expectant mothers and new parents. The purpose of the handbook is to raise awareness among healthcare professionals about issues relating to violence in close relationships. It is noted that meetings with patients in maternity care offer a rare opportunity to detect honour-based violence. According to the document, ethnic minorities are defined as particularly vulnerable. This particular vulnerability is due to their limited opportunities to contact healthcare services because of a lack of knowledge about how the healthcare system works and of the Danish language. It is noted that there are significant differences between different ethnic groups, but at the same time it can be observed that citizens with an immigrant background generally contact healthcare services less frequently. Within this group, women from ethnic minority backgrounds are highlighted as particularly vulnerable for several reasons, such as difficult migration processes, insufficient financial resources, limited connection to the labour market, social isolation and a lack of social networks in Denmark. This is also a target group that is more exposed to discrimination.[37]

Main actors, tasks and initiatives

The Nationalt Center mod Æresrelaterede Konflikter (MÆRK; National Centre against Honour-based Conflicts) is part of the Danish Agency of International Recruitment and Integration, SIRI, under the Danish Ministry of Immigration and Integration. Before MÆRK was established in 2024, the Office for Diversity and Prevention at SIRI was responsible for tasks related to honour-based conflicts and negative social control. In 2024, responsibility for these tasks was transferred to MÆRK, which at the same time was given a strengthened mandate to coordinate

35. Government of Denmark: *National handlingsplan mod partnervold og partnerdrab* 2023–2026, 13.
36. Danish Agency for International Recruitment and Integration (SIRI): *Håndbog til rådgivning på voksenområdet. Æresrelaterede konflikter og negativ social kontrol*, 2022.
37. The Danish Health Authority and The Danish Agency for International Recruitment and Integration: *Håndbog om opsporing i sundhedsplejen. Vold i nære relationer hos gravide, kommende og nye forældre*, 2024.

national efforts in this area. In a government document from 2022, the Government of Denmark expressed a desire for a greater and more persistent focus on work against negative social control.[38] The government text reads: "We want a greater and sustained focus on how we as a society can put an end to negative social control, so that girls and women with migrant backgrounds enjoy the same rights and freedoms as Danish women and men."[39]

MÆRK's responsibilities include the following:

- Advising municipalities and other actors, including other authorities and civil society actors, on the prevention and management of honour-based conflicts.
- Providing training and skills development for professionals working with relevant issues.
- Coordinating efforts at the national level and the development of methods and tools for managing honour-based conflicts.
- Collecting and disseminating knowledge about honour-based conflicts.
- Administration as the secretariat for the Sikkerhedskonsulenter (security consultants), the coordination unit against involuntary stays abroad and re-education trips, and a new system of rights advisors in youth education.

MÆRK offers two types of advisory services: one through the centre's general advisory service and the other through the national group of security consultants. The general advisory service offers advice to professionals working in local authorities, professionals working in local authorities and other public authorities. Representatives from civil society can also contact MÆRK for advice based on its knowledge and experience of preventive measures. The scope of the advisory service includes:

- The prevention, detection and management of honour-based conflicts and negative social control.
- Optimising and improving the organisation of work.
- Mapping and strengthening cooperation between civil society and municipalities.

MÆRK also offers professional development in the following areas:

- Honour-based conflict and negative social control
- Legislation concerning honour-based conflicts and negative social control
- Handling doubt in professional contexts
- Negative social control as a barrier to the employment of ethnic minority women

38. Government of Denmark: *Ansvar for Danmark: Det politiske grundlag for Danmarks regering*, 2022, 44-45.
39. Government of Denmark: *Ansvar for Danmark: Det politiske grundlag for Danmarks regering*, 2022.

- Democratic education and human rights
- Closed families and environments

MÆRK also offers training for municipal employees to develop special expertise so they can serve as knowledge resource in providing guidance and advice to their colleagues on honour-based conflicts and negative social control.

As of 1 April 2024, when the new Children's Law (Barnets Lov, LBK No. 83 of 25/01/2024) came into force, every municipality is obliged to have a plan in place to prevent, detect and deal with honour-based conflicts and negative social control directed at children, young people and their families, to screen for honour-based conflicts and to carry out risk assessments. MÆRK provides support to municipalities during the planning process.

A national security consultation team was established in 2018 as part of the Danish national action plan against honour-based conflicts and negative social control.[40] Security consultants offer case-level advice to professionals and citizens on honour-based conflicts and re-education trips. They are based in five regions and have offices in four municipalities: Copenhagen, Aarhus, Odense and Aalborg, but work as a national team and offer advice to anyone in the country regardless of their municipality.

Security consultants provide advice on risk assessments and ensuring the safety and security of citizens. The advice covers issues such as honour-based conflicts, negative social control, re-education trips and involuntary stays abroad. Security consultants provide support to professionals in individual cases and coordinate work with other authorities and relevant actors. Advice to citizens covers issues such as the options available to individuals, what rights citizens have, how an individual's behaviour (e.g. online) can impact safety and so on.[41]

Security consultants provide support by coordinating the efforts of actors within municipalities and government agencies, as well as other efforts related to specific cases. This is done on a voluntary basis. A key task in this is familiarising all parties with the specific, current risk assessment. Citizens must always be closely involved and informed, and coordination must be carried out in a way that supports the empowerment of citizens and their ability to take responsibility for their individual circumstances. It is important to note that security consultants cannot step in as an authority in specific cases but provide support to relevant actors involved. Municipalities still have primary responsibility in individual cases.

40. *National handlingsplan til forebyggelse af æresrelaterede konflikter og negativ social kontrol*, 2016; Sikkerhedskonsulentordningen (The Security Consultant Scheme), 2017.
41. Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing: Lov om ændring af lov om social service, lov om retssikkerhed og administration på det sociale område og forskellige andre love, LOV nr 217 af 05/03/2024. Available: https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/lta/2024/217

Koordinationsenheden mod genopdragelsesrejser og ufrivillige udlandsophold (The Coordination Unit for Re-education Trips and Disciplining Trips) was established in 2020. It consists of representatives from the national security consultation team, the Danish Migration Agency and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. The Coordination Unit is responsible for coordinating advice on cases of involuntary stays abroad between the unit's members and other relevant authorities and actors. The Coordination Unit also provides advice to municipalities, authorities, citizens and other relevant actors.

SIRI/MÆRK administers a pool of funds for which the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Denmark and municipalities can apply to cover all or part of the costs of repatriating[42] people over the age of 18 who are staying abroad involuntarily due to an honour-based conflict. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Denmark's security service/citizen service should be contacted.

The Danish Migration Agency's helpline for young people at risk of coercion offers guidance to young people who are at risk of being sent abroad against their will, as well as to reunited women seeking to leave a physically and/or psychologically violent marriage who need specific guidance regarding the possibilities for retaining their residence permit. Authorities, support persons and others seeking guidance in connection with the above problems can also contact the Danish Migration Agency.

The Danish Knowledge and Specialisation Organisation (VISO) provides free advice and investigation services on honour-based conflicts to professionals working in local municipalities. In individual cases, VISO offers advice and investigation services to professionals when a citizen under or over the age of 18 is exposed to an honour-based conflict. Advice may include, for example, a risk assessment, professional counselling and discussions with an at-risk young person and their family. In so-called group cases, characterised by a specific, local challenge in relation to a limited group of citizens experiencing the same problem, VISO offers skills development for public officials and other professionals.

Municipalities in Denmark play a key role in identifying and dealing with cases of honour-based violence. They are responsible for offering protection and support to individuals at risk of violence, including providing sheltered accommodation. The municipalities also work to integrate preventive measures in schools and other local institutions. The municipalities are responsible for taking proactive measures when there is concern that children or adults are being subjected to honour-based violence. This may include offering family treatment, a support contact person or other proactive measures. In taking action, it is the municipality's task to support safety-oriented and rehabilitative work. Measures are taken if someone is exposed or at risk of being exposed to honour-based violence or control.

42. Repatriation means the return of someone to their home country.

Under the Danish Act on Social Services (Section 12a), municipalities must offer free counselling to persons over the age of 18 seeking help due to honour-based conflict. Adults at risk of exposure to serious honour-based conflict must be offered an action plan if the municipality deems it necessary. Municipalities are also responsible for the integration of new arrivals who have been forced to move between municipalities due to honour-based conflict.

The Children First reform (Børnene Først) is based on the principles of the Children's Act (Barnets lov) and also includes the establishment of specialised interventions such as intervention teams and family treatment aimed at ethnic minority families.

The intervention team aims to ensure early and coordinated efforts to protect children and young people from violence, negative social control and other social challenges by offering targeted support to families in vulnerable situations (cooperation between MÆRK, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing, and the Appeals Board).

Family treatment aims to support the whole family in changing inappropriate patterns and promoting positive development in the home, with particular attention to cultural and social conditions that may affect non-Western families.[43]

Examples of voluntary organisations

In Denmark, there are a number of voluntary organisations working on issues associated with honour-based violence. RED Rådgivning is a national organisation that offers professional counselling on honour-based conflicts. It offers advice, including via the RED Support Line, to young people, adults, parents and professionals experiencing or working with honour-based conflicts. RED Rådgivning offers psychological counselling or physical trauma treatment to help people process trauma and has a network of psychologists and physical trauma therapists throughout Denmark. RED Safehouse offers special sheltered accommodation for both men and women exposed to negative social control, honour-based violence, forced marriage or threats thereof. RED+ is a crisis centre for ethnic minority LGBTI young people aged 16–30 with honour-based problems. Søstre mod vold og kontrol is a non-profit association that trains volunteers and works to promote women's freedom and equality through counselling and support.

Identified challenges

No challenges are explicitly mentioned in the analysed material. However, the challenges identified in connection with an evaluation of the *National Action Plan to Prevent Honour-based Conflicts and Specified Honour Crimes* from 2016 are highlighted. The action plan proposed several measures and initiatives that were

43. Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing: *Børnene Først*, Available: https://www.sm.dk/arbejdsomraader/boern-og-unge-i-udsatte-positioner/boernene-foerst

implemented during 2017–2020 and these were presented in the evaluation, including the travel team (Rejseholdet) and the national security consultants.

The evaluation showed that, overall, the action plan has fulfilled the objectives for the four areas described in the plan.[44] However, some challenges have been highlighted, including those of resources. The evaluation concluded that insufficient resources have been allocated for the proposed measures. It was pointed out that more evacuation accommodation and additional resources to meet psychological support needs are required. The security consultants have also faced a lack of resources to disseminate knowledge to municipalities where they are not established.

Furthermore, the evaluation highlights an ongoing need for knowledge among professionals. Among other things, key individuals interviewed in connection with the evaluation pointed out that there is still a lack of knowledge about the connection between honour-based conflicts and negative social control and other social problems (e.g. unemployment, lack of resources, citizens' housing situation, etc.). They also pointed out that there is a lack of knowledge about the connection between crime and the role of boys in negative social control as both victims and perpetrators, as well as a lack of knowledge about good examples in relation to the placement of children who are directly or indirectly involved in honour-based conflicts and negative social control.

Conclusions and comments

Efforts to combat honour-based violence in Denmark are extensive and involve a range of different actors, including government agencies, municipalities, non-governmental organisations and specialised centres. These efforts focus on preventing violence, vulnerable people and training professionals, with a strong emphasis on cooperation and specialisation in this area. Between 2017 and 2020, a national action plan was implemented that was specifically aimed at preventing honour-based conflicts and negative social control.

In Denmark, the issue of honour-based violence falls within the scope of integration policy. *Regeringsunderlaget 2022* notes that women from migrant and refugee backgrounds are overrepresented in women's crisis centres in the country and that girls and women with migrant backgrounds should have the same rights as ethnic Danish women and girls. Although it is not explicitly stated that such women and girls are vulnerable to honour-based violence, it can be taken as an implicit assumption given the strong focus on integration, democratic education and the dissemination of knowledge about human rights.

44. The included areas: better assistance for victims of honour-based conflicts and negative social control, improved prevention of honour-based conflicts and negative social control, mobilisation of confrontation against oppression and negative social control, systematic knowledge and documentation efforts.

This division between ethnic Danes and minorities is made explicit in various steering documents and on the websites of the responsible authorities. With regard to the concept of 'honour-based conflict', there is an emphasis on the incompatibility between different values, beliefs and interests that arises between migrant families with patriarchal honour norms and individuals who oppose these norms and are thus interpreted as embracing Danish values.

Ethnic minorities are referred to as particularly vulnerable groups due to their limited opportunities to contact public authorities (e.g. health and medical services). This is explained by their limited knowledge of how the systems in Danish society operate and the Danish language. When the limitation is understood in this way, it is logical to see information campaigns and knowledge dissemination as a solution, but other causes of specific vulnerability are also mentioned, such as difficult migration processes, a lack of socio-economic resources, limited connections to the labour market and vulnerability to discrimination. On the one hand, considering honour-based violence from an integration perspective can help to highlight more forms of vulnerability at the individual and structural levels, but on the other, it can lead to further stigmatisation of certain groups.

What further characterises the Danish context is a strong focus on security, as is evidenced by the establishment of security consultants to assist various authorities and municipalities in matters relating to foreign travel, involuntary stays abroad and so-called re-education trips. Risk assessments, contingency plans and other security issues are an important part of the country's work against all types of violence. However, given greater attention to these issues in relation to honour-based violence contributes to the pre-existing narrative about the unique nature of honour-based violence that promotes it as being more dangerous than violence in close relationships in other contexts.

Finland

Honour-based violence has recently begun to receive greater attention in Finland, while issues such as female genital cutting and forced marriage have long been topical social issues in public debate. At present, there is no specific strategy focusing specifically on honour-based violence, but two perspectives through which to understand the current work against honour-based violence can be distinguished. The first sees honour-based violence as a form of gender-based violence, domestic violence or violence in close relationships. The second sees it is a form of violence against children, which in turn is also related to gender and linked to heteronormative ideas about the behaviour of girls and boys.

Concepts and their usage

Finland's national policies and strategic steering documents most often use the term 'honour-based violence', but the term 'negative social control' is also used. The definition of honour-based violence can be found in the national *Action Plan for Combatting Violence Against Women 2020–2023* [45] and *Non-Violent Childhoods: Action Plan for the Prevention of Violence against Children 2020–2025*.[46]

In 2021 and 2023, workshops were held with the aim of developing terminology related to honour-based violence. Representatives from various ministries, organisations, actors and researchers participated in the workshops. The collaboration resulted in a list of recommended terms and terms that should be avoided. The list of terms included 'shame', 'honour', 'honour-based conflict' and 'coercive control'. The importance of context when using different terms was particularly emphasised. The concept of 'culture' and its various uses were also discussed. It was noted that despite the important influence of culture on people's lives, the term 'culture' should be avoided when explaining complex social processes with many different underlying causes.[47]

Honour-based violence

Honour-based violence is defined as follows:

> "Honour-based violence can take the form of psychological, physical, sexual and economic violence. In milder forms, it can involve strict limits on freedom of movement, friend groups and life choices, abuse, economic violence, threats and pressure. In extreme cases, preserving the honour of the family and relatives can lead to physical violence, female genital cutting, forced marriage or even murder. Violence can be perpetrated by a number of different people and in a variety of ways. The perpetrator and the victim's immediate circle may believe that the violence or threat of violence is justified."[48]

In *Non-Violent Childhoods: Action Plan for the Prevention of Violence against Children 2020–2025*, honour-based violence is characterised by the use or threat of gender-based violence with the aim of protecting or restoring the honour of a family or clan when a family member is suspected of not following (or intending not to follow) the group's rules on social and sexual behaviour.[49] The action plan describes honour-based violence from a rights perspective, i.e. that honour-based violence is a violation of a child's physical integrity and/or right to self-determination.

45. Ministry of Justice: *Programmet för bekämpning av våld mot kvinnor 2020–2023,* 2021:1.
46. Ministry of Social Affairs and Health: *Åtgärdsplan för förebyggande av våld mot barn 2020–2025 "En barndom utan våld",* 2021:3.
47. Sopu: *Kunniaan liittyvän väkivallan vastaisen asiantuntijatyön yksikkö*, 2023; Available: https://soputila.fi/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Kunniaan-liittyvan-vakivallan-terminologia-1.pdf
48. Ministry of Justice 2021:1, 36.
49. Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2021:3, 506.

The definition of honour-based violence focuses on the expression of violence and examples of controlling behaviour, the collective dimension and the motive for violence – the protection or restoration of honour. It highlights that, like violence against children, honour-based violence is characterised by its purpose to not only punish or control a child's behaviour but to protect the family's reputation in the eyes of others. It is also noted that actual or perceived external pressure to use violence to protect the family's honour plays an important role.

The action plan emphasises that honour-based violence should not be viewed separately from other forms of domestic violence and violence in close relationships. It also confirms that the most serious forms of honour-based violence are associated predominantly with certain migrant groups[50] but that negative social control occurs in various communities.

Negative social control

The concept of negative social control is defined as control aimed at maintaining family and other norms that includes systematic actions that contravene legislation and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and thus violate the freedom and rights of individuals. Negative social control can lead to honour-based psychological and physical violence.[51]

The *Action Plan for Combatting Violence Against Women 2020–2023* [52] highlights Satu Lidman and Tuuli Hong's research on the legal status of victims of honour-based violence in Finland. Lidman and Hong argue that when honour-based violence is described in terms of violence against women or gender-based violence in close relationships, the distinctive feature of this violence – that it is social in nature – is overlooked. In Finland (as in other Western contexts), criminal law is based on a perspective that centres on the individual and does not cover social violence.[53] Lidman and Tuuli's study highlights an important distinction between understanding and dealing with honour-based violence as a social problem and as a crime.

Work against honour-based violence and oppression

Efforts to combat honour-based violence in Finland are organised through a range of initiatives involving government agencies, welfare services, municipalities, voluntary organisations and research institutions. The focus is on identifying, preventing and combating violence through legislation, education and support for victims of violence.

50. For example, violence within the Roma minority has been highlighted and addressed within the framework of efforts to combat honour-based violence and oppression. See Finland's third national policy on Roma: *National Roma Policy (Rompo 3)*. Available: http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-00-8345-8
51. Ministry of Justice 2021:1: 36.
52. Ministry of Justice: *Programmet för bekämpning av våld mot kvinnor 2020–2023*, 2021:1.
53. Lidman, Satu and Hong, Tuuli: "Collective violence" and honour in Finland: a survey for professionals, *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, Vol. 10, No. 4, 2018, 261–271.

Work at the strategic level

Responsible ministry/ department	Ministry of Social Affairs and Health Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland
Actors at the national level	Committee for Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (NAPE) Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare – Coordinator for work against honour-based violence
Strategic steering documents	Action Plan for Combatting Violence Against Women 2020–2023 Non-Violent Childhoods: Action Plan for the Prevention of Violence against Children 2020–2025 Action plan for the prevention of genital mutilation (FGM; 2019) Action Plan for the Istanbul Convention for 2022–2025 Åtgärdsplan för förebygga Handlingsprogram mot könsstympning av fl Genomförandeplan för Istanbulkonventionen 2022–202

Finland has developed national strategies and action plans to combat violence in close relationships, including honour-based violence. The latest action plan against violence in close relationships includes measures specifically targeting honour-based violence. These plans aim to:

- strengthen legal and social protection for those exposed to honour-based violence
- educate and inform authorities and professionals in schools, healthcare and social work on how to identify and handle cases of honour-based violence
- improve cooperation between actors, including the police, social services and voluntary organisations

According to the Government Programme 2023, Finland will work to prevent various types of violence, including honour-based violence. Female genital cutting and forced marriage are specifically mentioned as acts that should be more clearly criminalised. [54] Honour-based violence is included in Finland's immigration and integration policy at the strategic level. Integration policy aims to integrate new arrivals through language and work and to ensure that they follow the rules of society. The

54. Finnish Government: *Ett starkt och engagerat Finland.* Regeringsprogram för statsminister Petteri Orpos regering 20.6.2023, 2023:59, 208.

government also aims to ensure opportunities for integration by promoting the personal responsibility of new arrivals for their integration and making the system binding. It is pointed out that Finland is working actively to prevent the formation of parallel societies.[55] Honour-based violence shall be identified and combated, awareness of honour-based violence shall be raised and penalties for honour-based violence shall be increased.[56]

The *Action Plan for Combatting Violence Against Women 2020–2023* is the central steering document in this area. The programme provides a background to the measures, various themes and the measures themselves. What is new about this programme is that it pays particular attention to two forms of violence: honour-based violence and digital violence. According to the programme, honour-based violence and oppression are forms of violence against women: "Honour-based violence should not be viewed separately from other forms of domestic violence and violence in close relationships."[57]

It is also noted that there is no action plan in Finland covering the various forms of honour-based violence. Furthermore, there are no specific national guidelines on these cases of violence. Reference is also made to *Action plan for the prevention of genital mutilation*, *Non-Violent Childhoods: Action Plan for the Prevention of Violence against Children 2020–2025* and GREVIO's recommendations. Among its recommendations, GREVIO calls on Finland to strengthen coordination and cooperation structures between different actors and to educate professionals about different forms of violence against women, such as stalking, forced marriage, female genital cutting and 'honour-based violence'.[58]

The programme for combating violence against women proposes six groups of measures:

- Raising awareness of violence against women
- Training for professionals
- Guidance for authorities
- Programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence
- Structures and regional coordination
- Investigations and inquiries

Several measures are responses to recommendations made by GREVIO to Finland, for example in relation to the legal handling of honour-based violence (investigating the need for separate criminalisation) and strengthening the competence of those

55. Finnish Government: *Ett starkt och engagerat Finland.* Regeringsprogram för statsminister Petteri Orpos regering 20.6.2023, 2023:59, 218.
56. Finnish Government: *Ett starkt och engagerat Finland.* Regeringsprogram för statsminister Petteri Orpos regering 20.6.2023, 2023:59, 219.
57. Ministry of Justice, 2021: 36.
58. Ministry of Justice, 2021: 38–39.

working with honour-based violence within the judicial system. Particular attention is paid to the need for better coordination of efforts to combat honour-based violence.

Among the steering documents referred to in the previous action plan is *Non-Violent Childhoods: Action Plan for the Prevention of Violence against Children 2020–2025.* According to the action plan, the following are considered specific issues: female genital cutting, non-medical circumcision of boys, honour-based violence and violence against children in religious communities ('spiritual violence'). These issues are addressed in the action plan from a child perspective, with reference to, among other things, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Child Welfare Act.

According to the action plan, honour-based violence differs from other violence against children due to its motive of protecting the family's reputation. It is noted that there is not much research in this area, and there is also a lack of separate statistics and a specific action plan. The overall goal is to implement more effective measures to prevent honour-based violence against children. This, in turn, is comprised of three objectives:

1. **Professionals working with issues of honour-based violence should be able to identify, prevent and intervene in honour-based violence.**

   Ekamples of measures:

   - Honour-based violence will be included as a theme in basic training and ongoing education will be conducted for relevant authorities.
   - Clear guidelines will be developed for early childhood educators, teachers, school counsellors, police officers and social and healthcare professionals on how to handle cases in which there is suspicion that a child is being subjected to honour-based violence.

2. **Cooperation between organisations and support for groups working to combat honour-based violence should be promoted.**

   Examples of measures:

   - Cooperation on honour-based violence between authorities and various organisations, including migrant organisations, will be promoted and necessary resources provided.
   - Guidelines will be developed to support the initiation of discussions with families for preventive child protection.

3. **Information should be gathered on the extent and forms of honour-based violence against children and on effective prevention measures.**

   Examples of measures:

   - A questionnaire to measure the prevalence of honour-based violence will be developed and may be included in the School Health Promotion study in the future. Information about organisations that provide assistance will be attached to the questionnaire.
   - The possibility of keeping statistics on crimes related to honour-based violence is being investigated.

In summary, the proposed measures concern training and skills development among professionals, better coordination and cooperation between a variety of actors and the collection of data on the prevalence of honour-based violence.

Furthermore, a specific group is highlighted in the action plan, namely victims of violence within religious communities, such as Laestadianism, the Pentecostal movement and the Evangelical Lutheran Church. This section considers vulnerability to violence from an experiential perspective, unlike other chapters in the action plan. Violence within religious communities is characteristically similar to honour-based violence, for example in terms of the importance of the community (fellowship and collective) and demands on the individual to conform, strong authority figures, and the justification of violence through reference to religion. The ambivalent relationship and combination of both negative and positive experiences is mentioned as an important aspect. The term 'religious violence' is used in the action plan, referring to psychological violence with a religious dimension.

The *Action Plan for the Istanbul Convention for 2022–2025* states that access to help, support and care for people who have experienced honour-based violence and undergone female genital cutting should be strengthened as part of the current social and healthcare system.[59]

The *Action plan for the prevention of genital mutilation (FGM; 2019)* describes female genital mutilation (female genital cutting) as a form of honour-based violence: "Female genital mutilation is linked to the concept of honour, and in many cultures the procedure is seen as a sign that a girl or woman is honourable and respectable and is considered a prerequisite for her to be able to marry."[60] Female genital cutting is described as a highly culture-bound phenomenon, and therefore the need to engage cultural interpreters to assist in working with communities where the tradition is practised is emphasised. It is proposed that cultural inter-

59. Finnish Government: *Genomförandeplan för Istanbulkonventionen 2022–2025*, Available: https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/164243
60. Ministry of Social Affairs and Health: *Handlingsprogram mot könsstympning av flickor och kvinnor (FGM)*, 2019: 16.

preters, i.e. those from similar cultural backgrounds, can talk about female genital cutting in a culturally sensitive manner.[61]

In its report to GREVIO in October 2023, the government notes that understanding and framing female genital cutting as a form of honour-based violence has helped to ensure that preventive measures have benefited more people and that resources for preventive work have been secured.[62]

Main actors, tasks and intiatives

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health plays a central role in coordinating efforts to combat honour-based violence at the national level. It is responsible for planning and steering efforts to combat violence in close relationships. Honour-based violence falls within the ministry's area of responsibility. Its goal is to prevent violence and develop a nationwide service system that can offer services and support to different parties involved in violence in close relationships, regardless of where they live.[63]

Finland has signed and ratified the Istanbul Convention, which entered into force on 1 August 2015. The Convention requires the establishment of a coordinating body in the field of gender-based violence, in Finland this is the Committee for Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (NAPE). The Committee operates in conjunction with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. It is responsible for coordinating, monitoring and assessing the impact of the measures required for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, which must be approved by the government. The Committee also collects relevant statistical data on cases involving all forms of violence and cooperates with other bodies.[64]

The Committee consists of representatives from various ministries and actors within the administration under their authority. The Committee shall include representatives from at least the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the National Police Board of Finland, the Finnish National Agency for Education, the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, and local government and welfare services.[65]

The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, THL, is responsible for coordinating national prevention efforts against all forms of violence, including radicalisation,

61. Ministry of Social Affairs and Health: *Handlingsprogram mot könsstympning av flickor och kvinnor (FGM),* 201957.
62. Finnish Government: *Report of the Government of Finland on the Implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence* (Istanbul Convention), 2023: 7.
63. Ministry of Social Affairs and Health: *Våld i nära relationer och inom familjen.* Available: https://stm.fi/sv/forebyggande-av-vald-i-nara-relationer
64. *Statsrådets förordning om kommissionen för bekämpning av våld mot kvinnor och av våld i hemmet*, 1008/2016. Available: https://www.finlex.fi/sv/laki/alkup/2016/20161008
65. *Statsrådets förordning om kommissionen för bekämpning av våld mot kvinnor och av våld i hemmet*, 1008/2016. Available: https://www.finlex.fi/sv/laki/alkup/2016/20161008

extremism, violence in close relationships, violence against children and honour-based violence. The Institute also coordinates a network of authorities and organisations responsible for issues relating to violence in close relationships in various welfare areas. THL holds online training courses, including on honour-based violence. There are training videos available in various languages, including Arabic and Kurdish.[66]

THL is responsible for arranging shelter services and for coordinating and developing the service network throughout the country. Sheltered housing is intended for all individuals or families who have experienced violence in close relationships or threats of violence. Shelters provide immediate crisis assistance, round-the-clock sheltered accommodation and psychosocial support, counselling and guidance in emergency situations.[67] The Nollinjen helpline is a free, national helpline for anyone who has experienced violence or threats of violence in close relationships. THL is responsible for organising the service, which is provided by Setlementti Tampere ry. The Ministry of Justice funds Nollinjen. In recent years, helpline staff have been trained in honour-based violence and guidelines have been established for dealing with cases of honour-based violence.

The Seri Support Centre is a unit at the Women's Hospital (Helsinki) that provides support to people over the age of 16 who have experienced sexual violence, regardless of gender. The Seri Support Centre provides forensic examinations, trauma support, psychological counselling and therapy. Today, there are 25 Seri Support Centres across Finland.

The municipalities and wellbeing services counties are responsible for promoting welfare, health and safety. Wellbeing services counties are responsible for organising social and health care services for victims of violence. THL is responsible for organising shelter services, which are provided by non-governmental organisations and the wellbeing services counties.

The MARAK – multidisciplinary risk assessment is a method for helping victims of serious violence in close relationships and is intended for those experiencing violence in a close relationship, honour-based violence or threats of violence in their daily lives. The method relies on working groups bringing together authorities and organisations that work to help victims and coordinating support for them. In 2023, there were a total of 40 local and regional MARAK groups in Finland.[68]

66. Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare: *Våld*. Available: https://thl.fi/sv/teman/vald
67. Ministry of Social Affairs and Health: *Våld i nära relationer och inom familjen*. Available: https://stm.fi/sv/forebyggande-av-vald-i-nara-relationer
68. Finnish Government: *Report of the Government of Finland on the Implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence* (Istanbul Convention), 2023, 240.

MARAK consists of a systematic violence risk assessment. In cases of elevated risk, the victim is assisted by a multi-professional working group. The working group draws up a multi-professional plan aimed at promoting the victim's safety.[69]

The *Action Plan for Combatting Violence Against Women 2020–2023* states that a national competence cluster on honour-based violence is to be established in connection with THL (measure no. 28). THL currently employs about 20 people working on various issues related to violence who will contribute their various areas of expertise on honour-based violence. To strengthen expertise on honour-based violence, THL will employ a coordinator for work against honour-based violence. The coordinator's tasks will include ensuring that social and healthcare professionals and other key professional groups have expertise on honour-based violence, as well as maintaining and strengthening cooperation with other organisations.[70]

The Social and healthcare team at the Finnish Immigration Service's reception unit coordinates, plans and supervises operations and arranges training for the social and healthcare staff at the reception centres. The staff at the reception centre assess the need for urgent and necessary care and consult the social and healthcare team at the Immigration Service's reception unit. They conduct an initial health examination and provide health information.[71]

Examples of voluntary organisations

Voluntary organisations play an important role. They offer support to vulnerable individuals and work to raise awareness of the problem. Examples of such organisations include MONIKA – Multicultural Women's Association, which offers protection and support to women with migrant backgrounds who are subjected to violence, including honour-based violence.[72] Setlementti Tampere's Naistari works to support women and girls at risk of honour-based violence by providing counselling and protection.[73] Setlementti Tampere Didar is specifically aimed at people who are vulnerable to honour-based violence and oppression. DIDAR offers group activities in different languages and guidance in situations involving threats of honour-based violence. The services are confidential, free of charge and open to everyone.[74]

Sopu work is an established method of working. The aim is to prevent honour-based conflicts and acts of violence within families and communities through crisis support and education. Sopu carries out preventive and crisis work in the field of honour-based conflicts and violence and is part of Loisto setlementti, an umbrella organisation for units that work in various ways with young people in vulnerable

69. Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare: MARAK – multiprofessionell riskbedömning. Available: https://thl.fi/sv/teman/vald/som-stod-for-arbetet/marak-multiprofessionell-riskbedomning
70. Ministry of Justice: *Programmet för bekämpning av våld mot kvinnor 2020–2023*, 2021: 35.
71. Ministry of Social Affairs and Health: *Handlingsprogram mot könsstympning av flickor och kvinnor (FGM),* 2019: 61.
72. Monika – Multicultural Women's Association, Finland. Available: https://monikanaiset.fi/
73. Setlementti Tampere Naistari. Available: https://setlementtitampere.fi/osallistu-toimintaamme/setlementtitalot/naistari/
74. Setlementti Tampere Didar. Available: https://setlementtitampere.fi/palvelut/vakivaltatyo/didar/

situations to improve their wellbeing, prevent marginalisation and support their mental health.[75]

The Finnish League for Human Rights is a human rights organisation that has been working on issues related to female genital cutting and honour-based violence for many years. The organisation works actively to prevent honour-based conflicts and human rights violations. It provides support to officials and monitors legal and social developments in this area. It collaborates with other organisations and coordinates a network on honour-based violence, which was founded by the organisation in 2014. It also carries out preventive work against female genital cutting of girls and women.[76]

Identified challenges

Both authorities and voluntary organisations claim that Finland has not worked specifically on issues relating to honour-based violence. The need for knowledge about the prevalence of honour-based violence is particularly highlighted, even though statistics on the incidence of violence are currently available based on data from support organisations and shelters. Lack of knowledge has also been highlighted as another challenge. Several measures proposed in various steering documents specifically target skills enhancement initiatives and training.

With reference to Satu Lidman and Tuuli Hong's research, another challenge can be highlighted, namely the conflict that arises in the legal handling of honour-based violence with its specific collective dimension and the criminal justice system that is based on individual subjects. This is a challenge that affects most Western countries that criminalise honour-based violence with a focus on the specific motive, which makes it difficult to investigate such crimes.

The *Action plan for the prevention of genital mutilation* highlights the role of the media in preventing female genital cutting, which can also be interpreted as a challenge. For example, the plan addresses the issue of how victims are represented in the media, arguing that too much focus on the suffering of victims, risks creating a greater divide between the community where the tradition is practised and the majority population. It is a challenge for journalists to highlight the conflicting motives of parents, families and communities in decisions about female genital cutting. Simplifying the issue by presenting a victim-perpetrator constellation makes it difficult to understand the tradition and communication and work against female genital cutting.[77]

Similar problems arise in relation to other forms of honour-based violence, where the media produces and reproduces discourses on honour-based violence, victims of violence and perpetrators and risks reinforcing negative stereotypical perceptions

75. Loisto setlementti. Available: https://loistosetlementti.fi/english/
76. The Finnish League for Human Rights. Available: https://ihmisoikeusliitto.fi/forbundet-for-manskliga-rattigheter/
77. Ministry of Social Affairs and Health: *Handlingsprogram mot könsstympning av flickor och kvinnor (FGM)*, 2019: 63.

of ethnic minorities. It is important to note here that the challenge identified should not be interpreted in terms of restrictions on freedom of expression but rather highlighting the media's responsibility in the representation of minority groups through the selection and prioritisation of certain cases.

Conclusions and comments

In Finland, honour-based violence and oppression is presented as a problem of integration, violence against women and violence in close relationships. As in Denmark, efforts to combat honour-based violence are included as part of integration policy. The government programme refers to honour-based violence as part of immigration and integration policy. Integration is described in relation to societal rules, language, work and the personal responsibility and obligation of individuals to integrate. Integration policy should be designed so as to counteract the formation of parallel societies. The government programme also states that honour-based violence is incompatible with the rule of law and democracy, which makes the issue of honour-based violence a matter of democracy.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare are the main actors in this area. Honour-based violence is also included in the *Action Plan for Combating Violence against Women*, which emphasises that honour-based violence should not be considered separately from other forms of domestic violence or violence in close relationships. In this way, a certain duality can be observed in the question of which policy area work against honour-based violence belongs to – integration or health and welfare. Work against honour-based violence and oppression is also included in the *Action Plan for the Istanbul Convention* and is thus included in broader work against gender-based violence.

An additional dimension is created by the fact that religious and spiritual violence is mentioned in steering documents concerning violence against children. The described mechanisms and consequences of violence, concerning the relationship between the individual and the collective (religious community) as well as exclusion and isolation, are reminiscent of the mechanisms of violence usually described in relation to honour-based violence. This raises a further question about the nature of honour-based violence and what it means for work against violence in general.

