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The denial of the very existence of Islamophobia/anti-Muslim racism/anti-Muslim hate crime in Europe by many demonstrates the need for an appropriate effort and political will to tackle this normalized racism and its manifestations that are deeply entrenched in European societies, institutions, and states. This denial is not only the case for extremist groups on the political fringe of the society, but rather far-right discourses have moved to the center of political power. Consequently, it is not only right-wing extremist groups that rely on the means of Islamophobic propaganda and discourse - social democrats, liberals, leftists or conservatives are not immune to this form of racism.

As a survey published by the FRA reveals 76% of Muslim respondents feel strongly attached to the country they live in, while 31% of those seeking work have been discriminated against in the last five years. At the same time, only 12% of Muslims say they have reported cases of discrimination. Hence, we can say with certainty that the extent of discrimination Muslims face in Europe is much greater than the numbers revealed in any report on Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime in Europe.

In other words, one can claim that all the available data and statistics about Islamophobia in Europe show only the tip of the iceberg. Therefore, revealing the comprehensiveness of structural anti-Muslim racism lies at the heart of the European Islamophobia Report project, which on a yearly basis analyzes the trends and developments in Europe from Russia to Portugal, and Malta to Norway.

About SETA
Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA) is a non-profit research institute based in Turkey dedicated to innovative studies on national, regional and international issues. SETA is the leading think tank in Turkey and has offices in Ankara, Istanbul, Washington D.C. and Cairo. The objective of SETA is to produce up-to-date and accurate knowledge and analyses in the fields of politics, economy, and society, and inform policy makers and the public on changing political, economic, social, and cultural conditions. Through research reports, publications, brain storming sessions, conferences and policy recommendations, SETA seeks to guide leaders in government, civil society, and business, and contributes to informed decision making mechanisms.
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SETA is pleased to present the third edition of the annual *European Islamophobia Report* (EIR) succeeding the reports of 2015 and 2016. This year, 40 prominent scholars and civil society actors from various European countries who specialize in different fields such as racism, gender, and discrimination studies, present 33 country reports. In addition to highlighting the developments of Islamophobia in key fields such as employment, education and politics, they provide precious country-specific policy recommendations to counter this phenomenon and a detailed chronology of events. Since every year it applies the same methodological framework on a large number of European countries, the *European Islamophobia Report* (EIR) provides a unique collection of European-wide analyses in regard to anti-Muslim racism in Europe to policy makers, social scientists, and ordinary readers.

Monitoring Islamophobia in Europe became an urgent need in the last few years, since the phenomenon has sensibly increased, following economic recession and the rise of far-right politics. Today, Islamophobia constitutes a serious challenge for European democracies for at least four reasons:

- First of all, Islamophobia is severely impacting the life of millions of European Muslims facing racism at university, in the workplace, the public sphere, etc. In addition to representing a threat to their physical life, this racism undermines their place in society and their sense of belonging in European nation states.
• Secondly, the rise of Islamophobia both reflects and strengthens the normalization of far-right discourse in the political spectrum across Europe. Within a few months, neofascist parties entered the German Bundestag, accessed strategic ministries in Austria, and registered historical results in the French, Dutch and Italian elections.

• Thirdly, Islamophobia poses a problem of internal security as it intensifies tensions between communities, legitimizes hate crimes against individuals, and undermines the European Union ideals of peace and coexistence.

• Finally, Islamophobia represents an obstacle for European international relations, since it mars the EU image of tolerance worldwide and increases tension between EU member states and certain strategic partners, including Muslim countries.

Yet, even if Islamophobia objectively constitutes a threat for European democracies, many European intellectuals and politicians, both left- and right-wing, are still refuting the existence and the validity of the concept. Their worries about terrorist attacks and immigration are preventing them from acknowledging the daily racism that Muslims face in Europe. However, by denying Islamophobia, there is a risk – intended or not – to ignore the unacceptable reality experienced by millions of European citizens.

Based on this observation, as SETA, we decided to annually publish the European Islamophobia Report (EIR) in order to provide serious – yet accessible – analyses on a phenomenon that remains widely ignored and misunderstood. We hope this will be a vital contribution in the fight against Islamophobia in Europe.

Burhanettin Duran
General Coordinator of SETA
THE STATE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN EUROPE

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ

This is the third issue of the annual *European Islamophobia Report (EIR)* consisting of an overall evaluation of Islamophobia in Europe in the year 2017, as well as 33 country reports which include almost all EU member states and additional countries such as Russia and Norway. This year’s *EIR* represents the work of 40 prominent scholars and civil society activists from various European countries.

