



Informe - MATRIFOR
Analytical report – MATRIFOR

***Forced Marriage in Spain: a qualitative
research***

**Matrimonios Forzados en España:
una investigación cualitativa**

Antigona Group – April 2014



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form
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1. Introduction

	Organization	Code	Sex	Date of the interview	Language	Duration of interview
1	Pediatrician	A1	F	27/09/2013	Catalan	0:47:22
2	Technical immigration	A2	M	24/10/2013	Catalan	1:04:32
3	Founder and directors of NGO Genera	A3	F	14/10/2013	Spanish	0:50:44
4	Psychologist and coordinator of a service to victims of gender violence	A4	F	21/10/2013	Spanish	0:54:01
5	Member of a gypsy women association	A5	F	28/10/2013	Spanish	0:55:51
6	President of an association of sub-Saharan women	A6	F	15/11/2013	Spanish	0:54:53
7	Coordinator of an information service and attention to women	A7	F	11/11/2013	Catalan	0:54:44
8	Social lawyer	A8	M	07/11/2013	Catalan	0:45:16
9	Social Worker - Manager of programs of immigration and refugees	A9	M	22/11/2013	Catalan	0:55:11
10	Head of Victims' department, Department of Home Affairs, Catalan Government	A10	F	12/11/2013	Catalan	1:30:24
11	Head of Regional Unit Catalan police forces	A11	F	09/12/2013	Catalan	1:46:08
12	Secretary of intercultural association	A12	F	12/11/2013	Catalan	1:10:32
13	Intercultural mediator of the Sikh community in local government	A13	M	25/11/2013	Spanish	0:58:18
14	Cultural mediator	A14	M	28/11/2013	Catalan	1:23:10
15	Police	A15	M	03/12/2013	Spanish	1:22:22
16	Journalist	A16	F	09/12/2013	Catalan	1:33:32
17	Director of an intervention center specializing in gender violence	A17	F	02/12/2013	Catalan	1:00:19
18	Psychologist and coordinator of an association of victims of trafficking	A18	F	16/12/2013	Spanish	1:10:16
19	Community worker in a high school	A19	M	17/12/2013	Spanish	1:32:11
20	Intercultural mediator of the Senegal Community	A20	F	07/02/2014	Catalan	1:24:55
21	Chinese boy	A21	M	26/02/2014	Catalan	1:29:53

Table of the interviews with victims

	Ethnic background	Code	Date of the interview	Language	Duration of interview
1	Morocco	W1	28/10/2013	Spanish	1:04:27
2	Morocco	W2	29/10/2013	Catalan	0:52:49
3	Gambia	W3	20/11/2013	Catalan	1:18:23
4	Morocco	W4	12/12/2013	Catalan	1:15:16
5	Pakistan	W5	12/12/2013	Spanish	0:42:07
6	Senegal	W6	27/12/2013	Catalan	1:09:04
7	Senegal	W7	07/02/2014	Spanish	1:24:55
8	Pakistan (man)	M1	28/11/2013	Catalan	1:23:10
9	Catalan	M8	08/02/2014	Catalan	1:00:15
10	Gypsy	M9	28/10/2013	Spanish	0:55:51
11	Chinese	M10	7/03/2014	Spanish	1:06:12

2. Data on forced marriage

We have only statistics on forced marriages in Spain from the Catalan police forces, and limited to the autonomous community of Catalonia, since the Catalan law on gender violence recognized forced marriage as a form of gender violence in the community, and therefore police forces are obliged to register more specifically the cases arriving to them¹.

Nowadays, arranged marriages are common among certain communities of Asia, Middle East, Africa² and among some Roma communities³.

It is also difficult to link forced marriages to a certain culture, community or country. First of all because this type of forced marriage cannot be generalized to a whole community, culture or country, and secondly, because the aim, form and characteristics of marriage itself has been dynamic and has developed along the time both in our society, and also in these communities now present in our country⁴. For example, in our western culture we can find many examples, and very recent, of arranged, and even forced marriages⁵, such as state marriages, marriages when the woman become pregnant, or marriage as the only way women have to live in times where they did not have the opportunity to have education or economic independence.

¹ In 2013 the Catalan police forces registered 26 cases of forced marriages in Catalonia, 15 of them of girls under 18, and 11 of adult women. In 2014 they registered 10 cases, 6 minors and 4 adults (Source: Departament d'Interior, Generalitat de Catalunya).

² Not all societies practice forced marriage, but it is frequent in certain communities and ethnic groups of China, India, Pakistan, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Morocco, Senegal and Gambia among others.

³ ELVIRA BENAYAS, 2010, pp. 708.

⁴ Despite these clarifications, for example in Spain (according to the National Statistics Institute 2013), there are important communities from countries where arranged marriages are common (and consequently, where possibly forced marriages also take place): Morocco (186.316 women between 16-44 years); China (53.376 women between 16-44 years); Pakistan (10.175 women between 16-44 years); Senegal (7.658 women between 16-44 years); Nigeria (13.426 women between 16-44 years); India (7.297 women between 16-44 years); Mali (1.644 women between 16-44 years); Gambia (2.735 women between 16-44 years); Bangladesh (1.838 women between 16-44 years).

⁵ Marriage in Europe from the Middle Ages until the 18th century was a political and economic institution, that have nothing to do with love (marriage was too important to be left in hands of feelings). In high social classes, the woman's dowry was frequently the biggest economical transaction a man would receive in his whole life. And it was also the case among lower social classes, even if quantities were much lower (BRIONES MARTÍNEZ, 2009, pp. 1).

3. Legal and policy framework on forced marriage in Spain

3.1. Civil law

There is not a specific mention to forced marriage in the Spanish civil law.

However there are some rules applicable in cases of forced marriages (ex: laws on conditions to get marriage, age of consent, how to declare null a marriage if the consent is not valid, regulations on religious-civil marriages).

The Spanish law requires free consent of both spouses to get married, and the nullity of any condition, or clause to be added to the marriage's contract (articles 45 and 48 of the Spanish Civil Code).

It also requires a minimum age of 18 to get married, although it also allows from 16 to 18 if the person gets the parents' authorization (it has been recently eliminated the possibility to get married from 14 to 16 years old with the authorization of a judge).

Marriage without free consent of at least one of the spouse can be declared null (article 73 of the Spanish Civil Code). It can be considered a cause of this lack of consent the error, the violence, the intimidation or intention to commit a crime (article 1265 of the Spanish Civil Code). There is a period of one year to apply for nullity of marriage from the moment the marriage took place.

Marriages that took place under registered religions ceremonies are given civil effects once they are registered in the Civil Register (article 59 of the Spanish Civil Code).

The Instruction of the General Directorate of Registries and Notaries ("Instrucción de la Dirección General de Registros"), of 9th January 1995 requires a previous file when one of the spouses lives abroad. It includes separate interviews with each spouse.

Despite this norm, it is generally applied the presumption of good faith and the guarantee of the right to get married as a fundamental right, that should not be limited unless there is a reasonable and absolute certainty that there is a lack of consent in the marriage.

Moreover, there is always the possibility to apply for the marriage nullity by the Public Prosecutor (article 74 of the Spanish Civil Code).

3.2. Criminal law applicable in cases of forced marriages

Forced marriage has recently become a crime under the Spanish Criminal Code (due to a reform that entered into force on 1st July 2015). Forced marriage is now included as a form of trafficking in human beings in article 177 Bis of the Criminal Code and as an aggravated type of coercion in article 172 Bis of the Criminal Code.

This double criminalisation is confusing and it would be necessary to wait the application and interpretation of both articles by the courts. The possible criminalisation of forced marriage under the article 177 as a form of trafficking in human beings, has a more severe punishment (from 5 to 8 years of imprisonment) but it needs to fulfil the conditions to be qualified as trafficking in human beings (use of violence, intimidation or fraud; taking profit of a situation of superiority, or victim's necessity or vulnerability; the existence of a payment or profit). The victim of a crime of trafficking in human beings can receive special measures of support during and after the trial, according to the Spanish new law on the Status of the victim that will enter into force on 27th October 2015. If forced marriage cannot be criminalised under this article of trafficking in human beings, there is the second option of article 172 Bis. A possible explanation of this double criminalisation is the commitments adopted by the Spanish State under the international and European legislation. First, the Spanish State had to include in the criminal code the EU Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA (Directive 2011/36/EU), and article 177 Bis is one of the consequences. Secondly, the Spanish State had to include a new crime on forced marriage according to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). The Istanbul Convention entered into force on 1st August 2014. In April 2014 Spain ratified it. Article 37.1 of the Istanbul Convention obliges Member States to criminalize forced marriage as a form of violence against women.

During the fieldwork of the MATRIFOR research, these legal provisions did not exist. However some behaviours to be committed in a situation of forced marriage could fall under other crimes as: crimes against freedom, as for example illegal detention (article 163 of the Spanish Criminal Code); kidnapping (article 164 and followings of the Spanish Criminal Code); threats (article 169 of the Spanish Criminal Code); coercion (article 172 of the Spanish Criminal Code); torture and other crimes against the moral integrity (article 173 of the Spanish Criminal Code).

Forced marriages can also fall under crimes against sexual freedom and indemnity as for example, crime of sexual aggression (article 178 and following of the Spanish Criminal Code), sexual abuses (article 181 and following of the Spanish Criminal Code) or rape (article 179 of the Spanish Criminal Code).

It can also constitute a crime of injuries (articles 147 and 148 of the Spanish Criminal Code), or in the most severe cases, a crime of homicide (article 138 of the Spanish Criminal Code) or murder (article 139 of the Spanish Criminal Code).

3.3. Migrant law in relation to forced marriage

The Organic Law 4/2000, 11th January, about rights and freedoms of foreigners in Spain and their social integration, establishes the right to family reunification to foreigners legally living in Spain for at least one year, and with a work and resident permit for one year more (articles 16, 17 and 18).

The relatives that can be reunified are:

- The spouse of the foreigner, if they are not separated (legally or factually), or if their marriage is not fraudulent.
- His/her children under 18 years old
- His/her parents older than 65 and always if it can be demonstrated their dependence of the foreigner (of care and economically).

The conditions to exercise this family reunification right are:

- The foreigner has had a work and residence permission of one, and a renovation of one more year.
- He/she has to have a house, and enough economic resources to cover his / her needs and his/her relatives' ones.

In principle, the relatives reunified get the same residence permission (for the same period of time) that the foreigner who has exercised his/her right. The spouse reunified can get his/her own residence permission when he/she can prove to have enough economic resources to cover his/her own needs.

In case the wife reunified is victim of gender violence, it is not necessary to fulfill the above mentioned condition. She can get an independent work and residence permission, once the

Prosecutor approves a protection order or when the Prosecutor elaborates an inform informing there are evidences of gender violence (article 19.2)⁶.

There are also special legal provision for victims of trafficking in human beings (article 59 bis). There is the possibility to get an independent residence and working permit if the foreigner is considered a victim of trafficking in human beings.

According to the Spanish law on asylum, women victims of forced marriages could benefit from the Law 12/2009, of 30 October, regulating the right of asylum and subsidiary protection⁷⁸.

3.4. Other legal or public policies regulations, if existing at national level. This also includes protocols (if existing).

⁶ This can be applied to the cases of forced marriage if it is considered a form of gender violence.

⁷ "Article 2.The right to asylum.

The right of asylum is the protection afforded to non-EU nationals or stateless persons for whom refugee status is recognized in the terms defined in Article 3 of this Law and the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees done at Geneva on July 28, 1951, and its Protocol, signed in New York on January 31, 1967."

"Article 6.Acts of persecution.

1. The acts that are based on the well-founded fear of persecution within the meaning set out in Article 3 of this Act, shall:

a) be sufficiently serious by their nature or repetition as to constitute a severe violation of fundamental rights, in particular rights that can not be derogated from under the second paragraph of Article 15 of the European Convention for the Protection of the Rights human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms or

b) be a sufficiently serious accumulation of various measures, including violations of human rights, such as to affect a person similar to that referred to in point a).