Finland has long been working on two related issues: female genital cutting and forced marriage, which are now framed as forms of honour-based violence. Previously, female genital cutting was included as an aspect of sexual health and sexual and reproductive rights, and forced marriage is treated as a form of human trafficking. Female genital cutting is interpreted as a form of gender-based violence. The Finnish government writes in its report to GREVIO that by framing these issues as honour-based violence, they receive more attention and also better funding.

Finally, honour-based violence is discussed in various steering documents in several different ways, including as an issue of democracy, equality, human rights (sexual and reproductive rights and physical integrity), criminal law, violence against women, violence against children and child rearing, integration, and sex education.

Iceland

Efforts to combat honour-based violence in Iceland are part of broader efforts to combat violence in close relationships and promote gender equality. According to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing, the number of cases or suspected cases of honour-based violence remains fairly low. Although it can be said that honour-based violence is not as common in Iceland as in other Nordic countries, the Government of Iceland is aware of the problem and the importance of taking necessary measures to combat this form of violence.

Iceland ratified the Istanbul Convention in 2018, meaning that national legislation is required to comply with the standards established therein, including provisions on gender-based violence, violence in close relationships, forced marriage and other forms of violence. The Ministry of Justice is currently leading a working group tasked with developing an action plan for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, including measures against honour-based violence.

Concepts and their usage

The concepts of honour-based violence and oppression and negative social control are not used in Iceland's steering documents. However, looking at the definition of violence and its various forms, it refers to physical, psychological, sexual, economic and digital violence, neglect, stalking and harassment. Psychological violence includes expressions such as threats, humiliation and control. Honour-based violence or violence in the name of honour, forced marriage and female genital cutting are also mentioned.

In addition to the forms and expressions mentioned above, violence based on discrimination is also mentioned: violence and harassment directed at individuals because of their origin, gender, race, sexuality, gender identity, disability or other status. Such violence can be understood as hate crime, which also includes gender.[78] The National Agency for Children and Families uses the same descriptions of violence and includes violence based on discrimination in its list of different forms of violence.[79]

78. City of Reykjavík: *Together against violence*. Available: https://reykjavik.is/saman-gegn-ofbeldi
79. National Agency for Children and Families. Available: https://www.bofs.is/radgjof-og-upplysingar/listi-yfir-barnaverndarnefndir/

Work against honour-based violence and oppression

Work at the strategic level

Responsible ministry/ department	Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Children
Actors at the national level	The National Agency for Children and Families
Strategic steering documents	*National Action Plan against Violence 2019–2022* *National Action Plan for Matters of Immigrants 2022–2025*

At present, there is no steering document that specifically addresses honour-based violence. Strategic work, including action plans, has so far focused on combating violence in all its forms, including honour-based violence and oppression. As mentioned earlier, work is underway to implement Iceland's commitment under the Istanbul Convention. Although there is currently no specific strategy or action plan for combating honour-based violence, there are other steering documents that are relevant to combating honour-based violence within the framework of general efforts to combat violence.

The *National Action Plan against Violence 2019–2022* included various measures against violence in Icelandic society, to be implemented through cooperation between various ministries, institutions, municipalities and non-governmental organisations. Strategic planning in this area is based on national legislation and international agreements. Work against violence is carried out in cooperation between the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing. The Ministry of Justice has overall responsibility for coordinating the work.

In accordance with the Istanbul Convention, the steering group, comprising representatives from various ministries, has drawn up an action plan against violence. The plan includes preventive measures, including education, as well as support and protection for victims of violence (empowerment). The measures cover violence against children, violence in close relationships, sexual, physical and psychological violence and violence against persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. The measures also cover hate crimes.

The *National Action Plan for Matters of Immigrants 2022–2025* emphasises five areas: society, family, education, the labour market and refugee issues. The action

plan also includes measures to combat violence. The aim is to make services and resources available to victims and perpetrators with a foreign background. Particular attention is paid to the fact that people with a foreign background may have language difficulties and therefore need extra support. The action plan includes preventive measures – training on different forms of violence for professionals who come into contact with people with a foreign background (social services, study and career counsellors, nurses, teachers and police officers). The emphasis is on Nordic cooperation and inviting experts from other Nordic countries to share their knowledge and experience. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing is the organisation responsible. The measures are planned to be implemented in cooperation with local authorities, the Multicultural Information Centre, the Immigrant Council, Women's Refuge, Iceland's Human Rights Office, Bjarkarhlíð, Heimilisfiður, healthcare providers, the Icelandic Red Cross, the Nordic Welfare Centre (NWC) and Nordic experts on migration issues.[80] It is important to note that the action plan does not refer to honour-based violence and oppression or concepts such as negative social control; the measures are aimed at all forms of violence to which people with a foreign background are exposed or at risk of exposure.

Main actors, tasks and initiatives

At the national level, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education and Children cooperate on issues related to violence, including honour-based violence. The ministries cooperate with the police, the judiciary and social services to address these issues.

Although specific training programmes on honour-based violence are not as widespread as in other Nordic countries, these issues are included in the training of police officers, social workers and other professionals who may come into contact with vulnerable individuals. Awareness-raising initiatives targeting the general public and specific risk groups also exist. For example, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour has supported and participated in a project led by the City of Reykjavik (Department of Welfare). In 2024, the Ministry organised training courses on honour-based violence for people working in the welfare system, including social affairs, child protection, the school system, the police, healthcare and non-governmental organisations, in collaboration with experts from Denmark. The training was the first step in raising awareness of honour-based violence, and the plan is to continue this work and expand knowledge in the area.

In spring 2014, Reykjavík City Council decided to launch a campaign against violence in collaboration with the Metropolitan Police, the health service and the women's shelter Kvennaathvarfið. The project Together Against Violence aims to combat

80. *National Action Plan for Matters of Immigrants 2022-2025*. Available: https://www.althingi.is/altext/152/s/1364.html

violence in close relationships by integrating and improving the procedures of the police, social services and child protection services in cases of children exposed to violence and by promoting greater awareness of the issue. The collaboration will provide better support to victims and perpetrators and improve the situation for children exposed to violence in the home.

Another example of a project that is now a permanent fixture is the Bjarkarhlíð Family Justice Centre in Reykjavík, which opened in 2017. During the pilot project in a small region of Iceland, the police found that people subjected to violence were more likely to report it if they received help shortly after experiencing violence. Bjarkarhlíð is run through a collaboration between the City of Reykjavík, the Reykjavík Police, Stígamót (an education and counselling centre for survivors of sexual violence), Drekaslóð (an education and service centre for survivors of all types of violence and their relatives), the women's shelter, the women's counselling service, the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Justice and the Icelandic Human Rights Centre.[81]

The opening of Bjarkarhlíð has resulted in a new procedure for incoming calls to the police pertaining to ongoing violence. Rather than responding to calls alone, police officers are accompanied by social workers, child protection representatives, doctors and lawyers to provide immediate support and guidance to the victim of violence. Afterwards, the victim is offered support and assistance at a family centre, with various actors following up with the victim after the incident. The project is now being run throughout Iceland and is accompanied by the implementation of the so-called 'Austrian model', under which authorities are given the right to remove perpetrators from the home instead of victims and to impose a restraining order on perpetrators if violence in a close relationship is suspected.

Bjarkarhlíð offers the following services to anyone over the age of 18 who has been subjected to violence:

- Advice, support and information for victims of violence
- Coordinated services under one roof
- Individual interviews
- Legal advice
- Consultation with social workers
- Support for victims of human trafficking for sexual purposes[82]

It is important to note that the model for cooperation between the police, social services, social welfare services and healthcare in cases of acute violence in families

81. https://bjarkarhlid.is/
82. Bjarkarhlíð – Family Justice Center. Available: https://reykjavik.is/sites/default/files/baelkingur_bjarkarhlid_litill_ensku.pdf

with children under the age of 18, which has been tested and implemented in Sweden, is called the Iceland model.[83] Barnahús (the National Agency for Children and Families) is another example, which has also been a source of inspiration for the government commission that laid the foundation for the Swedish Barnhusen.[84] In other words, Iceland has extensive experience of cooperation that has proven successful both in Iceland and Sweden. The County Administrative Board in Sweden has taken Iceland's experiences into account in its preliminary study ahead of developing resource centres for people who have been subjected to violence by relatives, with a particular focus on honour-based violence and oppression.[85]

Examples of voluntary organisations

Voluntary organisations play an important role in providing support to vulnerable people and in raising awareness of issues relating to honour-based violence and oppression. In Iceland, there are several organisations working for women's rights and against violence in close relationships. The Women's Shelter is one of the leading organisations offering protection and support to women and children who are victims of violence. The Icelandic Red Cross also runs a helpline and chat service that offers psychosocial support, advice, a listening ear and information about the resources available in Icelandic society. Among other things, they receive calls from adults and children who have been subjected to violence.[86]

Identified challenges

In Iceland, efforts to combat honour-based violence and oppression are part of broader efforts to combat violence in close relationships. In the steering documents studied, honour-based violence is referred to as *one* form of violence. The lack of action plans that specifically address honour-based violence could be considered a challenge, but at the same time it should not automatically lead to the assumption that there is a lack of awareness of the existence of honour-based violence.

Conclusions and comments

Efforts to combat honour-based violence in Iceland are integrated into broader efforts to combat violence in close relationships. This includes legislation, support for vulnerable individuals through sheltered accommodation and counselling, as well as education and cooperation with voluntary organisations. Although the

83. Västra Götaland Region: Islandsprojektet/ Islandsmodellen. Available: https://www.vgregion.se/f/regionhalsan/valdinararelationer/utveckling/tidigare-genomforda-utvecklingsprojekt/islandsprojektet/
84. Swedish National Police Board, Swedish National Board of Forensic Medicine, Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare and Swedish Prosecution Authority: *Barnahus - försöksverksamhet med samverkan under gemensamt tak vid misstanke om brott mot barn*, 2008.
85. County Administrative Board Östergötland: *Förstudie inför uppdraget att utveckla resurscentra*, 2018. Available: https://kunskapsbanken.nck.uu.se/nckkb/nck/publik/fil/visa/655/F%C3%B6rstudie%20inf%C3%B6r%20uppdraget%20att%20utveckla%20resurscentra.pdf
86. Red Cross, Iceland. Available: https://www.raudikrossinn.is/verkefni/innanlandsverkefni/heilbrigdi-og-velferd/hjalparsiminn-1717-og-netspjallid/

phenomenon is not as common in Iceland as in some other countries, the authorities are aware of the problem and are working to provide protection and support to those affected.

In Iceland, a model for cross-sectoral cooperation has been developed that has also been adopted by other countries (e.g. Sweden). Collaboration and cross-sectoral cooperation are recurring themes in relation to men's violence against women and violence in close relationships. The positive experiences of effective collaboration can be applied in work with all victims of violence.

Norway

Concepts and their usage

In the Norwegian context, two terms are used: 'honour-based violence' and 'negative social control'. The first is used most frequently and seems to function as an umbrella term, while negative social control is used as an expression of honour-based violence together with expressions such as physical and psychological violence, threats of violence, forced marriage, etc. Definitions of key terms can be found in the latest action plan, *Freedom from Negative Social Control and Honour Based Violence (2021–2024)*, issued by the Ministry of Education and Research in collaboration with several other authorities. The key terms are defined as follows:[87]

Negative social control

Negative social control includes pressure, surveillance, control, threats or coercion that systematically restricts an individual in their daily life, repeatedly preventing them from making their own independent choices about their life and future. Negative social control can include both psychological violence and threats, as well as being forced into marriage. This applies, for example, to restrictions on individuals' self-determination over their identity, body and sexuality, freedom to choose friends, participate in leisure activities, choose religious beliefs, clothing, education, work, partners and even access to health and medical care. Negative social control directed at children is given special attention in the yearly reports of the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir).[88] Parenting involves a certain degree of control, but sometimes the degree of control is unreasonable. When assessing whether a pattern of behaviour constitutes negative social control, consideration should be given to the age and development

87. In 2021, responsibility for coordinating the follow-up of the plan was transferred to the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion.
88. Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) is a directorate under the Ministry of Children and Families. It is a specialist body in the areas of child protection, children, young people and upbringing, adoption, family protection, gender equality and non-discrimination, and violence and abuse in close relationships.

of the person being controlled and the principle of the best interests of the child.[89]

The concept of 'negative social control' was first used in the action plan for the period 2017–2020. It was also the first action plan to discuss negative social control in non-honour-based contexts, such as negative social control exercised in 'closed' religious communities. According to the annual report from Bufdir from 2023: "*Until 2017, these cases usually concerned people from ethnic minority backgrounds in Norway. In 2017, the first action plan was published that referred to negative social control in 'closed' religious communities, and in 2018, the Competence Team changed its mandate to include the phenomenon of negative social control. Since then, the Competence Team has sought to highlight that negative social control is also practised in certain religious communities where a large proportion of the congregation consists of ethnic Norwegian members.*"[90] Based on this report, it can be interpreted that the distinction between honour contexts and other contexts where negative social control occurs is based on ethnic affiliation: ethnic minorities or ethnic Norwegians.

It should be noted that religious practice and religious affiliation should not be equated with vulnerability or the exercise of negative social control. Instead, the focus should be on negative social control as a form of strict control to enforce compliance with religious norms and rules and punish violations.

In its 2023 annual report, Bufdir writes that negative social control can occur both in cases in which control is honour related and in cases in which it is intended to prevent violations of moral rules in a religious community or way of life.[91] Negative social control in religious contexts can involve coercion to participate in prayer, religious school, forced marriage, etc. Despite the distinction between negative social control in the context of honour and negative social control in closed religious communities, Bufdir highlights the similarities between the two contexts. One of the similarities concerns exclusion and ostracism as punishment for violating the norms of a collective, which leads to isolation, loneliness and, in the long term, a risk of mental ill health. Another similarity concerns the boundaries created between the collective (including religious communities) and society, which can lead to individuals having insufficient knowledge about society and lacking trust in other people and social institutions.[92]

Finally, the term 'negative social control' is not used in legislation. The term is defined in broad terms in the action plan, and it is difficult to strictly distinguish between psychological violence, negative social control in an honour context and negative social control in religious communities: *en æreskontekst og i trossamfund*

89. Ministry of Education and Research: *Frihet från negativ social kontroll och hedersrelaterat våld 2021–2024*, Handlingsplan 2021, 8.
90. Bufdir, Kompetanseteamet mot negativ sosial kontroll og æresrelatert vold: *Årsrapport 2023*, 8-9.
91. Bufdir, Kompetanseteamet mot negativ sosial kontroll og æresrelatert vold: *Årsrapport 2023*, 9.
92. Bufdir, Kompetanseteamet mot negativ sosial kontroll og æresrelatert vold: *Årsrapport 2023*, 10.

(in an honour context and in religious communities).[93] The distinction made, which is clearly evident in Bufdir's annual report from 2023, is the ethnic background of the affected individuals and their families. Ethnic minorities are referenced in contexts involving negative social control in an honour context, while ethnic Norwegians are primarily referenced with regard to other forms of control and psychological violence.[94]

Honour-based violence

Honour-based violence is defined as violence committed in association with a family or group's need to protect or restore its honour and reputation. Such violence occurs within families and groups that impose expectations on individuals to conform to the collective, characterised by strong patriarchal norms of honour. All family members have a responsibility to ensure that the family and group maintain a good reputation. Girls and women are particularly vulnerable because the honour of the family or group is linked to the control of women's sexuality and the belief that undesirable behaviour can damage the reputation of the entire family or group. Honour-based violence can take various forms, such as negative social control and forced marriage, humiliation, threats, ostracism and other psychological violence, physical violence and murder.[95]

Other terms used that indicate acts included in honour-based violence are forced marriage, child marriage, female genital cutting, abduction abroad and involuntary stay abroad, psychological violence, and sexual violence. It should also be noted that forced marriage, child marriage and female genital cutting can be part of a more complex challenge. These crimes can occur without prior negative social control or honour-based violence.

Work against honour-based violence and oppression

Efforts to combat honour-based violence and oppression in Norway are organised through a combination of government initiatives, cooperation with municipalities and efforts by voluntary organisations. Honour-based violence is seen as a serious form of violence in close relationships that Norway has developed several strategies and measures to combat and prevent.

93. Bufdir, Kompetanseteamet mot negativ sosial kontroll og æresrelatert vold: *Årsrapport 2023*.
94. Bufdir, Kompetanseteamet mot negativ sosial kontroll og æresrelatert vold: *Årsrapport 2023*, 8-9.
95. Ministry of Education and Research: *Handlingsplan 2021*: 8

Work at the strategic level

Responsible department/ ministry	Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion Ministry of Children and Families Ministry of Health and Care Services Ministry of Culture and Equality Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development Ministry of Education and Research Ministry of Justice and Public Security Ministry of Foreign Affairs The Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion has a coordinating function.
Actors at the national level	Department of Integration (IMDi) • Specialist team for the prevention of negative social control and honour-based violence Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) • Competence team against negative social control and honour-based violence
Strategic steering documents	National action plan Freedom from Negative Social Control and Honour Based Violence (2021–2024) Action plan against violence in close relationships, action plan against violence against children and integration strategy Integration through knowledge (2019–2022

The strategic work is a cross-sectoral collaboration between various ministries and authorities. In general, there is a strong focus on education and skills development for professionals, as well as guidance in specific cases. Norway has adopted several action plans that include specific measures against honour-based violence. These plans aim to:

- Prevent and combat honour-based violence through education, information and cooperation between authorities
- Strengthen the rights and protection of vulnerable individuals, including by offering sheltered accommodation and support
- Develop and implement guidelines for how authorities, schools and healthcare services should handle cases of honour-based violence
- Strengthen the judicial system's handling of honour-based crimes through, for example, the criminalisation of forced marriage and female genital cutting.

Norway's previous national action plan, Norway's national action plan *Freedom from Negative Social Control and Honour-Based Violence*, was adopted for the period 2021–2024. It is a key policy document that presents new measures against negative social control and honour-based violence, and the division of responsibilities between different authorities. The action plan is the result of collaboration between seven ministries[96] and other authorities and voluntary organisations. The Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion has overall responsibility for coordinating the implementation of the action plan and is working with the other seven ministries to implement the measures proposed in the action plan. The action plan specifies which ministry is primarily responsible for implementing each specific measure. The report is a follow-up to the previous action plan against negative social control, forced marriage and female genital cutting (2017–2020) *Retten til å bestemme over eget liv* (The right to decide over one's own life).

The action plan presents 33 measures divided into five different areas. Examples of measures:

1. **Measures aimed at newly arrived migrants**
   Work against honour-based violence falls under the area of integration. According to the action plan, educational efforts for new arrivals should be strengthened. These educational programmes include information about rights, laws and regulations that apply in Norway, Norwegian values and culture. They also include mandatory counselling for parents and prospective parents.

   The new measures aim, among other things, to increase awareness of negative social control, honour-based violence and the situation of LGBTI people among those who come into contact with new arrivals. A system for following up on new arrivals who have been subjected to negative social control, honour-based violence and violence in close relationships will be developed.
2. **Knowledge and competence**
   Measures in this area involve improving the skills of professionals in various sectors (healthcare, education, the judiciary) and better coordination of work between different authorities, sectors and levels. Among other things, it is pointed out that networking and information exchange between national and regional actors must be further developed.
3. **Strengthened legal protections**
   Legal protections cover issues that fall under Norway's international human rights commitments, whether Norway is fulfilling its commitments and what legislative changes are needed to guarantee the protection of victims of

96. Ministry of Knowledge and Integration, Ministry of Children and Families, Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, Ministry of Culture and Equality, Ministry of Health and Care Services, Ministry of Justice and Public Security and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

violence. Legislative changes to the Norwegian Penal Code, the Passport Act, the Immigration Act and the Marriage Act are mentioned. One of the measures involves a comprehensive legal investigation of the current regulations and an assessment of whether the regulations are sufficient and consistent with Norway's human rights commitments.[97]

4. **Prevention of involuntary stays abroad**
   Measures in this area aim to strengthen Norway's efforts to combat involuntary stays abroad by increasing the competence of, for example, school staff, developing cooperation between central support agencies and the police, and also Nordic cooperation. In 2022, a new reform (*Barnevernsreformen*) came into force. It requires municipalities to strengthen previous interventions tailored to the needs of children and families to prevent involuntary stays abroad.
5. **International cooperation**
   International cooperation focuses primarily on cooperation with other Nordic countries. The measures proposed include strengthening cooperation and the exchange of experiences in the Nordic region and creating a Nordic network for professionals. Since the transnational nature of honour-based violence is an important dimension, Nordic cooperation can improve the opportunities to address this challenge.

In addition to the action plan against negative social control and honour-based violence, there are specific action plans for related areas. These include action plans against violence in close relationships, violence against children and integration.

Main actors, tasks and initiatives

Norway has established specialised units and centres of expertise that focus on gathering knowledge and developing expertise in the field of honour-based violence. These centres also serve as resource centres for professionals working with these issues. The Kompetanseteamet mot negativ og sosial kontroll og æresrelatert vold (the Competence Team against Negative and Social Control and Honour-based Violence) was established in 2004. The Competence Team consists of representatives from Bufdir, the Directorate of Integration and Diversity, the Directorate of Immigration, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, the National Police Directorate, the Directorate of Labour and Social Inclusion and the Norwegian Directorate of Health. It is a national cross-sectoral team coordinated by Bufdir that works to prevent and detect forced marriage, honour-based violence, negative social control and female genital cutting, as well as to provide support and assistance to victims of violence.

97. In June 2024, the new legislation NOU 2024: 13 Law and Freedom was presented, which aimed to assess if legislation provides sufficient legal protection for children and young people who are subjected to negative social control, honour-based violence, forced marriage, female genital cutting, psychological violence and involuntary stays abroad or if there is a need for legislative reforms. See more: https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/nou-2024-13/id3046261/

The competence team offers advice and guidance to authorities and voluntary organisations that encounter people exposed to violence in their work. The team also provides guidance to people exposed to violence who contact them and, if necessary, puts them in touch with relevant authorities.

The competence team's mandate includes providing advice to both victims of violence and professionals, skills development, knowledge development, coordination and allocation of places in national shelters and support accommodation, counselling, cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cases of abduction abroad, and cooperation with voluntary organisations.[98]

Training and skills development comprise a significant part of its responsibilities. The team offers skills development with a focus on negative social control and honour-based violence and helps with guidance in individual cases. Experts from the competence team act as experts at the Child Welfare Tribunal and in court cases. They have also provided input on ongoing research projects, investigations and reports (e.g. *Opptrappingsplan mot vold og overgrep mot barn og vold i nære relasjoner;* Action plan against violence and abuse against children and violence in close relationships).[99]

Efforts to combat honour-based violence and oppression are included in Norway's integration policy. As mentioned earlier, the prevention of negative social control was included in the government's integration strategy for 2019–2022. The Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) is responsible for implementing Norwegian integration policy. This includes implementing and following up on measures based on the government's action plan against negative social control and honour-based violence. In addition, there are special envoys for integration issues at foreign missions in Ankara, Amman, Islamabad and Nairobi. They provide consular assistance to people who are subjected to negative social control, honour-based violence, forced marriage and female genital cutting. They also help to raise the competence of public sector employees in Norway by providing advice and guidance in individual cases and through ongoing competence-building measures.

IMDi has created a special internet resource with stories about exposure to negative social control and information about who to contact for help and support. Nora provides information to young people and those closest to them, as well as tips and guidance for those who encounter young people at risk of exposure to negative social control and honour-based violence.[100]

Diversity advisors are another example of concrete measures aimed at children and young people. These advisors work in certain upper secondary schools and adult

98. Bufdir: *Mandat for Kompetanseteamet mot negativ sosial kontroll og æresrelatert vold*, 2024. Available: https://www.bufdir.no/vold/aresrelatert/kompetanseteamet/
99. Government of Norway: *Regjeringen styrker arbeidet mot vold og overgrep mot barn og vold i nære relasjoner*, Press release, 2023. Available: https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/regjeringen-styrker-arbeidet-mot-vold-og-overgrep-mot-barn-og-vold-i-nare-relasjoner/id3019683/
100. Nora. Available: https://www.imdi.no/nora/om-denne-siden/

education centres and their task is to support young people living in honour contexts. In a national action plan against forced marriage and negative social control in 2008, minority advisors were one of the measures included.

Diversity advisors are employed by the IMDi. Diversity advisors are expected to maintain close contact with students, parents, teachers, other advisors, healthcare providers and after-school centres. They serve as a resource for expertise and knowledge in schools, both for school staff and students, as well as supporting vulnerable students, maintaining contact with parents and contributing to closer cooperation between schools and other authorities.

Diversity advisors are intended to operate as a combined individual and system-oriented measure. They conduct individual follow-ups with students and at the same time work to raise the competence of school staff. In their guidance and follow-up of individual cases, the diversity advisors use various interview and study methods. They also maintain contact with other authorities if there is a risk that a child will be taken out of the country against their will.

IMDi also has a professional team dedicated to preventing negative social control and honour-based violence. The professional team mainly targets employees at schools without diversity advisors, employees in adult education and refugee services. In addition to providing skills development to the target groups on how to prevent, identify and follow up on people who are subjected to negative social control, honour-based violence, forced marriage and female genital cutting, the professional team helps to raise awareness of other services in the area.

Regionalt resurscenter om vold, traumatisk stress og selvmordsförebyggning (Regional Resource Centre on Violence, Traumatic Stress and Suicide Prevention, RVTS) are regional resource centres that support, educate and assist professionals who encounter people affected by violence and sexual abuse, traumatic stress, migration or suicidal thoughts in their work. They have cutting-edge expertise in issues relating to the prevention of self-harm and suicide. The main goal is to promote health and quality of life for those affected. RVTS offers skills development through teaching, guidance, consultation and networking across sectors, authorities and administrative levels.

There are five resource centres in Norway covering the entire country. RVTS East in Oslo has cutting-edge expertise in areas such as violence in close relationships, genital mutilation, forced marriage and serious restrictions on the freedom of children and young people. RVTS East runs an online information portal for professionals who work with and encounter children and young people who are exposed to or at risk of honour-based violence and oppression, forced marriage and female genital cutting.[101]

101. Regionale ressurssentre om vold, traumatisk stress og selvmordsforebygging, RVTS: Region Øst, Available: https://www.rvts.no/region/ost

Bo- og støttetilbudet (sheltered and supported housing) is an organisation established in collaboration between Bufdir and five selected municipalities, coordinated by Bufdir's competence team. The municipalities receive grants from Bufdir to run shelters and support housing. Shelters and support housing are a national service established to provide support to people exposed to forced marriage, honour-based violence and negative social control. People who are subjected to psychological violence and need to get away from their abusers can also access the housing and support service in person without notice. Women, men, couples and parents with children can all access the shelter and support accommodation.[102]

Examples of voluntary organisations

Authorities at both national and local level work together with voluntary organisations to prevent and deal with honour-based violence, including providing sheltered accommodation, counselling and support, as well as education and information. For example, the Red Cross telephone helpline for negative social control and honour-based violence has extensive experience in supporting people who are subjected to negative social control, honour-based violence, forced marriage and female genital cutting.[103] The Red Cross works by offering telephone calls and chat services staffed by counsellors. They are aimed at those subjected to negative social control in various contexts, such as honour-based violence and within religious communities.

In their annual report, they describe one of their areas of work as building bridges between individuals exposed to violence and welfare institutions. Some members of the target group experience challenges in their contact with authorities, and the Red Cross telephone service provides support. They also offer follow-ups through guidance and advice at physical meetings for people who move out of national shelters and support housing and those who come into direct contact with the Red Cross.[104]

The Red Cross also offers a special mentoring programme (mentor family) for people over the age of 18 who have been subjected to negative social control, forced marriage or other forms of honour-based violence. Mentor families offer a positive respite from everyday life where young people can feel a sense of belonging, share everyday experiences and feel supported and secure. The Red Cross mentor family programme is available in the following municipalities: Bergen, Kristiansand, Oslo, Tromsø and Trondheim.

102. Bufdir: *Årsrapport* 2023.
103. Røde Kors-telefonen om negativ sosial kontroll og æresrelatert vold. Available: https://rodekorstelefonen.no/
104. Red Cross: *Røde Kors-telefonen om negativ sosial kontroll og æresrelatert vold, årsrapport 2023*. Available: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57559b06ab48de8a440cc072/t/65e829e29b0cb5187ce6e56f/1709713892152/A%CC%8Arsrapport+2023.pdf

The competence team against negative social control and honour-based violence collaborates with the organisation Hjelpekilden. It offers help to people with backgrounds in closed or strict religious environments. Hjelpekilden works with peer support for people in processes of change, counselling and competence development, information campaigns and dialogue with religious communities.[105]

Identified challenges

In Norway, work against honour-based violence is characterised by a high level of cross-sectoral cooperation, which poses challenges for coordination. Eight different ministries are involved, with the Ministry of Labour and Inclusion acting as coordinator. The previous national action plan for 2021–2024 highlighted the need to improve coordination. Another area highlighted in the action plan is knowledge about negative social control in contexts other than migration. These contexts include closed religious environments. Guidance and guidelines on security-based work are also described as insufficient. Knowledge and competence are one of the areas in the action plan.

An important issue raised in the strategic documents (e.g. the action plan and annual report from Bufdir) concerns vulnerability to multiple discrimination and minority stress that can be caused by exclusion and hostility directed at ethnic minorities. This requires not only knowledge of negative social control and honour-based violence but also awareness and knowledge of experiences of racism and discrimination, social exclusion and isolation to which ethnic minorities are exposed.

Furthermore, a lack of trust in the state among minority groups is mentioned. Combined with ambivalence experienced by victims of violence – on the one hand needing to seek help and on the other feeling strong loyalty to their families and perpetrators – there is a risk that victims of violence will refrain from seeking support and help. A lack of trust in authorities and social institutions can also prevent perpetrators of violence from seeking help, thereby hindering efforts to bring about change. The Red Cross's description of its role as a bridge builder between victims of violence and welfare/social institutions also confirms this challenge in terms of contact with authorities.

Bufdir's annual report (2023) included an evaluation of the competence team working on negative social control and honour-based violence. It highlighted a lack of resources within the competence team as an additional challenge, largely a result of the increase in the number of cases the team is working on. The report showed a doubling in the number of cases from 2013 to 2021.

105.Hjelpekilden Norge, Available: https://www.hjelpekilden.no/

Conclusions and comments

In summary, efforts to combat honour-based violence in Norway are carried out in cooperation between several ministries and coordinated at the national level. There is a special action plan in place to combat negative social control and honour-based violence with five focus areas, 33 measures and a division of responsibilities between various actors.

Honour-based violence is presented and discussed from several different perspectives that may overlap but also exist at different levels. According to the 2020 study, honour-based violence is understood as a part of integration at the strategic level.[106] Such a problem description is based on a certain understanding of the causes of violence, as well as who the victims and perpetrators of violence are, which also forms the basis for the solutions that are proposed. Violence is related to challenges associated with migration (for example, parenting in a migration context is discussed in terms of the boundaries between strict control and negative social control, generational conflicts and challenges associated with moving and living in a new country). The transnational dimension is also emphasised.

There are explicit references to ethnic minorities, people born in Norway or abroad and new arrivals. When violence is understood as occurring among ethnic minorities, prevention efforts focus primarily on integration. Teaching about Norwegian culture and values becomes an important part of integration. It is emphasised that the harmful practices involved in honour-based violence are not acceptable in Norway. These practices are presented as serious violations of human rights.

On a practical level, honour-based violence is interpreted as a type of violence in close relationships and violence against children. The 2023 action plan describes honour-based violence, forced marriage, female genital cutting and involuntary stays abroad as belonging to a field of violence that must be prevented and combatted in line with other violence in close relationships and violence against children.[107]

In conclusion, it can be said that the concept of negative social control is the one most frequently referenced in the Norwegian context. One possible explanation for this is that, unlike other forms of violence, negative social control is specific to honour-based violence and distinguishes it from violence in other contexts. Previously, the focus was on forced marriage, but this was considered too narrow. The concept of negative social control is broader and is defined in line with various forms of systematic control.[108]

106. Rambøll Management Consulting: *Strategier og initiative til forebyggelse af negative social control og æresrelaterat vold i de nordiske lande*, Kortlægning. København, 2020.
107. Norwegian Directorate of Health: *Opptrappingsplan for psykisk helse, 2023–2033*. Available: https://www.helsedirektoratet.no/om-oss/forsoksordninger-og-prosjekter/opptrappingsplan-for-psykisk-helse-20232033
108. Friberg, Jon Horgen and Bjørnset, Mathilde*: Migrasjon, foreldreskap og sosial kontroll*, Fafo report, 2019: 01.

Sweden

Concepts and their usage

In the Swedish context, the concept of 'honour-based violence and oppression' is well established. However, the understanding of what constitutes honour-based violence and oppression varies and no uniform definition is established. The interpretation and application of the definition differ between actors. In previous action programmes, honour-based violence and oppression was defined as follows: *"Honour-based violence and oppression means that people, mainly girls and women but also boys and men and LGBTI people, are restricted in their lives and subjected to pressure and violence aimed at maintaining the family's control over the individual."*[109] The government's action programme for 2024–2026 describes honour-based violence and oppression as a serious social problem and a violation of the human rights of those affected, most often girls and women, but also boys and men.[110]

The bill that preceded the introduction of specified honour crimes into the Swedish Criminal Code describes honour-based violence and oppression as linked to honour norms based on strong patriarchal or heteronormative ideas. Honour norms also include patriarchal ideas that show up in control exercised over girls and women, ranging from everyday restrictions on what they wear, who they spend time with and how they move around, to limits on their choices with regard to education, work, marriage and divorce. In their most extreme form, honour norms can lead to serious crimes such as threats and acts of violence, including lethal violence.[111]

Honour-based violence and oppression are presented as a priority area for the government's work to tackle men's violence against women. The national strategy to prevent and counteract men's violence against women describes honour-based violence and oppression as having a variety of expressions, such as female genital cutting and forced marriage (Skr. 2016/17:10). The government's action programme for 2024–2026 identifies some specific forms of honour-based violence: female genital cutting of girls and women, attempts to convert young LGBTI people, forced marriage, virginity checks and virginity operations, and involuntary stays abroad.

On 1 July 2022, the new offence of a specified honour crime was added to the Swedish Criminal Code (Chapter 4, 4a §). The provision contains a particularly severe scale of penalties for anyone who repeatedly commits certain criminal acts against a person on the grounds of honour, with each act constituting part of an ongoing violation of a person's integrity intended to seriously damage their self-esteem. Previously, on 1 July 2020, a new provision was introduced requiring the

109. Ministry of Employment: *Åtgärdsprogram för att förebygga och bekämpa mäns våld mot kvinnor 2021–2023*, A2021/02397.
110. Ministry of Employment: *Åtgärdsprogram för att förebygga och bekämpa mäns våld mot kvinnor, våld i nära relationer och hedersrelaterat våld och förtryck samt prostitution och människohandel 2024–2026,* 16.
111. Ministry of Justice: *Ökat skydd mot hedersrelaterad brottslighet*, Prop. 2019/20:131.

consideration of special aggravating circumstances when assessing the severity of a crime; one such aggravating circumstance is if a crime is motivated by a desire to preserve or restore the honour of a person or family, relatives or other similar group (Chapter 29, 2 § 10 Swedish Criminal Code).

Work against honour-based violence and oppression

The work against honour-based violence and oppression in Sweden is a priority issue involving several actors at the national, regional and local level.