In a presentation of the Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey’s selected findings on Muslims, the director of the European Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), Michael O’Flaherty, stressed that their survey clearly contradicts the claim that Muslims are not integrated into European societies. On the contrary, the survey found that the trust of Muslims in the democratic institutions of Europe is higher than much of the general population. Furthermore, O’Flaherty pointed out that “every incident of discrimination and hate crime, however, hinders their [Muslims’] inclusion and reduces their chances of finding work. We risk that we alienate individuals and their community from us, with all possible consequences.”

As the report based on a survey of 10,527 people who identified themselves as Muslims published by the FRA reveals 76% of Muslim respondents feel strongly attached to the country they live in, while 31% of those seeking work have been discriminated against in the last five years. At the same time, only 12% of Muslims say they have reported cases of discrimination. Hence, we can say with certainty that the extent of discrimination Muslims face in Europe is much greater than the numbers revealed in any report on Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime in Europe. In other words, one can claim that all the available data and statistics about Islamophobia in Europe show only the tip of the iceberg. Therefore, revealing the comprehensiveness of structural anti-Muslim racism lies at the heart of the European Islamophobia Report project, which on a yearly basis analyzes the trends and developments in almost all states in Europe from Russia to Portugal, and Malta to Norway.

However, NGOs and projects like the EIR cannot provide a European-wide daily monitoring mechanism given the colossal size of the problem and the funds required. Therefore, we think it is the duty of the nation states to put in place monitoring mechanisms and publish yearly data on anti-Muslim hate crimes in their respective countries. Yet, it is clear that we are far from that goal since there is no official documentation of anti-Muslim hate crime in the overwhelming majority of European nation states. Recently, Germany made an important step by including Islamophobia as a subcategory of “hate crimes” in the official police statistics of “politically motivated criminal acts.” We welcome this decision and urge other European nation states to follow suit, since Islamophobia is not only a fundamental threat to the coexistence of different religions and cultures but also a threat to the democratic foundations of Europe. Furthermore, tackling Islamophobia has also become an acute problem given the rise of racist, especially Islamophobic, anti-Semitic and anti-Roma far-right parties and the adaptation of their discourse by mainstream parties in many European nation states.

The first statistics, which were revealed for 2017 by the German State reveal around 71 attacks on mosques and 908 crimes against German Muslims (ranging from verbal to physical attacks and murder attempts). Germany also registered 1,413 attacks on refugees and 93 attacks on aid workers in Germany in the first 273 days of 2017. However, although the German state registered 71 attacks on mosques, the DITIB, which is an NGO, listed 101 attacks on mosques in Germany all throughout 2017. Therefore, bearing in mind also what the FRA revealed about the reluctance of Muslims to report incidents, one can claim that the estimated number of unknown cases might be more than eight times higher. There are various reasons for these phenomena; some of these include:
• Victims may not be aware of the reporting mechanisms.
• The victims’ possible social isolation or proximity to the perpetrator.
• The victims’ lack of trust in the authorities, due to fears that their claim will not be taken seriously.
• The victims’ fear of being victimized again by police officers.

In this regard, the OSCE ODIHR points out to the fact that “governments have a central role to play in ensuring access to justice; from the initial assessment of victims’ needs by police officers, to support mechanisms for victims through governmental or nongovernmental institutions.”

The denial of the very existence of Islamophobia/anti-Muslim racism/anti-Muslim hate crime in Europe by many demonstrates the need for an appropriate effort and political will to tackle this normalized racism and its manifestations that are deeply entrenched in European societies, institutions, and states. Intelligence services, such as the German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, have realized the important role Islamophobia plays for right-wing extremist parties. Still, it is not only the case for extremist groups on the political fringe of the society, but rather far-right discourses have moved to the center of political power. Consequently, it is not only right-wing extremist groups that rely on the means of Islamophobic propaganda and discourse - social democrats, liberals, leftists or conservatives are no longer immune to this form of racism.

The recognition of Islamophobia is of utmost importance in Europe. Therefore, we welcome the Swedish government’s decision to launch a National Plan to Combat Racism, which also acknowledges Islamophobia as a problem that needs to be addressed. However, despite this positive step the Equality Ombudsman in Sweden followed the EU Court of Justice in ruling that company policies banning the Islamic headscarf are not discriminatory.

That is also why initiatives such as the report The Missing Muslims: Unlocking British Muslim Potential for the Benefit of All by Conservative MP Dominic Grieve, in which the government was urged to adopt a definition of anti-Muslim prejudice along the lines of that adopted in 2016 for anti-Semitism, are so important. Successfully combating Islamophobia requires outspoken and brave initiatives and persons (politicians and activists) who challenge this widespread normalized form of racism.