2. Acts of persecution as qualified in paragraph one may take, inter alia, the following ways:
a) acts of physical or mental violence, including acts of sexual violence;

b) legal, administrative, police or judicial measures which are in themselves discriminatory or applied in a discriminatory manner;

d) denial of judicial redress resulting in a disproportionate or discriminatory punishment arising;

f) acts of a sexual nature involving adults or children.

3. acts of persecution as defined in this Article shall be related to the reasons mentioned in the following article."

Apart from the national law on gender violence, the Organic Law 1/2004 of 28 December on Integrated Protection Measures against Gender Violence, limited to domestic violence (despite the general title), there are different laws on violence against women at autonomous community level⁹).

The Catalan Law 5/2008, of 24th April, on the right of women to eradicate sexist violence, includes a wide concept of sexist violence, and it includes all types of violence women suffer in any field: within the couple, the family, at work, at social and community level. Forced marriages are included as a form of community sexist violence (article 5.4.e).

There is also a Catalan Police Protocol on Prevention and Attention on Forced Marriage, June 2009. This protocol is inspired in the English model, and its aim is to avoid the woman or girl victimization.

Right after the fieldwork conducted in this research, it was approved a new Protocol to approach forced marriages in the territory of Girona (December 2014), that meant for the first time a network of health, social services, educational and police forces, adopting measures to prevent and act in front of cases of forced marriage, although limited to the territory of Girona.

4. Analysis of interviews with stakeholders

4.1. Definition of forced marriages

In general, there is a clear distinction among forced marriages, arranged marriages and marriages for convenience (fraudulent marriages to get legal residency, or other aims different from the traditional ones expected from the marriage institution).

“We consider forced marriage where at least one of the parties has been obliged to marry without explicit will” (A2-inmigration stakeholder)

“Arranged marriages a lot, I would say 90% of the non autochthonous people, even some of the autochthonous persons, tell me they have been victims of arranged marriages. But they have consciously accepted them at that time” (A4-psychologist)

⁹ Spain is divided in 17 Autonomous Communities, and some legal and policy competences are transferred to them. Moreover, some policy fields, as gender equality of the fight against gender violence can be complemented by these Autonomous communities.

“For me, forced marriage would be: you marry someone you don’t even know because we have decided it” (A6-member women NGO)

Some of the stakeholders at first considered that they do not work or face cases of forced marriages in their daily work. This difficult to identify them is explained because many of them only understood forced marriages where physical force is actively used to oblige a person to get married against her/his will.

In this sense, most stakeholders emphasized the difficulties to distinguish sometimes between arranged marriages and forced marriage. The influence of culture and traditions, and especially in some Asian and African communities, the deep respect towards their parents, make that girls might say “yes I voluntarily accept to marry this man that my family chose for me” but you will never know if she is really free (from the western point of view) to make such a decision.

However, some of them are very critical with this ambiguity, or apparent difficulty stakeholders have when identifying forced marriages. Sometimes they think this difficulty can be explained because a lack of specific training, but otherwise, it corresponds to a form of institutional racism. A professional should be able to identify a case of gender violence and a violation of human rights.

“Then it seems that we cannot define between forced and arranged marriage and, how is it that we cannot define it?, Cannot we distinguish a couple relation from a situation of gender violence?” (A3- NGO)

Stakeholders with regular contact with these communities, or stakeholders who belong to those communities do not criticize the arranged marriages. They talked about different cultural meanings of choice in the marriage, and the role of the parents looking for the best for their children, and the children’s duty to respect their parents’ decision after all the sacrifices they have done for them.

“For us arranged marriages are those where both parties have agreed, they know there will be a marriage, that there is an aim behind it, to preserve the family’s goods, to secure a better future to the girl according to the cultural patterns, because they have debts between families, but both of them know to what they are doing, and in this moment they say “yes”, being aware perfectly” (A10- Administration)

“In Pakistan, it is a very generalized model in the whole territory (...) the young boys and girls delegate in their families their ability to choose wife or husband, they are the ones who look for the person and they tell you “do you like this one? Don’t you like this other one?” and then

you are the one who has the final decision (...) In Pakistan it is common to marry with direct cousins...because of economic, social and other reasons (...) I don't see it as a forced marriage, a marriage against your will (...) the family's role is very important, you see your parents have made a lot of sacrifices for you, many. In case of my father he risked his life for me. All the boys I know from Pakistan now their parents have made great sacrifices for them, and the mother has taken a lot of care, and when it comes the time to choose a girlfriend and wife you cannot say "this is my life, I take my decisions, and you don't have any authority to intervene in my personal decisions, it is only me and I will take a decision myself", this is really bad considered, and on top of that it is a lack of respect towards the family, towards your context, your culture, and also, a little bit a neglect of all sacrifices done by your parents" (A14-mediator)

However, all stakeholders, even those ones belonging to these communities, consider forced marriages a violation of human rights, although they differ in their way to approach to prevent and combat this practice. It is interesting to see, some stakeholders, especially those belonging to the implicated communities talked about a concept of forced marriage, further than the physical or emotional coercion of the family, and they stress the community's pressure to marry, or not to abandon a certain marriage.

"Because the community has a strategy of pressure to make women remain within the marriage, despite all difficulties she may encounter. Because the woman who stands more, it is best assessed by the community" (A6 – women's NGO)

"There are many women who have made a decision to separate and they are isolated by the community. And yes, there are problems with the communities here, it seems they suffer more pressure than in their countries of origin. The social networks of solidarity are more fragile, so they are almost expelled" (A17-gender violence NGO)

4.2. Marriage practices encountered in their working environment

The stakeholders know that arranged marriages are very common among population from Morocco, China, Senegal, Gambia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and some gypsy groups. These are the most common foreign communities present in Spain.

"For example in Morocco (...) they introduce to the daughter different candidates until she accepts the ones she likes. Yes, we have some marriages where you see it has been a forced marriage, but in these cases they have been married there. Sometimes you find girls that are already teenagers, and they come already married and sometimes even pregnant. We have even found a patient where the mother did not have 15 years old yet, and the baby was just born" (A1- doctor)

"In the case of African women, they normally accept African men living here. There is little opposition by these girls, and in many cases the marriage was not what they wanted" (A1-doctor)

In some communities, and depending on the geographical area, family or urban / rural characteristics of the family, they give a certain margin of choice to the boys/girls. The families are the ones who look for the husband and wife, but their

children have a certain margin to choose among a limited number of candidates the family looks for them.

“You can say if you don't like one and they will introduce you another, you can have up to 5 or 6 candidates. There is certain margin of election, but limited. And within certain parameters the family considers essential to get married” (A2- immigration stakeholder)

“I believe they think they choose freely many times. But with some restrictions and with very strict criteria, he cannot be a non gypsy one for example, the gypsy woman who chooses a non gypsy man starts badly” (A7-NGO)

Although in gypsy or Chinese communities, it does not correspond strictly to a definition of arranged marriage. Because families facilitate the encounter of girls and boys belonging to the same community and social class, but the girls and boys are finally free to choose with whom they want to marry, although marriages outside their corresponding communities are hardly accepted. This facilitation can be done through family meetings or celebrations (weddings or religious events) or through blind dates (in case of the Chinese community).

“In the case of Roma community, I think they prefer the worst gypsy man that a good non gypsy man. I think it is for maintaining the community, gypsy should be with gypsies...I am not so sure in the case of Muslims, (...) Obviously a person who knows their culture, their traditions, does not have to face the difference, the fear, the insecurity, the religion is very important, of course” (A7-NGO)

“In Shanghai there is a square...and during Sundays and Saturdays there is like a It is called Barrets Market (...) and there are many stands with papers where it appears: age, weight, job, earnings, it is really amazing they put that...and what they want for the other side...from the husband or whatever. And you go there and it is like a marriage agency, some of them have photos and some others not (...) And this is normally people who work on that, they are sitting down there....they are normally grandparents and parents, that go there and say: you put me an announcement and I pay you I don't know how much (...) And they leave there their staff and if someone is interested they meet. Well, first the parents meet, the show each one's their children's pictures, then they show the pictures to their children and if they like each other, they say: Ok (...) and then, from time to time, you see a young boy and a young girl, you see there and they don't know what to do, and they are like: hello, how are you?” (A21- Chinese boy)

“What they do is blind dates: he is a very handsome boy, from as very good family, and so on. And they organize a date with her, because both are from a Chinese family, although Spanish” (A21-Chinese boy)

“My parents always have told us, always, that we cannot marry with someone from outside, they have to be Chinese, this is something I can remember forever” (A21 – Chinese boy)

However, stakeholders in general can only describe the marriage practices of those communities they have more contact with (in case of stakeholders working within the administration, community services or NGOs) or the communities they belong to (in case of stakeholders who work as intercultural mediators). They mainly describe marriage practices

of the Moroccan community, Pakistan community, Sub-Saharan countries and the gypsy community.

In all of them the marriage has a completely different meaning than in the western society. Most of the time marriage has a collective meaning. Sometimes it is a way of maintaining the society and the families united, to preserve the culture, to secure the society's peace, to demonstrate the respect to the country and culture of origin. Arranged marriages are also a way to reconduct the daughter if her behavior is not been appropriate, and this includes going out or having a European boyfriend. In isolated cases, stakeholders recognize it is also a family solution when their children show homosexual attitudes.

Ex. Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, China or African

"Marriage has many aims: families get married to maintain the social status, families get married because the other family has a social recognition and they want their daughter to be married with someone from that family, to maintain the culture, as community we want more union, respect....nobody wants to be different, nobody want to change the community's agreement (...) with the land's inheritance, the girls do not claim for her part, because when the father dies, the land is for the male children. Since the daughter is going to live to the husband's house, he will already have his lands (...) I get married because my forefathers have been done that (...) if the woman is not married she does not have a social recognition (...) if you do not have a husband you are nobody" (A6-women's NGO)

"And parents theoretically look for the best for their son and daughter. With these marriages they look for agreements among families profitable for everyone. The same happened here, in the times of the textile industries, those families marry their son with the daughter of a banker because they were interested. It is the same. And yes, we are in the 21st century, but each culture and each country of the planet has developed in a different way, not better or worse" (A12-mediator)

"The concept of marriage is for us a union between two families, not the union between two individuals" (A13-mediator)

"It is for different reasons that these families decide to do these marriages. Sometimes it is an alliance between groups, and sometimes families that have emigrated need to reaffirm their belonging to a culture, even if it is far away, it is like a justification in front of the others: I am far away but I am still preserving the tradition as my family has always done. Sometimes it can be because when they see her daughter has a European boyfriend or from other origin, they say: She's escaping, our baby's escaping!, because the African culture also has this idea of children's property: my children are my own, therefore I can decide about her future (...) Sometimes is what I was explaining you before, even if this happens in only a few cases, when they see a boy that could be homosexual or lesbian and then: ai, ai, ai...this cannot be! And then they marry them, but it is not for a bad purpose. If they do is to preserve a tradition, a cultures, and sometimes, because of fear" (A20-mediator)

Marriage is normally practiced when girls become 18 years old, even in communities where probably the marriage has been arranged long time ago. Among African communities, they trend to choose among cousins or other relatives, and now it is more infrequent a big age gap between husband and wife, especially, because this fact is very shocking for the host society.

“I think it is already arranged before 18 years old, but then it is already done after” (A4-psychologist)

“I other communities, for example, the male cousins are made for the female cousins, they marry with each other. The male cousins have to know that before looking for others, here they have their cousins, that are beautiful and intelligent, they are known, their mothers have gone together to get water to the well, they know how it is an African family” (A6- women’s NGO)

On the contrary, marriages among the Pakistan and Indian communities trend to be done with people from outside their families, although always from the same social class.