Work at the strategic level

Myndigheter under regering	Ministry of Employment[112]
Actors at the national level	Swedish Gender Equality Agency National Centre against Honour-based Violence and Oppression, The County Administrative Board of Östergötland National Centre for Knowledge on Men's Violence Against Women, Uppsala University Barnafrid – National centre for knowledge concerning violence against children at Linköping University Ombudsman for Children Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society The Family Law and Parental Support Authority National Board of Health and Welfare National Agency for Education, Swedish School Inspectorate Swedish Migration Agency Swedish Police Authority, Swedish Prosecution Authority, Swedish Prison and Probation Service, Swedish Crime Victim Authority, Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention
Strategic steering documents	Action plan to counter and combat men's violence against women 2016–2027 Action programme to prevent and combat men's violence against women, domestic violence, honour-based violence and oppression, and prostitution and human trafficking for the period 2024–2026

112. During the preparation of this report, a new investigation was launched: *Frihet från våld, förtryck och utnyttjande – En jämställdhetspolitisk strategi mot våld och en stärkt styrning av centrala myndigheter, SOU 2025:28*, which specifies which authorities are proposed to be included in a national coordination centre against violence.

In 2016, a ten-year *action plan to counter and combat men's violence against women* for the period 2016–2027 was adopted. The strategy addresses issues and problems relating to men's violence against women. It states that the strategy is part of gender equality policy and that men's violence against women is one of the most extreme expressions of gender inequality. The strategy includes issues relating to honour-based violence and oppression, as well as prostitution and human trafficking for sexual purposes.[113]

According to the action plan, men's violence against women accounts for the majority of violence that occurs in close relationships, as well as honour-based violence and oppression. Some aspects of honour-based violence and oppression are not included in violence in close relationships, as this violence is sometimes perpetrated by a collective, both men and women, rather than just by an individual partner: *"There are also parts of honour-based violence and oppression that are not included in violence in close relationships, as this violence can be perpetrated by a large collective, both men and women, rather than just by an individual partner."* [114] Violence against women, honour-based violence and oppression are caused by inequality and gender power relations.[115]

The action plan identifies honour norms as a contributing factor to specific vulnerabilities. Honour norms are described as a perspective that sees a family's reputation and standing as dependent on the chastity and virginity of female family members and their actual and alleged behaviour with respect to these ideals. Honour norms require women and girls to be controlled, ranging from restrictions on everyday life and socialising to physical freedom of movement. Young men can also be subject to such control and restrictions.

The action plan emphasises that there is a risk that *"honour-based thinking is underestimated and misunderstood by people who do not live by honour norms"*.[116] Therefore, emphasis should be placed on the significance of honour norms for both perpetrators and victims of violence. The strategy also proposes that preventive work against honour norms should cover all young people in different groups and residential areas. Increased segregation is mentioned as one of the factors that can lead to the reinforcement of honour norms in economically disadvantaged areas. The promotion of gender equality and the prevention of honour norms should therefore be included in the government's long-term reform programme for reducing segregation.[117]

113. Government of Sweden: *Makt, mål och myndighet – feministisk politik för en jämställd framtid*, Skr. 2016/17:10, 113.
114. Government of Sweden: *Nationell strategi mot mäns våld mot kvinnor och hedersrelaterat våld och förtryck*, SOU 2015:55, 52.
115. Government of Sweden: *Nationell strategi mot mäns våld mot kvinnor och hedersrelaterat våld och förtryck*, SOU 2015:55, 51–52.
116. Government of Sweden: *Makt, mål och myndighet – feministisk politik för en jämställd framtid*, Skr. 2016/17:10, 117.
117. Government of Sweden: *Makt, mål och myndighet – feministisk politik för en jämställd framtid*, Skr. 2016/17:10, 127.

The political objectives of the strategy consist of expanded and effective preventive work against violence, improved detection of violence and stronger protection and support for women and children exposed to violence, more effective crime prevention and improved knowledge and method development. According to the action plan, the government shall annually establish action programmes for future initiatives. Action programmes are a form of government action plan that present political priorities and descriptions of focus areas and measures.

In June 2024, the Government of Sweden presented its new action programme, *Free and Safe without Violence and Oppression: Action programme to prevent and combat men's violence against women, domestic violence, honour-based violence and oppression, and prostitution and human trafficking for the period 2024–2026*. The programme presents 132 measures with six objectives. These objectives are in line with the objectives of the national action plan and include an additional objective: *a long-term and sustainable structure in relation to support, organisation and monitoring*. The action programme is a steering document that contains concrete measures for the implementation of strategic objectives in relation to honour-based violence and oppression. Analysis of the action programme together with the national action plan has been central to addressing the research questions in this study, although other documents have also been incorporated.

Four areas for development have been identified in the action programme, two of which are particularly relevant to the work against honour-based violence and oppression. The first is related to Development Area II: Intensified action against honour-based violence and oppression. Efforts will be intensified through improved long-term governance, better support and protection for those who are vulnerable regardless of where they live in the country, stricter legislation against honour-based violence and oppression and increased knowledge and methodological development.[118] Among the measures proposed, a number of priorities can be observed: strengthening the role of the school system in combating honour-based violence and oppression as part of preventive work, combating crime through criminalisation and tougher penalties for honour-based crimes and increasing knowledge about honour-based violence and oppression.

The second area related to work against honour-based violence and oppression is Development Area III: Enhanced support to children and young people who experience violence, including children taken abroad in honour-based contexts. This includes preventing and stopping harmful stays abroad in honour contexts, support for parents in honour contexts, support for particularly vulnerable groups of children and young people (e.g. children with disabilities and addiction problems), prevention and combating of honour-based violence, oppression and violence in

118. Ministry of Employment: *Fri och trygg utan våld och förtryck. Åtgärdsprogram för att förebygga och bekämpa mäns våld mot kvinnor, våld i nära relationer och hedersrelaterat våld och förtryck samt prostitution och människohandel 2024–2026*, A2024/00869, 16–19.

young people's relationships and stricter legislation to combat violence against children and young people.[119]

Preventive work and early intervention emphasise the role of schools but also the need for information campaigns targeting asylum seekers and new arrivals, as well as support for parents in honour-based contexts. The introduction of a national reporting and monitoring system and better national statistics on missing and abducted children has been proposed as part of preventive work against involuntary stays abroad. Social services should also work to stop honour-based violence and oppression when placing children in foster care and look into how siblings are affected in cases of honour-based violence and oppression. One of the measures involves providing support to parents in honour contexts to avoid inequality and negative consequences for children and young people. Supportive measures are intended to offer alternatives to repressive upbringing.[120] Measures to raise awareness involve several sectors: healthcare, social services, education and the judicial system. Knowledge about experiences of specific honour crimes linked to stays abroad and the regulations surrounding travel bans is highlighted in particular.[121]

Several inquiries into efforts to combat honour-based violence and oppression have been appointed. The Government of Sweden has appointed an inquiry into an inclusive gender equality policy sub-goal against violence, which will, among other things, provide proposals on how long-term governance in the area of honour-based violence and oppression can be strengthened.[122] The government has announced that a new sub-goal on honour-based violence and oppression will be introduced, despite the fact that an investigation concluded that a separate sub-goal for honour-based violence and oppression should not be introduced.

The Government also intends to appoint a commission to investigate ways of strengthening the role of the school system in combating honour-based violence and oppression in young people's relationships. It has also appointed a commission to investigate ways of improving student health, and the final report has been submitted.

The report on the *Prohibition of marriage between cousins and certain other close relatives (DS 2024:20)* proposes, among other things, that marriages between cousins be prohibited. The memorandum has been referred for consultation and is being prepared within the Government Offices.

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119. Ministry of Employment: *Fri och trygg utan våld och förtryck. Åtgärdsprogram för att förebygga och bekämpa mäns våld mot kvinnor, våld i nära relationer och hedersrelaterat våld och förtryck samt prostitution och människohandel 2024–2026*, A2024/00869, 20–25.
120. Ministry of Employment: *Fri och trygg utan våld och förtryck. Åtgärdsprogram för att förebygga och bekämpa mäns våld mot kvinnor, våld i nära relationer och hedersrelaterat våld och förtryck samt prostitution och människohandel 2024–2026*, A2024/00869, 20–21.
121. The ban on travelling abroad has now been extended, see: National Board of Health and Welfare: *Ett utvidgat utreseförbud för barn – Meddelandeblad - Socialstyrelsen*. Available: https://www.socialstyrelsen.se/contentassets/488629d4eff149c8b7b6dc49d5465fa8/2024-5-9117.pdf
122. Government of Sweden: *En stärkt långsiktig styrning av arbetet mot könsrelaterat våld och hedersrelaterat våld och förtryck*, Dir. 2023:117.

Main actors, tasks and initiatives

The Swedish Gender Equality Agency is tasked with monitoring the implementation of the *Action plan to counter and combat men's violence against women*.[123] According to its instructions, it has a special responsibility for coordinating efforts between different authorities to combat honour-based violence and oppression. The Gender Equality Authority's remit includes mapping and disseminating knowledge about experiences of specified honour crimes and other violence and oppression linked to stays abroad;[124] to work on developing working methods and approaches for preventive work against female genital cutting; and to compile, disseminate and develop effective working methods for violence prevention work with young men and boys in the context of honour-based violence.[125]

According to the action plan, the Swedish Gender Equality Agency is *"mandated to undertake tasks to highlight and combat honour-based violence and oppression, with a focus on national knowledge development and cross-cutting strategic issues. The Agency shall also promote the development of preventive measures against honour-based violence and oppression."*[126]

In 2024 and 2025, the Swedish Gender Equality Agency received and reported on several assignments related to the work against honour-based violence and oppression, including conducting a knowledge and research review on honour-based violence and oppression from an international perspective and implementing skills enhancement measures; mapping and analysing the prevalence of child marriage, forced marriage and polygamy in Sweden, as well as other related issues; disseminating knowledge about experiences of specified honour crimes and other violence and oppression linked to stays abroad;[127] and coordinating efforts to prevent and combat female genital cutting.[128]

The National Centre against Honour-based Violence and Oppression (NCH;[129] previously the National Competence Centre for Honour-based Violence and Oppression) was established in October 2022 and is based at the Östergötland County Administrative Board. The centre is organised into two units: the support and collaboration unit and the investigation and analysis unit. NCH works on behalf of the government to support and contribute to strategic, preventive and

123. Governemt of Sweden: *Nationell strategi mot mäns våld mot kvinnor och hedersrelaterat våld och förtryck*, SOU 2015:55.
124. Ministry of Employment: *Uppdrag till Jämställdhetsmyndigheten att kartlägga och sprida kunskap om erfarenheter av specified honour crime samt annat våld och förtryck kopplat till utlandsvistelse*, A2021/02051, 17.
125. Ministry of Health and Social Affairs: *Regleringsbrev för budgetåret 2018 avseende Jämställdhetsmyndigheten*, 2018-12-18
126. Ministry of Employment: *Fri och trygg utan våld och förtryck. Åtgärdsprogram för att förebygga och bekämpa mäns våld mot kvinnor, våld i nära relationer och hedersrelaterat våld och förtryck samt prostitution och människohandel 2024–2026*, A2024/0086, 17.
127. Ministry of Employment: *Uppdrag till Jämställdhetsmyndigheten att kartlägga och sprida kunskap om erfarenheter av specified honour crime samt annat våld och förtryck kopplat till utlandsvistelse*, A2021/02051, 17.
128. Ministry of Employment: *Uppdrag att förebygga och bekämpa könsstympning av flickor och kvinnor* A2021/01029.
129. On 16 December 2024, the Government decided that certain national tasks at the National Centre against Honour-based Violence and Oppression should be transferred to the Swedish Gender Equality Agency. See: https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2024/12/jamstalldhetsmyndigheten-ska-ta-over-det-samlade-nationella-ansvaret-for-arbetet-mot-hedersrelaterat-vald-och-fortryck/

knowledge-based work against honour-based violence and oppression at the national, regional and local levels. Among other things, NCH supports municipalities and regions in their work to introduce, monitor and evaluate working methods and approaches for supporting vulnerable individuals and for preventive work against honour-based violence and oppression. NCH also provides general support to professionals who deal with issues of honour-based violence and oppression in their work. NCH's national mandate will be transferred to the Swedish Gender Equality Agency from 1 January 2026.[130]

NCH shall ensure that there is a special national helpline (telephone and chat) to which individuals who are exposed to or at risk of honour-based violence and oppression can turn for general advice and guidance. This helpline is now available via the National Centre for Knowledge on Men's Violence Against Women. Since 2018, the County Administrative Board of Östergötland (as of 2022 NCH) has been tasked with supporting the development of regional, municipal and inter-agency resource centres for children, young people and adults who are exposed to or at risk of honour-based violence and oppression. The resource centre involves the co-location of social services, health and medical care, and the police with multilingual expertise to facilitate support and protection. The purpose of regional resource centres is to ensure that children and adults who are or are at risk of being subjected to honour-based violence and oppression have equal access to specialised and adapted support regardless of where they live in the country. The resource centres are intended to complement existing protection and support structures and not to take over the tasks of authorities.

Each county administrative board has a coordinating role in work against men's violence against women, violence in close relationships, sexual violence, honour-based violence and oppression, as well as prostitution and human trafficking. The coordination role includes responsibility for supporting regional cooperation, developing and implementing strategies and action plans and providing support for the introduction of effective working methods, training and skills development in the county.[131]

There are currently sixteen resource centres across fifteen municipalities.[132] Some resource centres are funded by the government initiative, but not all. Origo is a resource centre to tackle specified honour crimes and violence, run in collaboration between the municipalities in Stockholm County, Police Region Stockholm and Region Stockholm. It has partly served as a model for the government's resource centre initiative but is not funded by the government. Professionals from various authorities, counsellors, police officers and midwives work together to offer support

130. *Uppdrag till Jämställdhetsmyndigheten att förbereda inordnandet av vissa uppgifter enligt förordningen om nationellt centrum mot hedersrelaterat våld och förtryck*, A2024/01396
131. Regulation (2021:995) on the regional work of county administrative boards to combat men's violence against women | The Swedish Parliament
132. National Centre against Honour-based Violence and Oppression: Regional resource centres, Available: https://www.hedersfortryck.se/om-oss/resurscentra/

and advice. Origo offers support and counselling to young people by telephone or in person and acts as a 'gateway', providing information about other authorities or services that young people or professionals may need to contact. Origo offers consultative support and guidance to professionals in areas such as the police, schools and leisure, social services, health and medical care, and to voluntary organisations. Origo also offers training days and theme days on specified honour crimes and violence for professionals and voluntary organisations. The work is aimed at young people aged 13 to 26 who live in Stockholm County and are exposed to honour-based violence and oppression.[133]

National Centre for Knowledge on Men's Violence Against Women (NCK) has been tasked by the government with raising awareness nationally about honour-based violence and oppression. This is being done through university courses at basic and advanced levels, as well as commissioned education.[134] Furthermore, NCK has been tasked by the government with providing support to victims of violence and operates national helplines: the National Women's Helpline, the Support Line for Men, the Support Line for Transgender People and *Rätt att välja* (Right to Choose), a national helpline for victims of control, threats and violence in the name of honour. [135] NCK also runs Sweden's first specialist clinic for women who have been subjected to violence – *Kvinnofridsmottagningen* at Uppsala University Hospital.

Barnafrid – the National centre for knowledge concerning violence against children at Linköping University – collects and disseminates knowledge about violence and abuse against children to professionals who encounter or make decisions concerning children and young people in their work. They are tasked with implementing skills-enhancement initiatives on honour-based violence and oppression for children's homes in the country.

The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF) has special responsibility for youth policy and civil society policy. MUCF's work includes distributing government grants on behalf of the government to enables organisations to carry out their activities. MUCF is one of the government's LGBTQI strategic authorities. This means that it must promote equal rights and opportunities for young people regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.[136] In relation to the work against honour-based violence and oppression, MUCF has been tasked with developing and disseminating knowledge with a focus on honour-based violence and oppression and violence prevention work aimed at youth leaders and other professionals who work to provide leisure activities for young people. MUCF is also tasked with carrying out information campaigns on honour-based violence and oppression aimed at professionals and other adults who encounter newly arrived migrants and young asylum seekers in their work or voluntary activities. MUCF shall

133. https://etjanster.stockholm.se/Origo/arbetar-du-med-unga/hur-arbetar-vi
134. National Centre for Knowledge on Men's Violence Against Women. Available: https://www.uu.se/centrum/nck/
135. National Centre for Knowledge on Men's Violence Against Women: *Rätt att välja, En nationell stödlinje*. Available: https://rattattvalja.se/om-oss/
136. Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society: *Uppdrag*. Available: https://www.mucf.se/

also conduct an in-depth analysis of the need for support measures regarding honour-based violence and oppression, including exposure to so-called conversion attempts against young LGBTI people. The agency shall pay particular attention to situations where young people are subjected to threats or coercion, as well as to the fact that children and young people themselves need information about conversion attempts and the support available in such situations.[137]

The action plan assigns an important role to the school system, particularly when it comes to preventive work. The systematic work of preschools and schools to combat honour-based violence and oppression is to be reviewed and strengthened. The Swedish School Inspectorate has been tasked with reviewing schools' work to prevent and address intolerance, oppression and violence, including racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia, as well as honour-based violence and oppression. Other measures implemented by the Government include improvements in student health for students exposed to honour-based violence, among others, and an investigation into strengthening the role of the school system in combating honour-based violence and oppression. The Public Health Agency of Sweden and the Swedish National Agency for Education have been tasked with updating support materials for teaching in the areas of sexuality, consent and relationships.

The Family Law and Parental Support Authority (MFoF) is a government agency that provides knowledge to ensure that all children have a secure upbringing and good relationships with their parents. MFoF is the knowledge authority for parenting support, family counselling and family law cases handled by Social Services Committees.[138] MFoF's mission includes identifying and developing working methods and approaches for parenting support aimed at preventing honour-based violence and oppression, as well as developing a model for how coordination between parenting support initiatives aimed at parents in an honour context should be developed to best reach the target group. According to its mission, MFoF shall promote the development of violence prevention work through support for parents focused on families in an honour context.[139] MFoF shall gather knowledge from research and practice and develop working methods and approaches within parenting support that are deemed to be preventive with regard to honour-based violence.[140]

The National Board of Health and Welfare is a knowledge authority for healthcare and social care. The National Board of Health and Welfare collaborates with other authorities and offers expert advice to guide, support and develop healthcare and social services. The National Board of Health and Welfare's mission includes working to improve support for victims of violence, children who have witnessed

137. Ministry of Employment: *Fri och trygg utan våld och förtryck. Åtgärdsprogram för att förebygga och bekämpa mäns våld mot kvinnor, våld i nära relationer och hedersrelaterat våld och förtryck samt prostitution och människohandel 2024–2026*, A2024/0086
138. Family Law and Parental Support Authority. Available: https://mfof.se/
139. Ministry of Employment: *Uppdrag att främja utvecklingen av våldsförebyggande arbete genom stöd till föräldrar inriktat på familjer i en hederskontext*, A2021/02053, 2021.
140. The final report from the assignment was published on 28 March 2025.

violence and victims of crime and their relatives, including honour-based violence and oppression. It has developed online training courses on honour-based violence and oppression designed for healthcare and social services, for example. The National Board of Health and Welfare also provides support in the application of its regulations and general guidelines on violence in close relationships[141] and other regulations applicable to social services, healthcare and dental care in work related to violence in close relationships, including honour-based violence and oppression.[142]

In 2024, the National Board of Health and Welfare was tasked with strengthening systematic monitoring of interventions for individuals exposed to honour-based violence and oppression within social services. It shall also review, adapt and supplement knowledge support for work against violence in close relationships so that it can be fully utilised in work against honour-based violence and oppression. The assignment also includes support for social services in preventing children from being exposed to honour-based violence and oppression in network placements. The National Board of Health and Welfare shall gather data on the possibilities of producing national statistics on missing and abducted children in honour contexts within the activities of social services. It shall also investigate the prerequisites for ensuring the assessment support it has developed for social services' work with children and young people suspected of being exposed to honour-based violence and oppression can be used for persons over the age of 18. The National Board of Health and Welfare shall continue its work to prevent and combat female genital cutting of girls and women. The National Board of Health and Welfare is also tasked with supporting municipalities and regions in their work to establish and organise family centres. The National Board of Health and Welfare shall contribute in particular to support in areas where social exclusion is high. Through this assignment, it shall contribute knowledge support to prevent and increase the detection of violence and support equal parenting.

At the municipal level, social services are responsible for supporting victims of crime (Chapter 13, 1 § Social Services Act, 2025:400). Special attention is given to people currently or previously subjected to honour-based violence or oppression. If it becomes apparent during contact with social services that a person is exposed to violence, the Social Services Committee has a responsibility to carry out risk assessments and ensure that the person receives the support and assistance they need. The Social Services Committee's investigation must assess the victim's need for support and assistance and offer appropriate safeguards, such as sheltered accommodation, counselling or financial assistance. Social services also have a far-reaching responsibility to investigate the situation of children and young people

141. National Board of Health and Welfare: Socialstyrelsens föreskrifter och allmänna råd om våld i nära relationer, HSLF-FS 2022:39.
142. National Board of Health and Welfare: *Hedersrelaterat våld och förtryck*. Available: https://www.socialstyrelsen.se/kunskapsstod-och-regler/omraden/vald-och-brott/hedersrelaterat-vald-och-fortryck/

when violence is suspected. If a child is suffering harm or is at risk of suffering harm, the Social Services Committee may assess that the child must be protected through a placement outside the home.[143] As of 1 August 2021, the Social Services Committee's responsibilities also include working to ensure that individuals who subject or have subjected people close to them to violence or other abuse change their behaviour. The change in the law means an increased focus on perpetrators of violence, with the aim of them stopping their violent behaviour.[144] This means that social services have a new responsibility – working to prevent recidivism.

Since 2019, the Swedish Migration Agency has been working on behalf of the Government together with the Swedish Public Employment Service, the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, the National Board of Health and Welfare and the Swedish Gender Equality Agency to prevent and detect violence. The Migration Agency's tasks include providing information about what violence is and referring cases where necessary. The Migration Agency also organises compulsory social introduction courses for asylum seekers and foreigners who have residence permits with temporary protection. The introduction includes information about gender equality and honour-based violence and oppression, including the prohibition of polygamy, female genital cutting and child marriage. Please note that there are proposals to expand the social introduction course, and a decision may be made.

Municipalities shall ensure that newly arrived migrants are offered social orientation in accordance with Act 2013:156 on social orientation for certain newly arrived immigrants. The social orientation course must comprise at least 100 hours and aims to facilitate establishment in working and social life by providing a basic understanding of Swedish society and a foundation for continued learning. Social orientation shall provide knowledge about human rights, fundamental democratic values, individual rights and obligations, how Swedish society is organised, and practical everyday life.

Since 2018, the Family Conflict Section has been part of the Consular and Civil Law Department at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The section handles consular matters relating to family-based coercion. It was established to further strengthen consular support in the area of family conflict, with a particular focus on child and forced marriages.

The Delegation Against Segregation (Delmos) was established in 2017 with the mission of helping to increase the long-term effects of efforts to reduce and counteract social and economic segregation at the national, regional and local levels, to lift socially disadvantaged areas and to break structural segregation mechanisms. In 2021, Delmos was commissioned to analyse and describe the consequences of socio-economic segregation with regard to the preservation of

143. National Centre against Honour-based Violence and Oppression: *Socialtjänst*. Available: https://www.hedersfortryck.se/for-yrkesverksamma/socialtjanst/
144. Social Services Act 2001:453: prop. 2020/21:163.

traditions and customs that lead to honour-based violence and oppression and undermine gender equality, which resulted in one published report. However, the assignment was not completed, as Delmos was shut down in 2023.

In 2024, the Swedish Parliament decided on a new overall goal for integration policy with five sub-goals. These sub-goals concern economic, linguistic, democratic, social and cultural integration, as well as education. Through the sub-goal for social and cultural integration, the Government clarifies that society's fundamental norms and values need to be established and adhered to by everyone who lives in Sweden and conditions that limit opportunities to live a free, dignified and independent life must be reduced. As the sub-goal is difficult to monitor with register data, the Government has decided to commission Statistics Sweden to conduct a sample study with the aim of increasing knowledge about differences in needs, values and conditions among the foreign-born population compared with people born in Sweden.

Examples of voluntary organisations

There are several voluntary organisations working against honour-based violence and oppression in Sweden. Terrafem is a non-profit national organisation that works for the rights of women and girls, with a particular focus on women of foreign origin. Terrafem provides support and legal advice to women of foreign origin who are victims of violence at its women's shelter, women's emergency centre and temporary accommodation. Terrafem offers training to women who want to work on a voluntary basis in the emergency services and in Terrafem's advocacy and prevention work. Glöm Aldrig Pela och Fadime (GAPF) is a non-profit association that works to provide support to victims of violence through a support hotline and other support initiatives. The organisation also conducts training activities and works to raise awareness. Shanazi Heroes is a non-profit organisation that offers training initiatives to prevent and foster greater understanding in society about honour-based violence and oppression. They offer training to staff in healthcare, social services, the judiciary, the police, politicians, non-profit organisations and to students and staff in schools.

Identified challenges

In Sweden, issues relating to work and efforts to combat child abduction and involuntary stays abroad receive a great deal of attention and are included in several of the development areas in the action programme for 2024–2026. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs and selected embassies work specifically with situations involving abduction and involuntary stays abroad. The National Centre against Honour-based Violence and Oppression (NCH) at the County Administrative Board of Östergötland also provides support to professionals but responsibility for operational work lies primarily with individual municipalities.

The National Board of Health and Welfare and Barnafrid also have a mandate to disseminate information about the new extended ban on involuntary trips abroad. However, experiences vary among municipalities. Cases tend to be complex and resource intensive, and it can therefore be challenging for some municipalities to handle such cases.

Another problem area mentioned in connection with honour-based violence and oppression is segregation. Both the national strategy and the action programme for 2021–2023 identify segregation as a factor that can lead to the reinforcement of honour norms. Previous research has also identified segregation as an important risk factor.[145] The term 'segregation' is not used in the 2024–2026 action programme. Instead, the term 'exclusion' was introduced to describe this policy area. In the action programme, exclusion is mentioned twice in connection with measures to establish and further develop family centres.

Conclusions

Although understanding and use of the concept of 'honour-based violence and oppression' may vary, the concept is well established and is used in both national steering documents and by key actors. In the key steering documents, honour-based violence and oppression are referred to as a form of men's violence against women but it is stated that women can also be the perpetrators of violence and control and men and LGBTI people can be victims of violence.

The steering documents also use terms such as 'honour norms', 'honour thinking' and 'honour contexts'. These terms are used without definition and their use is very broad, which gives the impression that the meanings of the terms are implied. It is debatable what the intended meanings of these terms are in the context and whether they are implicitly associated with people with foreign backgrounds. This creates space for varied interpretations and, as a consequence, increases the risk of arbitrary assessments.

The development and implementation of separate measures and initiatives specifically targeting honour-based violence and oppression indicate that this form of violence is understood as distinct from other forms of gender-based violence. Honour-based violence and oppression are mentioned as part of the integration policy sub-goal on social and cultural integration and can therefore be interpreted as both a gender equality and integration problem. Several measures concern social introduction with a focus on gender equality and human rights and support for parents who offer an alternative to a repressive upbringing.

In conclusion, efforts to combat honour-based violence in Sweden, as in other countries, are characterised by a high degree of changeability. Several measures in

145. Delegation Against Segregation: *Socioekonomisk segregation och hedersrelaterat våld och förtryck. Återrapportering av regeringsuppdrag: DELMOS 2021/437*, 2022.

the action programme for 2024–2026 have been implemented across a number of different areas, such as the judicial system, the school system and social services. With the introduction of a new gender equality policy sub-goal to prevent and combat honour-based violence and oppression, the organisation of the work will change. The Swedish Gender Equality Agency already has several government assignments related to honour-based violence and oppression and its role is to be further strengthened.

Autonomous territories: The Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland

The Faroe Islands

Honour-based violence and oppression are not identified as a specific policy area in the Faroe Islands. The *National Action Plan on Violence in Close Relationships 2023–2028* is the result of extensive work carried out in 2022–2023, the purpose of which was to describe how work against violence is organised and identify knowledge gaps with regard to violence. This was conducted through mapping and talking to authorities, associations and other public and private actors in the field of violence.

The action plan focuses on five main areas: preventive work, support for victims of violence, measures aimed at professionals, measures to facilitate access to support in connection with exposure to violence and measures to promote scientific research in the field of violence.

Greenland

There are no specific steering documents, strategies or regulatory letters in the area of honour-based violence and oppression in Greenland. Nor are there any statistics on cases of honour-based violence. As in Åland and the Faroe Islands, there is a national action plan against violence in close relationships: *Action plan against violence in close relationships 2023–2027*, but like in the Faroe Islands, there are no specific regulations concerning honour-based violence and abuse.

Åland

In Åland, efforts to combat honour-based violence and oppression are part of a broader attempt to combat men's violence against women and promote gender equality. The *Strategy for Zero Tolerance of Violence in Close Relationships 2020–2030* provides a definition of honour-based violence and oppression with reference to the report by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions *Violence prevention work with men – A knowledge overview* (2011). Honour-based violence and oppression are understood to be based on gender, power and sexuality and the

cultural perceptions of these concepts. The control of girls' and women's sexuality is seen as central and strongly linked to the collective. Instead of honour norms and honour contexts, the term 'honour thinking' is used to describe perceptions of the importance of, for example, virginity and chastity, sexuality, gender identity and gender expression.

'Violence in close relationships' is used throughout the strategy as an umbrella term that covers both violence in close relationships and honour-based violence and oppression, including forced marriage, child marriage and female genital cutting. In addition, the term 'particular vulnerability' is introduced to highlight various vulnerability factors. The term 'particular vulnerability' is also used to highlight certain circumstances that can affect the vulnerability of individuals. These circumstances include, for example, ethnic background, disability, age, sexuality, gender identity and the norms of relatives regarding self-determination over sexuality and family formation (commonly referred to as 'honour norms').

The work against men's violence against women is one of the government's strategic priorities in its gender equality work. The *Strategy for Zero Tolerance of Violence in Close Relationships 2020–2030* is part of the work of the Agenda for Gender Equality, which is to be followed up annually. The strategy is to be implemented through annual action programmes, which are to be monitored and evaluated.[146] The *Strategy for Zero Tolerance of Violence in Close Relationships 2020–2030* presents four over-arching focuses:

- Expanded and effective preventive work against violence in close relationships
- Improved detection of violence and stronger protection and support for women and children exposed to violence
- More effective law enforcement with regard to violence in close relationships and men's violence against women
- Improved knowledge and method development in the area of men's violence against women and violence in close relationships, particularly with regard to violence prevention, with a special focus on the link between masculinity and violence.

The strategy covers all forms of physical, psychological and sexual violence, as well as threats of violence, directed at women, children and men in close relationships, including honour-based violence and oppression, prostitution and human trafficking for sexual purposes.

Preventive work should be carried out on three levels: (1) early violence prevention, (2) selective violence prevention and (3) indicative violence prevention. The strategy

146. https://www.regeringen.ax/sites/default/files/attachments/guidedocument/strategi-gallande-nolltolerans-mot-vald-i-nara-relationer-2019-2030-med-ordlista.pdf

put particular emphasis on early violence prevention and selective preventive work. The preventive work consists of several different aspects. Fundamentally, it is about challenging and changing perceptions of power and masculinity that justify violence and norms that restrict the self-determination of women and girls. The measures proposed include, for example, raising awareness of norms and values surrounding power and violence linked to masculinity and other power structures, also through an intersectional perspective. In addition to challenging norms, conditions for the early detection of victims and perpetrators of violence must be established.

Detection of violence, protection and support are included in area two, selective violence prevention. Asking about violence is an important part of this work. This in turn requires sufficient knowledge among professionals about how and when to ask the question and how to proceed. The proposed measures include raising awareness and visibility of violence in close relationships and consist of: a competence-based approach to ensuring custody, housing and access; strengthened protection and support for children who have witnessed or been subjected to violence; competence-enhancing measures for professionals; and the development of methods for detecting and helping people who live with limited freedom in an honour-based context. It is highlighted that knowledge about honour-based violence and oppression should be prioritised in activities that involve children and young people.

Knowledge and methodological development are included in area three, particularly in the field of violence prevention, and is linked to the three levels introduced initially: universal prevention (measures aimed at everyone), selective prevention (measures aimed at risk groups) and indicated prevention (measures aimed at those already affected). Violence prevention measures seem to overlap with preventive work, where a norm-conscious and gender-changing approach is central, i.e. with the aim of changing perceptions of gender and masculinity.

With regard to the more operational work in Åland, it should be noted that neither the Social Welfare Act nor the Health and Medical Care Act distinguishes between different types of violence. In other words, work to combat honour-based violence and oppression is included in work to combat violence in close relationships. However, the Åland police regard honour-based violence as something that occurs particularly among migrants. Honour-based violence is described as follows: "It is a form of violence that results from someone breaking community norms or the rules of individuals. In such cases, the purpose of the violence is to cleanse and restore tarnished honour."[147]

In Åland, honour-based violence is not defined as its own crime but may be classified as a form of unlawful threat, coercion, defamation, assault, persecution, human trafficking or a sexual offence. Female genital cutting may also be classified

147. Åland Police Authority: *Hedersrelaterat våld.* Available: https://polisen.ax/brott/brottstyper/valdsbrott/hedersrelaterat-vald

as serious assault. The police state that it is difficult to compile statistics and obtain an overall picture of the extent of honour-based violence. To gain a better understanding of the situation, the police introduced a classification code that makes it easier to compile statistics. Honour-based violence is brought to police attention through preventive work but also through reports from schools, social and health authorities and civil society organisations. Violence may also be revealed in connection with criminal investigations or through reports made by a victims' contacts.

According to the police, honour-based violence has increased in Finland. They write:

> "In recent years, honour-based violence has become more common in Finland. Finnish women have also been subjected to violence in relationships with men of foreign origin. Young people with migrant backgrounds who have grown up in Finland may be subjected to violence living under pressure from two different cultures."

Identifying violence as honour-based is important in terms of the task of the police. In cases of domestic violence, for example, the police must be thorough, good at listening and able to establish an understanding of situations so that they can identify and intervene in case of violence. During investigations, the police may need to take account of other people involved, such as instigators or accomplices who may be implicated.

Problem description: policy areas and solutions

The problems surrounding honour-based violence and oppression are presented in different ways; these presentations can be understood by (1) identifying the policy areas to which the problem is assigned and (2) analysing the proposed solutions. In this section, these two approaches to interpreting the problem presentation will be outlined and related to each other. In developing an understanding, it is also important to consider how the work against honour-based violence is organised at the strategic and operational levels, and whether these are consistent with each other. Rambøll's 2020 study showed that, at the strategic level, work against honour-based violence and oppression is assigned to one of three policy areas: violence against women, violence in close relationships or integration.[148] The comparative analysis presented in this study confirms this division, although some countries, such as Norway, have organised the work through cross-sectoral cooperation between several different ministries.

148. Rambøll Management Consulting: *Strategier og initiative til forebyggelse af negative social control og æresrelaterat vold i de nordiske lande*, Study. Copenhagen, 2020.

Since the Nordic study in 2020, another area has been added: childrearing and violence against children. Violence against children is included in the concept of violence in close relationships, which tends to be understood and interpreted as violence between partners. This presents a risk of rendering children who are victims of violence invisible. Based on the different policy areas and how honour-based violence is treated in the analysed steering documents, the problem of honour-based violence is presented as either an integration problem, a parenting problem or a gender equality problem.