With the help of the new president of the USA, who defends his “Muslim Ban” by referring to invented terrorist attacks such as the one in Sweden, the imagined figure of the all-time lurking Muslim enemy is kept alive. When Trump tweet-

ed “You look at what’s happening last night in Sweden. Sweden, who would believe this? Sweden. They took in large numbers. They’re having problems like they never thought possible,”⁴ Swedish officials and reporters were bewildered since there were no major incidents that night. The climate of the age of fake news, which has always been central to the spread of conspiracy theories, is now exaggerated and expanded by leading politicians in the world, while the structural dimension of Islamophobia still exists at the heart of European societies and institutions. This situation requires a need for a clear stance by governing politicians, elites and intellectuals since they are bound by their constitutions and laws, and international and national human rights standards.

In this manner, British Prime Minister Theresa May criticized Trump for re-posting material from the far-right Britain First, while the U.S. president answered her with the advice that it would be better if she dealt with the “destructive radical Islamic Terrorism that is taking place within the United Kingdom” rather than focusing on him.⁵ It is quite clear that Europe needs more courageous leaders such as Alexander Van der Bellen, the president of the Austrian Republic, who defended the rights of women to wear a headscarf in a country where the far right has become the leading political power.⁶

**Combatting Islamophobia on the European and the Supranational Levels**

Combatting Islamophobia on national and regional levels is important but not enough. Therefore, there is a need for a concerted effort to combat Islamophobia first on the European level and second on the supranational level. In this regard both the coordination among different NGOs and the involvement of institutions such as the EU, the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the UN are essential. In 2017, there were some initial positive steps on the EU level, however, given the size of the problem there is still a long way to go.

As an NGO coalition statement following the 4th Roundtable on anti-Muslim hatred, which was organized by the European Commission (EC) and chaired by the EU coordinator on combatting anti-Muslim hatred, David Friggieri, made clear, a “stronger and more concrete commitment and actions”⁷ are needed to combat

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Islamophobia. These civil society organizations argue that “there are still some misconceptions by the European institutions with regards to the issue of Islamophobia. With the generalised suspicion against Muslims, it is of utmost importance for EU policy makers not to fall into the trap of treating Muslims as potential problems but rather as human beings whose fundamental rights can be violated. Combating Islamophobia is not about preventing radicalism or terrorism […] it is about politically addressing structural forms of discrimination and racism affecting Muslims or those perceived as such.”

Although the statements of high-ranking politicians such as Frans Timmerman, vice-president of the European Commission, in which he recognized the problem of Islamophobia are positive steps, the European Coalition against Islamophobia still sees a large potential for improvement regarding the fight against Islamophobia on the EU level. According to the European Coalition against Islamophobia, the EU and national legislations provide legal remedies for racist crime and discrimination, yet Muslims still suffer from violence, prejudice and exclusion in Europe. In this context, the FRA recommends better implementation of the relevant EU and national legislation to combat widespread harassment and hate crime against Muslims.

On March 14, 2017, the European Court of Justice (EJC) for the first time made two judgments to rule on non-discrimination at work on religious grounds. The EJC ruled that employers would be able to prohibit the wearing of religious garments by their employees. This was despite the content of Article 9, which secures the freedom of thought, conscience and religion of the European Convention on Human Rights. The EJC ruled that banning visible signs of political, philosophical or religious beliefs is “appropriate” to ensure a “policy of neutrality” if systematically applied as a company policy. Obviously, also observant Jews and other religious minorities will be affected by this as much as Muslim women and men. But the verdict has evolved in the context of the complaints of two Muslim women, one from France and one from Belgium. It will be Muslim women who will suffer from this regulation disproportionately. Amnesty International protested against this decision as potentially propelling increased discrimination on the basis of religious identity, especially against Muslim women. Also, many faith communities and vocal Muslim organizations in Brussels and beyond have objected to what they perceive a step towards further institutionalization of Islamophobia.

8. Ibid.
While this verdict made clear that visible signs of political, philosophical or religious beliefs can be banned in private companies, it left many questions open regarding the decisions to be taken in the future.

As Bülent Senay, personal representative of the OSCE Chair-in-Office on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims, argued during the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2017, on a supranational level, institutions still lack means to fight Islamophobia. Amongst other important recommendations, he called the OSCE states to commit to recording hate crimes against Muslims as a separate disaggregated category. The OSCE ODIHR is also considering the preparation of a guide on hate crimes against Muslims and on the security needs of Muslim communities in the OSCE region. A similar guide has been prepared and published for Jewish communities. We think this would be a positive step to combatting Islamophobia in the OSCE region and, therefore, welcome the preparation of such a guide.