“In relation to marriage, before it was always among direct relatives. However now, due to the values promoted by the mass media, people are aware that getting married among relatives is negative, especially from a health point of view (...) there is a strong individualization process (...) Now there is an important tendency to marry with someone outside the family (...) People have started marrying outside the family but with someone from the same city, and always from the same cast and/or social class. The higher the education level is the more frequent gets” (A14-mediator)

In Chinese communities, it is also very important to be not only from China, but preferably from the same town or geographical area of China. For them it is very important that the husband is 2-3 years older than the wife, and more importantly, that he earns more money than the wife.

“If the man earns less than the woman is really bad seen. The man has to be the one who brings home the biggest amount of money because he is the man, and it is not positive, if the man is smaller than the woman” (A21- Chinese boy)

Marriage is also the only way to become an adult and be part of the society, especially for women. There is not an acceptable alternative to marriage, this is why, pressure starts in some communities when girls and boys reach certain age, although, boys in general have some more tools to resist to such pressure, or at least to postpone it.

“In relation to marriage within the Roma community, you are not considered an adult person until you have your first child. This is why it is so important marriage, it is very heavy, therefore you have to be a very mature person to manage it properly” (A5- gypsy NGO)

“The boys resist more (...) It is more accepted the delay (...) and moreover there is all the polygamy system (...) the boy gets longer. Maybe he has been arranged some alliances and he has said yes and had escaped, but sooner or later they accept. Around 28 or 29 many of them end up accepting....many of them are married with girls from their country they will never bring here, this is another thing” (A16-journalist).

“It is very strange that you don't get married, it is very weird within the community: ai, your child! (..) Are you 27 years old and still not married? What? Aren't you married yet? Don't you have a girlfriend?)...) everyone worries about that, and we even more, because we come from the country side....” (A21-chinese boy)

Love has a different meaning in these communities. It is commonly accepted that such an important institution as marriage, cannot be decided upon a feeling, as it is love. They think there are more important factors, as sharing a culture, a social class, having a good economic position, sharing the same religion, which will constitute important pillars to build a family and have children. The mutual love and respect will come later.

“The staff about falling in love and love in Africa is a little bit different. To fall in love is something passing and it can't be a reason to choose a partner and get married, you cannot establish something so serious as marriage with such a passing thing. They work from a different point of view, like that love is something you can build. If I and another person decide to establish a family, with the time, our common things, our children, with the time we will love each other, respecting and taking care of each other, and this is real love” (A2-immigration stakeholder).

“We think parents have more experience, don't they? In meeting people. And well, you don't have much. And if you are in love, you are blind. You don't see the others' defects, don't you?” (A13-mediator)

“They know their mother married without love, her grandmother married without love, her cousin married without love, and they learn to live together because love is something you build from inside the relationship” (A18-psychologist)

Sometimes it is a way to get a status in society, unless you are not married, you do not become a wife and a mother, you cannot be part to the community as an adult. Moreover, it is also a way to maintain the society united, and to preserve the cultural values and identities from generation to generation. Your ancestors have been done it, and if you have been educated in this way, you find it normal. This is why sometimes, there is a difference between the girls who have been born in their countries of origin, or those ones who have been born and educated in Europe, who have more difficulties to accept this as normal.

Ex. Sub-Saharan communities, gypsy.

“It depends a lot if they are girls who have been born here or they have come from their countries of origin, because evidently they have a different experience. It is really different for a girl born here, that when is 18 years old she is a still a girl, from a girl who comes from there who is already a woman” (A2-migration stakeholder)

The role of mothers and fathers in marriage practices differ among the cultures. In South Asian communities, the mother is who decides within the families, therefore, it is very important if the children have a good relation with their mothers, because this will permit a wider margin to choose wife / husband, or even, to have more candidates until they choose. Even if the father is the one who has the power on the public sphere, and finally approves or not the marriage.

“The ones in power are the mother and the sister, the father grants. The person who really decides at home is the mother. The father is the authoritarian figure to put order and to control, who makes decisions daily...I always say the fathers is the Constitutional Court who takes the decisions in extreme cases, however the mother is the Prime Minister who takes the important decisions every day, she negotiates and agrees with the others. The father even if he is against something, he ends up accepting it if the mother is convinced, because the mother explains him, argumentates him. The mother has the main role, if you have her on your side, things are easier, if you have her against you, you'd better escape from home” (A14-mediator).

“The problem is that the mother chooses a girl who could be very faithful to her, who obeys her instructions, and moreover, she wants her to live in her house, obeying her orders. However an autochthonous girl, or a Pakistan girl raised here does not have these values, this way of making things and it is very complicated she would accept it” (A14-mediator)

On the contrary, in African or gypsy communities, the father is the one who leads all negotiations to choose husband / wife (or accept or not in case of current gypsy communities). The mothers have their role to preserve their daughters' virginity and honor. If she has not fulfilled her responsibilities properly, the father would not be able to arrange an honorable marriage for his daughters.

“Normally it is the father who decides (...) For example, the representative of a family goes to their house to ask for the girl's hand and so on, and negotiations start, there is a whole ceremony. And the girls are there to listen to it, although negotiations are directed to the father, not to the mother. The parents listen and if the father is a little bit open, he consults with the family (...) the father would be able to decide this honorable alliance for the family and have everyone happy and accept it if the mother hasn't be able to take care of the girls' honor and virginity (...) If the wife does not fulfill this condition and everyone talks about the girl and judges what she does (...) if the mother does not take care of the daughter, and she is in everyone's mouth and she's lost her prestige, her father would not be able to make any alliance” (A16-journalist)

Something in common among these diverse communities where arranged marriages are very common is that sexual relations outside the marriage are very negatively perceived by the community in general. Therefore arranged marriages, and at early ages is a way to prevent these extra marriage relations or illegitimate children, that will represent a damage to the honor and good name of the family.

“If sexual relations were allowed, we would come to these early marriages because they all teenagers have the same needs at these ages (...) but it is forbidden, it is super taboo, super closed, and it is very important to arrive virgin to marriage” (A5-gypsy NGO)

This is why in some communities, for example for the gypsy or some African ones, they have some specific rituals to demonstrate the bride's virginity before the marriage or rights after the wedding night.

“And even if forced marriages do not exist, I tell you from my personal point of view, in my opinion there is a forced part in the weddings, it is the handkerchief proof, to prove she is virgin before the wedding, if you don't go through that there is not wedding. For me, this is forcing and limiting the person's freedom. It is a little bit contradictory, they don't force you to choose a partner, but if you want to marry a gypsy boy you are obliged to arrive virgin to the wedding. In Spain there are just a few places where this is not required: in Jerez...” (A5-gypsy NGO)

“The day you are given to your husband, there is a white handkerchief, if it is stained with blood, that means you are virgin, if it does not come out blood....that means you are not virgin (...) if your husband loves you a lot he is even capable of cutting his hand to have blood, or to kill a chicken and that's it...because the grandmothers and aunts wouldn't say: ah! You are the family's dishonor!” (A-20-mediator)

In other communities, for example in Pakistan, they underlined the incoherent situations where, women and men are required to arrive to marriage virgins, but at the same time, the man is supposed to marry when he has already got a job, some economic status, and even a house, something impossible to achieve in our societies until the 30's.

“I am very worried because as a society, on one side, sexual relations are forbidden before marriage according to religious and cultural reasons, and on the other side, marriage is getting very complicated, because of the dowry, to have a good house, a permanent salary, certain economic stability, therefore men had to wait until they are 30-32 years old (...) and this is creating a big sexual frustration (...) I think there are many boys here (...) who have relationships outside marriage and this creates them a lot of frustration because they know they are unfulfilling some of the basic Muslim mandates and they will be punished with the eternal hell” (A14-mediator)

Another common aspect of all these communities is the very negative of the divorce. Some scholars also include into the definition of forced marriages, the supervening forced marriages, that is, a volunteer or arranged marriage that later on becomes a forced marriage,

because the family and/or the community does not allow any of them to get divorce (since a divorce represent a huge stigma for the family as a whole, and the person in particular).

“The marriage is like a union between two families, so before getting to a divorce, both families make mediation, if they can solve something. But if they can’t, and there is a case of gender, better to get divorced” (A13-mediator)

“There are not divorces because it is badly seen, even if the religion allows them” (A14-mediator)

“I see more pressure on the women not to get divorced than to marry. I really see pressure here, pressure because we still live in a collective way, in a sense that whatever the woman does is not only her who is responsible, if she is right to wrong falls over the whole family, nor only over her (...) if she can’t stand longer and she poses it to the family, she would need the family’s approval, and if her family say: “stand, stand, stand” she will stand” (A12-NGO)

Marriage is for all your life, no matter what happens. Only in very extreme cases of physical violence from the man to the woman, or a flagrant breach of the husband’s obligations to maintain and economically attend his wife and children, the wife is allowed to come back to her family and get divorced. But this is quite exceptional, and still, a divorced person in many communities has few or none possibilities to get married again and start a new life.

“They have to be very strong reasons to admit divorce and accept a separation. It could be a case of gender violence to be admitted, even if admitting gender violence in the gypsy community is still almost an impossible (...) it has to be something very justified, something really violent to have many people accepting it: your husband leaves you for another relationship, for other marriage, things like that” (A5-gypsy NGO)

“Can you remake your life? It is extremely difficult, it is a step back, these women are aware they are refusing to have any other relationship in their lives. Because of this fear, they stand all this sexism (...) if you have children you will dedicate your life to take care of them, and you will be at home” (A5-gypsy NGO).

“If the husband repudiates her, he can separates, then she can remain with the children. If she wants to leave, the husband can ask the dowry and he can keep the children. And the families see divorce very negatively and they don’t help or support you. She has to pay back her dowry alone” (A6-NGO)

“If the girl comes from a very powerful family or the brother and the father knows someone raises their hand against their daughter, who is the family’s honor, they can even kill the boy. In front of unjustified and extreme violence, I’ve seen cases where the family finally kills them. In other disagreements, it is the family that tries to solve the problem” (A14-mediator).

There are also huge differences in relation to arranged marriages and the possibilities given to the brides to choose candidates, even among one community. For example, there are huge differences among urban and rural families among the Moroccan, Pakistan or Indian communities. The urban families normally give more opportunities to decide to the girls and

boys to choose among several candidates searched by the family, meanwhile the rural families not so much.

In some communities, the level of education is an important factor. In Southern Asian communities, women with higher education have more opportunities to wait to marry or to choose among different candidates. In Chinese communities, education means a key to higher economic position, therefore women and men who study are allowed to wait longer until they marry.

“I think boys have more opportunities than girls. In the case of girls, it depends on their level of education, if they have more, they receive more opportunities. Their level of autonomy. The more religious the family is, the more opportunities to choose. The less religious and conservative the family is, fewer opportunities to choose. In Pakistan religion and conservatism are not linked like here. There the basic religious values are against tradition (...) Over there the members of the most religious families have more opportunities to choose because they know they cannot force their children, because they know God will punish them. Even if they would, they have this fear” (A14- mediator)

There is also a common aspect repeated by several stakeholders belonging to the affected communities: the forced marriages is something more linked to culture and tradition and it does not have anything to do with religion. In fact, the Islam, Hinduism and sij prohibit forced marriages.

“In many countries culture and religion are very linked. Therefore it is connected, and I would be able to distinguish. But I think it is more related to culture than to religion” (A8-lawyer)

4.3. Description of their work in relation to forced marriages

Most of the interviewed stakeholders do not have a job with direct and explicit responsibilities on forced marriages.

“Not explicit. In our service not. Sometimes I had suspicious, maybe because I are aware and have specific training to identify the indicators in front of a woman, and specially young. In fact just a few ones” (A7-NGO)

“Many young girls, from other cultures, the way they explain how they have been married, how the ceremony was organized, how they met the boy, how many times they have seen him before the wedding day....Especially from Muslim religion. And also many Sub-Saharan girls” (A7-NGO)

There is only the two members of the police forced interviewed, that legally speaking have competencies on forced marriages because it is included in the Catalan law as one form of gender violence in the community. Moreover, one of the policewoman interviewed, has had a

pioneer role in the prevention and work against female genital mutilation in Catalonia, and now she is also leading some police initiatives on forced marriages. She clearly explains their work responds to their personal implication and initiative to make work on prevention and fight against forced marriage, and then, they have taken advantage of the legal framework and the existing work of the network on female genital mutilation.