Policy areas

Honour-based violence as an integration problem

In Denmark and Norway, efforts to combat honour-based violence are included at the strategic level in integration policy. In Norway, the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) has primary responsibility, and in Denmark it is the Agency for International Recruitment and Integration (SIRI). In Finland, honour-based violence is also associated with migrant groups, and according to the government programme, honour-based violence is included in Finland's immigration and integration policy. According to the programme, integration requires new arrivals to learn Finnish and find employment but also to learn to follow the rules of society.[149]

Jaana Vuori, professor of gender studies at the University of Eastern Finland in Joensuu, has analysed educational materials used in Finland to disseminate knowledge about Finnish society to new arrivals. In her study, Vuori shows how such educational materials are based on a generalised perception of migrants and migrant families that also reflects the view of gender equality in Finland. The material assumes that migrant families do not treat their children as individuals with rights, that children are subjected to violence and that boys and girls are treated differently. Vuori writes: *"the implicit notion in my data is that migrants have gender equality problems."*[150] At the same time, gender equality is presented as a reality that has been achieved in Finland through statements such as *"men and women are equal in Finland"*.[151] Vuori's analysis shows that integration work, and more specifically so-called social introduction, is based on the idea that there are significant differences in views on gender equality, sexuality and child-rearing in Finland compared to other societies from which migrants come. Therefore, education on these issues is considered important in preventing violence against women and children. As already mentioned, assumptions about migrants and their views on gender equality and child-rearing are problematic because they are based

149. Norwegian Council of State: *Ett starkt och engagerat Finland*. Regeringsprogram för statsminister Petteri Orpos regering 20.6.2023, 2023:59, 218–219.
150. Vuori, Jaana: *Guiding Migrants to the Realm of Gender Equality*, in Keskinen, S., Tuori, S., Irni, S., & Mulinari, D. (eds.). *Complying with colonialism: Gender, race and ethnicity in the Nordic region*. Taylor & Francis Group, 2009: 218.
151. Vuori, Jaana: *Guiding Migrants to the Realm of Gender Equality*, in Keskinen, S., Tuori, S., Irni, S., & Mulinari, D. (eds.). *Complying with colonialism: Gender, race and ethnicity in the Nordic region*. Taylor & Francis Group, 2009: 208.

on generalised and stereotypical images of migrants. It is also problematic for another reason – it reinforces the self-image of Finland as a gender-equal society where violence against women and children has no place.

The same problem has been noted in relation to other Nordic countries. Linnéa Bruno, Associate Professor in child and youth studies at Stockholm University, has analysed the Swedish self-image in relation to the issue of children's experiences of violence and how social services handle issues related to cases in which women with children leave their violent partners. She argues that Sweden's self-image as a gender-equal country is misleading if attention is shifted from economic equality to other parameters, such as the handling of violence, both in interpersonal and structural terms. Her study paints a clear picture that shows that the identities of victims and perpetrators of violence play a role in how professionals assess cases of violence and that there is a tendency to culturalise violence, i.e. that violence is understood as culturally conditioned in some cases but not in others, depending on the perpetrator's ethnicity, skin colour, religion or similar factors.[152]

Honour-based violence as a gender equality issue

In Sweden, work against honour-based violence and oppression is carried out within the framework of gender equality policy and forms part of the sixth gender equality policy sub-goal: *"Men's violence against women must end. Women and men, girls and boys, should have the same right and opportunity to bodily integrity."* In accordance with the national strategy, honour-based violence and oppression are covered by the umbrella term 'men's violence against women'. The work is coordinated by the Gender Equality Unit at the Ministry of Employment.[153]

Iceland's action plan against violence treats honour-based violence alongside other forms of violence against women and violence in close relationships. However, Iceland's action plan for integration highlights violence to which migrants may be particularly vulnerable, without specifically mentioning honour-based violence. The measures are thus aimed at all forms of violence, reflecting a holistic approach.

The relationship between honour-based violence and men's violence against women is a controversial issue, and the debate tends to be simplified with reference to the fact that women also perpetrate violence and men are also victims of honour-based violence. The same argument is also used in relation to other groups that are vulnerable to violence, namely LGBTI people.

For all victims of violence to recognise themselves in descriptions of violence and be more inclined to seek support and help, regardless of sexuality or gender identity, Nordic steering documents advocate the use of gender-neutral language. On the one hand, gender-neutral language can contribute to a more inclusive approach, on

152. Bruno, Linnéa: National self-image as an obstacle to ensuring children's rights in the context of domestic violence and family law: the case of Sweden, *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law*, Vol. 40, No. 4, 431, 436.
153. Government of Sweden: *Mål för jämställdhet, 2016*. Available: https://www.regeringen.se/regeringens-politik/jamstalldhet/mal-for-jamstalldhet/

the other it risks obscuring the patriarchal structures behind violence, specifically the gendered nature of violence and the understanding of violence as the ultimate expression of patriarchy and a means of maintaining patriarchal structures. GREVIO has highlighted this problem in its reviews.

Without aiming to resolve this debate, but while maintaining focus on honour-based violence and oppression, it may be appropriate to return to Aisha Gill's argument regarding the understanding of honour-based violence as gender-based violence. Gender-based violence can be considered gender-neutral, as neither the victims nor the perpetrators of violence are identified. At the same time, gender and gender norms are central to understanding the causes and consequences of violence. Gill highlights that honour-based violence is a complex and multifaceted issue but that it should be considered a form of gender-based violence or violence against women (VAW) and not distinct from other forms of gender-based violence. By viewing honour-based violence as a manifestation of the broader problem of violence against women, honour-based violence can be understood as a violation of human rights.[154]

In her analysis of the introduction to society for new arrivals in Finland, Vuori points out that violence against women with a migrant background is dealt with from a gender equality perspective, which should also highlight other forms of violence. She writes:

> Why does the frame of gender equality not allow us to talk about the oppression of women's rights, inequality, or discrimination in Finland with regard to Finnish women, in the context of migrant women's lives, or globally?[155]

There is a clear tendency for the structural perspective on gender equality, or the lack thereof, to be rendered invisible when violence is individualised and presented as a gender-neutral matter.[156]

It is also important to clarify that the understanding of gender-based violence should not be reduced solely to individual gender differences and gender identities of perpetrators and victims. Gender-based violence is characterised by gender differences but also how social relationships are governed by gender norms, including social expectations of masculinity and femininity. In addition to the relational aspect, a structural perspective should be applied, which recognises gender as a social structure that influences social institutions, identities, attitudes and relationships. Gender is thus a system that places men, women and LGBTI people in different unequal relationships. Its structural nature means that gender

154. Gill, Aisha: *Honor-based violence as gendered violence*, in Idriss, M. M., Abbas, T., & Abbinnett, D. R. (eds.). (2010). *Honour, violence, women and Islam*. Taylor & Francis Group, 227.
155. Vuori, Jaana: *Guiding Migrants to the Realm of Gender Equality*, 214.
156. See GREVIO's reviews and criticism of gender neutrality in Nordic countries in section two, Study.

functions as a social force, independent of the wishes and preferences of individuals.[157] Therefore, the fact that women are also involved in perpetrating violence and that men can be subjected to honour-based violence does not automatically mean that the violence is not gender-based. Such an understanding does not exclude the need for specially adapted support measures due to the different expressions of violence, risk factors and the transnational dimension.

Honour-based violence as a parenting problem

It was noted earlier that several measures and initiatives have a younger target group, aimed at children and young people. This is also confirmed by the various steering documents studied. Finland's *Non-Violent Childhoods Action Plan* for the prevention of violence against children presents a rights-based perspective in which honour-based violence is seen as a violation of children's physical integrity or right to self-determination. Another example is Sweden's action programme, which proposes several measures focusing on children and young people as well as support for parents, including training for parents with migrant backgrounds, in how to raise their children as *"an alternative to repressive parenting"*. In Norway, minority counsellors have been introduced as part of a special initiative for children and young people.

Presenting the problem as a question of upbringing should also be linked to the earlier discussion of the concept of negative social control, which is presented as one of the mechanisms of violence. The limits of control and views on upbringing are characterised by views on upbringing in each country. The Nordic countries also project a self-image characterised by a strong respect for individual freedoms and rights in relation to the issue of upbringing and views on children. Teaching about children's rights is usually included in curricula in preschools and schools.

What consequences does such a self-image have for the view of social control? Hanna Cinthio, Doctor of Social Work, points out in her thesis that social control has become a very useful concept for studying interpersonal relationships, but therefore a criticism is that it has become too broad and vague.[158] Cinthio defines social control as a conscious regulatory mechanism for dealing with actions that threaten social order. Social control can be exercised for preventive purposes but can also constitute a form of punishment.[159]

What is interesting about Cinthio's reasoning on social control is that she highlights different forms and levels of social control. She also highlights, among other things, the state's control over individuals and groups through the criminalisation of certain behaviours. The broader perspective on social control shows that control

157. Anderson, Kristin L.: Theorizing Gender in Intimate Partner Violence Research, *Sex roles*, 2005, Vol.52, No. 11–12, 853-865.
158. Cinthio, Hanna: *Rörelser i gränslandet. Om komplexa hedersnormer och samhälleliga markeringar,* Malmö University, 2023: 134.
159. Cinthio, Hanna: *Rörelser i gränslandet. Om komplexa hedersnormer och samhälleliga markeringar,* Malmö University, 2023: 135.

also plays an important social function. The discourse on honour-based violence and oppression focuses on the control of individuals by families or groups. The question of how much control the state should exercise over individuals and families is less frequently discussed in this context. The framing of the concept of honour-based violence and oppression signals the seriousness and risk of the most severe form of violence, but in practice, other forms of control (related to upbringing) are also included in the concept. This raises the question of how much states should interfere in child-rearing, with the degree of accepted control varying in relation to different groups.

Solutions

While the previous section dealt with possible solutions based on the political area to which work against honour-based violence is assigned, this section will focus on the key solutions presented in the analysed steering documents. For the purposes of the analysis, key approaches that are common to the different countries have been selected. These solutions are also more practical in nature than the reasoning presented above.

Training and knowledge development

Several proposed measures concern education and the development of knowledge and methods. This is mainly in reference to professionals but in some cases applies to new arrivals and migrants. Norway's action plan *Freedom from Negative Social Control and Honour Based Violence* aims, for example, to "prevent and combat honour-based violence through education". The plan includes measures to increase the competence of professionals and educational initiatives for new arrivals. The educational initiatives can be directly linked to the framing of honour-based violence as a problem of integration. In the area of integration, the strategy *Integrering gjennom kunnskap* (Integration through knowledge) applies.

Sweden's national strategy describes education as an important part of preventive work. Education on sex and relationships should convey the fundamental democratic values and human rights on which Swedish society is based, including issues relating to sexuality, gender roles and gender equality. The role of the school system is emphasised. In the most recent action programme, the government proposes that the role of the school system be strengthened. The Family Law and Parental Support Authority is also responsible for providing parental support and family counselling to families in honour contexts.

Law and order

Another clear theme is the legal treatment of honour-based violence through criminalisation. In Sweden, legislation has been tightened, first through the establishment of honour as an aggravating circumstance and second of honour crimes as a specific offence. In addition to honour crime, other acts have also been

criminalised, such as forced marriage and female genital cutting. Other countries emphasise the importance of tightening legislation and express an intention to criminalise honour crimes.

Risk and safety assessments

The transnational nature and involvement of multiple perpetrators in honour-based crimes place higher demands on risk assessments and security measures. Several measures therefore address these issues specifically. This mainly concerns measures relating to cooperation, counselling and support at the operational level. Measures concerning procedures and guidelines for how authorities, schools, healthcare and the judiciary should handle cases of honour-based violence are also examples of the increased focus on risk and security assessments. This trend is most evident in Denmark, where travel teams, security consultants and a coordination unit for re-education trips and involuntary stays abroad have been in place for several years. In Sweden, efforts to combat harmful stays abroad in honour-based contexts have also been intensified. A proposal has been put forward for a reporting system to keep statistics on missing and abducted children, as well as a set of rules on travel bans and citizenship.

Conclusion

In the Nordic countries, a combination of different understandings of the problem of honour-based violence and oppression can be seen, as well as different solutions. However, in general the main trends that emerge in steering documents shows a discrepancy between the way the problem is presented on the one hand and the solutions proposed on the other. Fundamental social problems, such as gender inequalities, poor integration or problematic views on parenting, are intended to be solved through education, criminalisation and security measures. The proposed solutions are not wrong in themselves and serve important purposes and functions but there is a risk that they will be insufficient.

Legal measures and risk and safety assessments focus on extreme cases of violence and the risk of victims being taken abroad against their will or subjected to re-education trips, forced marriage or genital cutting. The transnational nature of this violence places higher demands on cooperation between various authorities within and outside the country, and this mainly involves measures at the operational level. Risk assessments and security measures are necessary and should not be underestimated. At the same time, this is reactive work in connection with serious violations that does not aim to address the root causes of the problem. An increased focus on reactive work should be reviewed and assessed in relation to the prioritisation of existing needs and the distribution of resources between preventive and operational work. If such an assessment is not made, there is a risk that all resources and measures will have short-term effects and fail to address the problem in a sustainable manner.

Another effect of the increased focus on risk and safety measures is that violence is individualised, i.e. understood in terms of isolated incidents. Previous knowledge about gender-based violence and men's violence against women shows that individualising violence is a way of depoliticising the problem. It is presented as a private matter that does not require major political initiatives or reforms. When violence is individualised and depoliticised, its structural causes – the patriarchal power relations that perpetuate gender inequality – are rendered invisible. This contrasts with representations that emphasise that honour norms are about the subordination of women, heteronormativity and homophobia. The same effect, i.e. individualisation, can be observed in connection with criminalisation, when legal measures are considered to be the most central and effective. The law, and criminal law in particular, has an important function – to highlight and convey that certain behaviours and actions are not accepted in society and that the state therefore has the legitimate power to use coercive measures as punishment. The Nordic countries have historically been described as exceptional in their view of criminal law and the criminal justice system, where rehabilitation has long been considered the ultimate goal. In recent years, there have been several changes that have been described in research as 'the punitive turn', i.e. a shift towards punishment as the ultimate goal rather than rehabilitation.[160] This change has resulted, among other things, in increased criminalisation. Criminalisation contributes to the individualisation of violence, where the focus is on individuals who commit violent acts. Once again, as in relation to risk and security assessments, legal regulation is necessary. However, this and the required resources should be considered in relation to preventive work.

Criminalising honour-based violence also raises important questions about legal certainty. There is a risk that such legislation, in covering certain groups, does not meet the requirement of generality. In practice, it is ethnic minorities that are covered, such as Kurdish, Somali or Roma minorities. When the criminalisation of honour-based violence was introduced in Sweden, it was met with criticism from several actors. There is also a need to study existing practice more closely, i.e. how the courts have reasoned about motives and assessed evidence.

While criminalisation, risk and safety measures are part of the reactive work that is initiated after violence has occurred, educational measures are central to preventive work. Preventive work consists of skills enhancement initiatives for professionals and educational initiatives for new arrivals and ethnic minorities through social introduction, education in sex and relationships, and parenting support. Previous research in this area has highlighted the need to consider a range of different areas, including housing, employment and economic conditions. Dependency and confinement have been identified as important factors behind the development and maintenance of conservative and patriarchal norms (described as honour norms).

160.Tham Henrik: *Kriminalpolitik: brott och straff i Sverige sedan 1965*, Nordstedts Juridik, Stockholm 2022.

Critical policy analysis

This study is based on a critical policy analysis developed by Carol Bacchi, a professor of political science. The central idea behind her method is to challenge the traditional understanding of steering documents as a reaction to problems that need to be addressed. Instead, she argues that policy is not primarily a reaction but a way of constructing a problem. Bacchi writes:

> The methodology involves starting with a policy or policy proposal, ensuring understanding of its context, and 'working backwards' to see how the 'problem' is represented – the meaning it is given or how it is discursively constituted – within the policy or proposal.[161]

The representation or description of a problem carries with it certain explicit or implicit assumptions; critical analysis is therefore about identifying these assumptions and critically examining them. Why is this necessary? According to Bacchi, the representation of a problem has a number of consequences, including discursive ones, i.e. which voices are seen as legitimate or not, and these have material impacts on people's living conditions. The representation of a social problem can either maintain or challenge existing hierarchical power relations.

The purpose of the analysis is to apply a power perspective to problem presentations. The power perspective includes an analysis of who has scope for action, interpretative priority, and ownership and control over resources. It is important to note that the WPR method does not as a starting point assume a deliberate or strategic framing of a particular problem. The method is based on the premise that, since all steering documents present proposals for change, they inherently contain implicit problem representations.[162]

Taking into account the context and focus of this study, Bacchi's questionnaire has been adapted and formulated into three questions:

- How is the issue of honour-based violence and oppression presented in steering documents?
- What assumptions underlie this presentation?
- Which areas are left out of the presentation of the issue?

Based on these three questions, the paper examines how honour-based violence is understood at the policy level and which concepts are used to describe the same or similar phenomena. This section presents the various concepts that are used, the understandings they express and how they relate to each other.

161. Bacchi, Carol: *Analysing Policy: What's the Problem Represented to be?*, Pearson, Midland 2009, 114.
162. Bacchi, Carol: *Analysing Policy: What's the Problem Represented to be?*, Pearson, Midland 2009, 116.

Use of terms

The concept of 'honour-based violence' is established in all countries studied and in the autonomous regions. Since all countries have ratified the Istanbul Convention, it is important to refer to how honour-based violence is used in the Convention itself. The preamble refers to 'forced marriage', 'honour-based crimes' and 'female genital mutilation' as serious forms of violence. According to Article 12, the parties to the Convention shall *"shall ensure that culture, custom, religion, tradition or so-called 'honour' shall not be considered as justification for any acts of violence"*.[163] Article 42 elaborates further by stating that justifying crimes by reference to so-called honour is unacceptable. According to the article, the parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that such justification is not considered legitimate in any criminal proceedings.[164] To summarise the norms contained in the Istanbul Convention, the term 'honour', or 'so-called honour', is referred to as a motive or justification strategy for violence, together with culture, custom, religion and tradition. The use of 'so-called honour' can be interpreted as an expression of the fact that there is room for interpretation and discrepancy between different understandings of honour and how it is used in different contexts.

Honour-based violence as an umbrella term

An analysis of the Nordic context shows that honour-based violence (and oppression) is often used as an umbrella term that includes, among other things, forced marriage, female genital cutting and child marriage. At the international level, the terms 'honour-based crimes' or 'crimes in the name of honour' are used as examples of gender-based violence and harmful practices. Previously, the term 'traditional harmful practices' was sometimes used, but the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) advises against using this term, as it tends to imply that such practices originate in and are almost exclusively maintained within non-Western cultural traditions. It may also imply that harmful practices do not exist in Western societies. The term 'harmful practices' is preferred and refers to practices that are harmful to women and girls and are based on discrimination.[165] In the UN committees for the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), harmful customs or practices are used as a collective term that includes female genital cutting, child marriage, forced marriage, polygamy and crimes committed in the name of so-called honour.[166]

163. Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, Istanbul 2011, Article 12.
164. Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, Introduction, Articles 12 and 42.
165. European Institute for Gender Equality: "traditional harmful practices". Available: https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/thesaurus/terms/1379?language_content_entity=sv
166. *United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and Committee on the Rights of the Child: Joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2019) on harmful practices**. Available: https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g19/134/42/pdf/g1913442.pdf

How can such use of honour-based violence as an umbrella term be understood? One possible explanation may be the flexibility of the term and the possibility of interpreting different forms of violence as based on honour. Another possible explanation may be the concept's 'political success' and the considerable attention that the most severe form of violence, honour killings, has received in Sweden, Finland, Norway and Denmark.[167] Since the use of the honour discourse has proven to have a strong social resonance, the same concept is used to describe other practices. Finland's report to GREVIO shows, for example, that framing female genital cutting as a form of honour-based violence is considered to have contributed to preventive measures reaching more people and to securing resources for preventive work.[168] This framing can be seen as pragmatic, shifting attention from what is considered a narrower focus on forced marriage and female genital cutting to the broader issue of honour-based violence and crime. This shift has been observed in several Nordic countries, where legislation on female genital cutting and forced marriage has been in focus for longer than honour-based violence.

The widespread use of honour-based violence as an umbrella term carries certain risks. It can give a misleading picture of the causes behind different forms of violence and, as a result, lead to misguided solutions. There is a risk that the violence itself will become a side issue and that much attention will be given to other issues that explain honour as a motivation for crime. Flexibility risks being transformed into arbitrariness, thereby jeopardising the rule of law. Other possible risks relate to the distribution of responsibility and resources when several actors become involved in the work and only resources for combating honour-based violence are prioritised. This does not mean that resources are not needed, but a holistic approach is required to analyse the issue from a societal perspective, where several different social problems are involved.[169]

Using the term 'honour-based violence' as an umbrella term risks reinforcing a strict division between honour-based violence and other forms of gender-based violence. Since the concept of honour underlies many different forms of gender-based violence around the world, honour-based violence cannot be understood or studied in isolation from other forms of violence against women or specific social contexts in which such violence occurs.[170]

Honour-based violence and oppression

In the Nordic context, a number of different concepts can be identified. Since this study was initiated by Sweden, the concept of 'honour-based violence and

167. The murders of Fadime Şahindal and Pela Atroshi in Sweden, Kadra Yusuf in Norway and Ghazala Khan in Denmark received significant political and media attention.
168. Finnish Government: *Report of the Government of Finland on the Implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence* (Istanbul Convention), 2023, 7.
169. Research has identified several contributing factors, including segregation, socio-economic conditions, statelessness, exposure to racism and discrimination.
170. Gill, Aisha: *Honor-based violence as gendered violence*, in Idriss, M. M., Abbas, T., & Abbinnett, D. R. (eds.). (2010). *Honour, violence, women and Islam*. Taylor & Francis Group, 219.

oppression' has been used as one of the starting points. The term 'oppression' is not used in the other Nordic countries. Originally, the term refers to the use of harsh measures directed against a group or citizens, for example political oppression directed at groups with the aim of keeping them in a state of powerlessness (a synonym for tyranny).[171] In a 2004 study, *Patriarchal violence – an attack on human security – A broad survey of measures to combat patriarchal violence and oppression, particularly acts committed in the name of honour directed at women, homosexuals, bisexuals and transgender people*, Gerd Johnsson-Latham defines oppression similarly: *"Harsh measures imposed on (a certain group of) people for the purpose of keeping them in a state of powerlessness."*.[172] Based on the analysis of steering documents, it is difficult to determine how and why the word 'oppression' has come to be used in relation to honour-based violence. One possible explanation is that the concept of 'oppression' is strongly associated with patriarchal violence (which, according to the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, is a collective term for global forms of violence that are rooted in and serve to defend patriarchal power structures). As Johnsson-Latham writes, the focus (both in debates and in initiatives) has shifted from violence against women to extreme forms of violence and oppression, such as female genital cutting, human trafficking for sexual purposes and crimes in the name of honour.[173] While the term 'oppression' is no longer used in relation to men's violence against women or violence in same-sex relationships, it has been retained and its use is now established in Sweden in relation to honour-based violence. In this way, the conceptual link between violence and patriarchal power structures has been retained specifically in relation to honour-based violence. The 2004 study shows that oppression is distinguished from physical violence. While physical violence is exemplified by beatings, kicking, sexual violence, manslaughter, murder and executions, oppression is expressed through threats, insults and abuse and stands for deprivation of liberty, forced and child marriages, violations of integrity, ridicule and demands for chastity. According to Johnsson-Latham, the line between violence and oppression tends to be blurred. Violence refers to overt violence, while oppression is a more covert form of violence that is difficult to verify.[174]

In summary, the term 'oppression' can be used in different ways: in the context of keeping a group in a state of powerlessness or controlling an individual's behaviour and choices. Contemporary usage of the term 'oppression' tends to refer to behaviours directed at an individual and forms of violence that are difficult to verify

171. Svenska Akademiens ordböcker. Available: https://svenska.se/tre/?sok=f%C3%B6rtryck&pz=8
172. Government Offices of Sweden: *Patriarkalt våld som hot mot mänsklig säkerhet – en kartläggning av åtgärder mot patriarkalt våld och förtryck, särskilt i hederns namn, mot kvinnor och homo- och bisexuella samt transpersoner*, 2004, 13.
173. Government Offices of Sweden*: Patriarkalt våld som hot mot mänsklig säkerhet – en kartläggning av åtgärder mot patriarkalt våld och förtryck, särskilt i hederns namn, mot kvinnor och homo- och bisexuella samt transpersoner*, 2004, 8. Johnsson-Latham also writes about it later in his chapter "Mäns våld mot kvinnor i ett globalt perspektiv", in Heimer G. et al. (Red.) in *Våldsutsatta kvinnor – Samhällets ansvar*, 4th ed., Studentlitteratur, Lund 2019.
174. Government Offices of Sweden: *Patriarkalt våld som hot mot mänsklig säkerhet – en kartläggning av åtgärder mot patriarkalt våld och förtryck, särskilt i hederns namn, mot kvinnor och homo- och bisexuella samt transpersoner*, 2004, 37.

(hidden violence). Examples of such forms of violence can be understood with the help of a theory developed by the American sociologist Evan Stark with respect to coercive control. Stark identifies the mechanisms behind violence by highlighting various patterns of controlling behaviour aimed at exercising power and control.[175] However, the original meaning of the term 'oppression' that links violence to patriarchal structures ('patriarchal violence') seems to be downplayed.

Honour-based violence and honour-based conflicts

Honour-based violence is a well-established concept in all the Nordic countries and is also used in English-speaking contexts. It refers to violence based on a (perceived) violation of someone's honour. Descriptions of how such violence is applied indicate two different purposes: to prevent a breach of norms or as punishment in the case of an honour violation. In Denmark, the term 'honour-based conflict' is used. The use of the term 'conflict' instead of violence emphasises honour-based conflicts that arise between parents and children, representing a generational conflict. Reinterpretations of violence as conflict can take place in different ways and have different implications. There are also examples of such reinterpretations when it comes to men's violence against women, both in research and practical work. One of the most important risks highlighted in connection with such a reinterpretation is the risk of obscuring the power imbalance between perpetrators and victims of violence and that violence is a way of maintaining this power imbalance.[176] With respect to honour-based violence, the use of the term 'conflict' can be explained by the fact that violence in close relationships includes violence against both adults and children, and it is violence against children and young people that receives the most attention. Presenting the problem as a conflict between children/young people and their parents can, on the one hand, open up opportunities for support and help for both parties but, on the other, risk obscuring the power perspective.

The question of whether to use the term 'conflict' or 'violence' also raises a broader discussion about the boundaries between the private and public spheres, specifically with regard to the degree of control parents have the right to exercise in connection with child-rearing and the situations in which the state should intervene in child-rearing. There is no doubt that violence against children should be prohibited, as it is in all the Nordic countries and autonomous regions. However, when the understanding of violence becomes increasingly broad, to the extent that instances of violence are redefined as conflict, there is a risk that the boundaries between control, upbringing and violence become blurred.

175. Stark, Evan: *Coercive Control: How Men Entrap Women in Personal Life*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2009.
176. Lövkrona Inger and Nilsson, Gabriella: *Mäns våld mot kvinnor – ett olösligt samhällsproblem? Våld i svensk jämställdhetspolitik under 2000-talet*, Lund universitet, 2023.

The target group for various measures, protection and support has changed over time and now includes not only adults but also children and young people. Although honour-based violence has long been seen as a form of violence in close relationships, these relationships have primarily been perceived of as relationships between partners or between adult children and parents. Both in research and in political debate, there has been and continues to be discussion about whether honour-based violence should be seen as a distinct form of violence from men's violence against women. However, the question of whether and how honour-based violence differs from other forms of violence against children has not received as much attention. Today, the issue is increasingly discussed as a form of violence against children, with proposed measures aimed at a younger target group.

Negative social control

A concept that is mainly used in Norway and Denmark is 'negative social control'. To link back to the concept discussed initially, namely honour-based violence and oppression, negative social control can be likened to oppression – hidden violence. Unlike oppression (specified honour crime), the concept of negative social control seems at first glance to be linguistically disconnected from the motive for the violence – honour. Descriptions of negative social control are similar to descriptions of honour-based violence. Negative social control is also referred to as an expression of honour-based violence alongside other expressions such as physical and psychological violence and threats of violence. However, the difference between negative social control and psychological violence is not clarified. Since there is no explicit link to honour motives, the issue of negative social control in contexts outside of those associated with honour contexts becomes relevant. Such a discussion is interesting, not least because it helps us to interpret how honour contexts are defined and what other contexts are constructed in relation to them.

Other contexts mentioned in the steering documents include, for example, 'closed' religious communities (Norway)[177] and religious communities within Laestadianism, the Pentecostal movement and the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Finland)[178]. Finnish steering documents use new terms to describe instances of violence: 'spiritual violence' and 'religious violence', which are defined as psychological violence with a religious dimension. What characterises these other contexts is that the members of these communities are representative of the social majority. In Norway, this is explicitly described: 'communities in which the majority of the congregation consists of ethnic Norwegians'. Paradoxically, such descriptions and 'comparisons' are intended to counteract the stigmatising notion that negative social control is only carried out within ethnic minority groups. However, the result is

177. Ministry of Education and Research: *Frihet från negativ social kontroll och hedersrelaterat våld 2021–2024*, Handlingsplan 2021.
178. Ministry of Social Affairs and Health*: Åtgärdsplan för förebyggande av våld mot barn 2020–2025 "En barndom utan våld"*, 2021.

the opposite: this positioning reinforces a distinction between violence committed by representatives of ethnic minority groups and violence committed by representatives of the social majority. In other words, the focus is placed on the ethnic background of individuals.

Other concepts

The studied documents also use the terms 'spiritual violence' and 'religious violence'. These two terms are used synonymously and refer to violence that occurs in religious communities. Finland's action plan for the prevention of violence against children presents perspectives based on the experiences of three different religious communities: Laestadianism, the Pentecostal movement and the Evangelical Lutheran Church.[179] The action plan presents the Evangelical Lutheran Church's definition of religious violence as 'psychological violence with a religious dimension'. This violence takes the form of intimidation, conversion attempts, blame, isolation and control with the intention of breaking down another person's worldview, life-style or opinion. Religious language is used as part of the exercise of power. The description of religious violence within religious communities is particularly focused on sexual violence against children justified by religious language. The description of religious violence is reminiscent of the description of honour-based violence in that it is described as a hidden phenomenon that is difficult to detect and define.[180] The closed nature of certain religious communities enables violence. Another aspect that is highlighted concerns the importance of a community based on the group's authority – the promise of salvation and threats posed by the surrounding society. The relationship between individuals and religious communities is described in terms of conformity and unspoken expectations that individuals follow the teachings of the community.[181] Leaders within religious communities have precedence in the interpretation of religious writings, traditions and practices. The definition and descriptions of religious or spiritual violence address the issue of the role of religion on two levels. Firstly, references to faith and the consequences of not following advocated norms are described as a way of justifying violence, highlighting specific ways of manipulating and controlling individuals. Secondly, the presence of a religious community is described as a decisive factor in defining violence as religious. The role of religion is virtually absent from the steering documents studied. The absence of this dimension in the problem description will be discussed later, under the section Concluding reflections.

Another concept that has been proposed in research is 'collective violence'. Satu Lidman and Tuuli Hong suggest that, in terms of the decisive dimension of violence,

179. Ministry of Social Affairs and Health: *Åtgärdsplan för förebyggande av våld mot barn 2020–2025 "En barndom utan våld"*, 2021, 514.
180. Ministry of Social Affairs and Health: *Åtgärdsplan för förebyggande av våld mot barn 2020–2025 "En barndom utan våld"*, 2021: 516.
181. Ministry of Social Affairs and Health: *Åtgärdsplan för förebyggande av våld mot barn 2020–2025 "En barndom utan våld"*, 2021: 517–518.

emphasis should be shifted from honour to the collective. They write: *"while HRV includes elements of collectivity, collective violence does not take place solely in honour contexts"*.[182] Lidman and Hong understand the collective dimension as both contextual and causal. According to the authors, it is important to note that violence is collective. The reason for this is that Western legal systems are primarily based on the individual, which makes it difficult to deal with crimes committed by multiple perpetrators.[183] Similar issues have previously been raised by Swedish researchers Jenny Westerstrand and Åsa Eldén. The authors critically analysed the legal handling of Sara's murder in 1996, arguing that a coherent perspective on women's experiences is needed. Their analysis has shown that the view of violence is fragmented.[184]

This section has discussed concepts and their use. The seemingly different concepts raise several questions about which groups are considered vulnerable to violence and whether it is desirable to define forms of violence according to specific concepts. The use of concepts is also linked to how the problem of honour-based violence is presented and what assumptions underlie the presentation, as outlined in the section Problem description: policy areas and solutions.

Language use and differentiation

The steering documents studied use several terms in reference to 'honour', such as 'honour norms', 'honour thinking' and 'honour contexts'. The concept of 'honour' is defined and explained implicitly with reference to these three concepts. What role does 'honour' play in these contexts? For the sake of simplicity, the descriptions of honour norms can be divided into two groups. The first group concerns norms relating to those who are exposed, at risk of being exposed or considered to be exposed to violence. These honour norms are described as 'strongly patriarchal', with authority linked to gender and age. As a result, honour norms require control of women's sexuality and of desired and undesired behaviour. They also include 'heteronormative notions', which explains why even men can be subjected to violence if they do not follow these norms. Such a representation of honour norms is normalised and rarely questioned. At the same time, it should be questioned why it is not enough to describe and label these norms as patriarchal and conservative.

The second group concerns norms relating to those who are perpetrators of violence or are considered to perpetrate violence. Here, the importance of the collective and, above all, the family is emphasised. According to honour norms, the interests of the family take precedence over the interests of the individual ('family control over the individual'). This understanding is also normalised in steering

182. Lidman, Satu and Hong, Tuuli: "Collective violence" and honour in Finland: a survey for professionals, in the Journal of Aggression, *Conflict and Peace Research*, Vol. 10, No. 4 2018, 262.
183. Lidman, Satu and Hong, Tuuli: "Collective violence" and honour in Finland: a survey for professionals, in the Journal of Aggression, *Conflict and Peace Research*, Vol. 10, No. 4 2018, 266.
184. Eldén, Åsa and Westerstrand, Jenny: Hederns försvarare. Den rättsliga hanteringen av ett hedersmord, i *Kvinnovetenskaplig Tidskrift,* Vol. 3, No. 4, 39.

documents and public debate. However, no definitions are established for the family, collective or relatives, nor are any clarifications made regarding which forms of control are acceptable and which are not.

As previously presented and discussed, honour contexts refer to groups outside of the social majority. A generous interpretation would be that honour contexts are not equated with immigrant groups but refer to contexts or groups among ethnic minorities. At the same time, the concept and its use means that violence among ethnic minorities is distinguished from violence among the majority population. Such an interpretation could possibly be avoided if honour contexts were defined and nuanced. If different countries and their key authorities consider honour-based violence to be a distinctive phenomenon, this needs to be described and evidenced rather than assumed.

The use of the term 'honour' in conjunction with specific norms, contexts and mindsets has a clearly differentiating function. These norms and mindsets are attributed to ethnic minorities and immigrant groups. To understand how widespread these norms are and whether they are upheld within the groups to which they are attributed, a sociological study is required. The critical question here is why these norms and contexts must be distinguished from other conservative and patriarchal norms that, in terms of content, represent the same ideas and values regarding the subordination of women and intolerance towards homosexuality.

Discourses within problem presentations

According to Bacchi, critical policy analysis includes an analysis of various linguistic elements, such as discourses and dichotomies. The material on honour-based violence and oppression is characterised by several dichotomous relationships that are constructed for the purpose of distinguishing honour-based violence from other forms of violence (primarily from violence against women in general). In the following section, these dichotomies will be presented and commented on.

Honour context and religious communities

Honour contexts and closed religious communities represent two different contexts in which violence and control occur. These contexts are characterised by conservative norms, strong authorities and the importance of the community or collective. These contexts demand individuals' loyalty to a group and their adaptation to the prevailing norms. Despite clear similarities, the two contexts are seen as distinct. Closed religious communities with members from the majority population are presented in contrast to honour contexts, which are mainly associated with ethnic minorities. As already highlighted, such a construction contributes to the perception that honour-based violence only occurs among

migrants and migrant families. In addition to stigmatising effects, there is a risk that links are not made between knowledge about honour-based violence and violence in closed religious communities. Research on honour-based violence shows, for example, that exclusion is an important factor in the emergence of so-called 'honour norms'. In their study of the prevalence of honour-based violence and oppression in Stockholm, Malmö and Gothenburg, Baianstovu et al. show that violence increases in introverted or closed groups where interaction with other groups is low.[185] The results of this research project could also be transferred to contexts that are not described as honour contexts. A perspective that treats honour-based violence and oppression as a special area increases the risk that important analyses and insights are not applied in other contexts. Similarly, knowledge about spiritual or religious violence linked to violence in closed religious communities would be relevant for understanding the mechanisms behind negative social control and the relationships between individuals and families, as well as the ambivalence that characterises these relationships.