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance of the Council of Europe publishes an annual report on the ECRI’s activities, in which Islamophobia is also analyzed under a separate heading. In the last report, which covered the year 2016, the ECRI points to the fact that “Muslims continue to experience discrimination in various areas of social life, including education, employment and housing.” The ECRI concludes that the “negative experiences of Muslims in Europe can fuel feelings of isolation within a larger community and hinder inclusive societies.” However, we think that the Council of Europe, which consists of 47 states, can play a wider role in the combat against Islamophobia in Europe.

The European Coalition against Islamophobia, which consists of 13 NGOs, has published its suggestion for an action plan for 2018–2019 to fight Islamophobia in the European Union. This plan puts the recognition of Islamophobia at its center and among other important recommendations calls the European Parliament to adopt a resolution on combating Islamophobia as it did on combating anti-Semitism and anti-Gypsiesm.

14. Ibid.
15. The members of this coalition are the following: European Forum of Muslim Women; Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations; Karamah EU; European Muslim Initiative for Social Cohesion; European Network against Racism; and the Collective against Islamophobia in France.
A resolution adopted by the UN Human Rights Council on March 23, 2016 (Resolution 31/16) expressed “concern over violent attacks motivated by anti-religious bias, targeting individuals belonging to religious minorities, as well as religious places, and recommended that states prevent, investigate and punish such acts.”

Although this is more a general resolution on freedom of religion it is still relevant to EU states which are witnessing an unprecedented rise of anti-Muslim hate crimes in the last decade. More concretely, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance reported that “the fear of terrorism and racist and xenophobic speech often translate into increases in hate crimes targeting Muslims, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.” Like many others, the special rapporteur reiterated the importance of collecting disaggregated data on hate crimes targeting Muslims and others.

The Rise of the Far Right in Europe

Beyond the supranational level, there are observable trends in different European nation states. Firstly, the far-right political camp has moved from the periphery to the center and become integral to the political landscape in Europe. While most far-right parties are still in opposition, some have gained major influence by becoming governing parties such as in the cases of Austria, Bulgaria, and Finland. While others may still be in opposition, their Islamophobic discourse, which is so central to most of them, has become mainstream since their issues have been co-opted by former centrist political parties. In Sweden, for instance, the once marginal anti-Muslim Sweden Democrats became the third or second largest party in opinion polls, pushing most other parties to adjust their policies accordingly. Secondly, we also observe a stronger cooperation of various Islamophobic parties in Europe. For instance, the Czech Freedom and Direct Democracy Party (SPD) organized a meeting of representatives of its partners from the European Parliament in December 2017 in Prague. Politicians such as Geert Wilders (Dutch Freedom Party) and Marine Le Pen (Front National) were amongst some of the participants.

From Sweden to Greece, from Poland to the Netherlands, the rise of far-right parties is a vital threat to democratic order in Europe. What is more dangerous is the mainstreaming and normalization of the far-right policies within mainstream politics. Austria is a wake-up call and the prime example of this horror story which might repeat itself in many European countries if European societies do not seriously tackle this disturbing trend.

18. Ibid.
The Right Wing in Opposition

As mentioned above in the majority of EU countries far-right parties are still in opposition. However, when in opposition, right-wing political parties are even more explicit about their racist utopia and hence speak out in a harsher and more direct way against Muslims. By doing so, they are playing a crucial role in the normalization of anti-Muslim discourse in Europe.

There are many examples of this blatant anti-Muslim racism, some of which will be presented here. In this context, the Northern League’s candidate for president of the Lombardy region of Italy warned that there is a “risk that the white race disappears and is replaced by migrants.”19 In Slovenia, right-wing populist and extremist parties are not strong enough to win elections, however they are very active on social media and in the organization of public events and protests. For instance, Nova 24TV in Slovenia broadcasted the following Islamophobic opinion: “Obviously, we do not have enough terrorists, rapists and other criminals in Europe. It seems that leading politicians want to bring even more. Only this can explain their desire for the ever-increasing inclusion of migrants and Muslims in European countries.”20

In Latvia, numerous pre-election programs of various parties for the 2017 municipal elections demonstrated unambiguous Islamophobic positions. In Riga, the Action Party of Eurosceptics (Eiroskeptiķu Rīcības partija) published the following slogan in their program, “We are not against Muslims, we are against the Islamization of Latvia and Europe.”21 The National Alliance (Nacionālā apvienīb) was even more radical in its program in which it stated that it was “in support of not letting into Liepāja illegal immigrants called ‘refugees’ – potential criminals, terrorists and idlers! There will be no mosques here!” 22

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, anti-Muslim bigotry and negative trends towards Muslims were evident mainly in the educational, political and media sectors. The main generators of Islamophobic discourse and anti-Muslim bigotry are the Bosnian Serb political, media and academic policymakers.

