

## **Marital status**

The marital status is a person's state of being, basically, single or maiden, married, separated, divorced or widowed.

There are some differences between the various kinds of *marital status* existing in countries. Some countries, for instance, do not acknowledge the marital status *separated*, which will obviously lead to problems in other countries where this marital status does not exist. The opposite is possible as well, for instance in Austria, where someone can live '*getrennt*', i.e. being married but not living together.

In the Netherlands it is also possible to have a *registered partnership*. It is a way to legally record a relationship between two partners. It is similar to a marriage, but differs with respect to rights over possible children. However, registered partnerships are not recognized in all countries.

Problems will also arise in case of bigamy and polygamy. These types of *marital status* can be officially registered (e.g. in Togo), but are considered invalid by e.g. European Law.

Another problem is the case of *traditional marriages* (marriages that have been carried out according to the customs and practices in a number of non-European countries). These marriages are not registered according to the European bureaucratic rules and consequently are not considered valid in Europe. To make things even more complex, the term *traditional marriage* may also be used in European societies as the conventional alternative of the so-called same-sex marriage.