“It started with some very isolated cases, and consequently we have tried to go to the territory, to talk with the different groups of victims’ attention, if they knew about it, and they were briefly informed about forced marriage, if they remember any case and we identified some cases. And then we have made an internal protocol of the Catalan police for forced marriage, and we have carried out training with professionals coming from England, who helped out to make the protocol (...) and since then we have started identifying cases, but what happens is that there are regions where there are more cases identified than others, sometimes because of the populations characteristics or because the professionals are more prepared for it (...) We mainly identify them in the Moroccan and Gambian communities because we have more contact with them, but with the Pakistan and Indian communities we have more difficulties, because they are very closed communities, but we know there are cases. There are girls that disappear at certain ages” (A10-Administration)

“We have linked one thing to the other. With female genital mutilation we have started in 1999, and then in 2006 as a result of many conferences on female genital mutilation, I remember some we have made here in Barcelona, where there were some colleagues who talked about two cases of forced marriage and I thought something should be done” (A11-police)

The Catalan police force seems to be the only group of stakeholders with a precise protocol on how to intervene in a case of forced marriage, with detailed instructions on what to do in each step of the procedure, both in prevention, and in intervention.

“If the marriage has been done, I would collect all information from the victim or from her context, and I will pass it to the judge, and at the same time I will forward the victim to an specialized agency. If the victim of forced marriage is a minor, she will be forwarded to psychological support, or to a women’s center where they can work with her (...) if she is an adult, I will ask for a restraint order. If she is minor I will try to bring her back to her family if this is convenient or not (...) Apart from that we make a follow-up (...) it is a new follow-up system we have started some months ago with gender violence, trafficking, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, sexual aggressions. We have to make a follow-up, we have to make periodical phone calls (...) we have special instructions on what should be done. The first one is to classify if there is a suspicion, if there is a risk or if it has been done. According to this classification, we can also work preventively with the network. For example, if the girl is going to be married when she reaches 18 years old, you do not have to start legal proceedings, you have time to work on that with the family from the network. But well, if you find a situation where she is going to leave in 10 days and they have the plane tickets in hand, here you cannot work from the network, you have to go directly to collect information to be given to the judge or the public attorney, so they can decide is she can leave or not” (A11-police)

“In the protocol is detailed who can make a denounce, who can ask for information, what happens if the victim is at the police station, what should be done, who takes her denounce (in this case the group of victim’s attention), the confidentiality and discretion, the emphatic

treatment, the use of interpreter, to collect all evidences, counseling to the victims about her rights and the network of resources, inform her about self defense measures. (...) It also explains precautionary measures, techniques to avoid secondary victimization, how to forward her to other services, never act as a mediator, respect the time for the denounce (...) if is she is minor, safety advices (what you can advice her, documents to be preserved by her...), it is very, very detailed. And the the follow-up, what you have to do, the periodical contact, the interchange of information with the rest of the professionals working in network, supervision of the judicial measures adopted, which kind of information you have to keep for the follow-up (her address, with which relatives she lives, what she is studying and where, to whom they want to force her to marry, personal data of the potential husband (A11-police)

And there is also another representative of the Administration, Department of Home Affairs of the Catalan Government, with also competencies over forced marriages as the police does. She stresses, together with the other police representatives interviewed, that the specific statistics on forced marriage available in Catalonia, responds to the existence of the Catalan law on sexist violence that explicitly recognizes forced marriage as a form of community violence. Still, they noted, their statistics are very poor and represent a small sample of the real size of the problem. They also note that the variability of the data among the different areas of Catalonia depends, not only of the socio-demographic composition of the population, but specially, of the awareness and specific training of the implicated stakeholders.

“From 2009 until 2013 we had identified 80 and a little bit more cases. In our case, we have around 30 cases. Here you have the statistics, 23% our area, 18% Maresme area, the north area and others, they have isolated cases (...) the explanation is that people work more, but not only us” (A11-police)

“It depends absolutely of the professionals’ training, absolutely! And we are identifying a minimum part. This is a little shit. This year we had 6, well 7 cases (...) But yes, it arrives to us a very small part of the whole reality (...) most of the times during the last two years the own girls have been the ones who have alerted us, and only in a case where it was the mother” (A11-police)

“When we register a case, for statistics purposes, if we are dealing with a case of gender violence, we have to identify if it is domestic violence, sexual violence, sexual harassment, forced marriage (...) Differently is how it is collected according the Criminal Code” (A15 – police).

The rest of the stakeholders, come across cases of forced marriage and act (or not) depending on their interest, awareness and knowledge on the problem. There is not any protocol to coordinate their work, they have not receive any specific training, most of the times, they do not know how to identify a case of forced marriage or what to do if a woman comes asking for help.

“Here in Catalonia we think one of the spaces we should make stronger in order to help and identify victims of forced marriages, is the migrants’ spaces, where women go to seek for

help (...) when women escape from a forced marriage, they go there to look for help to a church, whatever type, to a hospital, or to migrants' associations. And none of them are prepared to identify them..." (A18-psychologist)

They try their best, within their area of expertise, within their competencies and with the limited resources they have.

Exceptionally there are some stakeholders, working in community services of small towns or cities, where the presence of migrant communities is very important (mainly from Sub-Saharan countries and Morocco), and they have important links of trust with them. These stakeholders are the only ones who work in a specific way the problem of forced marriages; they establish good networks of coordination with other agents (police, health actors, schools, etc). They mainly work directly with the families, trying to mediate between the families and the girls, never questioning their culture and traditions, and focusing on the empowerment of the girls and the protection of the human rights, especially the freedom to choose.

"Normally, when we do the revision at 2 years old, they start giving you information, and this is why for us it is essential the medical revision at 14 years old, before they are transfer to adults' doctor" (A1-pediatrician)

"Because of the size of this territory, it is easier to work in a network, coordinated and working together police, health actors...(...) We prepared awareness raising materials for both professional and communities, and also for empowerment, and to at least make a protocol on how should be the itinerary to attend cases of forced marriages" (A2-inmigration stakeholder)

These stakeholders work trying to make a work of prevention, through awareness of families, promoting the girls' education, and showing to her families this would mean an investment for the whole family, and at the same time, it does not represent an act against their culture or against the parents' respect. There are also other stakeholders that put an emphasis in differentiating forced marriage from the religious precepts.

"Having your daughter studying is not a daughter you lose, but a daughter you will win, because she will improve her quality of life, she will have studies and that will help economically. Families should see it as a positive rather than a negative thing" (A1-pediatrician)

"In some occasion we had to intervene just before the marriage, or even the same wedding day, avoiding a flight where a girl from Pakistan was leaving. They want to marry, but as the date comes by, and you explain her she would have to quit her studies, she probably wouldn't be allowed to work, that she would have to stay at home, this is when they start seeing everything...and we find a lot girls born in Catalonia who are very aware, they carry in

certain way the background of a democratic country, and they say “uau, I can develop here my life project”, but we face here all these culture completely sexist that ends up bringing her away and making her disappear from the map” (A10- Administration)

“It is important that the girl can see what she will find behind all, because frequently they are confused. They would find a man in the house, who probably does not allow you to work, and you will have to go to bed with him, and you will have to maintain sexual relations with him, and sexual relations are free!. This is still what we have to explain to university people and from high school, we still have to tell them that a no is a no, and you go to bed with whoever you want, not to whom you have been told” (A11-police)

“If we don’t make a very strong awareness work (...) probably if we get 4,5,6 girls where you can say as references, where being African and respecting your parents is not incompatible with the idea that the intimacy belongs to other universe (...) if they get education, and they reach a certain professional success, this will allow them to help other sisters and their own parents, who probably had to work in very hard and precarious jobs, who probably would not have retirement, as in Africa (...) in this sense, they would not have stopped being good daughters of their parents and they have to help them” (A16-journalist)

“Even the Muslim religion say: the marriage is OK, but the divorce is also OK. Then if the religion says so, you shouldn’t be afraid of getting divorced. No! Because if they tell you it is because of religion, men are not fulfilling this, and not in this way. Muslim religion is very clear in these aspects (...) For example when a woman gets divorced according to the Muslim religion the man has to keep on maintaining her economically. Everything, the children’s maintenance, the house....” (A20-mediator)

Even these stakeholders that have a specific interest and awareness on forced marriage underline the difficulties to offer to the girls and women any support in case of forced marriage. If they are minors, they first need to put in knowledge to the judge and the administration department with competencies over minors in a vulnerable and risk situation. This means these girls could end up in children’s shelters with no specialization at all on gender violence, and forced marriage in particular. Apart from that, this requires a denounce to the police, and this have horrible consequences for the girls; they do not want to harm their parents (to whom they love), their families, their communities.

“We always tell them they have the possibility to denounce, but none of them want to denounce. They want to do everything but putting a denounce. Well, they are their parents “the people I love, the people who care about me and I care about them, now they are harming me a lot” (...) and with these girls we have worked all the psychological support, how to make their own decision, if they decide to marry to make sure this is their decision. We have never pressed them to say no, as professionals or within this project, we only accompany them whatever is their decision, if it is yes, so it is yes with all the psychological and social support, and if it is no, the same, but working with the family, with the mother, with the community” (A2-immigration stakeholder)

If they are adults, these women can be forwarded to the normal community’s resourced for gender violence: women’s shelters, legal and psychological counseling and so on. But once again, these services many times put difficulties to accept those women, since they do not

recognize their situation as a form of gender violence, and even if they admit them, they do not have special knowledge, training and resources to help those women in cases of forced marriages.

“If she is minor, obviously she could not be attended from my department, she should be forwarded to the Childhood Department. If she is an adult, the options would be.....from our department we could offer her a psychological counseling to help her with her idea of not getting married, offer her a accommodation resource....If we understand forced marriage as a form of gender violence, we could forward her to a women’s shelter. But they will surely put problems from the Social Welfare Department, because it is not a “common” case of gender violence. We could look for other accommodation services...it would be complicated to give an answer...it should be studied the concrete case and the specific demand” (A7-Administration).

It is really interesting how only one stakeholder emphasized the importance to prevent racism, in order to promote the integration of these communities, and eradicate forced marriage as a violation of human rights, understanding forced marriage was a strategy to survive in their countries or origin, but it does not apply anymore in the host society.

“If they could integrate in our society, and our society accepted them and did not show refusal and so; this would facilitate them to see the western way of life more sympathetically (...) to make steps towards integration and maybe to eradicate these practices that we cannot tolerate, although they are deeply rooted in their way of understanding life and within very clear surviving conditions, it represents a surviving strategy in their countries of origin (...) in the case of forced marriage it is like that, I think it is because these family alliances and agreements were born to survive, to be all more united” (A16-journalist)

4.4. Risk factors

Some stakeholders identified as a risk factors the negative consequences of forced marriage for the women and girls, specially what these women/girls did to prevent or escape from a forced marriage: to get pregnant at very young ages of a different man, or to get divorced and become in a very vulnerable social and economic situation that can lead them even in extreme cases to prostitution.