For the first time since 1989 a right-wing extremist party managed to enter parliament in Slovakia. The opposition party ‘We Are a Family – Boris Kolar’ submitted

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a bill to amend the laws to enable a ban on building mosques. Eleven members voted for the proposal, 48 against it, while more than a half of the MPs, 77 in total, abstained from the vote.

In Southern Cyprus, a newly established party, the far-right ELAM (Ethniko Laiko Metopo), which is a sister party to Greece’s Golden Dawn, has significantly contributed to spreading Islamophobia in the southern part of the island. Although ELAM is a very small party and only managed to enter parliament in 2016 with 3.71% (allowing them 2 MPs), their views are widespread; the archbishop of southern Cyprus often expresses his agreement with ELAM’S positions.

The successful Swiss right-wing party SVP tried to introduce a full-face veil ban in Sweden. Another parliamentary initiative by National Councillor Yannick Buttet (CVP) demanded a “mandatory labelling of imported halal meat at all stages of sales as well as an increase in the price of imported halal meat.” Although the National Council accepted the initiative, the Council of States rejected it.

In Switzerland, the parliamentary motion by Lorenzo Quadri from the regional right-wing party Lega, which was adopted in the National Council, instructed the Federal Council to draw up a bill, which, following the rules that apply in Austria, provides a guarantee for the following: “(1) The prohibition of Islamic places of worship and imams who accept funds from abroad; (2) The obligation for Islamic centers to disclose the origin and use of their finances; (3) The duty to conduct sermons in the language of residence.”

Meanwhile in the UK, UKIP’s election manifesto promised a public ban on “face coverings” and proscribed sharia courts in the UK. In the Netherlands, radical parties such as the Dutch SGP (a radical Christian party) published a manifesto, which argued that “the love offer of Jesus Christ and Muhammad’s use of violence are as different as day and night.”

Beyond political parties, on the more extreme non-parliamentarian level or the grassroots level, far-right groups, such as the Identitarian movement or ones that function underground, pose a threat to Muslims in Europe, especially in their most violent form. Nationalist groups such as, among others, the Finnish branch of the Nordic Resistance Movement and the “Finland First” movement were active in spreading their ideology of hate.

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26. Ibid., p. 2.
The Right Wing in Power

Currently, there are a few governments in Europe, which include right-wing parties that have focused heavily on using Islamophobia as a means of gaining public support and political power. After the general elections in Norway, the Progress Party, which is often regarded as a right-wing populist party and which had an openly Islamophobic election campaign, governs together with the conservatives in a coalition. Consequently, for the first time in Norwegian history, there are government representatives who do not shy away from using Islamophobic discourse. The Progress Party’s minister for immigration and integration, Sylvi Listhaug, suggested a prohibition against hijabs at elementary schools, which was not supported by the coalition partner. The party also proposed to ban the circumcision of baby boys, which also found no support in parliament. A third proposal, a national ban of the face veil in schools and institutions of higher education, won broad parliamentary support and is currently being circulated for consultation.

In the Czech Republic, a new party called ANO won the elections. Its leader supported the notorious Islamophobic politician, Czech President Miloš Zeman. The leader of the right-wing populist party Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD), which campaigns continuously for a legal ban of Islam, became vice-chair of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic. Although there is a tiny Muslim community in the country, the 2017 national elections were the first in the history of the Czech Republic, during which attitudes towards Muslims were a central issue.

In Bulgaria, a hostile language towards Muslims is winning ground. Especially, during election campaigns, anti-Muslim rhetoric was at its peak. Many extreme right-wing political parties such as ATAKA, NFSB (National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria), and IMRO (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization) are part of the current government and form a coalition with the leading party.

In Serbia, there are ministers such as Aleksandar Vulin, minister of defense, and Nebojša Stefanovic, minister of the interior, who attract attention by stirring ethnic and religious hostilities. Today, we can witness a revival of political parties and forces from the 1990s in the political arena. Currently, the strongest parties are those that were the most important players in the aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. A rise in nationalism and hate speech targeting Muslims can be seen in the public sphere. Crimes committed against Muslims are glorified.