Individuals and community

The relationship between the individual and the community (family, clan or collective) is another dichotomy that arises in the documents and in understandings of honour-based violence. This representation is based in part on the description of Nordic cultures and societies as individualistic and 'others' as collectivist. However, these descriptions are accompanied by the assumption that individualist societies are the norm, with reference to human rights and the autonomy and integrity of individuals. Honour norms are presented as norms where individuals must show loyalty to the community to which they belong and submit to the collective.

In this way, this presentation contributes to recreating a stereotypical image of 'other' cultures as collectivist and thus more prone to violence and control within the family.

Gender equality and patriarchy

The contrast between gender equality and patriarchy permeates several contexts, where the Nordic countries are presented as gender equal and other societies as non-gender equal, i.e. characterised by patriarchal structures. This is expressed through a distinctiveness perspective that sees culture as the root cause of violence. Violence is described as a cultural phenomenon. Honour norms are described as patriarchal, and the term 'patriarchal violence' is also used in relation to honour-based violence and oppression. Previous research has highlighted 'the violence of the other man', i.e. the portrayal of men with migrant backgrounds as

185. Baianstovu, Rúna Í, Strid, Sofia, Särnstedt Gramnaes, Emmie and Enelo, Jan-Magnus: *Heder och samhälle: Det hedersrelaterade våldets och förtryckets uttryck och samhällets utmaningar*, Report. Örebro: Örebro University Press, 2019, 24.

more violent. This portrayal reinforces not only stereotypical images of men with migrant backgrounds but also those of women with migrant backgrounds. An important insight that Shahrzad Mojab and Amir Hassanpour highlight in their article concerns precisely this misleading and reductionist portrayal of women, in this case Kurdish women. They write:

> To deny or ignore the existence of a culture of struggle for gender equality in Kurdistan or in other non-Western societies is a political decision emanating from patriarchal politics, in the sense that to do so denies the universality of the oppression of women and the struggle against it. It is racist in so far as it denies to non-Western, non-White women the means to understand the conditions surrounding their subordination and ignores their determination to resist.[186]

They argue that Kurdish culture is characterised by both misogyny and patriarchy but also by women's struggle for equality. When certain cultures are portrayed as homogeneous and patriarchal, while others are portrayed as gender equal, it reinforces the patriarchal myth as well as an ethnocentric, orientalist and racist myth. As Linnea Bruno has shown, a selective culturalisation of violence in close relationships is present, which contrasts with Sweden's self-image as a gender-equal and modern country. Bruno also shows that selective culturalisation and its myths are harmful both to people from other countries and to women and children belonging to the majority population who are exposed to violence, as it reinforces a false self-image.[187]

This construction is achieved through comparisons with the most extreme examples from other societies, which are applied in a generalised way. This explains the importance of individual stories and testimonies that receive significant political and media attention. Despite the tragic nature of these stories, they are misused to create a stereotypical image of women and men with foreign backgrounds. Such constructions are also based on the desirable image of gender equality as a reality that has been achieved, as Vuori writes, *"gender equality as an achieved reality"*.

Modern and traditional

Another dichotomy that arises in the presentation of honour-based violence, which is closely linked to views on gender equality and patriarchy in the Nordic countries versus other societies, concerns perceptions of modernity and traditional societies.

In this regard, it is worth delving deeper into the question of how men's violence against women has historically been understood and analysed in a context such as Greenland. Bo Wagner Sørensen presents an analysis of how men's violence against

186. Shahrzad Mojab & Amir Hassanpour: *Thought on the Struggle against "Honor Killing"*, 85.
187. Bruno, Linnéa, 436.

women has been explained with reference to the social change that took place in Greenland in the 1950s – a transition from a traditional lifestyle to a modern, Western one. The narrative of the dichotomy between tradition and modernity and the stress it has caused for Greenlanders and the indigenous Inuit people is used to explain social problems such as alcohol abuse, suicide statistics and violence. Men's violence against women is also explained by the stress caused by destabilisation of identity and a loss of power and sense of self-worth. Men's violence against women is presented as a reaction to this.

Sørensen is highly critical of such a presentation of the problem and argues that it is based on a problematic essentialisation that arises in the dichotomy between tradition and modernity, psychologisation and externalisation of violence.[188] Sørensen argues that instead of presenting Greenland as a special case, an analysis of men's violence against women should be grounded in general theories of gender-based violence (as developed by Dobash & Dobash and Eva Lundgren).[189] These theories provide analytical tools for understanding the mechanisms of violence and problematising the assumptions made in the analysis of the Greenlandic context specifically and of the Arctic region in general. Sørensen's analysis can also provide some important insights into how honour-based violence and oppression tend to be presented and discussed, based on a contrast between tradition and modernity, where perceptions of traditional collectivist societies are contrasted with modern egalitarian societies in the Nordic countries.

Issues that are not addressed

Critical policy analysis also involves an analysis of problems and issues that are left out of steering documents or dealt with to a lesser extent. Such an analysis requires knowledge of the issues that have been identified and highlighted in, for example, previous research. One of the key problems analysed in previous research concerns the risk of discrimination against already vulnerable minorities. This risk can be present both at the discursive level through the construction of 'us' and 'them' and at the practical level in encounters with victims of violence, as well as being an obstacle to victims of violence seeking help. Several action plans (e.g. in Norway and Finland) discuss the risk of discrimination. The risk is also addressed in GREVIO's reviews of all the Nordic countries.

188. Sørensen: "Men *in Transition" The Representation of Men's Violence Against Women in Greenland*, in *Violence against Women*, Vol. 7, No. 7, 2001, 826–847
189. Sørensen: "Men *in Transition" The Representation of Men's Violence Against Women in Greenland*, in *Violence against Women*, Vol. 7, No. 7, 2001, 840–841.

How should efforts to combat honour-based violence and oppression be organised to not also expose minorities to discrimination? Due to the central nature of the problem, there are good reasons to apply this perspective to all measures (including criminalisation) and problem descriptions and to consider what constructive measures should be introduced to minimise the risk. The fact that such considerations are lacking indicates that the risk of discrimination is not being taken seriously.

Another problem that is addressed to a lesser extent is exclusion and segregation. On the one hand, various steering documents reflect a preconception that honour norms are reinforced in segregated areas and that it is primarily there that the risk of honour-based violence increases. Previous research also suggests that exclusion and segregation are contributing factors. However, the studied steering documents do not contain any measures relating to these issues. This can be interpreted as indicating a lack of a holistic societal perspective and deeper understanding of the problems underlying vulnerability to violence (such as reinforced dependency and exclusion) and the possibility of seeking help and support. Fundamentally, work against segregation and socio-economic vulnerability is about prevention. As shown in the study, national steering documents are mainly dominated by reactionary measures linked to criminalisation, risk and security measures.

Furthermore, in line with the preconceptions about segregation and exclusion that characterise the picture of the causes behind honour norms, it is important to mention issues relating to religion and culture. Perceptions of the identities of vulnerable people and perpetrators are linked to certain geographical areas (the Middle East, North Africa and South-East Asia) and to Islam. The concept of religious or spiritual violence is used in relation to closed (Christian) religious communities, as discussed earlier. Nihan Altınbaş writes in her article that patriarchal gender relations are an ideological discourse within many religious traditions; it is misleading to portray Islam as inherently more patriarchal than Christianity or Judaism. In other words, she argues that honour-based violence and oppression are not exclusive to Islam.[190]

According to Article 12 of the Istanbul Convention, *"parties shall ensure that culture, custom, religion, tradition or so-called 'honour' shall not be considered as justification for any acts of violence"*. In other words, countries are encouraged to prohibit references to religion as a way of justifying violence against women and girls. There are few studies on the links between religion and honour-based violence. Most studies that mention religion argue that efforts to combat honour-based violence may be misguided and contribute to Islamophobia. They argue that both media coverage and political discourse present Islam as a backward and conservative religion that runs counter to Western values.[191]

190. Altınbaş, Nihan: Honor-related Violence in the Context of Patriarchy, Multicultural Politics, and Islamophobia after 9/11, *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences,* Vol. 30, No.3: 3.
191. For Example, Altınbaş, Nihan; Shahrzad Mojab and Amir Hassanpour.

Final reflections

By way of conclusion, the risks and implications arising in connection with different representations of the problem of honour-based violence and oppression are summarised here. In the steering documents studied, honour-based violence is presented as a specific form of violence, distinct from other forms of men's violence against women and violence in close relationships. This leads to the causes of violence being associated with ethnic groups other than the social majority and to phenomena such as culture and religion being presented as the root causes of violence. Such understandings of violence and its causes, which overemphasise the importance of culture, risk obscuring other causes behind violence, especially patriarchal structures. It can also be misleading and risks leading to overinterpretations of all occurrences of violence as honour-based. Nihan Altınbaş describes this tendency to attribute all murders committed among Muslims as 'honour-based violence'. Violence is culturalised and othered, i.e. attributed to groups other than the majority population, and risks contributing to further stigmatisation and discrimination against already vulnerable groups. Risks of discrimination, such as against Muslim minorities, need to be viewed in the context of the overarching structures that exist in the Nordic countries and the widespread Islamophobia that characterises these societies.

Stereotypical images and ideas about ethnic minorities can also be reinforced by media reports of violence. This applies to both the language used and the disproportionate attention given to certain cases compared to other cases of men's violence against women and violence in close relationships. The most extreme cases always receive the most attention, and this also applies to violence that is not defined as honour related. This also has other implications for reporting that concerns already vulnerable groups. Some steering documents (e.g. Norway's and Finland's action plans) show awareness of and refer to the risk of discrimination, but there are no proposals for measures to counteract this risk.

The introduction presented GREVIO's reviews of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The criticisms of the expert committee can be divided into two parts. The first concerns the use of culture as an explanatory model for honour-based violence and oppression. The second concerns gender-neutral approaches to issues of violence. There is a connection between how honour-based violence is understood and treated and the tendency for gender neutrality: the high degree of focus on honour-based violence can be interpreted as an expression of gender neutrality because the gendered nature of the violence is neglected. Gender neutrality marginalises women's safety issues and transforms a global social problem into an issue that affects individuals. Violence is individualised and once again becomes a private matter.

Efforts to combat honour-based violence and oppression can be further complicated when honour is used as an umbrella term. As the study shows, several different terms are used, including 'honour contexts', 'honour norms' and 'honour cultures'. These terms are not defined in the steering documents, which means that they risk being used arbitrarily. The same applies to various terms used to describe violence (honour-based violence, negative social control). They are based on predetermined assumptions about the identities of people who are vulnerable to violence and perpetrators. In some countries, this is stipulated explicitly, such as in Norway and Denmark, where it is clearly stated that ethnic minorities are included in these groups, while in other countries it is implied. This ambiguity opens up the risk of arbitrary and subjective assessments, where individual perceptions and stereotypes influence how violence is understood. This is contrary to the rule of law and can lead to human rights violations. There is therefore a great need to take these risks into account and take concrete measures to minimise them.

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Steering documents on LGBTI people's exposure to violence

Introduction

Background and aims

While there is no specific international convention dealing with the rights of LGBTI people[192], they should be interpreted on the basis of the two central principles of human rights: the equal value of all human beings and non-discrimination. In other words, human rights must be respected and implemented regardless of a person's gender identity and/or sexuality.

In practice, the rights of LGBTI people are rarely protected to the same extent as those of heterosexual and cisgender people. The rights that receive particular attention in relation to this group are the right to physical integrity (not to be subjected to torture, violence and other inhuman treatment on the basis of gender identity or sexuality), the right to family life (to choose one's partner and enter into marriage) and the right to not be subjected to discrimination in the labour market or in other public contexts.

The vulnerability of LGBTI people to honour-based violence and oppression is increasingly highlighted in various contexts. The UN Human Rights Council encourages states to criminalise discrimination against LGBTI people based on gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation, and to take measures against violence in close relationships.[193]

The Nordic governments are working together to promote equal rights and opportunities for LGBTI people in the Nordic region. The Nordic Council of Ministers' Cooperation Programme for Gender Equality and LGBTI 2025–2030 emphasises that gender-based violence, sexual harassment and sexual abuse affect people who do not conform to norms pertaining to gender, gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation and that many LGBTI people are disproportionately affected.

Honour-based violence and oppression are often described as a consequence of so-called honour norms, which include strong conservative, patriarchal and heteronormative values. This means that LGBTI people may be subjected to honour-based violence and oppression because their gender identity and/or sexuality violate these norms. As a consequence, LGBTI people are exposed to certain specific forms of violence, such as conversion attempts.[194]

192. The Yogyakarta Principles is an international document containing a set of international principles regarding the application of international human rights law in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity, 2006.
193. OHCHR: OHCHR and the human rights of LGBTI people, 2025. Available: https://www.ohchr.org/en/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity/about-lgbti-people-and-human-rights
194. Conversion attempts will be presented and analysed later in the report. According to the project description, conversion attempts are defined as "someone being urged, through coercion or pressure, to change their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression".

The previous section shows that the concept of honour-based violence and oppression is used as an umbrella term for all violence and oppression committed in an honour context, which includes acts of violence such as forced marriage, female genital cutting, child marriage and other so-called 'honour-based acts'.[195] Depending on how the context of honour is understood and defined, violence against LGBTI people can also be considered a form of honour-based violence and oppression. At the same time, there are other ways of defining and interpreting violence directed at LGBTI people on the basis of gender identity and/or sexuality – for example, as a hate crime or as domestic violence ('family abuse').

This section of the publication examines how the vulnerability of LGBTI people to honour-based violence and oppression is presented and addressed in national steering documents and other relevant material in the Nordic countries and autonomous regions. It analyses how the problem is described and how it relates to the general description of the problem of honour-based violence and oppression.

Method and materials

The collection of material has been carried out in collaboration with a Nordic network against negative social control and honour-based violence. Representatives from each Nordic country and the autonomous regions have been contacted with a request to help identify and collect relevant material related to the work against honour-based violence and oppression directed at LGBTI people. Representatives of authorities and civil society organisations in the Nordic region were also contacted with a request to contribute material.

LGBTI people are considered a group at particularly high risk of being subjected to honour-based violence and oppression in the Nordic region, but it has been difficult to find material that specifically addresses LGBTI people's vulnerability to honour-based violence and oppression. Therefore, steering documents relating to honour-based violence and oppression as well as those relating to the rights of LGBTI people have been included. The focus has primarily been on action plans relating to the rights of LGBTI people, including work to combat violence. The extent to which honour-based violence is addressed in these plans varies.

In addition to these steering documents, grey literature has also been included, such as government reports and other studies referred to by representatives of government agencies from various countries and civil society organisations. Some of these reports form the basis for current national action plans on the rights of LGBTI people. The empirical material has also been supplemented with relevant scientific articles that provide a research perspective on violence in LGBTI relationships, as well as tensions between LGBTI people's rights and how their vulnerability to violence is represented.

195. Study and policy analysis *Hedersrelaterat våld och förtryck i Norden*, 2025.

The analysis of the material was based on a thematic content analysis combined with a critical perspective. According to Braun and Clarke, thematic content analysis is a qualitative method used to identify, analyse and interpret recurring patterns or themes in data material. The analysis is carried out in six steps, during which the researcher familiarises themself with the material, codes relevant parts, searches for and examines themes, defines and names the themes, and finally presents the results.[196] The thematic content analysis was conducted inductively, i.e. themes were formed on the basis of the steering documents and reports studied.

The critical perspective was based on Carol Bacchi's policy analysis model "What's the problem represented to be?" (WPR).[197] A central premise of the model is that the problems that steering documents aim to solve should be understood in relation to the social context in which they are formulated. The questionnaire from the analysis model has been adapted to the purpose and focus of this study, with an emphasis on the following questions:

- How is the problem of honour-based violence and oppression in relation to the rights of LGBTI people represented in steering documents and other relevant material?
- What other forms of violence are specifically highlighted in relation to the vulnerability of LGBTI people?

LGBTI rights in the Nordic region

ILGA-Europe's Rainbow Map is an annual ranking of 49 European countries based on how LGBTI-friendly they are. It examines laws and policies that have a direct impact on the human rights and equality of LGBTI people.[198] As with all indices of this kind, there is a risk that the picture it paints says relatively little about the implementation of rights and what real living conditions are like. At the same time, ILGA-Europe's Rainbow Map contains several different assessment criteria that nuance the problems experienced by LGBTI people and the violations to which they risk being subjected.

ILGA-Europe's Rainbow Map ranks each country across seven categories with a total of 76 criteria. The categories include equality and non-discrimination, family, hate crimes and hate speech, legal recognition of gender, intersex bodily integrity, civil society space, and asylum. In addition to the quantitative data collected for the Rainbow Map, qualitative data is used to provide explanations for the ranking scores of the different countries.[199]

196. Barun V. & Clarke V.: Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology, in *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2006, 77–101.
197. Bacchi, Carol: *Analysing Policy: What's the Problem Represented to be?*, Pearson, Midland 2009.
198. Countries are ranked on a scale from 0% to 100%, on which 0% indicates gross violations of human rights and discrimination and 100% indicates respect for human rights and equality.
199. ILGA-Europe's Rainbow Map, 2025. Available: https://rainbowmap.ilga-europe.org/compare/

According to the most recent review (2025), the Nordic countries are ranked as follows:

Iceland – 3rd (84.06%)

Denmark – 4th (80.1%)

Finland – 6th (69.85%)

Norway – 9th (68.6%)

Sweden – 12th (66.07%)

The ranking does not include exposure to violence as a separate category, but it does include conversion attempts. Conversion attempts are divided into two categories: conversion attempts based on sexual orientation and conversion attempts based on gender identity. They are defined as follows:

> Conversion practices ban (sexual orientation) for minors covers legislation and policies prohibiting reparative or conversion practices which are based upon the assumption that homosexuality/bisexuality per se is a mental disorder or based upon the a priori assumption that a patient should change their sexual orientation.[200]
>
> Conversion practices ban (gender identity) for minors covers legislation and policies prohibiting reparative or conversion practices which are based upon the assumption that trans identities are per se a mental disorder and can be changed.[201]

Currently, conversion therapy is prohibited in Norway and Iceland.

Another way to protect LGBTI rights is through hate crime legislation. Hate crime is a collective term for crimes with racist, xenophobic and LGBTI-phobic motives, such as homophobic or transphobic crimes. Hate motives are constitutive of hate crimes and constitute grounds for increased penalties for crimes such as assault, harassment, unlawful threats and discrimination. According to a study by the Nordic Council of Ministers, there has been a positive development in the Nordic countries in recent decades, with the introduction of new legislation protecting LGBTI people and preventive work to combat hate crimes.[202] Starting in 1987 in Denmark and Sweden, sexual orientation has been increasingly introduced as a protected ground for hate crimes in specific legislation. When it comes to the protection of transgender and intersex people, the situation is less favourable, but even here positive developments can be seen.[203] The study also shows that the

200 ILGA-Europe's Rainbow Map: https://rainbowmap.ilga-europe.org/about/
201 ILGA-Europe's Rainbow Map: https://rainbowmap.ilga-europe.org/about/
202 Nordic Council of Ministers: *Hatbrott mot LGBTI-personer i Norden. En kartläggning av strategier, arbetssätt och insatser*, 2021, 3.
203 Nordic Council of Ministers: *Hatbrott mot LGBTI-personer i Norden. En kartläggning av strategier, arbetssätt och insatser*, 2021, 18.

intersectional nature of hate crimes has been increasingly recognised in recent years, i.e. when individuals belonging to several vulnerable groups are affected at the same time, such as LGBTI people who are also Muslims.[204] The prevalence of hate crimes against LGBTI people also shows that the problems addressed by hate crime legislation still exist in the Nordic countries.[205]

Theoretical perspectives on violence against LGBTI people

There are several different theoretical models and concepts that can be useful for understanding and analysing violence against LGBTI people. Below is a brief overview and description of some key perspectives on violence, with a specific focus on honour-based violence and oppression. The purpose of this overview is to highlight perspectives that focus on unique aspects of violence against LGBTI people in combination with the collectivist dimension that is typical of honour-based violence and oppression. That said, the overview is not exhaustive in terms of theories and research on violence against LGBTI people or violence in LGBTI relationships.

Identity-based violations and control

The violence experienced in LGBTI relationships is often described within the framework of intimate partner violence.[206] It is characterised by power and control over the victim, isolation, and psychological, physical and sexual violence, including economic and digital dimensions of violence. What is usually highlighted as specific to the LGBTI group is that violence can be directed at the victim's gender identity and/or sexuality, for example when the perpetrator threatens to reveal the victim's gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation ('identity abuse').

Violence and control within families

When it comes to honour-based violence and oppression, violence against LGBTI people often takes the form of violence in close relationships. The nature of these close relationships can vary, often including parents and other family members, relatives and members of religious communities. The motive for the violence may be directly linked to the victim's gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation. It is based on patriarchal conservative ideas about gender, gender roles and relationships. As with other forms of violence, it is important to be open to the possibility that there may be multiple motivations for acts of violence and control.

204. Nordic Council of Ministers: *Hatbrott mot LGBTI-personer i Norden. En kartläggning av strategier, arbetssätt och insatser*, 2021, 12.
205. Nordic Council of Ministers: *Hatbrott mot LGBTI-personer i Norden. En kartläggning av strategier, arbetssätt och insatser*, 2021, 13.
206. Ovesen, Nicole: *Intimate Partner Violence and Help-Seeking in Lesbian and Queer Relationships: Challenging Recognition*. Uppsala, 2021, 23–24.

Catherine Donovan, a professor of sociology at the University of Sunderland, introduced the concept of 'family abuse' (violence and control within the family) to describe this form of vulnerability. In her research, Donovan uses the term 'queer' collectively for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and non-binary people. According to Donovan, violence and control against queer people within the family is an important issue that rarely receives attention.[207] This is partly because violence and control within the family are mainly associated with ethnic minorities and/or religious communities, such as honour-based violence and oppression, forced marriage and female genital cutting.[208] It is important to note that Donovan refers to honour-based violence and oppression as a form of violence alongside forced marriage and does not use honour-based violence as an umbrella term.

Donovan et al. argue that there are similarities between violence and control directed at queer people within a family and honour-based violence and oppression. The logic behind such acts of violence is primarily that the individual's interests, desires and choices are subordinate to the interests of the family or community. Both forms of violence include attempts to forcibly control an individual's gender identity and sexuality, as well as to punish violations of conformist norms.

In the dominant and narrow understanding of violence and control within families, there is a strong focus on violence among ethnic minorities. This, in turn, contributes to cis-normative and heteronormative perspectives on violence, in relation to the majority population, being reproduced and remaining the dominant narrative ('the public story'). Donovan introduces the concept of 'the public story' to criticise the assumptions that form the dominant narrative about violence in close relationships. The public story is about cis men who subject cis women to violence.[209] Following Donovan's logic, it can be concluded that the dominant narrative surrounding domestic violence can also be interpreted as 'the public story', which assumes that domestic violence against LGBTI individuals primarily occurs among ethnic minorities.

Transphobic honour-based violence

Another researcher who has looked specifically at honour-based violence against transgender people is Michaela Rogers. In her study on honour-based violence against transgender people, Rogers shows that there is an interaction between a number of different dynamics: violence and oppression in close relationships, transphobia, stigma and honour-based ideology. As a starting point, Rogers considers criminology professor Aisha Gill's[210] perspective on honour-based

207. Donovan uses a different term – 'so-called honour violence' – but for the sake of consistency, it has here been translated as honour-based violence and oppression.
208. Donovan, Catherine, Jasna Magić & Sarah West: Family abuse targeting queer family members: An argument to address problems of visibility in local services and civic life, *Journal of Family Violence*, 2024 Vol. 39, 1337–1349.
209. Donovan, Catherine and Hester, Marianne: *Domestic violence and sexuality: what's love got to do with it?*, Policy Press, Bristol 2014.
210. Gill, Aisha: Honor-based violence as gendered violence, in Idriss, M. M., Abbas, T., & Abbinnett, D. R. (eds.). (2010). *Honour, violence, women and islam*. Taylor & Francis Group.

violence, in which honour is understood as a social construct used to justify and legitimise violence. Such an understanding goes beyond cultural explanations and implies a narrow view of honour-based violence as something that is solely associated with certain cultures, geographical areas or religious traditions.[211]. Rogers, on the other hand, argues that sociological perspectives on shame and stigma[212] are useful for understanding families' behaviour: violence and oppression are used to preserve or restore the 'honour' of a family and/or community by removing the 'shame'.[213]

Minority stress among marginalised groups

To date, several theoretical models have been presented to help explain and analyse violence against LGBTI people, such as identity-based abuse and control, violence and control from family members and transphobic honour-based violence and oppression. Another theoretical perspective that is often applied in relation to violence against LGBTI people focuses on belonging to a minority and minority stress. Minority stress is a theoretical model used to explain how discrimination, harassment, threats and hatred lead to a risk of poorer health outcomes among marginalised groups. In this way it refers to stress beyond that which is normally experienced by everyone, regardless of group affiliation. Minority stress can lead to an internalisation of the negative attitudes of society, the surrounding environment and the attitudes of perpetrators towards LGBTI people.[214]

In the report *Hbtqi-personer och våld i nära relationer. Om hjälpsökande och stödinsatser* (LGBTQI people and violence in close relationships: On seeking help and support measures; 2025), Nicole Ovesen and Renita Sörensdotter highlight[215] an increased focus on minorities within minorities. They show that there have been shifts within the Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Norway and Sweden) towards an increased focus on LGBTI people who belong to ethnic minorities (for example, in Denmark's and Norway's action plans for LGBTI people) and on honour-based violence and oppression (Sweden's Action Plan for Equal Rights and Opportunities for LGBTIQ People).[216] In addition to changes in action plans, crisis centres with specific focuses have also been opened, such as the RED+ crisis centre[217] and a new support line in Denmark.

211. Rogers, Michaela: Transphobic 'Honour'-Based Abuse: A Conceptual Tool, *Sociology*, 2017, Vol. 51, No.2, 229–230.
212. Goffman's theory of stigma in Goffman, E (1979): Stigma: *Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
213. Rogers, Michaela: Transphobic 'Honour'-Based Abuse: A Conceptual Tool, *Sociology*, 2017, Vol. 51, No.2, 228–229.
214. RFSL: *Kunskap och erfarenheter av arbete med våldsutsatta hbtq-personer. Ett kunskapsstöd från RFSL stödmottagning*, 2018, 43.
215. Researcher at the National Centre for Knowledge on Men's Violence Against Women, Uppsala University, Sweden.
216. Ovesen, Nicole & Sörensdotter, Renita: *Hbtqi-personer och våld i nära relationer. Om hjälpsökande och stödinsatser*, NCK 2025, 30.
217. RED+ provides sheltered accommodation for young LGBT+ people who belong to an ethnic minority and are exposed to honour-based violence and oppression and/or fleeing from honour-based conflicts, negative social control, honour-based violence and forced marriage or threats thereof (Ovesen & Sörensdotter, 2025, 30–31).

LGBTI rights and homonationalism

Finally, the theory of homonationalism can provide tools for understanding how views on the rights of LGBTI people risk being exploited for nationalistic purposes. The term 'homonationalism' was coined by researcher Jasbir K. Puar. In her research, Puar shows how the treatment of LGBTI people in different societies is used as a criterion for categorising countries as either progressive and tolerant or homophobic and barbaric. In other words, the term 'homonationalism' is not used to describe certain states as homonationalist but to problematise the tendency of liberal democracies in the West to use LGBTI rights to demonise other societies, reinforcing the narrative of the civilisation of the Other and thus contributing to Islamophobia.[218] Like issues of gender equality and women's rights, LGBTI rights risk being exploited to construct differences in values between different cultures and ethnicities. The self-image of LGBTI-friendly ('gay-friendly') and gender-equal states is reinforced. This also makes it difficult to critically assess the developments currently taking place in a number of Western countries with the rise of nationalist movements and right-wing populism.

Based on the above, Katharina Kehl has studied the intertwining of homonationalism and the construction of Swedish identity. Kehl argues that LGBTI rights and other liberal Swedish values define 'Swedishness'.[219] She writes:

> People racialized as non-White and/or Muslim are assigned the position of the 'constitutive outsiders' to a newly LGBT-friendly West, with their communities embodying the homo-, bi- and transphobia that Western societies claim to have left behind. The inclusion of some LGBTQ people into national communities of belonging therefore not only depends on them not being 'too queer'; it is also used to further the exclusion of the minorities.[220]

In other words, LGBTI rights function as a mechanism for exclusion and the creation of a national self-image of moral superiority ('gender exceptionalism'). The effects of this exclusionary mechanism are particularly evident in comparison with the increased focus on ethnic minorities and honour-based violence and oppression, as highlighted by Ovesen and Sörensdotter. At the same time, a more restrictive refugee policy and handling of asylum cases based on gender identity and/or sexuality is being implemented. Several studies have shown that asylum cases are characterised by a lack of trust in asylum seekers' testimonies, due to hetero-normative and homonationalist perceptions.[221] For example, the perceived

218. Puar, Jasbir K.: Whither Homonationalism?, in Angeliki Sifaki, C.L. Quinan, Katarina Lončarević (eds.): *Homonationalism, Femonationalism and Ablenationalism. Critical Pedagogies Contextualised*, Routledge, London 2022, 3.
219. Kehl, Katharina: *Boundaries of Queerness: Homonationalism and Racial Politics in Sweden*, Bristol University Press 2024, 1–2.
220. Kehl, Katharina: *Boundaries of Queerness: Homonationalism and Racial Politics in Sweden*, Bristol University Press 2024, 2.
221. See, for example, Hedlund, Daniel and Wimark, Thomas: Unaccompanied Children Claiming Asylum on the Basis of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol. 32, 2019; Lunau, M.: The trouble with 'truth'. On the politics of life and death in the assessment of queer asylum seekers, in *Kvinder, Køn & Forskning*, Vol. 28, No. 3–4, 2019, 12–23.

credibility of testimonies increases when asylum seekers described the entire community they come from as perpetrators.[222] This, in turn, highlights the importance of examining how the rights of LGBTI people are respected in asylum processes by analysing the discourses surrounding LGBTI rights, how these are constructed in relation to different groups and contexts, and what functions they fulfil.

Discrimination and co-occurring vulnerability

Several studies examining the vulnerability and living conditions of LGBTI people have been conducted in the various Nordic countries. In Finland, an intersectional analysis of the vulnerability of LGBTI people has been carried out on behalf of the National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL).[223] The report addresses several different issues, not all of which are explicitly linked to honour-based violence and oppression but are nevertheless relevant to this analysis. The report touches on problems experienced by LGBTI people in Finnish society but shows that how these problems are perceived and understood can be nuanced based on how different factors interact and affect LGBTI people's vulnerability to violence. As in other countries, double discrimination or being a minority within a minority is a significant theme.

Previous research has shown that LGBTI people are exposed to various forms of discrimination due to their minority status and the various structural problems that minorities may encounter. The interviews from the THL study show that people who identify as LGBTI and who also represent ethnic minorities experience challenges in Finnish society due to their migration status and their gender identity and sexuality. They experience both overt and covert discrimination, including physically and verbally abusive behaviour as well as exclusion in Finnish society.[224]

In the report, the researchers adopt an intersectional perspective and explain discrimination precisely as an intersectional phenomenon, i.e. when two or more grounds for discrimination occur in an 'indivisible manner'.[225] Discrimination is understood as negative treatment based on an individual's membership of a particular social group. Membership of a social group and social status are core elements of discrimination. At the same time, discrimination can also be described as "all ways of expressing and institutionalising social relations of dominance and oppression".[226]

222. Hedlund, Daniel and Wimark, Thomas, op. cit.
223. Czimbalmos, Mercédesz & Rask, Shadia: *Sexual and Gender Minorities Among the Foreign-Origin Populations in Finland: An intersectional analysis*, THL Report, 2022.
224. Czimbalmos, Mercédesz and Rask, Shadia: *Sexual and Gender Minorities Among the Foreign-Origin Populations in Finland: An intersectional analysis*, THL Report, 2022.
225. Czimbalmos, Mercédesz and Rask, Shadia: *Sexual and Gender Minorities Among the Foreign-Origin Populations in Finland: An intersectional analysis*, THL Report, 2022, 48.
226. Reference to Krieger 2000: 69 in Czimbalmos, Mercédesz and Rask, Shadia: *Sexual and Gender Minorities Among the Foreign-Origin Populations in Finland: An intersectional analysis*, THL Report, 2022.

Intersectional discrimination differs from double discrimination or multiple discrimination. Based on Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality, intersectional discrimination occurs when several grounds for discrimination occur simultaneously and interact with each other, making the discrimination qualitatively different.[227] LGBTI people with foreign backgrounds in Finland report experiences of racial and ethnic discrimination by the majority society. At the same time, they experience discrimination based on their gender identity and sexual orientation within their own diaspora. This creates intersectional vulnerability, where different forms of oppression are mutually reinforcing.[228] LGBTI people with foreign backgrounds are excluded from various groups, including the LGBTI community in Finland.[229] How LGBTI identities are defined and constructed can be exclusionary in itself, especially in relation to ethnicity and religion.

According to the THL report, Finland is described as a safe place for LGBTI people from the moment they arrive in the country. At the same time, the experience of safety is subjective and not a privilege experienced by everyone. The conclusion is based on interviewees' stories, in which they compared their experiences of Finland with their countries of origin. Although they felt greater safety and a certain degree of security in Finland, they emphasised that these feelings are contextual and situation dependent.[230]

The perception of Finland as a paradise for homosexuals ('a gay heaven') is promoted in relation to other countries that are portrayed as exceptionally oppressive and homophobic. This is the conclusion reached by Inka Söderström in her doctoral thesis, in which she examines how social work is perceived by people who have migrated to Finland and sought asylum on the grounds of their sexual orientation or gender identity.[231] Similar patterns have been studied in other Nordic countries, including Sweden, Denmark and Norway.[232] These narratives are based on an essentialist view of culture, where culture is presented as something unchanging and homogeneous. Söderström writes that LGBTI rights have been used as a tool to construct differences between Finland and the homophobic Other. The Other consists of both the countries of origin of minorities and compatriots in the diaspora living in Finland ('the Bubble of Oppression').[233]

227. Czimbalmos, Mercédesz and Rask, Shadia: *Sexual and Gender Minorities Among the Foreign-Origin Populations in Finland: An intersectional analysis*, THL Report, 2022, 49.
228. Czimbalmos, Mercédesz and Rask, Shadia: *Sexual and Gender Minorities Among the Foreign-Origin Populations in Finland: An intersectional analysis*, THL Report, 2022, 54.
229. Czimbalmos, Mercédesz and Rask, Shadia: *Sexual and Gender Minorities Among the Foreign-Origin Populations in Finland: An intersectional analysis*, THL Report, 2022, 58.
230. Czimbalmos, Mercédesz and Rask, Shadia: *Sexual and Gender Minorities Among the Foreign-Origin Populations in Finland: An intersectional analysis*, THL Report, 2022, 43.
231. Söderström, Inka: *Ulossulkevat rajat: Sosiaalityö ja pakolaistaustaiset queer-ihmiset Suomessa*, Helsinki 2024.
232. See, for example, Lagerman, Julia: *A Nationalist Contradiction Homonationalism and Nationalist Anti-LGBTQ Politics and Activism in Sweden*, 2024; Åse Røthing & Stine Helena Bang Svendsen: Homotolerance and Heterosexuality as Norwegian Values, *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 2010, Vol. 7, No. 2, 147–166.
233. Söderström, Inka: Homonationalism and talking back in Finnish social work with non-heterosexual people with refugee backgrounds, in Kris Clarke, Leece Lee-Oliver & Satu Ranta-Tyrkkö (eds.): *Decolonising Social Work in Finland: Racialisation and Practices of Care*, Bristol University Press, Bristol 2024.