“For example in Olot we had an important upturn of pregnancies among teenagers between 14 and 18, and behind it there was not a desire to become pregnant but a desire of not marrying an imposed person, therefore they ended up becoming pregnant of their boyfriends, so the that marriage will not take place. It is a bad strategy because you still carry the stigma, you have now a child, and your loose all your future plans” (A1- pediatrician)

“In certain trajectories prostitution was a way to escape from this marriage, and effectively it generated certain quick economic resources to live. Yes, there is a step between a forced marriage and prostitution, because they did not produce anything and they had to live in someone else’s house (...) you cannot count on anybody also. Thus, in front of this clear situation of isolation and lack of resources, prostitution appears as a valid option” (A3-NGO)

“Wake up! And this is what they say to women who have also divorced and they have been left in the street, and this is. I speak very hardly about these issues (...) I divorced and I can, but imagine, I am doing all these things and think about a woman who does not know how to read, how to write, does not have a job, and on top of that she is being battered, will she put up with this? Because..If she gets out, what will she do? If she gets out from that marriage, she will suffer even more! Therefore they prefer to stand before getting divorced, because you have seen many cases of girls that divorced and ended up very badly. And this explains the other women are very afraid, even if they are suffering domestic violence” (A20-mediator).

Another negative consequence identified by the stakeholders, is that within a forced or arranged marriage you did not have the opportunity to know the other person, therefore in many cases both sides have idealized the other part, and reality becomes a risk factor to face situations of gender violence.

“I think from the moment they do not let you choose freely, that means you don't know the other person, and the other person does not know you. Both sides have expectatives about the other that are not real because they don't know each other. I think the girl is waiting for a prince, who is going to take care of me, protect me, and the male protection staff is very paternalistic. And the man is thinking he is going to have a girl who will serve me, who will do everything I ask for me, someone annulled at my disposal” (A4)

Most stakeholders point out as a risk factor if the family comes from a rural area or from the urban area. For several reasons, because some migration movements have been led by people from rural areas, that trend to be more traditionalists and conservative, and identify forced marriages as a way to preserve their culture. And secondly, because in these rural families, women are generally regrouped to form a family, not to study or to work in the labor market. In those social classes of these communities, the men are the only ones who can work and go out to the public sphere, and it represents a dishonor if their wives have to work.

“Things you wouldn't do at your country of origin and you do here. Yes, communities are more strict here than there. The fact that the migration movement is led by people from rural areas, probably makes than here the community becomes more radical” (A17-NGO)

“Women from urban origin come from more educated families that can eventually have gone to university (...) women from rural origin, most of them have been regrouped, their husband have brought them here, they have come to establish a family (...) For middle and low social class it is a shame women had to work (...) In India it also happens and they are not Muslim, it is mainly because of tradition, the man is goes out to the public sphere and who has to be in charge that nothing happens to his wife” (A12-NGO)

Even within the same community or country, it varies a lot depending on the ethnic group. Moreover, talking about marriage is more difficult to be identified as a form of gender violence, because it is assumed both parts have freely agreed, when behind a forced

marriage there are generally different forms of gender violence: kidnapping, sexual violence, threats, coercion, etc.

“In this case the target population is much more heterogeneous and much more difficult to identify. You have, for example the Moroccan community, where some families do practice it and some other not (...) You can take a Moroccan women’s association, give them a conference and come back to you saying “what is he explaining this guy to us, if this does not happen among us?” (...) and then, it is not only Moroccan communities, it is also Sub-Saharan, Pakistan, Roma, and then, professionals are really lost. Then there is the issue of some of them being minors and others adults, this is also different. Probably at social level if you talk about female genital mutilation, they easily understand what you mean, but when you use the word marriage, this word can be an euphemism, because if you use this word you associate it with an adult couple who have decided to live together, and moreover, it has a positive connotation. When in reality there is kidnapping, sexual aggressions, threats, coercion “(A11-police)

They also emphasize the fact that, if the family is more educated, they will surely give more chances to their daughters to choose among the candidates the family look for them, until they find a candidate the girl likes. But still marriage is an essential step in all girls’ life, and sooner or later, they have to marry.

“Probably they want a different future for their daughters, and this is why in relation to the studies the mothers are more open than the fathers, and they do not oppose that much, at least among the Mandingos mothers, but it comes a moment where the most important thing is that the girl gets married. And then it is what the husband says (...) if the husband wants, she will continue studying. She can have children later. Although they also carry a stigma if they don’t have children soon” (A16-journalist)

Many of the interviewed stakeholders point out that a indicator to start suspecting they are in front of a case of forced marriages is when there is a big difference between the bride and the groom, for example, the future bride being in her twenties and the future groom over fifties....

“If the man doubles you in age, there is always a suspicion. Is it consented or forced?” (A13-mediator)

The risk factors also vary among communities and some stakeholders say it also depends on the type of relation the community established between mother and daughter. The mothers in many cultures are responsible of the education of their children, and a good educated girl will accept the husband looked by her family, If the daughter refuses to marry the candidate the family has searched for her, it would be a failure also to the mother’s role (and sometimes a threat even in cases of polygamy). And the refusal of the girl to marry can be interpreted by the community as a sign she is not virgin or has something bad to hide.

“She has not been a good mother, she has not fulfilled her assigned role as a woman and this carries consequences (...). It is her responsibility, it is her duty, she is the one who has to educate and make sure the girl arrives to marriage virgin. This explains these urgencies to marry them at 16 years old, because at least...Well, what happens? Here they are even more in a hurry when they see our world: the possibilities to extend adolescence and youth, to go out to party, to go to the discotheque, and all the risks involving an unwanted pregnancy; and the mother are afraid, they easily know the prize they will pay for it, the prestige women acquire when they become mature, when a woman is young she has to do all the steps expected by the community and then it comes the moment to position herself as a honorable woman, and all that prestige is at risk and even lost if her daughter makes something wrong” (A16-journalist).

“Polygamous families (...) if a girl does all these things, the mother has also failed in her efforts to educate her (...) and sometimes they blackmailed her : “if you don’t marry, we will kick you and your mother out (...) I can’t stand polygamy, this also increases the risk of arranged and forced marriages” (A2-immigration stakeholder)

“But if you say no you feel guilty because you are your family’s disgrace and shame. This is why so often they tell you: we want to marry you with a cousin living there; and you at first can say: “ay, mummy, I don’t like him, I don’t know him”, but they tell you: “you will meet him, I don’t know”. If you don’t accept him, they may tell you: “ah? Maybe she is not virgin!” And since the girls’ virginity is so important, because the girl represents the family’s honor, all what the mother has been done until the girl is 16 or 17 years gets concrete with her marriage, and it comes the time to see if she has been done it properly or not, if she is virgin or not. Therefore if you say no, probably means you are hiding something (...) When they tell you, you will be the dishonor of the family, the family’s shame, nobody will help you, then surely I will accept because seeing all what is going to fall on me...” (A20-mediator)

And also, some of the stakeholders emphasized that forced marriages have to be understood in cultures where respect for their parents is very important, it is even a religious precept for the Muslims. Therefore girls consider that if they refuse an arranged marriage done by their parents, they are bringing dishonor and disgrace to themselves and to the whole family.

“The parents’ respect is something absolutely sacred. It is sacred because the Koran repeats it so much, and also because of the culture. And in India also” (A12-NGO)

Some of the interviewed stakeholders underline that a risk factor can be if the girl has been born in the country of origin and later on moved to Spain, or if the girl has been born in Spain, grew here and went to school here. It is more difficult for the girls born in their country of origin to make any opposition to their families’ will. And also, because the girls who have been born and educated here, they know the language and have more competencies and resources to oppose to a forced marriage or even to escape from one.

“And we have to distinguish the ones who have been born here from the others, not only because they are at greater risk but also because they don’t master the language, because they don’t know the resources, because they have not lived anything different...” (A2-migration stakeholder)

4.5. Opinion about laws and policies on forced marriages

In general stakeholders manifest a complete lack of knowledge about the existing laws and policies on forced marriages in Spain, basically because they rarely exist. Moreover, when there are some laws and public policies on gender violence, they are mostly focused on domestic violence, and the professionals are rarely trained and coordinated to work on forced marriages.

“The minimum income pay in purity is for domestic violence. If this pay is given only to these cases, and on top of that, it is very limited quantity, if this girl is expelled from her family and does not have a job, she is being thrown to the emptiness (...) I think it is a decision that only those ones who are working can take” (A17-NGO violence)

“We think that as in any other forms of gender violence, there should be training for these cases, a very strong awareness raising within the social organizations” (A18-psychologist)

“Many women first don't do it for the rejection and all...and secondly because when you divorce, here, if you don't take care you would become a whore to feed your children, because social services and public authorities help you at first, they bring you to a shelter...but then...in most of the cases you have to sort out yourself, and if at the end you are not a battered woman” (A20-mediator)

The only stakeholders that talk about some type of law or public policy, they mentioned the protocol of the Catalan police forces, or some type of local public policies designed, created and coordinated by themselves (not impulse by the main public administration).

The only public authority with certain initiative on the subject is the Catalan police, that after the experience of the female genital mutilation, they tried to know other countries' experience on the problem of forced marriages (for example United Kingdom) and give some specific training to some units and territories. But once again, it depends more on the individual awareness and commitment to the problem, rather than a public policy.

In relation to the possibility to make forced marriages a crime, there are different points of view. Some of the stakeholders, especially those ones belonging to the police forces or public administration are in favor of making forced marriages a crime, in order to facilitate their work against and of prevention of forced marriages. They also consider forced marriages should be a crime because is a form of gender violence and a severe violation of human rights.

“I think it would be good if it is punished within the Criminal Code, but this does not mean we cannot act and we cannot protect the victims (..) But clearly if it is included in the Criminal Code this will disseminate it and it would remain clear what is a forced marriage, when one of the parties does not agree and a third party intervenes. And it would be clear that here in

Catalonia and in Spain is not allowed, it is forbidden and moreover is punished with a severe punishment, I hope, as it is the case of female genital mutilation, I don't know" (A11-police)

"See, if it is included in the Criminal Code, only this fact would create a mass media interest, and the mass media play an important role to disseminate, to help awareness raising, to pass information" (A11-police)

But on the other hand, other stakeholders, especially those ones belonging to NGOs or the implicated communities are against the criminalization of forced marriages. They think this will not contribute to the eradication of the problem, and on top of that, it will stigmatize and criminalize certain communities and religions.

Only some stakeholders mentioned the recent change of the civil laws to increase the minimum age to get married, from 14 to 16, although, still if they can marry from 16 to 18 with their parents' consent, this does not prevent forced marriages at all.

"For example, now with the legislation of 16 years old, I think we will take some load off. We have that with 14 years old you cannot give consent it is a completely manipulated decision" (A1- pediatrician).

Many stakeholders are very critical with the way our society uses law to prevent and combat gender violence, and forced marriage in particular. First because a law without resources becomes a completely useless tool. And secondly, because our society uses law mainly to punish and not to transform society, for example, guaranteeing rights and empowering minorities.

"Legislation with support of resources. Because a law without any type of support is not useful at all. We already have a law about female genital mutilations, that theoretically would have to be repaired, and they are still not treated under the public health system. If you don't give resources, things become useless. I would like to have a reference team, to get in touch when things get really severe, somewhere we can refer so that team can be in charge of whatever is necessary" (A1-pediatrician).

"I think law is always a tool, we cannot criminalize the law. Because sometimes since law is punitive or associated to punish, law becomes criminalized, and I think law is a tool, and it can be a very, very effective tool, precisely to set the limits....in the contrary sense, to guarantee people's rights" (A3-NGO)

Some of the interviewed stakeholders are very critical in this sense with the European foreign laws and public policies. They considered them very racists and economic orientated, with a clear gender impact.

"This is because all the European schizophrenia about immigration (...) because if they are "whities", speak five languages and play the piano, we want those ones....but on the contrary we don't want the others" (A2-inmigration stakeholder)

“Foreign law is not designed from a right’s perspective, and even less, from a women’s rights perspective, and consequently it is definitively a hindrance. Especially because once again, it reinforces stereotypes, stigmas” (A3- NGO)

4.6. Support services available in Spain for forced marriages

Some interviewed stakeholders point out the importance of some agents belonging to the educational, health and migration services. Those are the ones who can easily identify situations of forced marriages, or where women or girls at risk could eventually come to ask for help. If these professionals are not properly trained, they could even put these women / girls at risk.