Co-option of Islamophobia by Centrist Parties

We observe a general trend within centrist political parties to co-opt the Islamophobic discourse of right-wing political parties. The former president of Romania, Traian Basescu, proclaimed in the midst of a debate on a mosque in Bucharest that this was
“a risk to national security,” and argued that “part of the Islamization of Europe is building mosques everywhere.”27 During a local council election in Bucharest in June 2016, several leading Bucharest mayoral candidates argued for a referendum on the mosque, amongst them the current mayor Gabriela Firea of the Social Democratic Party (Partidul Social Democrat – PSD).28

In Poland, there is no nominal right-wing political party, but a conservative party in power, which nevertheless allows an unambiguous negative image of Islam to be spread in state institutions. State-funded media outlets seem to carefully select their guests, who spread a stereotypical portrayal of Muslims as “violent,” “terrorists,” “Jihadists,” “sexists,” “rapists,” “uncivilized,” “double-faced,” and in general “a threat” to European and Christian values. While a research commissioned by the Commissioner of Human Rights on the attitudes among Polish secondary school students was published in 2017, showing that the majority of the 396 respondents reveal strong anti-refugee, Islamophobic and homophobic prejudice,29 the Ministry of Education shut down anti-discrimination programs in Polish schools and instead promoted programs supporting patriotism and a national and cultural Polish identity.30

In Spain, former president of Madrid and of the senate, and former minister of culture, Esperanza Aguirre, tweeted that January 2 was a glorious day for Spanish women who otherwise would not enjoy any freedom under the rule of Islam.31 In Slovakia, former president Robert Fico argued that he will “not allow the creation of an integrated Muslim community in Slovakia.”32

In Hungary, the ruling conservative Fidesz competed in Islamophobic rhetoric with the far right. It finally managed to make anti-Muslim narratives become un-

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contested and thus realized a support of an overwhelming portion of the population. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán became famous for the alleged conspiracy of George Soros to Islamize Europe with the help of “hordes of migrants raping Europe.”

During the national presidential elections in France in 2017, Islamophobia was omnipresent not only in the campaign of the Front National but also in an array of other candidates’ campaigns. Also during the national elections in the Netherlands in 2017, there was a race between the right-wing populist party of Geert Wilders (PVV) and the center-right party of Mark Rutte (VVD). Some intellectuals, before the elections, discussed whether the number of Muslims could be reduced by deportation. Prominent Law Professor Paul Cliteur was present during the debate and discussed how this could be made possible legally.

In Denmark, the leader of the Social Democrats, Mette Frederiksen, argued that there is no need for Muslim private schools and that they would be strengthening the isolation of Muslims. Frederiksen argued that “a school with a foundation in Islam is not part of the majority culture in Denmark.” Bias against Muslims within the oppositional social democratic party intensified. This is also true for the conservatives in Austria. There, the then-leader of the conservatives and now chancellor, Sebastian Kurz, argued that there should not be any private Muslim kindergartens in the country.

Denying the Suffering

In many European countries, the very existence of Islamophobia itself is denied. In countries like Austria and Norway, leading journalists of editorial boards shift the focus from Islamophobia as a problem to Islamophobia as a “combat term,” arguing that the term itself is used by Islamists to delegitimize any debate on Islam and Muslims. Hence, there is a reluctance to use the term “Islamophobia” in the public sphere. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is a denial of the anti-Muslim genocide. Nationalist movements and even parts of the Croatian political establishment argue that the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to be territorially divided in order to secure peace and security. Convictions such as in the case of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague fueled Islamophobia within these separatist and nationalist movements. Republika Srpska, continued its separatist policy in 2017 and was supported by visits from abroad, especially members of the right-wing Austrian FPÖ, which now forms a government with the conservative ÖVP.

The (Mis-)Use of Education and Academia

An unsubstantiated report on an alleged Muslim Brotherhood conspiracy to establish an Islamic State in Sweden was published by a Swedish state agency. The Administrative Court of Appeal later dismissed the report as of “highly limited” value. The author is a senior fellow at the Brussels-based think tank European Foundation for Democracy, which plays a central role in disseminating this conspiracy theory, which helps in defaming Muslim civil society actors. Also in Austria, a report was published on an alleged Muslim Brotherhood conspiracy by another senior policy advisor of the same think tank in cooperation with a state agency. The report had no serious impact, since it was presented a few days before the elections and did not receive major coverage due to other political scandals. The current chancellor of Austria Sebastian Kurz has been central in sponsoring 'studies' on Muslims in Austria (one on Muslim kindergartens, the other on mosques), which would serve his increasingly Islamophobic agenda. Also, Islamophobia is a threat, when good initiatives are legitimized for the wrong ends. Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama defended the need for religious instruction in public schools with the prevention of the radicalization of young Muslims.