In his thesis, Söderström refers to a study by Røthing and Svendsen from 2010, which states: *"the problem of homophobia was pushed into the margins; it was not regarded as a structural issue in Finnish society but a problem of homophobic individuals"*.[234] The study thus suggests that homophobia is reduced to individual negative attitudes rather than a societal problem. In another study, Akin and Svendsen note that two processes are occurring in parallel: on the one hand, there is greater tolerance towards LGBTI people, which is increasingly seen as part of the national identity, and on the other hand, growing structural racism and Islamophobia.[235]

In Iceland, a study on violence in same-sex relationships and domestic violence against LGBTI people was conducted by the School of Social Sciences at the University of Iceland. The aim was to map the extent of violence and its various forms. Data was collected through a questionnaire sent to members of the Samtökin association and posted to a discussion group on an LGBTI forum, as well as through individual interviews with LGBTI people. The responses of upper secondary school students in the study were also analysed, and the results showed that some groups were at greater risk of being subjected to violence by family members and in their close relationships, specifically young people who identified as queer or 'other gender', pansexual or bisexual.[236] The study was one of a number of measures taken to address the issue of violence against LGBTI people, but without a specific focus on honour-based violence. It exemplifies a broader perspective on domestic violence.

A study of members of Samtökin '78 (the National Queer Organization) found, among other things, that the majority of respondents had experienced some form of psychological violence in a previous relationship. A relatively high proportion of respondents had also experienced such behaviours from their parents, while a lower proportion had experienced psychologically abusive behaviour from a current partner or other family member.[237] During personal communication with Guðnýju Gústafsdóttur regarding the subject of this study, it became clear that no specific reference to honour-based violence and oppression is made in the study.

234. Røthing & Svendsen 2010 in Söderström, Inka.
235. Akin & Svendsen, in Söderström, Inka.
236. *Rannsókn á ofbeldi í nánum samböndum og fjölskyldum hinsegin fólks á Íslandi*. Available: https://www.stjornarradid.is/efst-a-baugi/frettir/stok-frett/2024/12/12/Rannsokn-a-ofbeldi-i-nanum-sambondum-og-fjolskyldum-hinsegin-folks-a-Islandi/
237. *Rannsókn á ofbeldi í nánum samböndum og fjölskyldum hinsegin fólks á Íslandi*. Available: https://www.stjornarradid.is/efst-a-baugi/frettir/stok-frett/2024/12/12/Rannsokn-a-ofbeldi-i-nanum-sambondum-og-fjolskyldum-hinsegin-folks-a-Islandi/

Analysis of steering documents

The following is an analysis of the descriptions of LGBTI people who are victims of honour-based violence and oppression that appear in the Nordic countries' steering documents. The analysis is also based on a number of studies and reports that specifically address LGBTI people's vulnerability to violence, including those with ethnic minority backgrounds. The results are presented according to the themes that emerge from the collected material.

The Nordic countries lack specific action plans for dealing with honour-based violence and oppression against LGBTI people. Some action plans for LGBTI rights include sections on violence, such as Denmark's action plan for LGBT+ people 2022–2025 (*Room for diversity in the community. LGBT+ Action Plan 2022–2025*). The action plan places particular focus on ethnic minorities and separately addresses the vulnerability of new arrivals.[238]

Norway's action plan *Security, diversity and openness – The Government's action plan against discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and gender characteristics 2021–2024* consists of five areas of action, one of which deals specifically with 'conversion attempts' (a term used in the action plan). The term is defined as follows:

> Conversion attempts are a practice that aim to change or suppress a person's sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. This can represent a form of negative social control and can be a serious violation of an individual's identity, integrity and human dignity. Children and young people who break with norms of gender and sexuality may be particularly vulnerable when faced with practices that attempt to undermine who they are.[239]

The definition establishes a link between conversion attempts and honour-based violence and oppression, describing this as a form of negative social control. The action plan states that negative social control occurs in various environments, including closed religious communities, but the steering documents are also characterised by the perception that negative social control is primarily exercised by ethnic minorities. In addition to negative social control, the action plan also contains definitions of 'forced marriage', 'honour-based violence' and 'female genital cutting'.

238. Denmark's LGBT+ action plan *Plads til forskellighed i fællesskabet. LGBT+ handlingsplan 2022–2025.*
239. Norway's action plan *Trygghet, mangfold og åpenhet Regjeringens handlingsplan mot diskriminering på grunn av seksuell orientering, kjønnsidentitet, kjønnsuttrykk og kjønnskarakteristika 2021–2024.*

Sweden's *Proud and safe. Action plan for equal rights and opportunities for LGBTIQ people 2024–2027* includes the focus area "Violence, discrimination and other violations"[240] and has a similar structure to Norway's action plan. Honour-based violence and oppression and conversion attempts are dealt with individually. The action plan mentions the report *Young LGBTQ people's vulnerability to conversion attempts in Sweden* by the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF) from 2022, which is also included in this analysis.

Iceland's action plan for LGBTI issues 2022–2025 comprises 21 measures aimed at improving the rights of LGBTI people. One of the measures addresses issues of violence against LGBTI people, without a specific focus on honour-based violence and oppression. It includes the implementation of a study (as mentioned in the description of the state of knowledge) on violence in same-sex relationships and domestic violence against LGBTI people, aiming to raise awareness of vulnerability to violence by investigating the extent and manifestations of violence.[241]

Finland does not have a specific national action plan for the rights of LGBTI people. Issues relating to sexual and gender minorities are included in the country's national action plan for human rights. The steering documents on honour-based violence and oppression mention LGBTI people as a particularly vulnerable group at greater risk of honour-based violence. However, there is no specific material addressing this issue.

After reviewing existing steering documents and other relevant studies and reports, a number of themes emerged, as presented in the following sections:

- Double vulnerability and discrimination
- Religion and religiosity
- Conversion attempts
- Asylum and integration

Double vulnerability and discrimination

Denmark's most recent action plan, *Room for diversity in the community. LGBT+ Action Plan 2022–2025*, highlights the vulnerability of LGBTI people to violence and sexual abuse as one of five areas of focus. There is particular emphasis on ethnic minorities, with the vulnerability of new arrivals addressed separately:

240. Sweden's action plan *Stolt och trygg. Handlingsplan för hbtqi-personers lika rättigheter och möjligheter 2024–2027.*
241. Iceland: *Våld i queer relationer.* Available: https://www.stjornarradid.is/verkefni/mannrettindi-og-jafnretti/jafnretti/adgerdaaaetlun-i-malefnum-hinsegin-folks/stok-adgerd/?itemid=db6c2f48-4bb4-11ed-9bb1-005056bc4727

> Studies also show that around one third of LGBT+ people have been subjected to sexual abuse at some point. LGBT+ people from ethnic minority backgrounds are particularly vulnerable. At the same time, fewer ethnic minority LGBT+ individuals are open about their sexual orientation or gender identity, and more than one in ten have experienced threats of violence from their family or family circle. [242]

Newly arrived LGBTI people are presented as a particularly vulnerable group, described in part with reference to discrimination on the basis of ethnic or religious background, creating a discourse of 'double minority status'. This particular vulnerability also stems from the negative reactions, threats of violence and violence that LGBTI people may experience from within their families. Violence can take various forms, and particular emphasis is placed on pressure to marry against one's will, as well as various conversion attempts.

In Denmark, a special crisis centre called RED+ has been opened for LGBTI people from ethnic minority backgrounds. In connection with the establishment of the centre, Als Research, on behalf of the Danish Agency for International Recruitment and Integration (SIRI), has conducted a study of the living conditions and support needs of newly arrived LGBTI people in Denmark. The study, entitled *Living conditions and support needs of new Danish LGBT+ people*, includes an analysis of experiences of discrimination.[243]

According to the study, people with a foreign background are subjected to discrimination on the basis of their ethnic background and religious affiliation. LGBTI people are also subjected to discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, which increases their vulnerability and risk of being subjected to violence and discriminatory treatment. There is a significant overlap between experiences of discrimination based on ethnicity and/or religion and sexual orientation and/or gender identity. This leads to a lack of trust in social institutions and has consequences for those seeking help.[244]

The study also shows that discrimination against newly arrived Danish LGBTI people on the basis of sexuality and/or gender identity has increased since 2015, as has discrimination on the basis of ethnicity or religious background.[245] Discrimination takes various forms, such as condescending or hateful comments, unwanted/excessive attention, invisibility and discriminatory treatment. LGBTI people who have newly become Danish citizens are subjected to discrimination in public places, such as on the street and in the workplace, but also on social and traditional media.[246]

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242. Denmark's LGBT+ action plan 2022–2025.
243. Als Research: *Nydanske LGBT+ personers levevilkår og støttebehov*, 2022.
244. Als Research: *Nydanske LGBT+ personers levevilkår og støttebehov*, 2022, 21.
245. Als Research: *Nydanske LGBT+ personers levevilkår og støttebehov*, 2022, 36.
246. Als Research: *Nydanske LGBT+ personers levevilkår og støttebehov*, 2022, 37.

Furthermore, the study shows that discrimination based on ethnicity and religion is statistically significant, even when controlling for the significance of other background factors. Ethnic background remains the most important factor for ethnically or religiously motivated discrimination, even when accounting for factors such as living conditions, housing situation, education level or employment.[247] Discrimination based on ethnicity and religiosity is also linked to socioeconomic status, education level and employment. The study shows a tendency for LGBTI people from families with strong honour norms and/or with parents who are highly religious to be subjected to discrimination based on ethnicity or religion to a greater extent than other LGBTI people.[248]

Lesbian or bisexual women who have recently become Danish citizens are identified in the study as a minority that is vulnerable in a multitude of ways, including due to ethnicity, religion, sexuality and gender. The study refers to an English study showing that some Muslim LGBTI women experience a lack of belonging within both LGBTI environments and Muslim communities. Many do not identify with the visible LGBTI communities dominated by people from the ethnic majority, while also being concerned about encountering racism, Islamophobia and cultural insensitivity in these contexts. Women are also affected by the idea that the only place they can expect protection is within their family and/or ethnic-religious community. This often makes it difficult for them to access the public support systems, for example.[249]

The study's conclusions highlight several structural and societal factors that negatively affect the living conditions of newly arrived LGBTI people. Among other things, it shows that more than half of newly arrived LGBTI people have experienced discrimination on the basis of their ethnic or religious background in the past year, and that a significant minority – about 40 per cent – report having been subjected to sexual abuse. These problems require action on a broader societal level and cannot be addressed solely by actors such as RED+ or other organisations with specialised social expertise within the target group.[250] Although the study's main focus is to provide recommendations to specific actors who encounter newly arrived LGBTI people in their work, broader efforts against discrimination are required, involving cooperation between several social actors.

As in Denmark, double discrimination in Norway is highlighted as a problem that particularly affects LGBTI people with a foreign background, as they may be subjected to racism and discrimination on the basis of their country of origin, ethnicity, skin colour, gender identity and sexual orientation. They experience discrimination in various areas, such as housing, work, education, healthcare and public places, as well as in social contexts such as dating environments.[251]

247. Als Research: *Nydanske LGBT+ personers levevilkår og støttebehov*, 2022.
248. Als Research: *Nydanske LGBT+ personers levevilkår og støttebehov*, 2022.
249. Als Research: *Nydanske LGBT+ personers levevilkår og støttebehov*, 2022, 39.
250. Als Research: *Nydanske LGBT+ personers levevilkår og støttebehov*, 2022, 18.
251. Norway's action plan 2021–2024.

In addition to this, it is important to note that LGBTI people with a foreign background may be exposed to racism and encounter prejudice from LGBTI communities from the social majority, as well as negative reactions from families or compatriots in the diaspora (in the form of verbal condemnation, exclusion or physical violence).[252] A report on the living conditions of LGBTI people in Norway shows that it is more common for LGBTI people with foreign backgrounds to have been subjected to sexual violence, had suicidal thoughts or attempted suicide, compared to the majority population. Many experience minority stress, which can lead to mental health problems, suicide and drug abuse.[253]

Sweden's action plan includes a chapter entitled "*Focus area: Violence, discrimination and other violations*". It consists of four parts: LGBTI-based hate crimes and LGBTI hostility; violence and other violations; work against discrimination and for equal rights and opportunities for LGBTI people; and work for legal security and equal treatment in the asylum process. The content within these problem areas and proposed measures indicate a broad understanding of violence, both in public environments and private relationships. It is an approach that highlights a holistic perspective on violence against LGBTI people, including LGBTI-based hate crimes, prejudice and intolerance.

Violence in close relationships is also included within the focus area, and it is noted that LGBTI people's vulnerability to violence in close relationships follows the same pattern as violence in heterosexual relationships. At the same time, it is noted that there may be additional barriers to seeking support and help for LGBTI people due to the risk of discrimination or prejudice. However, this section focuses primarily on honour-based violence and oppression.[254] LGBTI people are described as particularly vulnerable in contexts where honour-based violence and oppression occur. Similar to other steering documents on honour-based violence and oppression, honour contexts are described with reference to honour norms and honour culture: "*Heteronormative ideas are central to cultures of honour, which can mean that a sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression that goes against the norm is seen as a threat to a family's honour.*"[255] Conversion attempts are referred to as a specific expression of violence.

Religion and religiosity

Another theme that emerges from the analysis of the steering documents and reports studied is the importance of religion and religiosity. Religiosity or a relationship to religious faith is an important factor that is often raised in analyses of LGBTI people's vulnerability to violence. As presented in the previous section,

252. Norway's action plan 2021–2024.
253. Norway's action plan 2021–2024, 59.
254. Sweden's action plan 2024–2027, 18–19.
255. Sweden's action plan 2024–2027, 18.

LGBTI people are exposed to discrimination from social institutions and the majority population. They also experience a lack of acceptance of LGBTI identities and violence and threats of violence within families. According to the study by Als Research, the risk of experiencing discrimination on the basis of gender identity and/or sexuality is greatest among younger LGBTI people, among non-cisgender people and among LGBTI people from families in which the family's reputation and/or honour influences their view of LGBTI people.[256]

As part of its study, Als Research has conducted interviews with newly arrived LGBTI individuals from families with strong honour norms. The interviews show that LGBTI individuals from families with honour norms or with highly religious parents feel particularly vulnerable. Respondent's experiences encompassed being excluded from social events, being socially ostracised by their families, being pressured to talk to a religious counsellor, being placed under house arrest and receiving threats of being sent on re-education trips.[257] LGBTI people with foreign backgrounds reported a need to navigate between their own desires and the norms and expectations of their family and relatives.

The Danish study links the living conditions of LGBTI people to notions of honour and religion as background factors. Families' views of sexuality and gender identity are described as part of honour norms. The study shows a significant correlation between age, a family's religiosity, living conditions and geographical location, and the likelihood of honour and reputation being factors influencing the family's views on sexuality and gender identity. In other words, there are several factors that result in stronger honour norms, such as living situation, i.e. whether young LGBTI people live with their families or not, and degree of religiosity. Previous studies have identified religiosity as an important factor in views on homosexuality, for example. A high degree of religiosity increases the likelihood of negative attitudes towards homosexuality (both Danish and international studies).

The study notes that, in relation to the threat of violence and intimidation faced by LGBTI individuals who have recently become Danish citizens, there is no significant correlation between coming from a family where reputation and honour are considered important and the risk of being subjected to threats of violence or violence based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Instead, ethnic background is considered to be the most significant factor in the risk of violence and threats in relation to sexuality and gender identity.[258] This in turn means that, in relation to violence and threats of violence (not only honour-based violence), there may be other factors that can influence violence or threats of violence within the family.[259] One aspect of religiosity concerns growing up in religious communities where LGBTI-hostile attitudes may prevail. As a consequence, LGBTI people may be forced

256. Als Research: *Nydanske LGBT+ personers levevilkår og støttebehov*, 2022, 69.
257. Als Research: *Nydanske LGBT+ personers levevilkår og støttebehov*, 2022.
258. Als Research: *Nydanske LGBT+ personers levevilkår og støttebehov*, 2022, 66–67.
259. Als Research: *Nydanske LGBT+ personers levevilkår og støttebehov*, 2022.

to break away from their families and other communities. Several LGBTI people in Norway state that it can be challenging to combine their LGBTI identity and religious beliefs. Sometimes it can be portrayed as incompatible identities, for example when religious communities with strong traditional gender norms do not recognise same-sex relationships. As a result, LGBTI people use different strategies to deal with these situations. They leave and break away, renegotiate and try to define themselves as queer and religious, or find a way to balance their beliefs and identity.[260]

The issue of religious communities and the various religious traditions most often associated with homophobic and conservative norms can be assessed in different ways, and there is always a risk of generalised and unbalanced perceptions. Norway's action plan highlights the Church of Norway as an example of a church that has opened its doors to same-sex couples wishing to marry. Several LGBTI groups and organisations are working to increase tolerance and acceptance in religious environments. Examples include Salam, an organisation for queer Muslims, and the Queer Christian Network, a network of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people who belong to or have a background in free church communities.[261]

A report on LGBTI people with foreign backgrounds in Finland addresses the issue of religion and its significance for LGBTI people. It confirms that religion and interpretations of religious texts are used to justify discriminatory treatment and violence. Interpretations of religious traditions can lead to LGBTI people being discriminated against and excluded from their faith communities or other religious communities. In these cases, LGBTI identity is portrayed as a sin, and religious ideologies are often used to justify abusive behaviour. Religious values and beliefs can be used to justify violence against LGBTI people, including violence in close relationships and honour-based violence.[262] Based on the accounts of the interviewees, conservative values are clearly present in certain religious contexts, in which respondents experienced rejection, exclusion, discrimination and psychological and physical violence.

The report uses the term 'religious' or 'spiritual' violence ('religious abuse')[263], similar to Finland's action plan on violence against children. Religious violence occurs when the leader of a religious group or the group itself manipulates the victim and uses interpretations of religion to commit abuse. According to the report, it is particularly common among people with an asylum or refugee background for religious beliefs to be linked to exclusion from social contexts. Experiences of discrimination and psychological and physical violence, including honour-based violence, emerged as a recurring theme in the stories. It turned out

260. Norway's action plan 2021–2024, 61–62.
261. Norway's action plan 2021–2024, 62.
262. Czimbalmos, Mercédesz & Rask, Shadia: *Sexual and Gender Minorities Among the Foreign-Origin Populations in Finland: An intersectional analysis*, THL Report, 2022, 74.
263. Other terms used include 'psychological violence' (e.g. ostracism) and 'spiritual abuse', 88.

that migration itself did not necessarily mean that such experiences ceased; several participants stated that they had also been subjected to discrimination and abuse in Finland, often from groups within their own diaspora.[264]

The role of religion is discussed in the report based on the fact that different interpretations of religious texts are used to justify violence. The interpretations focus on discussions about who and what is considered right for members of a Catholic, Muslim, Jewish or other religious community. Interpretative authority is described as the symbolic power to establish boundaries and who is to be excluded from a community.[265]

That said, there is also an important discussion about perceptions that an LGBTI identity is incompatible with religious identity and faith. It has been established that such a dichotomy is false. There are various interpretations of religious texts, some of which are more conservative and hostile towards LGBTI people, while others are more open and welcoming towards them.[266] An understanding based on the incompatibility between being an LGBTI person and a religious believer can mistakenly lead to the view that religion is always oppressive while secular societies stand for openness and freedom. According to the report, it is possible to reconcile religiosity with a queer identity. LGBTI people in different religious communities need to negotiate these dual identities and certain expectations or social codes in relation to their gender or sexuality.[267]

Conversion attempts

Conversion attempts are a form of violence usually described in relation to honour-based violence and oppression. A report on LGBTI people with foreign backgrounds in Finland studies the problem in relation to the LGBTI group as a whole in different contexts, rather than with a specific focus on honour-based violence and oppression. In Finland, conversion attempts are not criminalised. However, in 2021, both the Finnish Psychiatric Association and the Finnish Psychological Association issued statements that so-called 'therapies' aimed at changing an individual's sexual orientation and/or gender identity are harmful to their mental health.[268] Although such methods are not supported by professionals, conversion attempts are still used in certain circles.[269]

264. Czimbalmos, Mercédesz & Rask, Shadia: *Sexual and Gender Minorities Among the Foreign-Origin Populations in Finland: An intersectional analysis*, THL Report, 2022, 76.
265. Czimbalmos, Mercédesz & Rask, Shadia: *Sexual and Gender Minorities Among the Foreign-Origin Populations in Finland: An intersectional analysis*, THL Report, 2022, 79.
266. Czimbalmos, Mercédesz & Rask, Shadia: *Sexual and Gender Minorities Among the Foreign-Origin Populations in Finland: An intersectional analysis*, THL Report, 2022, 83.
267. Czimbalmos, Mercédesz & Rask, Shadia: *Sexual and Gender Minorities Among the Foreign-Origin Populations in Finland: An intersectional analysis*, THL Report, 2022.
268. Czimbalmos, Mercédesz & Rask, Shadia: *Sexual and Gender Minorities Among the Foreign-Origin Populations in Finland: An intersectional analysis*, THL Report, 2022, 23.
269. Ingman, Peik: *Conversion Practices and Societal Responsibility* (fi. Eheytystoiminta ja yhteiskunnan vastuu).

Denmark's action plan proposes that the possibility of introducing a ban on attempts to convert minors be investigated. A sub-project has been initiated to explore the possibility and need for such a ban.[270] According to the study conducted by Als Research, conversion attempts are a specific form of violence that affects LGBTI people. Experiences of conversion attempts are linked to honour norms in that conversion attempts are described as particularly prevalent among LGBTI people who come from families in which reputation and honour are highly valued and/or parents are highly religious.[271] It is important to note that the study could not comment on the prevalence of such cases in Muslim communities in Denmark more generally. However, based on an interview with a former counsellor from the organisation Sabaah, the study of 'conversion attempts' emphasises that attempts at healing in ethnic minority circles may in some cases take the form of, for example, punishment and sanctions or re-education trips to the home country.[272]

According to Norway's action plan, conversion attempts is a separate area of intervention. Conversion attempts are defined as treatment-like measures intended to make an individual change or deny (or suppress) their sexual orientation or gender identity. According to the action plan, this can represent a form of negative social control.[273] LGBTI children and young people are described as a group that is particularly vulnerable to various forms of violence and control. Although it is accepted that greater knowledge is needed about their living conditions, it is clear that children who break with gender and sexuality norms have poorer living conditions than other children.[274] Children and young people with migrant backgrounds who violate family norms regarding gender identity and sexual orientation risk being subjected to negative social control and honour-based violence in the form of, for example, deprivation of liberty, involuntary trips abroad and forced marriage.[275]

As in other countries, there is little research on the extent of conversion attempts in Norway. In autumn 2020, the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) conducted a small study of 13 actors' knowledge of conversion attempts in Norway. This was not a scientific study and the results must therefore be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, they indicate that conversion attempts do occur in Norway, including those targeting children.[276]

In Norway, conversion attempts have been banned in accordance with proposals in the analysed action plan to investigate a legal ban on such practices. An investigation has been carried out to examine the need for legislative changes to prevent this type of practice, who may need protection and what measures may need to be regulated, as well as the extent to which current legislation already

270. Denmark's LGBT+ action plan 2022–2025.
271. Als Research Study, 69.
272. Als Research Study, 69.
273. Norway's action plan 2021–2024, 89.
274. Norway's action plan 2021–2024, 80.
275. Norway's action plan 2021–2024.
276. Norway's action plan 2021–2024, 90.

prohibits acts related to conversion attempts.

Several acts are criminalised: conversion attempts, severe conversion attempts and the marketing of conversion attempts. The proposals cover both adult victims and children, also taking into account consequences such as the degree of harm, duration and whether the crime was committed by multiple perpetrators. In the Council on Legislation's referral on the proposal, conversion attempts have been analysed from several different perspectives, including a human rights perspective – whether human rights can be an obstacle to a ban on conversion attempts. Several rights are analysed, such as the right to privacy and family life, freedom of religion and freedom of expression. It has been established that, as these rights are not absolute, they may be restricted in accordance with the principles of necessity and proportionality.

Sweden's action plan mentions that young LGBTI people in particular are at risk of being subjected to honour-based violence and oppression and undergoing so-called conversion attempts.[277] Conversion attempts are not specifically criminalised in Sweden. According to the report *Strengthened protections for personal integrity – The need for measures against virginity checks, virginity certificates and virginity procedures, as well as conversion attempts*, an inquiry concluded that no specific regulation should be introduced to criminalise so-called conversion attempts of LGBTI people. According to the investigation, current regulations provide sufficient scope to take criminal action against the most serious forms of conversion attempts in particular, and a specific criminal provision on conversion attempts would probably not contribute effectively to strengthening protection against conversion attempts.[278]

The action plan refers to the report *Young LGBTQ people's vulnerability to conversion attempts in Sweden* (2022), published by the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF), which presents a study on various forms of coercion and pressure to which young LGBTI people are subjected to change their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. MUCF bases its work on the definitions of honour-based violence and oppression used by the Government, the Swedish Gender Equality Agency and the National Centre against Honour-based Violence and Oppression at the Östergötland County Administrative Board. These definitions make it clear that honour-based violence and oppression are based on strong "*patriarchal and heteronormative ideas*" (Swedish Gender Equality Agency, 2021b; Prop. 2019/20:131) and aim to *"uphold common norms and values that prevail within a family/clan or a larger collective"* (Östergötland County Administrative Board, 2020).[279]

277. Sweden's action plan 2024–2027, 8.
278. *Förstärkt skydd för den personliga integriteten – Behovet av åtgärder mot oskuldskontroller, oskuldsintyg och oskuldsingrepp samt omvändelseförsök.* SOU 2023:37, 329.
279. Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society: *Unga hbtq-personers utsatthet för omvändelseförsök i Sverige*, 2022, 14.

The report emphasises that the findings cannot be used as a basis for assessing how common different types of conversion attempts are. Nor is it possible to draw any conclusions about the environments in which conversion attempts are most common. Among the environments where conversion attempts occur, free church environments are mentioned, as well as conversion attempts linked to honour-based violence and oppression.[280] These two environments are the main focus of the report. Links between conversion attempts and religiosity as a decisive factor are recurrent, with conversion attempts being motivated by conservative religious movements within various Christian denominations, as well as other religions such as Islam and Judaism.[281] The report refers to previous studies that distinguish between honour-based violence and oppression and other forms of vulnerability that may in some respects resemble honour-based vulnerability. MUCF also follows this distinction, but no further reasons are given for doing so beyond the precedent set by previous studies.[282]

In this context, it is interesting to look at the 2011 study *LGBT and Honour* produced by the Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Rights (RFSL)[283], in which 'conversion' is one of the themes. The interview material contains interviews with 18 people from free church environments and environments in which honour-based violence occurs ('families with honour norms'). The report highlights a difference in the motives behind conversion: in free church environments, the aim of the family and/or congregation is to save the young person's soul, as homosexuality is regarded as a demon or illness that must be exorcised, while the motive behind honour-based violence is to save a family's reputation.[284]

The report *Strengthened protections for personal integrity* (SOU 2023:37) refers, among other things, to the MUCF report when assessing the need to criminalise conversion attempts. The report emphasises that conversion attempts are not a form of medical care or treatment and that when considering whether conversion attempts should be criminalised it is necessary to ensure that criminal provisions do not cover gender-affirming care.[285] The report also highlights the need to delimit the concept of conversion attempts from gender-affirming care, which aims to adapt the body to an individual's gender identity to reduce gender dysphoria and alleviate the suffering it causes. The goal of gender-affirming care is therefore to enable the individual to live in accordance with their gender identity.[286]

280. Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society: *Unga hbtq-personers utsatthet för omvändelseförsök i Sverige*, 2022, 21.
281. Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society: *Unga hbtq-personers utsatthet för omvändelseförsök i Sverige*, 2022, 27.
282. Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society: *Unga hbtq-personers utsatthet för omvändelseförsök i Sverige*, 2022, 36.
283. RFSL – Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Rights.
284. RFSL: HBT & Heder, 2011.
285. From the report on gender-affirming care in connection with a diagnosis of gender dysphoria: "A person whose gender identity does not match the gender stated in the population register and who suffers psychologically as a result or experiences impaired ability to function in everyday life may be diagnosed with gender dysphoria.", 247.
286. SOU 2023:37, 248

The term 'conversion attempts' refers to attempts to bring about lasting changes in a person's sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, i.e. a 'conversion'. Changes to the appearance or functions of the body are not covered.[287] Four categories of conversion attempts are identified: 1) methods that target the body directly, such as hormone treatment and surgical procedures ('body-based methods'); 2) methods that resemble or are derived from talk therapy, the twelve-step programme and similar approaches ('therapy-imitative methods'); 3) methods based on religious rituals and other religiously related actions, such as intercessory prayer, pastoral care conversations and exorcisms ('religious methods'); and 4) other attempts at influence that do not fall under the other categories but which can range from ostracism and verbal persuasion to forced marriage and serious acts of violence.

The last approach is linked to honour contexts. It is pointed out that in this case, actions do not need to be methodical. They may involve isolated and spontaneous acts of violence with the aim of punishing a person who has violated hetero-normative social expectations. This may occur in conjunction with other punishments, such as ostracism, exclusion from the community, and removal from positions of responsibility in a congregation. The investigator writes: "*Such actions approach the limit of what may be considered conversion attempts*".[288] This is because the material does not clearly indicate the extent to which the measures are used for the purpose of 'converting' individuals. The investigator emphasises that the measures may be aimed at 'converting' individuals but also preserving or restoring the honour of a family or clan.

The inquiry concludes that no specific legislation criminalising conversion attempts should be introduced. It states that existing legislation provides ample opportunity to take criminal action against various forms of influence for the purpose of conversion and that further criminalisation would not serve as an effective means of counteracting conversion attempts.[289] According to the investigation, certain acts fall outside the scope of criminal liability, such as pressure in the form of ostracism or exclusion from a community and other similar social punishments.[290] In May 2025, the Ministry of Justice submitted a draft bill to the Council on Legislation with a proposal to specifically criminalise psychological violence. The draft states that the proposed regulation is expected to strengthen criminal law protection against conversion attempts.[291]

287. SOU 2023:37.
288. SOU 2023:37, 273.
289. SOU 2023:37, 324 and 329.
290. SOU 2023:37 325.
291. Government Offices of Sweden: *Förslag till stärkt straffrättsligt skydd mot psykiskt våld, 2025*. Available: https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2025/05/forslag-till-starkt-straffrattsligt-skydd-mot-psykiskt-vald/

Asylum and integration

Violence in connection with asylum processes is another topic that emerges. The first Danish action plan to promote safety, wellbeing and equal opportunities for LGBTI people, *Action plan to promote safety, wellbeing and equal opportunities for LGBTI people, 2018–2021*, contained a proposal concerning LGBTI people in asylum reception centres.[292] As a result, guidelines have been developed for people who work with LGBTI asylum seekers. According to the guidelines, staff at asylum reception centres should support LGBTI people and other minorities so that they have the opportunity to live their lives as they wish and so that other new arrivals show respect for *"Danish norms and values, including the rights of women, children and minorities, as well as gender equality*".[293] The guidance also refers to studies that suggest particular challenges with acceptance of LGBTI rights among ethnic minorities. This is further reinforced when LGBTI people come from environments and families with strongly traditional family patterns and/or patriarchal norms. The consequence may be that LGBTI people are subjected to negative social control, harassment, coercion, pressure, physical and psychological violence or threats of violence from their family or the surrounding community.[294] Therefore, it is proposed that asylum seekers receive education in topics such as sexual morality, gender equality, women's and minority rights – including the rights of LGBTI people in Denmark and the fact that these rights also apply to people at asylum reception centres.[295]

The guidelines highlight a number of recommendations to which staff at asylum reception centres should pay particular attention. Several examples are given, including that an asylum seeker may have fled their home country out of fear of living there as an LGBTI person, may be unwilling to provide personal and intimate information about themselves, such as their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, when meeting with staff, or may have different perceptions of how much they need to disclose about their 'LGBTI identity' based on the requirements for asylum applications in Denmark.[296] The guidance and recommendations in particular highlight a contradiction that can arise in asylum procedures. On the one hand, asylum applications usually require detailed and credible descriptions of an individual's identity, including their sexual orientation and gender identity, on the other, these issues can be perceived as shameful and difficult to disclose when there is an imminent threat of violence precisely because of one's LGBTI identity.

Violence in asylum accommodation is also discussed in the Finnish context. Due to the lack of specifically LGBTI-friendly reception centres, and the fears of asylum

292. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Denmark: *Handlingsplan til fremme af tryghed, trivsel og lige muligheder for LGBTI-personer, Danmark 2018–2021.*
293. Danish Immigration Service: *Vejledning til operatørerne om indkvartering af LGBTI-personer*, 2020.
294. Danish Immigration Service: *Vejledning til operatørerne om indkvartering af LGBTI-personer*, 2020, 3.
295. *Vejledning til operatørerne om indkvartering af LGBTI-personer*, 8.
296. *Vejledning til operatørerne om indkvartering af LGBTI-personer*, 3.

seekers rooted in their experiences in their countries of origin, individuals can rarely be open about their sexual orientation or gender identity. They fear, in part, hostility from diaspora groups and their own family members, and even the reactions of reception centre staff.[297] Respondents described experiencing physical, sexual and psychological violence inside and outside reception centres.[298] Refugees and transgender people who had sought asylum testified that they had experienced homophobic and transphobic violence in Finland, and many of them did not feel that the police could guarantee their safety or investigate cases.[299] However, honour was not mentioned as a motive.

The Finnish League for Human Rights, Finland's human rights organisation, has also identified that transgender people and lesbians are rarely included in discussions about honour-based violence, and according to the UNHCR, asylum seekers belonging to sexual and gender minorities are in a particularly vulnerable position. According to the UNHCR, asylum applications from women who have experienced persecution because of their sexual orientation are rejected more often than those from men who have been persecuted on the grounds of their homosexuality.[300]

Introductions for new arrivals is another theme addressed in Norway's action plan, which addresses language and the content of the introduction programme. According to the action plan, there are negative attitudes towards LGBTI people among ethnic minorities, and since language influences attitudes, one of the goals is to contribute to and develop positive words (terms) in languages other than Norwegian, so that this can have a positive impact on social structures that are reproduced through language.

Furthermore, focus is placed on the introduction programme for new arrivals across municipalities, for which there are currently mandatory content requirements. The introduction should promote a diversity perspective, including the rights of LGBTI people. In addition, the mandatory content should include information about negative social control, forced marriage and genital cutting.[301]

As in other countries, it has been noted that newly arrived LGBTI people may be particularly vulnerable to negative social control and honour-based violence. It is proposed that a study be conducted of the expertise in negative social control, honour-based violence and gender and sexual diversity among those who work with newly arrived migrants and refugees.[302]

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297. Czimbalmos, Mercédesz & Rask, Shadia: *Sexual and Gender Minorities Among the Foreign-Origin Populations in Finland: An intersectional analysis*, THL Report, 2022, 44.
298. Czimbalmos, Mercédesz & Rask, Shadia: *Sexual and Gender Minorities Among the Foreign-Origin Populations in Finland: An intersectional analysis*, THL Report, 2022.
299. Czimbalmos, Mercédesz & Rask, Shadia: *Sexual and Gender Minorities Among the Foreign-Origin Populations in Finland: An intersectional analysis*, THL Report, 2022.
300 Finnish League for Human Rights: The concepts of honour and violence: a study of honour-based violence and its consequences in Finland (*Kunniakäsitykset ja väkivalta: selvitys kunniaan liittyvästä väkivallasta ja siihen puuttumisesta Suomessa*), 2016, Available: https://ihmisoikeusliitto.fi/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Kunniak%C3%A4sitykset-ja-v%C3%A4kivalta_B5_netti-002.pdf, 48-49.
301. Norway's action plan 2021–2024.
302. Norway's action plan 2021–2024, 61.