“It is more useful a school teacher you trust, a pediatrician who has seen you since you were a child, a neighbor you have always asked for help when you needed... (...) the ideal thing is a change of mentality... to understand your daughters have autonomy and should have the right to decide by themselves as persons. To understand that your rights are their rights” (A1-pediatrician).

“Look, out of the 10 cases we had here, 9 cases it was the victim herself who came to inform, it doesn’t have to be to police, she can go to school, that it has a very important role, or maybe to social services. But the thing is that now they are aware that what is happening can be solved, and this is much more than we had. This is what we gained” (A11-police)

“Our experience is that when we managed to escape and tried to seek for help here, to social services, to the police, nobody helped them, they haven’t identified them as victims of trafficking in human beings. We have two specific cases of trafficking in human beings that seek for help to social services, and they didn’t believe them, and have called their husbands to pick them up and testified these women were sick. They have put in danger these women’s lives (...) And a professional prefers to wash his/her hands, or forward her to a NGO, or wait until she sorts out by herself and he/she can find justification in his/her lack of knowledge. The fact that trafficking in human beings is not identified and not treated, when the majority of them are black women.....this is something related to institutional racism” (A18-psychologist)

There are not specific support services for victims of forced marriages in Spain. Some stakeholders talked about the availability of mainly residential, and some times, economic resources for victims of gender violence (in general). Most stakeholders when they have to provide with some material support to the potential or current victims of forced marriage, they forward them to the existing support services for victims of gender violence in the family (the so called domestic violence).

“There is not absolutely anything. It is a very new subject (...) There is an abyss between social reality and politics or from the decision making positions” (A1-pediatrician).

If they are under 18 years old, they are forwarded to the government authorities in charge of minors in vulnerable situations, and most of the times, they are also placed in young people's shelters.

But as many of the interviewed stakeholders emphasized, none of these resources are specialized, adapted or prepared for those women victims or potential victims of forced marriage. Sometimes, because the only way to forward them to these support services is if the girl or woman makes a denounce, and most of the victims or potential victims of forced marriages will never put a denounce against their own parents, to whom they love. Other times, because if they can finally be forwarded to those resources the women find themselves a complete stranger among women victims of domestic violence with very different needs and life trajectories. In the case of minors, the shelters are normally prepared to take care of girls with very difficult family and life stories and past, something nothing in common with most of these girls that probably come from very loved and regular family and community contexts.

“Counseling, mediation, to forward to other entities...(...) and this little girl would leave her house to go to a minor's centre. And this is not the most appropriate thing. I have recommended in some occasions to go to some relative's house to avoid conflict” (A1-pediatrician)

“In some cases we had the opportunity to access to resources for battered women's and this has worked out very good and we had used them. But the girls' profile do not always fit into the profile required by the resource (...) We need more services if they have to leave their houses. We have them if it is only a question of some days, but for a longer stay we use the women's shelters, and sometimes they tell us they don't fit into the profile” (A2-immigration stakeholder).

“Since there is not a rule about women's shelters that obliges them to accept women victims of forced marriages, here we have a problem” (A8-lawyer)

The few stakeholders that have a specific procedure to work with potential or current victims of forced marriage, they focus their work in the empowerment of these girls and women, without judging their culture and tradition, their community's meaning of marriage, family and love. They think the only option is to educate in human rights, to both families and girls.

5. Analysis of interviews with (potential) victims

5.1. Demographic background

In total, women and 1 have been interviewed, potential victims of victims of forced marriage.

The composition of the sample has tried to be representative in terms of the most important foreign communities in Spain where arranged and forced marriage are common. Therefore 3 women from Morocco have been interviewed, 2 women from Senegal, 1 woman from Gambia, one women and one man from Pakistan, 1 Catalan woman, 1 gypsy woman and 1 Chinese woman.

The women who have been victims of forced marriage are already divorced (3), and from the three single women, one of them managed to escape from a forced marriage and the other 2 have resisted, or are resisting pressures from their families to marry or to accept arranged marriages (in the case of the gypsy woman, this means almost to be outside of her own community or in a very difficult position). Another two woman and one man are currently married, and the man as a result of an arranged marriage.

“I feel like a gypsy in between: not inside accepted by my community, nor accepted by the majority society. For me is like sailing in the middle of nowhere and having my own world” (W9-gypsy)

“All women from my family are married, except me and a girl of 12 years old” (W9-gypsy)

Some of them have been born in Spain (4 of them) and others have come to Spain regrouped by their families or by their husbands as a result of a forced marriage or arranged marriage.

“I am from Senegal origin and I am in Catalonia since 11 years ago. I am mother of three children, intercultural mediator and I am studying Political Science at the University of XXX (...) I am 36 years old (...) I came regrouped by my ex-husband” (W7-Senegal)

Two of the woman have finished or are studying universities studies.

“I am 22 years old, I was born here in Mataró and I lived all my life in Premià, now I am studying third year of Psychology, I am single and my father’s country of origin is Gambia, from a little town of Gambia (...) I have four siblings (...) I don’t consider myself a religious person, zero. I don’t believe in anything” (W3-Gambia)

“I am 24 years old. I am studying Social Work (...) I was not born here, I was born in Morocco, I came here when I was 10 years old (...) my father was the first one to come. Well, he started to work and after some years, through family regrouping we came all of us (...) we

are 4, but first we came my mother, me and my brother – my brother was 1 year old- and afterwards my sisters came, they were born here (...) I am the eldest, unfortunately I am the eldest” (W4-Morocco)

Three of them interrupted their university studies because a forced marriage or studying became impossible because they had to be married, even if two of them have resumed their studies after getting divorced.

“I had studied, I went to university, but when I had only three months left to obtain my diploma, I quit because I married and I couldn't finished (...) in Morocco I studied Law. At the University of Tanger” (W1-Morocco)

“I am 34 years old, I come from Senegal (...) It is 20 years ago I live here (...) I came with a cousin and my parents were in Senegal, they remained there, and they worked as farmers, now they are retired (...) when I left Senegal I just finished primary education, afterwards I didn't study, I married, had three children, they are grown-up now, and right now I am preparing the access to university for aged 25 and more” (W6-Senegal)

“I decided to study English Philology to work as English teacher afterwards. I did two years and then, I married and came here. And since they did not recognize me the diplomas and so son, I had to start from the beginning. I started learning Catalan, and then I did an access exam and after I did a professional training grade....in order to be able to enter university” (W7-Senegal).

For one of the interviewed woman, to interrupt voluntarily her universities studies became a problem for her family, since for her Chinese community to have university studies is a good passport to earn in the future more money and have better future expectatives.

“I am 24 years old, and right now I am working, so far as shop attendant. With all this crisis (...) I studied Translation and Interpretation (...) but I quit in the middle, this was a problem (...) a reason for a fight at home because to quit something with a good future....and then I dedicated myself to photography (...) My parents didn't like it, but well. And I was born here in Spain (...) my family is very traditional. I was for a while in Shangai, and I think they hoped I would open a little bit to the Chinese culture, to the Chinese people...and all of this....and this didn't happen at the end” (W10-Chinese)

5.2. Marriage expectations

There are differences among the women interviewed, depending on their age and community of origin. For some communities, these marriage mean a way to improve the girl (and the whole family) position and level of life, having the opportunity to live in Europe, as one of the Moroccan women forced to marry

“My parents had an idea that I was going to improve my life, with the residency permits. When he asked me for marriage I said no. And they cried at me: “why don't you like this boy? Do you have other?” I felt rage because they didn't trust me. I got angry and cried. We became engaged but I told him: “I don't like you” (W1-Morocco)

And some others, because marriage is the only option when a girl becomes fertile, even if they accept some postponement if they live in Europe, as the case of this woman from Gambia who managed to escape before a forced marriage:

“There is the tradition over there that when a girl has her menstruation for the first time, she becomes ready to get married, and her parents are the ones to choose with whom. In order to do it properly, they choose some relative, cousins, to strengthen the family in certain way. And when they find someone, there is the dowry that it is when the husband has to pay the parents with something, such as goats, clothes, money, and jewelry. They wanted to marry me at 13 but they saw I was too young here, I wanted to study, and miraculously they had canceled it. When I was 19-20 years old they came back because I was “old” (W3-Gambia)

Some of them, especially those ones who were born in their country of origin never thought about a marriage outside the arranged marriages practice common in their culture. That was part of their culture, its community identity and that was the way their mothers, grandmothers and grand grandmothers did.

“There are girls that get marry with whom they were told and they think this is OK, they think this is religion and they believe they are doing what they should do, and what is better for us. All these women reproduce again the circle when they have children, they raised them this way and they establish again this way of thinking (...) There are other women that marry out of resignation, because there is no other option. Those have also children and since the husband is who decides, everything remains the same” (W3-Gambia)

“Because we have been raised this way since we were little. Girls don’t have the right to talk. The important decisions in life should be taken by their parents. Then, if since you are little they put in your head: you don’t, you don’t, you don’t, when it comes the moment of marriage, she does not care. They say OK, if my parents tell me I have to marry....so I have to marry and that’s all” (W5- Pakistan)

They do not always give a negative connotation to the arranged marriages, as long as there was a certain freedom for the bride or the groom to refuse the candidates they family was looking for them. Although they recognize there is a certain limit, you cannot refuse candidates for ever, even in the most open and respectful families with their children’s’ will, after 5-6 candidates you have to accept one.

“I speak with my mother who is the family’s speaker and she tells my father. My mother, for example, when we discussed, I put it in a better color (...) “listen, I am not marrying a Chinese” because this is really strong for her and she starts screaming. So to have them a little bit calmer, even if it is not likely to happen, I always say: “there are 50% possibilities that I marry someone from China and 50% that I don’t”. But they accept this 50%, even if for me it is 99,9% I am not marrying a Chinese (...) At the end I am not getting married. I prefer to be unmarried than being married with someone I don’t love! And this is even worse” (W10-Chinese)

The women interviewed that accept the arranged marriages defend that it is a different way of building a marriage, not worse or better than the western way, based on love. Their cultures consider that the marriage institution is such an important thing, for the future family itself and for the whole community, which cannot be decided on such a perishable and temporal factor as “to fall in love with someone”. The parents, who want the best for their children, look for the best candidates for their daughters: a good boy from a known family, from the same religion, from the same cast or even town, someone hard worker and with good feelings. This will secure a happy, successful marriage and good relations among families and social cohesion. In case of the parents looking for a good bride for their son, they also look for a good girl, with good reputation, from a good family, someone they know she can cook, take care of the house, is healthy and probably will have a lot of kids.

“I was educated like that since I was little because my mother or my sister told me “when you were older, I’ll look for a girlfriend”. Then, you start being metalized that it is not your business, that it is your family’s task: they have to check if she knows how to cook, how to behave, how to talk and communicate, if she has or not studies (...) if she comes from a good family or not...the families are in charge of these things. Therefore the family plays a very important role in choosing this girl or boy, you are aware of the sacrifices, the competencies of each family, and you end up accepting it” (M1-Pakistan)

In some cultures also, to be marry is the only civil status allowed for a woman, and the only way to be in society. Even in the gypsy community you are not considered an adult until you have your first child.

In relation to the marriage expectations, it also varies a lot if the girl has been born and educated in Spain or in their country or origin. They girls born in their country of originally generally accept as normal, or with resignation the arranged marriages, even if they become forced marriages. But the girls who have been born here put more resistance to an arranged marriage, and they prefer to be alone, or to escape, before marrying someone they do not like.

“First, I don’t see myself married this way, and second, not with a Chinese because I don’t like them. And this does not enter into their heads. On top of that they are very traditional and they want me to look someone from the same town, he has to be from the same town” (W10-Chinese)

5.3. Marriage circumstances

Some communities make the marriages in their country of origin, sometimes because this is cheaper, since most of the family still live there (ex. some Pakistan or Indian communities).

Some other communities make the marriages in their country of origin if this is the only way to consummate a forced marriage or when the girl is too young according to the Spanish laws (or when it is the second, third wife in cases of polygamy, forbidden by the Spanish law).