Online Islamophobia

Islamophobic groups are especially active on the Internet. Often, the Internet is where right-wing groups emerge before materializing in “real life.” Therefore, better regulations are needed in this sphere to combat the spread of Islamophobic content which is the main source in the radicalization of far-right terrorist groups or lone wolves.

Groups such as the explicitly Islamophobic Identitarian Movement that represents the postmodern face of the New Right, is active in countries like Slovenia, Hungary. Malta witnessed the emergence of its first far-right party, the Ghaqda Patrijotti Maltin (Maltese Patriots). While doing poorly in elections, their media campaign and social media advertisements presented many Islamophobic statements. In countries with a negligible Muslim population like Latvia, Islamophobic attitudes are still mostly voiced on the Internet. In Italy, a significant research on intolerance based on an analysis of Twitter realized by Voxdiritti in 2016 ranked Muslims as the fourth most targeted group (6% of all tweets).35

Legalizing Islamophobia

Early in 2017, the Austrian government, made up of social democrats and conservatives, passed a law that outlawed the veiling of the face. Romania followed

with a legislative proposal for the ban of face veiling in educational institutions initiated by the ruling People’s Movement Party (PMP). The asserted aim was the prevention of violence and terrorism. The law was launched by 26 MPs from three parliamentary parties. Also, in Latvia, where – similar to Romania – there are nearly no Muslims, a draft law on the restriction of wearing a face veil was prepared by the Ministry of Justice in 2015 and is still under consideration. In Belgium, the parliament voted for limitations on ritual slaughter including the prohibition of Muslim halal slaughter. Also, a debate on a state takeover of the Grand Mosque of Belgium began. In a small village in Hungary, a mayor passed a law to ban the construction of mosques and minarets, the Muslim call for prayer, the chador, niqab, burqa, and burkini. The mayor argued that he wished to set a positive example for other Hungarian municipalities in order to guarantee the ‘centuries-old traditions’ of local communities in the face of mass migration to the country. After massive protests in the entire country, the mayor had to withdraw the legislation for contradicting a number of basic rights guaranteed by the Hungarian Constitution. In November 2017, however, the local council voted in favor of the same legislation that was amended after merely removing any words referring to Islam from the text. Also, the Dutch Christian-Democrats (CDA) included a ban on the financing of mosques from abroad and were wary of “radical Islam” in their campaign program.

In Finland, a citizens’ initiative was launched to amend a law in favor of a “Burka Ban.” Among the initiators was Terhi Kiemunki, a former member of the Finns Party, who was convicted of incitement to hatred due to texts on her blog defaming Muslims. A spokesperson of the initiative was Jukka Ketonen, current chairman of the Finnish Defense League (FDL), who proclaims to be fighting against “Islamic extremism” and is known for other smaller initiatives such as demonstrations against “Islamization” before a school. In Denmark, a ban on full-face veils, a so-called “mask ban” (popularly referred to as the “niqab ban”) was proposed by the Danish

38. “Initiative submitted by at least 50,000 Finnish citizens eligible to vote and containing the proposal that an act be enacted” as defined in “MOT Eduskuntasanasto,” a multilingual parliamentary glossary, prepared jointly by parliament and the Government Terminology Service of the Prime Minister’s Office, retrieved January 31, 2018, from https://mot.kielikone.fi/mot/eduskuntasanasto/netmot/U1-flie&height=147.
40. For a detailed description of Terhi Kiemunki’s court case, see Ibid.
People’s Party following the verdict by the European Court of Human Rights.42 This initiative was not only supported by the right wing, but also the Social Democrats and the Danish Social Liberal Party, arguing that they would, thus, empower Muslim women. There is also a law prohibiting male circumcision under way in Denmark.

Terrorist Attacks against Muslims

In Europe, the largest number of attacks which could conclusively be affiliated to terrorist organizations were carried out by racists, nationalists and separatist extremists (99), followed by left-wing extremist attacks (27). Nevertheless, Jihadist terrorist attacks (13) and the general Muslim population in Europe associated with it are largely seen as the greatest threat to European societies.43 Irresponsible politicians and media play their part in supporting this trend.

There are worrying signs of far-right terrorist groups and lone wolf far-right terrorists increasing their activities and targeting Muslims in Europe. Attacks against mosques and Muslim institutions have become a daily routine. For instance, according to the DITIB in Germany there were 101 attacks on mosques throughout 2017. However, the attacks against Muslims, persons who are perceived as Muslims, and persons who are vocal in their support for Muslim or refugee rights are becoming more and more frequent and violent. In Germany, the government registered around 908 hate crimes in 2017 against German Muslims, ranging from verbal to physical attacks and murder attempts. As a result of these Islamophobic attacks in Europe, there are already victims of Islamophobic terrorist attacks who have either been killed or severely injured. Below we have summarized the most important attacks in 2017.