Concluding remarks

The purpose of this section of the report has been to analyse how LGBTI people's vulnerability to honour-based violence and oppression is referred to in national steering documents. The focus has primarily been on action plans that describe efforts to promote LGBTI rights, including measures to combat violence. The space allocated to honour-based violence in these plans varies. It can be noted that the general steering documents on gender-based violence, violence in close relationships and honour-based violence and oppression mention LGBTI people as particularly vulnerable groups. This is justified with reference to so-called honour norms, which are characterised by patriarchal, conservative and heteronormative ideas about gender identity, gender expression and sexuality.

The section on the background to understanding violence against LGBTI people highlights several different perspectives that have been raised in previous research and studies. None of the perspectives presented rely on culture as an explanatory model but rather represent broader and more holistic perspectives on vulnerability to violence, based on the understanding that violence against LGBTI people in close relationships, families or from the general public is a serious problem that occurs in all societies.

Several different themes have been highlighted in the analysis of steering documents, reflecting the results of previous research. Double discrimination and increased focus on minorities within minorities is a clear example. The intersectional perspective highlights the particular vulnerability that LGBTI people with foreign backgrounds may experience due to their gender identity, sexuality and ethnic background. This vulnerability is the result of a variety of factors, including societal norms and attitudes as well as the actions of states. There is a discrepancy in the way LGBTI people's vulnerability to violence is viewed, especially when the focus is on honour-based violence and oppression, which is often implicitly linked to people with foreign backgrounds.

The issue of LGBTI people's vulnerability to honour-based violence and oppression raises a broader question about the boundaries between honour-based violence and other forms of violence and control. One example of this concerns conversion attempts, which are highlighted in steering documents as a specific form of violence. Previous reports and studies have noted that conversion attempts occur in various environments, in honour contexts and in free church environments. Similar to the distinction made between honour contexts and closed religious communities with regard to the issue of negative social control, the presentation of these two different contexts is problematic because it is based on the ethnic backgrounds of people in these contexts. From the perspective of victims of violence and their need

for support and assistance, there may be several advantages to considering the common mechanisms behind violence and the causes of violence. It would benefit preventive work for all victims of violence and reduce the risk of the vulnerability of certain groups being overlooked.

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Criminal law



Introduction

Background and aims

This part of the publication presents a review and analysis of national legislation concerning honour-based violence and oppression in the Nordic countries. It covers criminal legislation that explicitly targets honour-based violence as well as legislation on other crimes that are referred to as honour-based in policy and legislative processes, such as female genital cutting, child and forced marriage and conversion attempts. Legislation and regulations within social law, such as the provision and organisation of support for families or children subjected to specified honour crimes, as well as authorities' care of vulnerable children and young people, are not included in this study.

ABBREVIATIONS

§ = section

§§ = sections

art. = article (Icelandic legislation, corresponds to §)

chap. = chapter

cl. = clause

itm. = item

para. = paragraph

Since this section deals with criminal law and is written by a researcher with a Swedish background, the term 'specified honour crime' will be used instead of the collective term 'honour-based violence and oppression', i.e. the criminal classification used in Swedish criminal law to define a specific offence since 1 June 2022 (Prop. 2021/22:138). Unless otherwise stated, 'specified honour crime' corresponds to the terms used in the Swedish and Finnish contexts, 'honour-based violence' and 'honour-based violence and oppression' respectively, and the term used in the Danish, Norwegian and, to some extent, Finnish contexts, 'negative social control'.

From a criminal law perspective, the debate on specified honour crimes in Nordic countries involves a number of specific acts or phenomena that are assumed to be honour-based, although the emphasis differs somewhat between countries. At the

heart of the debate is the assumption that honour can serve as a motive for various crimes that fall under general criminal law, such as unlawful threats, assault of varying degrees of severity, unlawful deprivation of liberty and murder. This stems from a social debate that originally arose in the 1990s, aiming to 'explain' or 'rationalise' the underlying causes of individual crimes for which the patterns of victims and perpetrators did not correspond to 'normal' crimes committed in family contexts (Johansson, 2005; Englund & Larsson, 2004; Guillou, 1997). The debate on the underlying causes of this eventually led to the conclusion in Sweden that the causes could be summarised under a so-called motive for crime, i.e. that the mindset preceding the actions could be described as honour related (Rosquist, 2022, 2020; Norée, 2022; see also Lernestedt, 2006). For a number of years now, there has therefore been a basis in Sweden for imposing harsher penalties for criminal acts believed to stem from a motive of honour, and there is now a specific legal provision for 'specified honour crimes'. In Denmark and Norway, there are similar trends towards imposing harsher penalties for honour-based crimes than for similar crimes committed in other family contexts, even though these countries have not yet legislated honour as a specific crime. Instead, these countries have chosen to identify and impose relatively harsher penalties for crimes associated with honour, such as forced marriage and female circumcision/genital cutting. See, for example, Chap. 4 § 4e of the Swedish Penal Code or the inclusion of specific honour-based crimes in the general grounds for increased penalties in the Danish Penal Code, for example in §§ 81a, 81c and 114a.

Finland and Iceland are characterised by less harsh processes with regard to criminal legislation against honour-based crimes, although, as the review below shows, Iceland has recently begun to move towards more specific legislation. The autonomous regions of the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland have not drafted any specific criminal laws with regard to specified honour crimes. Åland applies Finnish criminal law. Faroese legislation has been officially drafted independently by the *Løgting* since 2010, but criminal law essentially consists of a Faroese translation of the Danish Criminal Code. Greenland is characterised to an even greater extent by its independence from Denmark; the review below concludes that no honour-based legislation exists in Greenland (Nyborg Lauritzen, 2019).

The debate also highlights a number of more specific acts that have come to be associated with honour over time. Based on previous research and the research in this study, it is possible to identify four distinct types of honour-based acts: child and forced marriage (Idriss, 2022), female genital cutting (Yoza, 2022), clothing restrictions (Davary, 2009) – referred to in media discourse as 'compulsory veiling' – and conversion attempts in relation to sexualities and gender identities outside of the norm (MUCF, 2022).

Finally, it should be mentioned that Sweden is currently the only country in the world with criminal legislation that directly identifies honour motives as a

prerequisite for a specific criminal classification, although similar criminal legislation exists in Denmark. However, it is only in Sweden that defines 'specified honour crimes' as directly linked to honour practices. In Denmark, violations in a family context that can be attributed to 'negative social control' are punishable by imprisonment for up to three years, but the criminal classification is 'psychological violence' rather than specified honour crimes or similar.

In recent debates in particular, discussions have been held over travel bans, primarily for minors, in connection with suspected preparations for forced marriages as well as so-called 're-education trips', when it is assumed that a young person will be forced to undergo schooling under strict conditions in their family's country of origin (see Lebedeva's study in the previous section). However, the issue of travel bans is treated predominantly as an issue of social law in the Nordic countries. There is therefore no criminal liability for arranging such a trip unless it falls under the scope of the crimes of forced marriage or attempted conversion. Instead, regulation is achieved through the imposition of travel bans, which are enforced by border control authorities with respect to an individual's passport. The regulation is therefore imposed on the travel documents of the potential victim, not on a suspected perpetrator.

In most of the Nordic countries, re-education trips are considered a matter for authorities responsible for crime prevention and children's right to a safe school environment. This issue is therefore only of peripheral importance in the context of this criminal law review, except in Denmark/the Faroe Islands, where such trips are punishable by law.

In summary, this study will focus on acts that are punishable through fines, imprisonment or equivalent penalties. Acts that fall under social law and other administrative law regulations will be addressed in certain cases but are not the main area of focus. With reference to the above, the searches have focused on criminal law, i.e. the Swedish Criminal Code and the linguistic equivalent of the Criminal Code in other countries. Searches have also been made for legislation related to the other honour-based acts presented above that are categorised as crimes, i.e. female genital cutting/circumcision, child and forced marriage, clothing restrictions (compulsory veiling), re-education trips and conversion attempts. Specific legal provisions outside the Criminal Code have also been identified here. For example, some countries have specific legislation on female genital cutting, while others classify the act as assault under a section of the Criminal Code. For forced and child marriages, searches have also been conducted of the marriage legislation of each country to investigate further legal consequences in the event of established offences, primarily with regard to the validity of the marriage.

Method

The term 'honour-based legislation' is used extensively in the study. It is used in the absence of a better or clearer term for legislation aimed at identifying and prosecuting honour-based acts. The term should *not* be interpreted to mean legislation that advocates or promotes honour-based acts.

This work does not claim to be an in-depth analysis of the meaning or consequences of the legislation, as would be achieved using traditional jurisprudential methods. The aim is to descriptively identify the existence of honour-based legislation in the Nordic countries. Thus, only occasional references are made to preparatory work, case law and doctrine. The descriptive section is followed by an analysis that examines how legislation in the Nordic countries and regions portrays those who are seen as perpetrators and how support is provided to victims of crime. The analysis is based on the first part of this publication, which deals with strategic work, policy and concepts. While a review of Nordic legislation focusing on specified honour crimes has long been called for, it is important to point out that legislation is, by its very nature, a perishable commodity. This review is an account of criminal legislation as it exists in the Nordic countries in the spring of 2025. As the first part of the publication shows, policy processes related to specified honour crimes are constantly evolving in all Nordic countries, and policy development is often followed by legislation. It is therefore desirable to ensure that reviews of this kind are carried out at regular intervals.

The database searches were conducted in February 2025 by librarians at KvinnSam at Gothenburg University Library, after consultation with the author. While there were differences in terms of the nature of the databases used and the technical search conditions between the search contexts, corresponding concepts across languages and similar parameters regarding, for example, publication type were applied. Lovdata Pro (Norway), Juno (Sweden) and Karnov (Denmark) are comprehensive and licence-based databases. Finlex (Finland), on the other hand, is a freely accessible resource owned by the Finnish Ministry of Justice, and there were certain search limitations when using the beta version at the time. Below is a description of the searches conducted of the three databases.

Denmark

The Karnov database contains Danish legislation with comments and rulings. The database allows you to conduct a single search using the Boolean operator 'OR' between terms to obtain hits on documents in which one or more of the search terms appears in the full text. This search was also limited to legislation and preparatory works such as commission reports. The search in Karnov resulted in 52 downloaded PDF files for further selection. Search string: 'kvindelig omskæring' OR kønslemlæstelse OR tvangsægteskab OR børneægteskab OR 'negativ social kontrol' OR æresrelater*

Finland

Finlex is a freely accessible search service for Finnish legislation and related documents, which can also be searched in Swedish. In the beta version of the database, which was searchable in February 2025, the use of Boolean operators was not available. Instead, individual searches were performed for each term and duplicates were filtered manually. This resulted in a total of 11 downloaded PDF files of laws and government bills for further selection. The following search terms were used: barnäktenskap, tvångsäktenskap, hedersrelatera*, könsstymp*, 'negativ social kontroll', 'kvinnlig könsstympning'.

Faroe Islands

Since 2010, the Faroe Islands have had their own criminal legislation, which was mainly introduced through *Løgtingslóg no. 38 frá 30. apríl 2018 um broyting í lovbekendtgørelse om straffeloven* (*Revsilógin* – Faroese for the Criminal Code). In essence, *Revsilógin* is a Faroese translation of the Danish Criminal Code. During the compilation, all the provisions described in the section on Danish legislation were matched with the corresponding section in the latest version of the *Revsilógin* (last revised on 2 May 2025).[303] The Faroese language was interpreted with the help of Google Translate and Copilot. On this basis, it can be concluded that all existing Danish provisions relating to 'honour' also appear in the *Revsilógin.*

Greenland

Greenlandic legislation has been examined through searches on www.nalunaarutit.gl, which is the official source of Greenlandic legislative information. The site contains legislation and other legal material in both Greenlandic and Danish. Searches were conducted in the Greenlandic Criminal Code and in specific legislation on marital relations, genital cutting, and negative social control based on the Danish search terms listed above.

Iceland

Icelandic criminal law was initially analysed on the basis of the official English translation[304] of the General Penal Code of Iceland.[305] Searches were conducted using English equivalents of the search terms used for the Scandinavian countries, i.e. female, genital, mutilation, circumcision, child, underage, marriage, forced, 'negative social control', honour, sexual, orientation, gender, identity. Unfortunately, the most recent English update is from 2015, which is why a supplementary review has been carried out using an AI-generated (Co-Pilot and Chat GPT) Swedish

303.https://www.logir.fo/Logtingslogarkunngerd/8-fra-20-02-2024-um-revsing-Revsilogin
304.https://www.government.is/lisalib/getfile.aspx?itemid=dd8240cc-c8d5-11e9-9449-005056bc530c
305.https://www.althingi.is/lagas/nuna/1940019.html

translation from Icelandic. The Icelandic expressions highlighted in the study are derived from the author's general knowledge of Scandinavian concepts (e.g., the synonymous relationship between 'honour' and 'glory').

Norway

The Lovdata Pro database was used for Norwegian legislation and related preparatory work. It contains Norwegian legal sources, laws and regulations in full text, as well as bibliographic references for legal literature. When logged in, users can search using multiple keywords simultaneously, save their search history and download documents as PDFs. The search was limited to laws, public inquiries and government bills, which resulted in 196 hits. After an initial selection, 56 PDF files were downloaded for further selection by the author. Search string: kvinn* omskjær*, kjønnslemlest*, barneekteskap, 'negativ sosial* kontrol*', æresrelater*, tvangsekteskap.

Åland

As mentioned previously, Åland's criminal legislation follows its Finnish counterpart hence Åland is reported together with Finland in the review.

Sweden

The review of Swedish legislation was based on the Swedish Criminal Code, which is published on the website of the Swedish Parliament.[306] Supplementary material has been sought in the Juno database, using a similar search strategy to that used for other countries.

306. https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/brottsbalk-1962700_sfs-1962-700/

Legislation in each country and autonomous region

This section constitutes the main descriptive review of honour-based criminal legislation. Rather than following a strict country-by-country review in alphabetical order, it begins with the two countries that have the most comprehensive legislation: Sweden, which has defined specified honour crimes as a criminal offence, and Denmark, which has the most comprehensive legislation in terms of the number of acts that can constitute a crime in an honour context. This is followed by an alphabetical country-by-country review. Since, as explained above, criminal legislation in the Faroe Islands and Åland replicates that in Denmark and Finland respectively, these cases are treated together under the same sections. Greenland is covered in a short section stating that, in practice, there is no honour-based criminal legislation corresponding to that found in the other countries and autonomous regions.

Swedish legislation

Swedish legislation contains both the oldest and most recently implemented legislation in the Nordic region, in the sense that a completely new legal provision and new criminal classification have been formulated. The oldest is Act SFS 1982:316 on female genital cutting, which entered into force on 1 January 1983. The most recent is the so-called 'honour oppression clause' (Chap. 4 § 4e of the Criminal Code), which entered into force on 1 July 2022.

Specified honour crimes

Since 2022, Sweden has had a specific law prohibiting repeated acts that constitute a crime against a person or their property in which "the motive is to preserve or restore the honour of a person or family, relatives or other similar group [...] if the acts form a part of an element in a repeated violation of that person's integrity and suited to severely damage that person's self-confidence," a person can be convicted of specified honour crimes. The penalty is one to six years in prison (Chap. 4 § 4e of the Criminal Code).

4 § 4a of the Swedish Penal Code concerning gross violation of integrity and gross violation of a woman's integrity and also carries the same range of punishment. As with the offence of a violation of integrity, the individual acts do not need to be of a

particularly serious nature. Milder forms[307] of violation, assault or similar acts fulfil the requirement, provided that they are repeated incidents.

While the offence of a violation of integrity explicitly focuses on violations committed against a close or former close relative, the section on specified honour crimes places greater emphasis on the perpetrator's motives. It is therefore not necessary to be a close relative of the victim to be convicted of a specified honour crime. The legislation appears to take into account the fact that many honour-based crimes are committed against boyfriends who are not accepted by a woman's family. In such cases, the victim cannot be considered a close relative.

However, the concept of 'motive' is problematic. The clause on specified honour crimes is the only place in the entire Criminal Code in which 'motive' is a prerequisite, i.e. something that a prosecutor must prove has taken place. The question, however, is how motive can be proven, since it requires a court to be convinced that a person thought in a specific way in connection with specific acts, with an emphasis on the notion that they thought in such a way on repeated occasions. There is still no case law (ruling by the Court of Appeal or Supreme Court) pertaining to this section of the Criminal Code, although there is some guidance on assessing honour as a motive in relation to increased penalties, as explained in the following section.

Stricter penalties for honour-based crimes

An earlier Swedish law that entered into force on 1 June 2020 and pertains to harsher penalties is found in Chap. 29 § 2, para. 10 of the Swedish Criminal Code. The wording is largely the same as in the paragraph on specified honour crimes, as it stipulates that when determining a sentence, it shall be considered an aggravating circumstance "if the motive for the crime was to preserve or restore the honour of a person or family, relatives or other similar group". The application of this provision in sentencing means that a person must first be convicted of a crime, i.e. that a criminal act has taken place and that there is no doubt that the defendant committed the act. Only when these two criteria are met can a sentence be imposed. At the prosecutor's request, the court may then assess whether the crime was committed for reasons of honour, which may result in a harsher sentence. For example, an assault of the normal degree, an act which would typically carry a sentence of six months' imprisonment, could instead result in a sentence of eight months' imprisonment.

307. "Milder" refers to there being a difference in degree between, for example, blows to an arm and blows to the head, where the former is a milder form of assault. However, both are punishable offences. Direct legislation on assault does not take into account the victim's experience of a blow to the arm (unless it has caused physical pain). The violations of peace in Chap. 4 of the Penal Code §§ 4a-4e have been added in order to draw attention to the mental strain of being subjected to repeated crimes (see, e.g., Brå 2023).

Female genital cutting

According to Act 1982:316 prohibiting female genital cutting, it is a crime to perform "*an operation on the external female genitalia with the aim of mutilating them or causing other permanent changes to them [...] regardless of whether consent has been given to the operation or not*". The standard sentence is two to six years' imprisonment or, in the case of a serious offence, five to ten years' imprisonment. The range of punishment for a normal degree offence corresponds approximately to that for aggravated assault. In the case of a serious offence, it corresponds to the criminal classification of particularly aggravated assault. There is no classification for minor genital cutting – corresponding to assault of a normal degree. However, for genital cutting, there is the possibility of classification as a less serious crime, with a prescribed penalty of up to four years' imprisonment. It is also possible to be convicted for attempted, conspired or planned crimes.

Forced marriage and child marriage offences

In Sweden, forced marriage and child marriage are regulated in Chap. 4 § 4c of the Criminal Code. In addition, misleading someone into travel for the purpose of marriage is punishable under Chap. 4 § 4d of the Penal Code. The crime of forced marriage entered into force in 2014 and the crime of child marriage came into force in 2020. Since 2022, preparing, attempting and/or conspiring to commit the above offences have also been criminalised under Chap. 4 § 10 of the Criminal Code.

In short, the elements of forced marriage include "through unlawful coercion or exploitation of a vulnerable situation, causing a person to enter into a marriage". The second paragraph of the section equates a 'marriage-like relationship' with marriage, which means that even in cases where there is no formally documented marriage certificate, it may be sufficient for the marriage to be considered to exist through the customs of a group and – as a central part of the requirement – that the dissolution of the relationship is in some way conditional.

The description of the offence of child marriage (Chap. 4 § 4c, para. 3 of the Criminal Code) is similar to that of forced marriage, except that it specifies that the person given in marriage (the plaintiff) is under the age of eighteen. The legislation also takes into account that persons under the age of eighteen have limited legal capacity, which means that even those who *allow* a child to be married off (implicitly a guardian) can be convicted of the offence.

The penalty is the same regardless of whether it concerns forced marriage or child marriage offences, i.e. imprisonment for a maximum of four years.

The offence of "misleading a person into travel for the purposes of marriage" is also introduced via § 4d. This means that anyone who *"through deception persuades a person to travel to a country other than the one in which he or she lives, with the aim of exposing that person to [a marriage crime]"* is guilty of what can be

described as a form of aiding and abetting or preparation for a marriage crime or child marriage crime. In this case, the penalty is slightly lower: imprisonment for a maximum of two years.

According to Chap, 5 § 5 of the Marriage Code, a person who has been subjected to forced marriage has the right to request a divorce without a cooling-off period (a cooling-off period is otherwise a normal condition for divorce). The third paragraph of the same section gives prosecutors the mandate to pursue a divorce case, and a social welfare board that becomes aware of a child marriage is obliged to provide information relevant to such a case to the prosecutor.

Compulsory veiling and conversion attempts

There is no Swedish legislation that makes it a criminal offence to force someone else to wear or not wear certain clothing. In recent years, a number of municipalities have introduced local rules mainly prohibiting girls in primary and lower secondary school from wearing a veil during school hours. Compliance with these local regulations has been varied but, judging by media reports, limited overall, mainly because head teachers have not compelled (or been able to compel) teachers or other school staff to enforce the bans.

Conversion attempts, i.e. actions aimed at persuading individuals to embrace a heterosexual lifestyle and thus distance themselves from other possible sexual orientations, have been the subject of relatively little debate in Sweden compared to, for example, Norway. Recently, the issue has also been included in steering documents concerning honour-based issues (see the policy analysis in the previous section of this publication), but at the legislative level there has still been no discussion of defining conversion attempts as a specific crime. On a theoretical level, as there is still no court practice to confirm this, repeated conversion attempts with proven reference to family honour could be tried under the aforementioned clause on specified honour crimes. Similarly, a proven single violation of an individual's sexual orientation could result in a more severe punishment if the court considers that the act has an underlying honour motive.

Double criminality

Chap. 2 § 5, para. 2 of the Swedish Criminal Code stipulates that even though the main rule in the first paragraph of the same section is that crimes committed by or against persons with a connection to Sweden (in practice, citizenship or residence permit) can only be tried if the suspected crime is also a crime in the country where it was committed, certain crimes included in Chap. 4 of the Penal Code may be tried even if they are not criminal offences in the country where they were committed. These include forced marriage, child marriage and specified honour crimes. Female genital cutting is also included among the offences for which a person can be convicted even if the offence was committed in a country where such acts do not constitute a crime.

Danish and Faroese legislation

In Denmark, virtually all existing criminal legal provisions were introduced during the 2000s. In 2003, female genital cutting was made a criminal offence. In 2012, forced marriage was made a criminal offence. In 2019, § 243 of the Criminal Code was introduced, making psychological violence against close family members a criminal offence. Such psychological violence is assumed to be included under the definition of so-called negative social control.

The Faroe Islands have been part of the Danish Kingdom since 1380 and followed Danish legislation between 1816 and 1948, when the territory became self-governing. Since 1948, the area has gradually moved away from Danish legislation in favour of its own, with *Løgting* as the legislative assembly (Nyborg Lauritsen, 2019). Since 2010, the Faroe Islands have had their own criminal legislation (*Revsilógin*), which is essentially a Faroese translation of the Danish Criminal Code. All existing Danish laws relating to honour are also included in the *Revsilógin*. The term 'negative social control' found in the Danish Criminal Code has its counterpart in the Faroese *neiligt sosialt eftirlit*.

Stricter penalties

Danish/Faroese legislation also applies tougher penalties for honour-based crimes. Unlike Swedish legislation, however, these tougher penalties are sometimes specified in individual sections of the law, in addition to crimes in certain contexts being grouped together in a section on sentencing (§ 81a-d of the Criminal Code). Stricter penalties in Danish/Faroese legislation will therefore be dealt with both for individual crimes and within the framework of the section on stricter penalties.

Negative social control

The Danish Criminal Code stipulates that anyone who, through neglect or degrading treatment, violates a partner, child or minor under their care, or other relative or in-law who is a direct ascendent or descendent, shall be sentenced to imprisonment for up to two years (§ 213). This provision, which is found in Chap. 23 on crimes in family relationships, is somewhat dated and could be applied to honour-based acts. However, since 2019, § 243 of the Criminal Code contains a provision under the offence of 'psychological violence'. The key elements of § 243 are that gross violations are acts carried out repeatedly over a period of time against someone in a household to whom one has a connection with the aim of *"unduly controlling the person through negative social control"*. While the length of the period is not specified, the central requirement is that the acts are repeated, which is comparable to the Swedish honour oppression clause. The period is then limited to taking place between the first and last proven act.

The fact that the offence is described as taking place in a household context rather than a family context means that the collective interest extends beyond clear family ties. This can be compared to the aforementioned § 213, where applicable kinship is clearly defined. The term 'household' may imply family ties but can also be interpreted as persons with interests in a collective in which kinship is not a strict prerequisite. This broadening of the concept means that persons with more distant kinship ties can be implicated in such a crime and that persons who are not related but otherwise have interests in a family or clan sphere can be considered accomplices. This was the case, for example, in a high-profile honour killing in Denmark in 2005 (see Wikan, 2010) and in an honour killing in Sweden in 2016 (Court of Appeal for Southern Norrland, Case B 821-17; see also Rosquist, 2020).

The term 'negative social control', which in Denmark (and Norway and, to some extent, Finland) is a collective term for the collectively imposed system of sanctions that constitutes specified honour crimes, is explicitly used in § 243. Negative social control is exercised with the aim of "punishing those who violate the norms and behaviour that the family or community considers to be decent" (see part 1 in this publication). What is highlighted here is that negative social control is accepted and sanctioned within the community (or household) whose honour is considered to be threatened by a specific individual's breach of norms. The mention of negative social control reflects the Swedish legal provision, which instead focuses on the *motive* of maintaining or restoring the honour of a family or similar group.

Physical violence and grounds for increased penalties

The following sections of the Criminal Code (§§ 244-246) deal with violent crimes (crimes against the 'body') of gradually increasing severity, from assault of a normal degree to gross negligence resulting in the death of another person. Here, the legislation emphasises that such offences are considered more serious if they have been committed against someone who is or has been a member of the perpetrator's household. See, for example, § 244, which stipulates that the maximum penalty for assault of a normal degree is doubled from three to six years' imprisonment in cases in which the act is committed against a close relative. It should be noted, however, that the concept of a close relative is applicable to all forms of violence in family relationships and not exclusively to honour-based family violence.

Female genital cutting (kvindelig omskæring)

Denmark and the Faroe Islands are the only Nordic countries to use the term 'female circumcision' rather than female genital cutting or genital mutilation in legislation. The legal provision concerning female circumcision is included in the Criminal Code (§ 245a) through Act 2003-05-28 nr 386, an amendment to the Danish Act on Aliens. In practice, this is an addition to the existing § 245 on criminal liability for causing bodily harm through medical intervention, which carries a maximum penalty of six years' imprisonment. Alongside this, female circumcision is

included in § 246, which concerns grievous bodily harm or death, which carries a maximum penalty of ten years' imprisonment. In addition, sentences for offences included in §§ 245, 245a or 246 can be increased by a further fifty per cent of the stated maximum penalty in the event of repeated offences (Criminal Code § 247).

Forced marriage, compulsory veiling and child marriage

Since 2012, Danish/Faroese legislation has included a criminal law provision (Criminal Code § 260, para. 2) that equates forced marriage with unlawful coercion. It was introduced by Act 2013-05-01 No. 434, an amendment to the Criminal Code and the Act on Aliens. Forced marriage in this context includes forcing someone to enter into marriage or partake in a religious ceremony or similar marriage-like relationship, or to force someone to remain in such a relationship. Under this provision, refusal to accept a divorce could also constitute forced marriage, but this needs to be seen in the light of the fact that divorce is a relatively common occurrence in Denmark and that it is not unusual for one party to oppose divorce. For coercion of an individual to remain in a marriage to constitute forced marriage, it must be assumed that there are perpetrators outside of one of the two married parties from within the extended family circle. In this respect, the involvement of a clan or family constitutes an honour-based case.

Criminal Code § 260 is a portal provision in Chap. 26 concerning "crimes against personal freedom", corresponding to "crimes against freedom and peace" in Chap. 4 of the Swedish Criminal Code. While unlawful coercion of a 'normal degree' (§ 260, para. 1) carries a penalty ranging from a fine to imprisonment for up to two years, coercion into marriage under the second subparagraph is punishable by imprisonment for up to four years. Similarly, the third part, introduced in August 2018, stipulates that anyone who forces someone to wear clothing designed to conceal their face ('compulsory veiling') also risks imprisonment for up to four years. In terms of sentencing, forced marriage and compulsory veiling are therefore considered particularly serious crimes against personal freedom. It is also noteworthy that forced marriage and compulsory veiling are dealt with in such close connection to each other in the text of the law and that they are given special significance from a sentencing perspective. This indicates that Danish legislation attaches particular importance to codifying the prosecution of honour practices.

Child marriage is regulated in § 260a of the Criminal Code. According to the first subparagraph, a marriage officiant who marries a child under the age of eighteen can be fined or sentenced to imprisonment for up to two years. The same penalty is imposed on anyone who allows their child to be married (implicitly a guardian), as per subparagraph two. It is noteworthy that child marriage is in practice subject to a lower penalty than forced marriage. However, it can be assumed that the issue of forced marriage would be investigated in parallel and, where appropriate, prosecuted separately by the public prosecutor.

It should also be noted that, under Danish/Faroese law, a marriage officiant who marries a minor can be prosecuted for child marriage offences. There is no equivalent to this in the criminal legislation of other Nordic countries. In the other Nordic countries, the focus is entirely on coercive family members and other relatives. In all the Nordic countries and autonomous regions, marriage ceremonies are invalid in the case of forced and/or child marriage, but it is only in Denmark that conducting a marriage ceremony is in itself a punishable offence for the person conducting the ceremony.

Re-education trips

Criminal Code § 215a stipulates up to four years' imprisonment for anyone who is responsible for a minor travelling abroad to participate in activities that harm the child's health or development (re-education trips). This provision is consistent with the fact that Danish authorities have a special mandate to combat re-education trips and that such trips are related to so-called honour-based conflicts and negative social control (see part 1 in this publication), as well as UIBM 2016).

Double criminality

The prohibition and enforcement of laws on female circumcision are further clarified and strengthened through the inclusion of criminal liability for offences committed abroad through the additions of Act 2006-06-08 No. 540 amending the Criminal Code and Act 2008-06-17 No. 490 amending the Criminal Code and various other laws. In practice, this means extended criminal jurisdiction, as Danish citizens or persons with strong ties to Denmark (e.g. through residence permits) can be convicted of crimes in Denmark even if they do not constitute crimes in the country where they are committed. The same applies if the act is committed against a Danish citizen or a person with strong ties to Denmark. This provision applies only to a few crimes; in addition to female circumcision, it applies to the sexual exploitation of children, human trafficking and terrorism (Criminal Code § 7). Female circumcision is also one circumstance in which a person can be prosecuted abroad but still be prosecuted in Denmark at a later date, known as double criminality.

Finnish and Ålandic legislation

The Finnish Criminal Code contains few specific references to crimes that can be assumed to be honour-based. As described in the policy analysis of this publication, work to strengthen legislation has recently begun; see, for example, the Finnish Government (2023:209). A review of pending bills from 18 July 2025 does not indicate, however, that such legislation is imminent.[308]

308 https://www.finlex.fi/sv/lagstiftning/1889/39-001#chp_2bv20010520__heading

Sentencing

No honour-based acts are specified as grounds for sentencing under Chap. 6 §§ 4-8 of the Finnish Criminal Code. Instead, sentences are imposed according to general principles that apply to all criminal acts.

Female genital cutting

The provisions on female genital cutting were introduced as recently as 2024 and are regulated in Chap. 21 of the Criminal Code, which deals with crimes against life and health. They have been introduced as sub-paragraphs to Chap. 21 § 6, which regulates aggravated assault and preparations for such assaults. Female genital cutting is described as the total or partial removal or other damage to the external genitalia of a woman or girl (Chap. 21 § 6b). The penalty is imprisonment for one to ten years. Chap. 21 § 6c regulates preparation for female genital cutting, which may include possessing "a tool that is designed specifically for the purpose" of performing the act (Criminal Code, Chap. 21 § 6a, cl. 1), taking a woman or girl abroad for the purpose of performing the procedure (Criminal Code, Chap. 21 § 6c, cl. 2) or persuading a woman or girl to undergo the procedure (Criminal Code, Chap. 21 § 6c, cl. 3). Preparing to perform female genital cutting carries a sentence of four months to five years' imprisonment.

The range of punishment for female genital cutting is the same as for aggravated assault, which implicitly means that the crime is not considered to be of a normal degree. It is also stipulated in § 6b that attempts at female genital cutting are punishable within the framework of the range of punishment. In the case of preparation for female genital cutting, the range of punishment is slightly higher than for preparation for other forms of aggravated assault, mainly because it carries a minimum penalty of imprisonment. Preparation for other forms of aggravated assault can result in a sentence of up to four years in prison but do not require a prison sentence.

The focus of § 6a is on the act of female genital cutting in itself, i.e. the person who performs the procedure. In cases in which family members or other persons are involved in planning and carrying out female genital cutting, these circumstances are considered preparation for the crime under § 6b.

Forced marriage and child marriage

The Criminal Code does not contain any specific provisions on forced marriage; instead, this offence is dealt with under the provisions on human trafficking (Chap. 25 § 3, cl. 4) or aggravated human trafficking (Chap. 25 § 3a). If the forced marriage is carried out against a child, aggravated human trafficking is automatically applicable (Chap. 25 § 3a, cl. 3). Human trafficking of a normal degree carries a sentence of imprisonment for at least four months and up to six

years while aggravated human trafficking carries a sentence of imprisonment for at least two and up to ten years. The provisions on unlawful coercion under § 8 of the same chapter may also be applicable (RP 172/2021).

According §§ 27a and 27b of the Marriage Act, a marriage entered into under duress shall be annulled with the same legal effect as in the case of divorce under § 27 1, i.e. without the requirement for a cooling period as would apply in the case of an ordinary divorce. The legal process for applying for the annulment of a marriage is regulated under §§ 30b-32. Provisions for the annulment of marriage were introduced in 2023 on the basis of Government Bill 172/2021. On the same basis, § 115a was introduced, according to which a marriage contracted abroad shall not be recognised in Finland if at least one of the parties was under eighteen years of age and at least one of the parties was resident in Finland when the marriage was contracted.

Double criminality

Finnish law applies to crimes committed outside Finland against Finnish citizens (§ 5 Criminal Code) and by Finnish citizens (§ 6 Criminal Code). This only applies to crimes with a maximum penalty of more than six months' imprisonment. This means that all of the above-mentioned crimes could be subject to trial in a Finnish court, as their maximum penalties all exceed six months' imprisonment.

The starting point for double criminality is that acts that are not crimes in the country where they were committed cannot be tried in any other country. However, it follows from Chap. 1 § 11, cl. 8 of the Criminal Code that female genital cutting can still be tried by a Finnish court. Similarly, unlawful coercion (Chap. 25 § 8) can be tried if the coercion constitutes an act of forced or child marriage in violation of Article 37 of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

Greenlandic legislation

Greenland has traditionally exercised considerably greater independence from Denmark in the legal sphere than the Faroe Islands has. This is evident, for example, in the fact that Greenland has its own independently drafted criminal code (*Kriminallov for Grönland*), although it has been translated into Danish. The Greenlandic Criminal Code is clearly influenced by the specific social problems that arise from the vulnerability and isolation caused by Greenland's geography and nature (Nyborg Lauritsen, 2019). The Criminal Code stipulates, among other things, that it is expressly punishable not to help persons in distress (§ 89 of the Criminal Code). A corresponding provision, consistent with one of the most important assessment criteria of honour practices, "to help one's neighbour", also appears in the General Penal Code of Iceland. There are no corresponding explicit provisions in the criminal codes of the other Nordic countries or autonomous regions.

Greenlandic legislation has been examined through searches on www.nalunaarutit.gl, which is the official source of Greenlandic legal information. The site contains legislation and other legal material in both Greenlandic and Danish. Based on the Danish search terms listed in the methodology section, searches were conducted in the Greenlandic Criminal Code and in specific legislation on marital relations, genital cutting and negative social control. Despite extensive searches, no legislation or other legal documents have been found that can be attributed to forced marriage, child marriage, female genital cutting, conversion attempts or other honour-based acts.