In some cases, arranged marriages or forced marriages between a man or woman living in Spain and a relative of their country of origin is a form of improving the status of the family of the bride or groom who lives in the country of origin. It seems that whoever lives in Europe must be rich and powerful.

Some of the women interviewed distinguish once again arranged marriages (where there is always freedom of choice for the spouses) from forced marriage (where there is no space for choice). Arranged marriage are justified as a way to find husband or wife, respecting the parents' will, respecting the own culture or religion, because boys and girls in their community cannot go out as western youth to find someone to marry.

"Women, boys and girls cannot meet each other in whatever way, therefore, what happens many times? It is true parents say: look I have a very cute daughter, so on and so forth, and the other says: ah! So I have a son, why don't we introduce each other and see if they like and marry? Until this moment it is one thing, and when the marriage is done against someone's will is another thing" (W2-Morocco)

In some communities (for example Indian, Pakistan, Chinese or some parts of Morocco) it is more frequent the arranged marriages, where the girl or the boy has certain margin to accept or refuse possible candidates chosen by their families (until certain number or until certain age). If you become too old, or have refused too many candidates, the pressures to marry become very strong, and then it is difficult to talk about arranged marriages anymore.

"It is possible that some parents if you say "I don't want, I don't want", then, the marriage does not take place (...) But at the end you will end up marrying someone, you cannot remain single, you can't choose to whom you marry, it is not your right for them" (W3-Gambia)

In some other communities, it is more frequent that your parents or relatives impose you a candidate to become your husband, someone generally older than the bride.

"For me it is a violation of human rights, since theoretically a marriage should be a happy event and not an enlargement of suffering, of the deprivation of freedom, and apart from that letting you without any future option. In my case, I had suffered other things when I was little at home and when I became 18 years old and I am able to leave, it becomes a no, you have to marry a man they will tell you. Before it is your father who decides, from now onwards it will be this man who will decide over you. As a result, which can of life would I have if I have

to obey only because I am a woman? Therefore, what is for me a forced marriage? A crime. A crime, and it is a pity that it happens and that people accept it or people who did not manage to sort out, because there are not resources to get out from these situations” (W3-Gambia)

“This man used to come on Sundays, he must be 20 years older than me (and I was 19 years old!). We were sitting there with my parents, this man was coming with two of his friends and they stayed for dinner, for example. And then I had to serve him water, or whatever he asked me to do and I had to be at his side. Zero communication, we didn’t talk at all! Only at the beginning: “hello, how are you?” “Fine”. He brought me presents. See, a shit, I didn’t want them! It made me sick!. He came three Sundays and during the third one it is given a fruit (...) it is like a dried fruit (...) it is given as a symbol that it is accepted. And then he leaves and he has to pay the dowry men had agreed. And that’s it! It is decided the date and you are married. And you don’t have anything to say with a man you have been sitting still at his side three times (...) my parents: “why you were not friendly?” or “take away that doggy face!”. They even hit me once. I was very arrogant, even if afterwards I know that was going to bring me bad consequences but I didn’t care. I thought “let’s see if I result disgusting to this man and he finally leaves...” (W3- Gambia)

“I married without willing to. I was told I was coming to study, to continue my studies here and at the end when I came here that was not the true. They have arranged me a marriage and I tried to say no, in all the possible ways, but it has been useless, they married me (..) to a man from another family, who was already here. He was 33 years old and I was 14 years old. I was here only for a week and I only knew my cousin. My cousin lived with a family, and the wife of this family is my second counsin. We lived with them. When I arrived here they had arranged a marriage with a man who was not finally my husband (...) because right before I left he was asked to pay my plane ticket and he said he didn’t have the money. I was about to come, they brought me with the documents of another girl (...) and they asked another man to pay and was at the end my husband. And he paid an important part of my plane ticket and he said he would marry me when I arrived and he would pay the rest of the plane ticket. And when I came I was shocked, I wanted to continue studying, and my parents told me I was coming to study and when they told me I said to them I didn’t want to marry. I didn’t want to marry because: 1. I didn’t know that person and 2. He was old and I was 14 years old, and especially because I didn’t know him! And my cousin told me to marry him, that he didn’t have money to maintain me, I told him I wanted to study and he answered me not. During those three weeks they sent me men to talk with me, also the woman who lived with us was telling me yes, yes, and I was, no, no, no. And at the end they threatened me saying things like: “you can start making your suitcase because we will bring you back to Senegal” (W6-Senegal).

In some of these communities, if the girl is studying that can constitute a legitimate excuse to postpone the marriage, or to wait a little bit longer. But sooner or later, the arranged or forced marriage will have to be consummated, and if the woman is still studying, it would be the husband’s decision if the woman can continue or not her studies.

“Because I was studying, everything was very delayed, but until a moment where I was already “old”, and then they told me: “your husband would decide if you continue studying or you are finished”. Because “the daughter is a burden” and on top of that if I was married they would get profit...and the end you seem to be a coat in the whole business!” (W3-Gambia)

Even if arranged and forced marriages are practiced with women and men, the frequency and pressure is bigger towards women, and in some communities, it is only practiced with women. Daughters are perceived as a burden for the family, therefore a marriage with a rich or a well situated husband is a good solution and the only possible end to the situation.

“The father is not interested to have her daughter all her life at home. He is interested in having her daughter married and with someone who earns money, you know? (...) the husband that works and brings money home, because the girls do not earn money. So, what do the parents do? Marry her, because she would be with a man that brings money home” (W4-psychologist)

“I was seeing her because she was a possible candidate for my brother. And my brother has refused her, he said he didn't like this girl. And since my family had already gave its word, and we liked her, we couldn't say no (...) and my mother called me one day and said to me: “you know your brother doesn't accept the proposal” (...)” and you being the younger brother, what do you think? Are you willing to marry her?” I personally like this girl and I said yes. And again the same concept, all the sacrifices done by my parents, my life is not entirely mine, so my decisions are not completely mine because they depend on many factors, so in this sense I said: “yes mother, whatever you want”. I was convinced and I liked her. If I wouldn't like her, I would had said no (...) and after my mother told me that, the first thing I did was to send her a message (I knew her facebook) and I told her: “look, we are planning to do so and sincerely, if you don't agree, if you don't like it, please tell me, and I will tell my family that I don't want and I will appear as the bad guy”. It also affects me, but in a different way because I am a boy. Apart from that I was the youngest and it was not my turn. I could still say no, but if she refuses, it would have been worse for her. And she told me: “before I didn't choose, not I do now. I accept my parents' will, my parents know what it is the best for me and I accepted before and I will continue accepting now”. And that was it. We married and very happy” (M1- Pakistan)

The candidate has to be someone from the same social class, religion, culture, race and even geographical area.

“Not only from Chinese origin, they don't want me to look for someone from Beijing, for example, or from Shangai, he has to be from our town (...) Because they are so rooted, being China so big, that at the end even if he is Chinese, there is a big difference (...) they don't mind, as far as he is from our town, they don't mind if he is Chinese-Chinese of Chinese-Spanish” (W10-Chinese)

The dowry, although illegal in most legislations of the countries of origin is still in practice. Its meaning differs among cultures. Meanwhile for most of the African communities it is like a “prize” the groom's family pays to the bride's family for the wife, in South Asian communities, it is the prize of the bride's family to the groom's family for the new burden to maintain.

“It is true all Muslim women receive some present from the husband when they marry, normally an economic one” (W2-Morocco)

“Well, it is forbidden by law, but they still exist. They give you all furniture for the house, houseware, everything their daughter needs” (W5- Pakistan)

To arrive virgin to the marriage is also an important aspect of marriage circumstances, and if the girl does not bleed in the wedding night, she is blamed for not behaving properly and not maintaining the family's honor.

“And shame on you if it does not work properly! I get mad with this, see how square head they are that the hymen does not always bleed and if you have bad luck and does not bleed, then that's it, you have already done something and you are a whore. They never trust you. You have to bleed, yes or yes, if not, you have done something according to them!” (W3-Gambia)

“The virginity is a very big problem because there are not many people aware that the hymen can be broken in any moment, it is a natural thing, not? But since men are not aware of that, because they don't have vagina, and since they don't suffer all this stuff, the woman is the guilt. She should have taken care, did that...” (W4-Morocco)

In most of the cultures these women belong to, the woman when it gets married, becomes part of her husband's family, and in many cases, lives with them. She is normally obliged to obey her husband, and also her mother-in-law. They can rarely visit or come back to their own families, unless their husbands allow them.

“When I married, I lived 3-4 years with his family here in Spain. We had a mortgage. They were many siblings at home, seven siblings, it is too much, imagine in one house (..) When I arrived here I was always with them at home and I had to go always with some of them if I wanted to leave the house. I didn't mind that, but I couldn't stand how they treated me. His mother knew how I lived over there and for any small detail she was telling me: “don't do that, don't put that”. It took me three months to become pregnant, and he was screaming at me and battering me. “Why do you hit me?”. He started to control me, he didn't let me leave the house” (W1-Morocco)

“They are at their husbands' house, with their parents in law! Imagine it!” (W3-Gambia)

“You have to be at home because you have to be there, you have to take care of the parents in law, if there are younger siblings of the boyfriend, you also have to take care of them. You have to do all domestic work (...) If she goes to her own parents' house, she can go some days, but not the husband. Thus, he let her go, stay some days, and when she wants, he will pick her up” (W5-Pakistan).

Divorce is generally very negatively considered in all the communities. When a divorce takes place, the wife is generally the one blamed for the marriage failure, and she holds a very strong stigma that makes impossible to have another relationship. It is very exceptionally accepted by the community, and it has to be in very extreme situations (where openly and clearly the husband is who has provoked the divorce).

“Really, you have to respect my decision and that’s it. And my mother: ay, what are you doing? And she was sick for a month, a month. And one day I told her: mum, this is serious, if you keep on telling me stand, stand, stand, do you know what you will see? Your only daughter will be put in a coffin and sent to Senegal. And they will tell you: here you have the corpse of your daughter. And uau! And she told me: What? Really? Do as you want (...) I was serious, I was not going to commit suicide, those things are not in my thoughts (...) I couldn’t put up with it. And I was telling her, putting up with so much suffering, one day you will see my corpse there...and she answered me: no! Shut up! Do as you want and I will accept whatever you do. And this is what happened, after I told her that she supported me and so” (W7-Senegal)

“You have to have very strong reasons for a separation to be admitted and positively seen (...) It has to be something very justified, something very violent seen by many people to accept that separation. Something like your husband leaves you for other relationship, for other marriage, or something like that” (W9-gypsy)

“They always blame the woman for a failed marriage (...) There are also relatives that never get divorced, they separated, and they do their lives apart, or hide it for a long time” (W10-Chinese)

5.4. Risk factors

The women interviewed identified as main risk factors the following ones:

First of all, the lack of education. From this point of view the more educated the girl/ woman is, the most empowered is to accept or not the candidates proposed by the family. Therefore education works as a prevention shield to avoid forced marriage, not only because the girl/woman is more empowered, it is also because families do respect studies.

“Before getting married I was studying a lot because I was threat that if I was not a good student, they will marry me! And thus, I was risking my life!” (W3-Gambia)

Secondly, the interviewed women pointed out the economic dependence. Most women cannot escape from a forced marriage, or do not dare to divorce from an arranged or forced marriage because they do not have the educational and professional tools to be independent, to work, and to maintain her children alone. In some cultures, the sexual division of work is a very strong element of gender socialization, so women themselves expect their husbands to maintain them economically. In many cultures (Chinese, Moroccan for example) men are expected to be the breadwinners and women the caretakers. The threat to become a whore, the worst insult and stigma a woman can have in our and in their societies is present in many of these women’s interviews. Men from their society also use this threat to put pressure on women when they want to divorce.

