

Case Study M., 18 years old, at Papatya in 2016

Family background

M's family belongs to the Yezidi community from Turkey. No one in her family ever married someone who was not a relative. Her parents were forced to marry.

She describes her mother as depressive. Her father is not successful economically and his status in the family is low. His father is the head of the family and decides about everything. Since her family learnt that she has a boyfriend who is Muslim she has been controlled even more than before and been locked in.

“They took my mobile phone and forbid me any contact with friends. They locked me for 4 months in the basement to “correct” me. (...) They took all my documents and I was not allowed to have a bank account. (...) I was not allowed to see a doctor alone and was brought to and from work. (...) I was constantly under pressure (...). They planned my life and I had to live it like that. I really fear they might kill me”

(Quotation from Ms letter to the Youth Social Services)

She fled before her grandfather returned from a visit from Turkey. She expects a lot of people to look for her and is afraid about what might happen then. She turns to a local women's shelter and is referred to Papatya to Berlin to be safe.

Challenges in Support: Integration in the Youth Welfare System and Provision of Anonymity

At Papatya it becomes clear that M. is decided not to go back and wants to stay at Berlin. Her boyfriend plans to follow her on the long run, but now they both agree that this would be too dangerous.

The Youth Social Services of her home town is contacted, since M. says she does not feel ready to live on her own and wants more support than is available through the Social Services for adults (Jobcenter). M. has to apply for youth care and to give reasons why - although adult – she wants to be supported within the Youth Welfare System. She does this in writing and later also over the phone.

M. wants to continue her education as doctor's assistant and sends job applications to several doctors at Berlin. She already started the process to get the German nationality back in her home town. The police there is informed not to give her new passport to anyone from the family. She wants to change her name officially – but this is only possible after obtaining the German nationality.

Her boyfriend is terrorised by members of her family for two days, but since he can prove that she is not with him, he finally is left alone.

M. has to go to the dentist. Therefore precautions have to be taken: She is anonymized by her health insurance agency which needs phone calls as well as written statements by Papatya.

From the local women's shelter, the police and her former employer she learns that her family searches for her a lot. They tried to get her passport, her aunt has faked to be a victim of domestic violence to get more information from the women's shelter and they approached her former employer several times.

Papatya tries to make watertight that no information goes out to her family through her old or new health insurance and talks about precautions with her former employee.

M.s boyfriend comes to visit her and stays at a hotel at Berlin. Her family thinks, he still is on holiday in Turkey.

M. writes a letter to her family, which is sent to them from a different town – every connection to Berlin has to be avoided.

After some weeks at Papatya she is granted youth welfare money. A quite common form of housing

for young people from 15 to 21 years in youth care in Germany is a “Jugendwohngemeinschaft”. 5 young people share a flat which is rented by an NGO and 2 social workers with 30 hours/week each take care of them. There are mixed ones and “only girls” ones. About 10 “only girls”- flats exist at Berlin. M. wants to go to one of those. After visiting two she decides which one she wants to live in. She will be able to stay there for about two years. Every half year she has to prove to Youth Social Services that she still continues her education and wants to stay on. Papatya has a transfer talk with the colleagues from M.s new home – especially about the further provision of her anonymity. Whenever they need advice they can consult with Papatya.

Issues to Promote in EU

“My life was pre-structured by them, I was not allowed to have an own opinion. did not learn to manage my own money. I am quite afraid to decide on my own. I am not used to stay alone in a flat or even in a room of my own.”

NGOs which support victims of HBV often have to make great efforts to persuade youth social services to support young adults and sometimes are not successful.

Girls and young women, who face honour based abuse, have to cope with a very complex situation. Their socialisation did never encourage self- determination and if they break up with their family, they often have to leave their social network completely. At the same time they can be persecuted by a lot of people and have to handle their risk to be caught. It is not enough to refer them to another town.

They need shelters which can respond to their needs and have capacities to accompany them closely. To start an independent life also the young adults should have access to the Youth Welfare System and it's structures. Since they are not used to live alone they should have the opportunity to lean this step by step starting with shared flats.

The provision of anonymity is also a complex and complicated issue. Existing witness protection programs have a very high threshold – a criminal charge and total isolation from the past are required. A change of name is only possible for German citizens and still has some shortcomings. So authorities should think about ways to make victims' lives safer. For example: They should be more supportive in exchanging data between them where possible and not ask victims to provide data of their parents/families (like f.e. proof of income). They should issue letters of support which help victims get an “particular worthy of protection”-status with welfare authorities like the Jobcenter, health insurance agencies and others.