Icelandic legislation

Almenn hegningarlög, or the General Penal Code of Iceland, was originally enacted in 1940, from which point many additions and amendments have been made. The General Penal Code largely does not contain criminal classifications but consists of descriptions of crimes. The section headings below correspond to the criminal classifications used in Swedish legislation.

A number of the criminal definitions mentioned below are relatively new and were introduced in 2016 in connection with the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. The ratification mainly meant that female genital cutting and forced marriage were included in the General Penal Code. The changes are specified in Act No. 23 from 30 March 2016.[309]

Recent treatment of the concept of honour in Icelandic legislation

Icelandic criminal law takes a slightly different approach to the concept of honour than other Nordic countries and autonomous regions, as, until recently, the concept has been legally applicable. Under Articles 84 and 85 of the General Penal Code, a person convicted of a minor offence (punishable by up to one year in prison) could, two years after serving their sentence, apply to the court to have their honour restored (*uppreist æru*). The possibility of having one's honour restored had far-reaching consequences, among other things because the crime for which an individual had been punished could not be invoked in defamation cases under the former Article 238, nor could it be held against them with respect to various forms of public employment. In this way, the Icelandic concept of honour reflects research that places honour practices in a political, legal, economic and social context (Rosquist, 2020; Baianstovu, 2017).

Articles 84 and 85 were removed from the General Penal Code in 2018, which entailed changes to a large number of related legal provisions.[310] The preparatory

309.https://www.althingi.is/altext/stjt/2016.023.html
310.https://www.althingi.is/altext/stjt/2018.141.html

work and debates that preceded the removal of the principle of restoring honour are not covered by this study. However, it is important to mention that until recently Iceland had legislation that *allowed* for the restoration of honour, which contrasts with the legislation that this study focuses on, i.e. the *prohibition* of maintaining or restoring honour in the Nordic countries and autonomous regions.

Stricter penalties

There is no specific Icelandic provision for stricter penalties that directly refers to honour. However, stricter penalties are stipulated for certain specific offences. These are described under the respective subheadings.

Article 70, which regulates sentencing in general, states in the third paragraph that if an act is directed against a man, woman or child with whom the perpetrator has a close relationship, and the relationship is considered to be relevant to the seriousness of the crime, a more severe penalty shall be imposed. Therefore, if a crime takes place in a family or clan context, and this context was significant for the planning and execution of the crime, it can be considered an aggravating circumstance (*þyngingar refsingunni*) under Icelandic criminal law.

Item 7 from the first paragraph of the same article states that the perpetrator's motive must be considered. However, it does not specify whether the motive should be considered a mitigating or aggravating circumstance, which means that both circumstances may be relevant. This can be compared to the Swedish so-called stricter penalty clause (Chap. 29 § 2, itm. 10 of the Swedish Criminal Code), in which honour motives are interpreted as an exclusively aggravating circumstance when determining sentencing.

Female genital cutting

Article 218a, which is an addition to Article 218 on general assault, stipulates a sentence of up to six years in prison for offences of a normal degree, those which cause injury by partially or completely removing the sexual organs of a girl or woman. In the case of a serious offence, a sentence of up to sixteen years' imprisonment may be imposed. No fines are included in the range of punishment, with imprisonment being the minimum sentence. When assessing the severity of an offence, consideration is given to whether the act caused serious injury or death, led to long-term health problems and/or was conducted in a particularly reckless manner (author's translation).

Article 218c states that if a person previously convicted of female genital cutting is convicted of a new offence (implicitly against another woman or girl), this constitutes grounds for a stricter penalty. The penalty may then be increased by an addition fifty per cent of the prison term of the first sentence.

Forced marriage and child marriage

Article 225(2) of the General Penal Code stipulates that anyone who forces a person to marry (*ganga í hjúskap*) or undergo a marriage-like ceremony may be sentenced to imprisonment for up to four years. Fines are not included in the range of punishment, and the prison sentence is twice as high as for crimes of general unlawful coercion, as described in the first paragraph of the same article.

As mentioned earlier, Icelandic legislation makes relatively little use of explicit criminal classifications, and this is also the case here, but Article 227a states that forced marriage (*nauðungarhjónaband*) may also constitute human trafficking (*mansal*), which can result in up to twelve years' imprisonment. Article 227a also specifies that if the target of an act of human trafficking is under the age of 18, this shall be considered an aggravating circumstance or grounds for a stricter penalty. The crime of child marriage is thus implicitly criminalised but without an explicit criminal classification.

In Icelandic marriage law, the validity of a marriage is mainly regulated by Article 25a.[311] This article, which was added to the Marriage Act as recently as 2022, concerns the recognition of marriages contracted abroad. The basic rule is that marriages contracted abroad shall be recognised in Iceland as long they have been conducted in accordance with the laws and regulations applicable in the country where the marriage took place. However, the second paragraph emphasises the requirement that both spouses must have been over the age of eighteen when the marriage took place. In exceptional cases and *"taking into account the unambiguous interests of a person under the age of eighteen"*, a marriage may be recognised for persons who were sixteen years of age at the time of the marriage. Thus, there is some regulation of the recognition of child marriages and marriages involving young people.

The third paragraph of Article 25a states that if a marriage *"is contrary to the fundamental rules of the Icelandic legal system or public policy"*, it cannot be recognised in Iceland. In this way, forced marriages or child marriages established in accordance with the above-mentioned Article 225(2) or Article 227a of the General Penal Code could not be recognised under the Marriage Act.

Conversion attempts

Since 1 January 2024, a new article (227b) has been added to the General Penal Code. According to this, anyone who *"through coercion, deception or threats persuades a person to undergo unconfirmed treatment (ógagnreynda meðferð) with the aim of suppressing or changing their sexual orientation, gender identity or*

311. https://www.althingi.is/lagas/nuna/1993031.html

gender expression (breyta kynhneigð, kynvitund eða kyntjáningu)" shall be sentenced to a fine or imprisonment for up to two years. The term *ógagnreynda* specifies that the treatment lacks medical or similar evidence, meaning that the provision does not apply to gender-affirming treatment performed within the framework of public healthcare.

An offence committed against a person under the age of 18 carries a sentence of imprisonment for up to four years, as is the case for anyone who abducts a child for the purposes of subjecting them to conversion attempts. The legislation is thus clear that such an offence against a minor is particularly serious.

The third subparagraph of the same article also stipulates that encouraging or inciting conversion attempts, as well as accepting money to participate in such a crime, is also punishable. There is thus an implicit assumption that conversion attempts are carried out in a collective context against individuals.

Double criminality

Article 5 of the General Penal Code specifies that persons who are citizens or residents of Iceland may be convicted under Icelandic law for offences under Article 218a and Article 225 sub-paragraph 2 even if the offence was committed abroad and even if the act is not a criminal offence in the country where it was committed. This corresponds to the other Nordic countries' specific focus on double criminality for honour-based crimes. Additional crimes included in this specification relate to child pornography offences and certain sexual offences. Double criminality was introduced through a number of amendments to the General Penal Code between 2012 and 2023. The amendments aim in various ways to promote the health and safety of children and women and involve the ratifications of UN conventions on children and women and a number of EU directives.

Norwegian legislation

In Norway, there is no specific legislation for crimes believed to be committed for reasons of honour. The terms 'honour-based' and 'negative social control' are not used in the Norwegian Penal Code. To the extent that honour-based acts are punished, they must instead be derived from more general legislation.

Stricter penalties

Point f of Chap. 14 § 77 of the General Penal Code, which concerns increased penalties, states that crimes committed by several persons acting in concert (*fellesskab*) constitute grounds for increased penalties. This finds its parallel in the aforementioned § 81 sub-paragraph 2 of the Danish Criminal Code, which specifies acts committed by "several persons acting in concert". However, it does not specify

what this association or group might consist of, unlike Chap. 29, § 2, sub-paragraph 10 of the Swedish Criminal Code, which specifies "the honour of a family, clan or similar group". Whether this point has been used in honour-based cases in Norwegian case law may be the subject of further research.

Forced marriage and child marriage

The Norwegian General Penal Code § 253 regulates the crime of forced marriage, which means forcing someone to enter into a marriage or marriage-like relationship through violence, deprivation of liberty, other unwarranted or criminal acts, or undue pressure. The second paragraph of the same section stipulates that taking a person abroad for the purpose of forcing them into marriage constitutes attempted forced marriage. The maximum penalty for the offence is six years' imprisonment.

Child marriage is regulated in § 262 sub-paragraph 2 of the General Penal Code. There is no criminal classification for child marriage corresponding to forced marriage, but anyone who enters into marriage with a person under the age of sixteen may be sentenced to up to three years' imprisonment, even if they are unaware of the other party's age. If both parties are of equal age or development, immunity from punishment may be applicable.

If the child marriage was entered into under duress, the above-mentioned § 253 applies, which can incur an increased penalty of up to six years' imprisonment.

The Marriage Act § 23 regulates the right to obtain a divorce in cases of forced marriage. This is supported by § 16 of the same act, which allows for the marriage to be annulled, providing a stronger legal action than divorce. Child marriage is mainly regulated by § 1a of the Marriage Act, which states that persons under the age of 18 cannot enter into marriage. Child marriages contracted abroad cannot be recognised in Norway if one or both parties were under the age of 18 at the time of the marriage. This applies regardless of whether one or both parties had a connection to Norway at the time of the marriage (§ 18b of the Marriage Act) or neither party had a connection to Norway at the time of the marriage (§ 18c). However, § 18c of the Marriage Act allows for marriages to be approved upon special application if either or both parties were over sixteen years of age and neither party had a connection to Norway at the time of the marriage, provided that the parties are over eighteen years of age at the time of the application. Such an application for approval may also be granted if there are exceptional reasons for doing so.

Female genital cutting

The General Penal Code §§ 284 and 285 describe the crime of female genital cutting as an intervention that causes damage to or permanently alters a woman's

sexual organs. Restorative procedures are also criminal and fall under the same section of the law. The sentence for female genital cutting of a normal degree (§ 284) is imprisonment for up to six years. For aggravated female genital cutting (§ 285), the sentence is imprisonment for up to fifteen years. When assessing whether the crime is aggravated, consideration must be given to whether the procedure has led to illness or incapacity to work, permanent or incurable (irreversible) changes in appearance, serious bodily injury or death. Only one of these consequences needs to be proven for the more serious classification of the crime to apply. It is also emphasised in § 284 that the consent of the victim does not exempt the perpetrator from liability. The provision in the General Penal Code replaces the previous law prohibiting female genital cutting, which was in force from 1995 to 2015.

It should be noted that while the classification of the crime is gender neutral, the crime itself is only applicable if the procedure is performed on a woman. Female genital cutting is therefore a crime that can only be committed against women (or girls), which distinguishes it from the medically proven procedure on men or boys, which is referred to as circumcision (*omskjæring*).

It should also be noted that the requirement of permanent change, combined with the fact that consent does not exempt from liability, means that the threshold for a crime of normal severity to be committed is very low. It also means that procedures requested by a woman for cosmetic rather than ritual or religious reasons are also punishable.

Conversion attempts

The General Penal Code §§ 270 and 270a classify conversion attempts as an offence in both the normal and serious degrees. A conversion attempt is defined as a violation that involves influencing a person to change, deny or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity in a systematic way. 'Systematic' refers to the use of psychotherapeutic, medical, alternative medical, religious or similar methods. For offences of a normal degree, the range of punishment spans fines to prison sentences of up to three years (§ 270). For serious offences, a sentence of up to six years in prison can be imposed. General Penal Code § 270 sub-paragraph 2 emphasises that the offence is also applicable when the methods are used against children under the age of 18 and that it does not matter whether the suspected perpetrator knew that the child was a minor. However, the description of the offence and the range of punishment are the same as for acts committed against adults.

When assessing the severity of an offence, particular consideration shall be given to whether the acts cause significant damage to the body or health, whether the 'conversion attempt' continues over a long time and whether the acts are committed by several perpetrators.

The fact that the forms of retribution listed are described as systematic means that the acts may fall under what Norwegian policy refers to as 'negative social control', which is one of the concepts used to specify that acts are honour related (Friberg & Bjørnset, 2019). It also means that it is implicitly required that the acts be repeated to be considered 'systematic'. One of the requirements for a serious offence is also that several perpetrators are part of the systematic conversion attempt. Since honour is practised collectively for the good of a family or clan, and since the 'shame' of one member becomes a collective concern, conversion attempts carried out in an honour context in principle always constitute a serious offence.

Double criminality

According to the General Penal Code § 5, a Norwegian citizen, a person residing in Norway or a person working on behalf of a Norwegian-registered company may be convicted for, among other things, child marriage, forced marriage and/or female genital cutting, even if the crime was committed abroad. Conversion attempts performed abroad are also punishable under Norwegian law. Similarly, Norwegian criminal law may apply to persons who, regardless of Norwegian or other national ties, commit the aforementioned crimes against a Norwegian citizen or person residing in Norway, provided that the crime is subject to a minimum sentence of six years in prison (§ 5 sub-paragraph 5 of the General Penal Code). In other words, the legislation takes into account that crimes associated with honour-based practices can be committed both by and against persons with strong ties to Norway. However, the normal degree of punishment for some of the crimes discussed above is waived as a result of the limitation on the penalty value.

Overall comparison between legislation in the Nordic countries

This section presents a comparative overview of criminal legislation in the Nordic countries, with a particular focus on honour-based crime. The overview consists of a table that summarises existing legislation in each country, where such legislation exists. The table then forms the basis for a section that analyses how the different countries and regions position perpetrators and victims through their respective legislation. In cases where there is no legal provision corresponding to that of other countries, this is indicated by (-). As reported in the previous section, the Faroe Islands follow Danish legislation and Åland follows Finnish legislation, which is why these autonomous regions are reported together with their respective countries for reasons of space. Greenland, which has its own criminal legislation, has no specific honour-based legislation, which is why Greenland is omitted entirely, again for reasons of space.

TABLE 1: Honour-based legislation in the Nordic countries and autonomous regions

ENGLISH	DENMARK/FAROE ISLANDS	FINLAND/ÅLAND	ICELAND	NORWAY
Specified honour crime	Negativ social kontrol (§ 243), Fine or prison up to 3 yrs	(-)	(-)	(-)
Aggravating circumstances	Skærpende omstændighed – general (§ 81a-c) and specific (§ 244-245, 247)	Straffmätning – general (6 kap. 4-8§§)	þyngingar refsingunni (Art. 70)	Skjerpende omstendigheter – general (§ 77)
Forced marriage (Human trafficking)	Tvangsægteskab (§ 260 Stk. 2), Prison up to 4 yrs	Människohandel (25 kap. 3+3a §), Prison 4 mths – 6 yrs	Nauðungarhjónaband/ Mansal (Art. 225, 227a), Prison up to 4 yrs (12 yrs if mansal)	Tvangsekteskap (§ 253), Prison up to 6 yrs
Child marriage (Human trafficking)	Børneægteskab (§ 260a), Fine or prison up to 2 yrs	Grov människohandel (25 kap. 3a §), Prison 2–10 yrs	Mansal (Art. 225, 227a), Prison up to 12 yrs	Barnekteskap (§ 262 2 st.) Prison up to 3 yrs (6 yrs if forced)
Female genital cutting	Kvindelig omskæring (§ 245a), Prison up to 10 yrs	Kvinnlig könsstympning (21 kap. 6 §), Prison 1–10 yrs	Fjarlægja kynfæri (Art. 218a), Prison up to 16 yrs	Kjønnslemlestelse (§ 284), Prison up to 15 år
Influencing sexual orientation	(-)	(-)	Undirgangast ógagnreynda meðferð (Art. 227b), Prison up to 2 yrs (up to 4 yrs if against a child)	Konverteringsterapi (§ 270, 270a), Fine or prison up to 6 yrs
Clothing restrictions	Tildækningsforbud (§ 260 Stk 3), Prison up to 4 yrs	(-)	(-)	(-)
Disciplining trips	Udlandsophold (§ 215a), Fine or prison up to 4 år	(-)	(-)	(-)

Analysis of legislation

Structure of the analysis

This section provides a comparative analysis of honour-based legislation in the Nordic countries and autonomous regions. The analysis begins with a comparison of the legal provisions that exist in all countries and autonomous regions (except Greenland). It then addresses the legal provisions that are only applied by individual countries and regions. The analysis is based on the information presented in Table 1 above.

An overarching question that characterises the analysis is how individuals and groups who practise honour-based violence are positioned through the wording of legislation. The analysis focuses on how assumptions about gender and sexuality appear in the wording of crimes definitions and sentencing.

Particular attention is also paid to whether the focus of legislation is punishing perpetrators or drawing attention to and providing redress for victims of crime. In respect to the latter, one aspect is highlighting the severity of punishment for each crime in the respective country/region.

Forced marriage and child marriage compared

All countries and territories except Greenland criminalise both forced marriage and child marriage. Denmark, the Faroe Islands, Norway and Sweden use both terms in their criminal legislation, while Finland and Iceland classify them as human trafficking, although Iceland's *hegningalög* (General Penal Code) also features the term *nauðungarhjónaband* (forced marriage). In Sweden, misleading someone into travel for the purposes of marriage is also defined as a separate crime.

Across the Nordic countries, the strictest possible penalty – imprisonment for up to twelve years – is found in Iceland's General Penal Code; the strictest minimum penalty for human trafficking of a normal degree is imprisonment for four months, as applicable in Finnish and Ålandic law. In Iceland, human trafficking involving a child may also be grounds for a more severe penalty, which should mean, at least in theory, that it would be possible to impose a prison sentence of more than twelve years. The lightest minimum penalty is a fine, as appears in Danish law.

The penalties for forced and child marriage vary somewhat between countries and regions. The penalties are slightly lower for forced marriage than child marriage in all countries except Denmark/Faroe Islands, where the maximum penalty for forced marriage is twice as high as for child marriage (four and two years, respectively). Iceland stands out as having the highest possible maximum penalty, as applied for offences classified as human trafficking (twelve years). However, a key observation regarding forced and child marriage is that both acts are specified as individual

offences in the respective chapters on offences against liberty and peace across all the countries and independent territories, and the penalties are higher for these offences than for other forms of offences against peace. In this respect, these honour-based offences are singled out as particularly serious.

The fact that two countries (Iceland and Finland/Åland) also classify these crimes as human trafficking can be seen in light of a fundamental problem with respect to honour-based practices: that chastity and virginity are associated with unmarried female bodies as an economic, social and political asset (Wikan, 2008; Ali, 2021). The compulsory gender segregation of honour-based practices is based on the belief that an unmarried woman must maintain her reputation as sexually pure before marriage. An unblemished reputation guarantees attractiveness in a marriage market in which, in traditional honour-practising societies, it is important to build alliances within and between families (King, 2013). In this way, forced and child marriages can be equated with the treatment of human bodies as commodities. Classifying forced and child marriages as human trafficking results in wide-spread attention and ensures extended protection for victims.

All countries and autonomous regions have supplementary civil law legislation that allows for the annulment of marriages entered into under duress or involving underage spouses. Annulment should be seen here as a collective term for the possibility of avoiding the usual requirements for a cooling-off period and other legal obstacles to 'normal' divorces. This alleviates the legal consequences of being forced into marriage or of a minor entering into marriage without consent.

Some minor differences exist with regard to child marriage. In Iceland, for example, marriages entered into when one party was over the age of sixteen may still be recognised if warranted by specific circumstances. However, most Nordic countries and autonomous regions have gradually clarified in their legislation on marriage that marriages entered into by persons under the age of eighteen should generally not be recognised. This can be seen as part of a social discourse that is increasingly moving towards intolerance of the cultural customs of migrants, partly as a means of protecting the domestic population (see, e.g., Manga, 2022). However, it can also be interpreted as a more general protection for persons who are considered too young to independently choose to enter into marriage and persons of legal age who live in circumstances in which their own will is subject to the influence of a surrounding group.

Female genital cutting compared

All countries (including the Faroe Islands and Åland via Danish and Finnish criminal law respectively) have specific legal provisions prohibiting female genital cutting. These provisions generally appear as an addition to the respective criminal law provisions on aggravated assault. Female genital cutting also has a specific name or criminal classification in all countries, although Denmark and the Faroe Islands

deviate from this by using the more neutral term 'female circumcision'. This can be interpreted as Danish legislation striving to use gender-neutral wording to a greater extent, since 'circumcision' is the term used for the male equivalent case. Previous reviews have highlighted that in Denmark legislation and preventive work against violence in close relationships is more gender neutral than in the rest of the Nordic region (GREVIO, 2017; see also Lebedeva's study in the previous section). However, in terms of criminal law, Denmark and the Faroe Islands follow the other Nordic countries and Åland, as female circumcision is prohibited and subject to relatively high penalties. In all countries, the Faroe Islands and Åland, the range of punishment starts at imprisonment – fines are not mentioned as a penalty in any legal provision.[312] Icelandic law includes the highest maximum penalty – imprisonment of up to sixteen years for serious crimes. Swedish law includes the highest minimum penalty – two years' imprisonment for crimes of a normal degree – while Finnish law includes a minimum penalty of one year's imprisonment. In Denmark and Norway, as well as in the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Åland, no minimum penalties are stipulated.

The legislation in all countries and regions is age independent with regard to victims. There are also no exceptions for cases in which a woman or girl states that the procedure was performed with her consent. The issue of consent is relevant in discourses on gender power that highlight universal male power and dominance over female partners and relatives (Björsson & Lebedeva, 2023). Consent, together with the aforementioned issue of age neutrality, is likewise relevant with regard to the question of a victim's opportunities and capacity to give consent, given that in certain geographical contexts female genital cutting is sometimes performed on very young girls. It is not uncommon for the act to be carried on girls between six and twelve years of age, and in some cases it may take place shortly after birth (Nour, 2008). In this way, the wording of the legal support should constitute a clear obligation for, for example, school nurses who detect signs of genital cutting in connection with routine examinations to report it to the police or social services in accordance with the Social Services Act or equivalent legislation.

This study uses the collective term 'female genital cutting' because it is the most commonly used in the legislation of the countries studied. Only Denmark uses the more neutral term 'female circumcision'. However, it should be noted that terminology is highly debated in Nordic and international research. The debate, grounded partly in social science but mainly anthropology, is part of an approach that emphasises a balance between protecting victims of crime on the one hand and avoiding stigmatisation of religious and cultural groups on the other. This is weighed against a more medical approach that focuses on the harm caused by the procedure from both a surgical and emotional/psychological perspective. The term 'female genital cutting' can be said to go furthest in terms of describing physical

312. However, the legal principles of all Nordic countries and autonomous regions allow courts to administer more lenient penalties, such as fines or probation, in lieu of prison sentences.

abuse, and therefore most clearly justifies criminal legislation. At the other end of the scale is the term 'female circumcision', which equates the practice with that of male circumcision, generally considered a medically insignificant procedure as well as being a culturally and socially accepted custom. A factor that further complicates the debate is research that has identified five categories of female genital cutting on an ascending scale of physical procedures, one category consisting of voluntary so-called cosmetic procedures. A comprehensive account of this debate, with an emphasis on Nordic research, can be found in the anthology *Female Genital Cutting – The Global North and South* (Johnsdotter, 2020).

Conversion attempts compared

Conversion attempts, i.e. attempts to influence or persuade a person to change their gender identity or sexual orientation, are punishable by law in two countries: Iceland (*undirgangast ógagnreynda meðferð*) and Norway (*konverteringsterapi*). Although the criminal classifications share the same spirit, it can be inferred from their wording that the two countries have slightly different views on what defines it as a crime. In Norway, the emphasis is on the violation of a vulnerable person, which places the emphasis on the victim's perspective. In Iceland, the emphasis is on the criminal act of "subjecting a person to unconfirmed treatment through coercion, deception or threats". When emphasis is placed on the act itself, the perpetrator's guilt is highlighted more clearly. A further difference is that the Icelandic wording "unproven treatment" emphasises acts based on methods not supported by evidence. In addition to alternative medicine and religious-based treatment, the Norwegian wording also highlights psychotherapeutic or medical treatments, both of which should be understood as evidence based. However, a key feature of the Norwegian wording is the focus on systematised approaches. This highlights that the crime must constitute a repeated violation, which can be compared with the corresponding requirement that an act be "part of a repeated violation" in the Swedish clause on specified honour crimes.

When conversion attempts are placed in a Nordic context, so-called 'good gender-equality values' are emphasised in relation to a traditional view of 'good sexuality'. Good sexuality as an ideal, according to Gayle Rubin's (1998) model, can be seen to mean heterosexuality, monogamy, sex as a private act within marriage, and sexual intercourse primarily with the purpose of reproduction and childbearing. Rubin argues that 'good sexuality' is considered the norm and is contrasted with 'the abnormal', which is associated with non-heteronormative sexuality among LGBTI people. LGTBI people's sexuality is instead associated with sex outside of marriage, promiscuity, and sex solely for pleasure and recreation. Honour practices advocate a moral code of protecting and controlling the continued spread of a clan through clear divisions between male and female, within the home but above all in public (Rosquist, 2024; Knutagård, 2022). A moral code that guards and upholds traditional gender norms ('the good' in Rubin's model) can, in some families, manifest as controlling behaviour towards those who deviate from 'good sexuality'

and are seen as needing help to 'return' to the family's moral code. Such controlling behaviour can be said to constitute the systematic social control that defines conversion attempts.

The Nordic context, on the other hand, is characterised by long-term efforts to demystify issues relating to variations in sexual orientation. For example, since sex and relationships were first introduced into the Swedish curriculum in 1955, sex education has consciously moved away from traditional, moralistic values towards sexually liberal and diversity-affirming ones as part of societal efforts to promote gender equality (Liljefors Persson, 2021). Attempts by honour-practising families to counteract this ambition for gender equality can thus be brought to the attention of authorities, potentially resulting in investigations into conversion attempts.[313] This presents courts with the dilemma of balancing the rights and obligations of parents in raising their children on the one hand and the rights of children to independently develop and embrace their sexual orientation on the other (see, e.g., Norée, 2022).

Veil bans and re-education trips – Exclusive to Denmark and the Faroe Islands

Only Danish/Faroese legislation expressly prohibits "*forcing someone to wear clothing that conceals their face*" or *"sending a child abroad in circumstances that seriously endanger the child's health or development"*. Both offences can incur prison sentences of up to four years.

The prohibition against forcing someone to wear clothing that covers their face, pursuant to § 260 sub-paragraph 3 of the Criminal Code, must be interpreted with regard to § 134c, which expressly prohibits persons from wearing clothing that covers their face in public places. The Criminal Code § 134a-c actually regulates offences against public order in connection with demonstrations, riots or similar events, but § 134c is justified by the perceived legislative need to safeguard social cohesion and respect for citizenship. The overall objectives of the law are:

> […] to ensure respect for the community, values and cohesion of Danish society. More specifically, clothing restrictions aim to promote and facilitate social interaction and coexistence, which are crucial in a society, by contributing to people in Denmark treating each other with respect. *(Danish Ministry of Justice, 2018)*

The Danish Ministry of Justice's official report on how clothing restrictions should be applied by the police in practice emphasises that Danish values must be upheld

313. As mentioned above, specific legislation on conversion attempts exists only in Norway and Iceland, however the Swedish government bill on specified honour crimes singles out LGBTQ people as being particularly vulnerable to conversion attempts (Prop. 2021/22:138, p. 7). According to Swedish preparatory work, conversion attempts could therefore constitute a form of specified honour crime.

and that social interaction in Denmark must take place *"in a proper manner"*. The basic rule, according to § 134c, is that no one – regardless of gender, age or similar – is permitted to wear clothing that covers the face in public. The range of punishment only includes fines.

A certain degree of tolerance is stipulated for reasonable circumstances (*anerkendelsesværdigt formål*) under § 134c sub-paragraph 2, but the list of such circumstances (Danish Ministry of Justice, 2018:3) indicates that this includes wearing legally required protective equipment such as a motorcycle helmet, fire protection equipment and protection against extreme weather when reasonable. Wearing masks at masquerades, carnivals and similar events may also be considered reasonable circumstances, as may wearing religiously dictated clothing, but only in connection with 'a specific religious act', i.e. a ceremony or ritual. Every-day wear of, for example, a face-covering veil or burqa is therefore not considered an acceptable circumstance. In this instance, the legislation tries to balance two sides of the same coin: religion as ritual and ceremony is acceptable but religion as personal belief and experience is not. At the same time, it is made clear that wearing clothing that covers the face for secular or social reasons is not acceptable.

A key aspect of the above legislation on the wearing of a veil is that it constitutes a prohibited act. It is, therefore, the wearer who is defined as the perpetrator. However, the legislation takes into account that in some cases someone wearing clothing that covers the face may not be doing so of their own free will. In situations where this may be the case, police officers are instructed to pay particular attention to whether there are grounds for investigating possible violations of the law with regard to a *"suspicion of specified honour crimes in connection with violations on clothing restrictions"*. Police officers must also consider whether a person may be in need of protection (Danish Ministry of Justice, 2018:4-5). The instruction does not specifically mention § 260 sub-paragraph 3, as outlined above, but reference to negative social control may be considered sufficient.

The ban on veils and compulsory veils is mainly aimed at female wearers. The three specific examples of prohibited garments listed are burqas, niqabs and balaclavas, the first two of which are garments specifically worn by women, while a balaclava can be interpreted as gender-neutral. The Ministry of Justice's instructions instruct police officers who suspect negative social control to provide the victim with information about or refer them to a *women's crisis centre*. However, these instructions are caveated by the stated assumption that the suspected victim *"is a woman"*; the text on support can be interpreted as meaning that the legislation is mainly focused on female victims (or female perpetrators). It is unlikely that a police officer who catches a person wearing a balaclava would instinctively suspect them of being a victim of honour-based negative social control. In the case of a niqab or burqa, such suspicion is more likely to arise.

These two provisions are related. The first prohibits clothing that covers the face, largely putting blame on women for their choice of clothing. The second can be used in the same situation to attribute victimhood to women on the assumption that they are or have been the target of a specified honour crime by a relative. In the latter case, however, the blame is put on the woman's relatives, who are positioned as suspected. It should be noted here that, through reference to 'Danish values', the legislation justifies passing judgement on women's clothing in public spaces. The question is whether it can be considered gender equality when a woman is faced with the choice of either being punished for her choice of clothing or reporting a close relative as a criminal for the sake of acquittal or receiving a reduced sentence.

Only Denmark and the Faroe Islands criminalise so-called re-education trips (*genopdragelsesrejser og ufrivillige udlandsophold*). This is consistent with Lebedeva's policy analysis, which shows that it is in Denmark specifically that re-education trips have received special attention. In Sweden, some attention has been paid to trips abroad at the policy level, although in Sweden travel bans are mainly issued to prevent forced and child marriages.[314]

The range of punishment in Denmark/the Faroe Islands for taking a child abroad in such a way as to endanger their health or development spans fines to imprisonment for up to four years. It is not specified in detail in which countries this could occur, implying that danger to a child's health or development could occur anywhere outside the borders of Denmark/the Faroe Islands. However, it is specified that the aim is to protect children's health and development. Here, the legislation assumes responsibility for determining the nature of the danger involved. The term 're-education trip', which is commonly used in public debate, suggests that guardians, based on their own perspective, take children abroad to promote their development. Legislation prohibiting such trips abroad suggests that these trips are perceived to be harmful. This presents an almost paradoxical situation, one Norée (2022) highlights as a core problem in honour-based legislation, in which a guardians' desire and obligation to raise their children is pitted against the state's interest in determining the nature of that upbringing.

Double criminality and stricter penalties

While double criminality is not specifically applicable to identifying and regulating the dividing line between 'legal' and 'illegal' honour practices, it is nevertheless relevant in this review because a number of Nordic countries (Denmark/the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) expressly allow crimes committed abroad to be tried as crimes within the Nordic judicial systems, even when the acts do not constitute crimes in the places they are committed. Similarly, all of these countries

314. Travel bans are regulated by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (Prop. 2019:131, p. 26) and are not included in Swedish criminal law. The exception is in the case of child marriage, which is dealt with in another part of the report and is mainly referred to in the legal provision on misleading travel for the purposes of marriage (Swedish Criminal Code, Chap. 4, § 4d).

apply principles of stricter penalties to specific honour crimes. Finnish/Ålandic legislation also stipulates double criminality for crimes that can constitute human trafficking (e.g. child and forced marriage) or violations of Article 37 of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. This illustrates that the legislation includes an international dimension in honour-based crimes and thus assigns them a special status. The application of double criminality and stricter penalties for honour-based crimes places these acts in an international context, while at the same time highlighting the complex relationship between honour and gender equality.

Final comments and concluding remarks

This review of honour-based criminal legislation in the Nordic countries, as it exists in spring 2025, shows a certain degree of consistency between the countries and autonomous regions as well as a number of significant differences. Both the similarities and differences can be seen in the light of Lebedeva's comparative policy analysis that accompanies this paper. It should also be noted that most of the legislation highlighted is relatively new and that political debate and policy work on proposals for further legislation is ongoing in several of the countries and regions.

Two Nordic countries stand out in terms of the comprehensiveness of their criminal legislation. Denmark (including the Faroe Islands) stands out as specifying the largest number of acts as expressly punishable. In Denmark/the Faroe Islands, all the acts discussed in this study are punishable outside of conversion attempts. Sweden stands out as having more generalised legislation for repeated violations that can be attributed to honour motives. This implies that Swedish legal actors are dependent on legal precedent established by court decisions, through the development of case law, to interpret both what can be attributed to honour and the extent to which honour can be assumed to have played a role in motivating specific acts.

All countries and autonomous regions (except Greenland) criminalise forced marriage and child marriage, with relatively strict penalties compared to similar coercion-based crimes. All also include supplementary provisions in marriage legislation or equivalent that allows for the annulment of both child marriages and marriages entered into under duress. This shows that in Nordic custom, marriage is considered an agreement entered into under equal conditions between two individuals, rather than part of a more complex and unequal power structure. It also highlights the ambition of legislation to mitigate the legal effects of an act of coercion as far as possible.

All countries and autonomous regions (except Greenland) also criminalise female genital cutting. The legal provisions for this generally appear in connection with legal provisions for aggravated assault – with the exception of Sweden, which criminalises female genital cutting through older specific legislation.

Some of the countries and autonomous regions stand out for criminalising specific acts. Norway and Iceland criminalise conversion attempts, measures that impact an individual's right to determine their gender identity and sexual orientation. Such laws aim to protect the freedom of individuals to define their own identity without influence or coercion to conform to heteronormative gender roles.

Denmark criminalises both wearing a veil and forcing a person to wear a veil. Criminalising the wearing of a veil can be seen as limiting women's freedom and their right to express their religious and cultural identity, among other things. Criminalising conversion attempts is a relatively clear statement against exerting pressure and/or other forms of coercion against people who are considered to deviate from heteronormative ideas of gender and sexuality. The ban on compulsory veiling, on the other hand, can be seen both as protection for women specifically and as a clear statement against specific groups for whom wearing clothing that fully or partially covers the face is customary. Here, the wording and justifications in preparatory work and other policy texts is key to analysing which values are central in each Nordic country or autonomous region.

Finally, on a more general level, it can be noted that laws that specifically criminalise honour-based acts are relatively new in the Nordic countries. Most of the laws have been enacted in the countries and autonomous regions during the 2020s, and this publication's policy analysis indicates that policy work on honour-based violence is still relatively intensive, especially in Denmark/the Faroe Islands, Norway and Sweden. It is therefore reasonable to expect the introduction of further legislation or adjustments to existing legislation. This study should therefore be regarded as a perishable commodity in need of continuous updating if it is to serve as up-to-date support for both law enforcement authorities and research concerned with specified honour crimes.

The focus of this study is limited to current criminal legislation in the Nordic countries, while a comprehensive range of measures against specified honour crimes can be found in social welfare legislation and, to some extent, in migration law. These areas – and others – should be included in future, more comprehensive reviews.



About this publication

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