“Because I thought: “where shall I go? I don’t have anybody”. When I tell him I was leaving, he was asking me where, if I didn’t have anything, that I was going to become a whore. I was thinking to go directly to my country with my family” (W1-Morocco)

“I am a Muslim, and if I marry a Muslim man is to have rights. This is why Muslim women cannot marry men that are not Muslim (...) if non Muslim women marry a Muslim man, this man is going to provide her with more rights. But if the Muslim woman marries a non Muslim man, then, which rights is she going to have? – Which rights you gain? – the obligation to maintain me!” (W2-Morocco)

“I want a person who works for me. Yes, indeed! I don’t want to work! Let’s have someone working for me. This is also another idea they have. The man is the one who has to work and the woman at home. Even the women think like that, even the women!” (W4-Morocco)

Thirdly, women stressed the role played by the respect to the parent’s decision and the preservation to the family’s honor.

It is also very important to understand forced marriages the fear of the girl’s family that their daughters are going to lose their culture, their identity that they are going to be melted into the host society:

“The fear, let’s see, I think forced marriages is extinguishing, first of all. The fear, normally, from the parents towards the daughters, especially when they are here because they see how the girls from here change” (W2-Morocco)

“She didn’t want her son to have a Spanish girlfriend, Spanish children, that didn’t belong to her religion, her culture (...) it is this issue that they are going to abandon your culture, that they wouldn’t be educated or wouldn’t choose the path you want for them” (W2-Morocco)

The pressure of the community, especially from other men who can perceive a divorce initiated by a woman as a threat to other marriages. The ultimate threat is the economic vulnerability of the divorced woman isolated from her community, who will have the prostitution as the only option to survive.

“And of course, when a woman wants to separate, all men put pressure on her, even if she is someone’s else wife, all men put pressure to avoid this happens because that could represent a risk” (W6-Senegal)

“They made me suffer a lot. In one meeting there were 7-8 men sitting around me saying...these are the things I will never forget...they tell me all sort of things, one had told me “you have to come back to your husband because if you separate you will be a whore as all separated women”. I remember tears were falling over my face. And I said: “if I have to be a whore to feed and educate my children, I will be. But if I have any other chances, I won’t do it”. And they were shocked...and I have told them: “enough, this is over!”. And I left” (W6-Senegal)

Interviewed women also identified as a risk factor their rural or urban origin: the urban families are generally more open, and give more chances to their children to choose among

the candidates. And once again, the women interviewed pointed out main differences between the girls who have been born in Spain or in their countries of origin.

“You have to differentiate a lot if you have been born here or not. You have to point out that there are two types of forced marriage, of the ones who have been born here and the others because it is completely different. The ones who have been born there have it completely accepted, assumed, assimilated or so. Maybe some of them wouldn't agree but they will do it at the end. The ones being born here probably they also believe in it, but there are many of them that do not want, even if they end up resigned!” (W3-Gambia)

They also stressed as a risk factor for forced marriages the age, they consider the younger the women are, the worse it gets.

Interviewed women from some communities informed that, polygamy, although legally forbidden in Spain, it is still practiced. This contributed to forced marriage with young women, and obviously it provokes horrible situation for the women, and direct violation of human rights, thanks also to our migration legislation.

“They always look for a younger woman. And this explains why so many men have four wives, they marry one and when they consider her old, they go for another, and when they consider this one old, then they go for another one...and so on. This is really serious because for example, there is a man here in Spain and one of his wives is one year here, then she comes back and he brings here another one, then she comes back and he keeps on doing that. Disgusting! And on top of that the wives fight among each other...” (W3-Gambia).

“Men from my community continue practicing polygamy (...) that happens to a European woman and I promise you she has to be placed in a psychiatric” (W7-Senegal)

Some of the interviewed women also pointed out the lack of references or other models in their own community work as a risk factor, and facilitates the prevalence of forced marriage.

5.5. Support received

All interviewed women who have tried to avoid a forced marriage or have tried to escape from a forced marriage have rarely received any type of support. Only some of them have received support from women's NGOs working on the field of gender violence, some university teachers who established especial contact or link of trust with them. And that is all.

“I went to talk with XXX, because I remember she started one day in class to talk about female genital mutilation and so on and I thought: “see, maybe this woman knows a little bit about these issues”. She was one of my professors, from social psychology. And I went to ask her, and she had activated everything to see what could be done. We looked for support, and we have discovered that since I was over 18 years old there was not any help. Really

bad, in fact. We had to look for, to search and search...because I had her, because if I am alone, I wouldn't arrive anywhere, if I wouldn't be at university, What? What could I do? This is the problem" (W3-Gambia)

Some of them stayed short periods of time in women's shelters for victims of domestic violence, but not because of their condition of victims of forced marriage, but because of being victims of other severe forms of physical and sexual abuse by their husbands.

"First we were in a house, now we are in a flat and I am looking for a flat. I was for four months in a shelter and the psychologist help me a lot, she explained me why I was feeling so bad, why I was crying, why I was not in the mood for anything, why I was tired" (W1-Morocco)

In general, escaping from a forced marriage or getting divorced from a forced marriage means isolation, and a lack of network, no matter if you have been born here or you have come regrouped. Few women have received spontaneous support from their own communities, and sometimes the pressure from the community has made them lose even the initial support received.

"I was able to speak Spanish, I understood it (...) But I knew just a few persons in the town. There were many integration projects in the town and I knew some, but I didn't have much network. I was very lost, then, I didn't have anything" (W5-Pakistan)

"Yes, yes I found a job and some nuns that took care of me a lot. And also a flat. When I left my ex husband house I went to a flat an African family was leaving, the man from this family had been the only man that had never told me anything and had always respected me. He told me to stay in the flat and that he was going to talk with the owner. He talked with the landlord and at first he accepted, but then the community came to talk with the landlord and they explained him all sort of things" (W6-Senegal)

Most of the times they do not trust or know they can seek help with the police. They are very reluctant to put a criminal denounce to their husbands, even in severe cases of gender violence. One of the interviewed women is very critical on the treatment she has received by the judicial system when denouncing her own parents in order to save her sisters from an eventual forced marriage.

"He always thought I would do anything because I never went to the police)... Never, in 6 years. The police always come to knock at the door...(...) This time the neighbors called the police, they came and asked me: "what is that?" and I said "nothing, I fell in the bathroom" because I was afraid (...) The police caught here, but I told the judge I didn't want to put a denounce...and the policewomen got angry, they didn't understand why I was protecting him...I just wanted to divorce and that's it" (W1-Morocco)

"Now there is the denounce, soon there will be the trial. Now let's see what happens. I had to put a denounce to get my sisters out of the house. Because I could have left and that was it. But if I left, shall I leave them there? They would have paid for what I did (...) They are in a

shelter for minors and I live in Barcelona, very, very far but well (...) they have 9 and 11 years old...(...) When I am free during the weekends they come with me. Little by little (...) Yes, yes, they tell me: "thank you for saving our lives!" (...) I have asked a partition screen to declare because I don't want to see my parents' faces, and the judge has said that he wanted to see the victim's face when seeing the aggressors" (W3-Gambia)

5.6. Support desirable

All of the women interviewed, the ones who were victims of forced marriages, or were about to be forced to be married, talk about preventive and awareness raising measures by the public authorities. These preventive measures should be directed to stakeholders in order to be able to identify forced marriages without having to wait for a criminal claim, and also directed to the girls and women, in order to empower them.

"We have to talk, they have to seeing themselves the mediators, and they have to be able to communicate. If they can't communicate with the parents, then to look always for another person, maybe a teacher at school, maybe someone they trust from the family; but always talk: see, mum I don't want that. And then explain yourself and give all your reasons. Surely a mother that listens to her daughter, that becomes aware that this marriage will make her suffer a lot, a lot, a lot. Probably the mother would be the first one to say: let's stop all. But many times the girls don't say anything; there is not dialogue at all. And they put up with it, accept and then, problems arise afterwards" (W7-Senegal)

Some of them were especially critical with the institutional racism, social services, schools or hospitals who have clear cases of forced marriages in front of them and do not do anything about it (for example, cases of African girls being pregnant and having kids at very early ages, girls that suddenly disappear from school after summer holidays and nobody knows where she is...).

"They know in the hospitals! How many girls of 15 years old have gone to deliver? They see it and do nothing. This is known but nobody does anything. I don't understand it. And I am also surprised because of the hospitals, they find it normal that black women have babies "because black women have children very young and they have a lot, you know" and they don't look further, and maybe there is a story behind...(...) For sure they must see it! I don't understand why they are not surprised or why anything is activated (...) a girl at school that suddenly stopped going, it's finished...what happened here? It is clear! It could be detected" (W3-Gambia)

Some of the women interviewed are also very critical with the efficacy of laws and public policies, when confronting women who have been suffering different forms of gender violence since they were born.

"I am very critical with the role of the laws protecting women, because it is impossible that a woman who has been in a violence situation since she was little, because many of them suffer violence since they were little until they are 40 years old, you tell her that if she doesn't

put a denounce she would not receive help (...) I think the law is wet paper, because in some cases the denounce works, but in other cases, and I am talking now about African women, I don't think it works, the law, the protocol is not enough (...) and when politicians talk about the protocol and so...come on! Maybe there is a woman sitting at his table that when she gets out she will be smashed!" (W6-Senegal)

Almost all women interviewed who were victims or managed to escape from a forced marriage described the complete lack of knowledge about which kind of support they could receive. The absolute fear to be completely alone and with no job or place to live on (and their children).

"Something that helps you, because there is nothing out there! In my case I had my sisters and when I was thinking "I get out or I die", but if I was leaving, who was going to help them?, and at the end I said "let's jump and let's see what happens!". But imagine you don't have anybody, that you are alone? What will you do? Shut up and marry (...) If something is done, you have always to transmit security. You will be always afraid, but at least, if you feel secure you can say, it will happens this, that, but I will do this and the other...because if you don't know what is going to happen, bua, then you don't do anything" (W3-Gambia)

"I couldn't go forward only if I had a job and food for my children and to give them education" (W6-Senegal)

6. Overall analysis

Forced marriage is a widespread problem in some communities and ethnic minorities living Spain. It is very difficult to distinguish when it is an arranged marriage and when it is real forced marriage, but it is true that many women who want to divorce from an arranged marriage receive pressure from their families and communities, and the result is the same as a forced marriage.

Nevertheless, there is a generalized lack of knowledge by public authorities, civil society about it, except isolated exception of some part of the Catalan police and some NGOs working very closely with certain communities. Consequently there is a lack of specific resources, awareness and trained professionals to identify and help a woman before a forced marriage or when trying to escape from an already consumed forced marriage.

Women who have been victims or are potential victims of forced marriage reinforce this analysis done by the stakeholders. There are huge differences among the same country, the same community or the same religion. There are also important differences if the girl/woman has been born here or in her country of origin. Rural families tend in general to practice more these marriage practices. Some communities give certain margin to choose, from candidates

from the same social class, community, religion, and geographical area, but marriage at the end within these parameters is never an option, it is a must. Even if arranged and forced marriage take place with both women and men, it is more prevalent in women, they have less margin to choose if any is given, and the social and economic consequences of refusing or escaping from these marriage have a clear gender impact, it is much worse for women than for men.

The girls' level of education is a preventive and a deterrent tool to force her to marry, sometimes because it is perceived by the family as an investment and used for the girl as a strategy to postpone the marriage, and sometimes because it constitutes a way to empower the girl/woman to oppose to the marriage, or to have means to escape from a forced marriage.

The younger the girl/woman, the worse it gets, because she would not have opportunities to study, or have contacts to a wider network than her family/community to say no to a forced marriage.

Forced marriage is more difficultly identified as a violation of human rights, and as a specific form of gender violence. When recognized, it generally creates a stigma for the community, because it is easier to link to migration or certain religions. But forced marriage is linked to tradition and gender inequality. Still, it is easier for our patriarchal societies use to criminalize the others (being another community, another culture, or another religion) rather than admit is another form of gender violence, as we also have in our society.