On the night of April 15, 2017, the 22-year-old Egyptian student Shaden Mohamed al-Gohary was killed in a hit-and-run incident in Cottbus, Germany. The most shocking part is that while she lay injured on the street, people started insulting her in racist ways, believing she was a refugee. The attackers eventually came back on foot and said things like “Well, they gotta check the street first, since they don’t have streets at home. They should fuck off to their damn country.”

In Germany, the conservative mayor of Altena, Andreas Hollstein, known for his welcoming stance towards refugees was stabbed in the neck and seriously injured in a knife attack at a kebab restaurant.44


In Sweden, three members of the national socialist Nordic Resistance Movement were sentenced to up to eight-and-a-half years in prison. The trio was found guilty of bombings of two refugee housings and a libertarian socialist trade union office in Gothenburg, which severely wounded one person. They were trained in urban guerrilla warfare by a Russian radical nationalist and anti-Muslim paramilitary organization. The perpetrators were influenced by Islamophobic and anti-Semitic discourse, which was clear in a recorded video prayer to All-Father Odin in which they vowed to “retake our land” and “take the fight against you who have defiled our country.” “Oh Jew, oh Muslim / We Norsemen have awakened / You should fear us / We are coming after you / The rage of the Norsemen thunder / Be assured / Oh, Jew and Muslim / The Norsemen are coming after you.” The fact that Islamophobia goes hand in hand with other forms of racism, such as anti-Semitism in this case, should be a symbolic reminder for those, who are aware of European history.

Beyond this example of a right-wing extremist movement, the case of Hungary, where the ruling Fidesz party mobilizes against George Soros while portraying him as a conspirator alongside Muslims to change the European population, reveals again that racism will eventually target every minority.

On September 27, 2017, four members of the banned neo-Nazi group National Action in the UK were arrested on suspicion of preparing and instigating acts of terrorism. According to the UK’s Defense Ministry some of them were soldiers serving in the British army.

In Germany, two supporters of a neo-Nazi terrorist group were arrested on January 14 after 155 kg of explosives were discovered in their home. On April 27, a German soldier posing as a Syrian refugee was arrested for allegedly planning a “false flag” shooting attack against politicians that would be blamed on asylum seekers.

On October 17, 2017, 10 far-right militants were arrested by French anti-terrorist police in France. According to the TV station M6, they were suspected of...

In Russia, between 2012 and 2016, five imams were killed in the Stavropol region. The cases remain unresolved to this day. All the assassinated imams were involved in civic activism and they openly resisted the prohibition of the hijab in the Stavropol region.

On June 19, 2017, a man drove his van deliberately into a crowd of Muslim worshippers leaving the north London Finsbury Park Mosque. As a result of this attack, one person was killed and eleven were injured.

In Poland, a Pakistani Muslim man was severely beaten by a group of men in Ozorków on January 3, 2017. On April 8, 2017, three Pakistani Muslim men were severely beaten in Swidwin Polan.

**Threatening the Religious Infrastructure**

More than two decades after the Agreements of 1992 between the Islamic communities and the Spanish state, basic rights such as access to religious education or the possibility of burying the Muslim dead in an Islamic cemetery have not been put into practice in most of the Spanish regions; small steps, however, are being taken in this sense. In Malta, there were debates about the legitimacy of teaching Islam to Muslim pupils.

In Slovakia, there has been a parliamentary debate on a draft law that toughened the registration of churches and religious communities and a draft has been submitted by members of the government of the Slovak National Party (SNS). This trend of discrimination against Muslims, who are a small minority in Slovakia and thus directly affected by these amendments, has been noticed by the U.S. Department of State, which in its report on religious freedom in the world noted the disparity in the approach to religious rights in the country. Today, it is impossible for the Muslim community to become an officially registered religious community in Slovakia.

In Greece, three mosques located inside non-governmental organizations belonging to members of the Muslim Turkish minority were closed by the Greek police - one of them had existed for 12 years. Officially, the closures were due to the lack of the necessary permissions to function a house of prayer inside the premises.

In Bulgaria, an indifference from the part of governments to the religious needs of Muslims can be observed. There is a lack of funding by the state be it in the area of religious education, Muslims’ attempts to develop a cultural-religious center, or the blocking of Muslims’ attempts to regain property ownership of \textit{waqf} properties. Also, many Muslim religious employees, which were formerly and legally paid by the Turkish government, had to leave their jobs because the Council of Ministers of Bulgaria unilaterally cancelled the treaty between Bulgaria and Turkey and did not
inform the representatives of the Office of the Grand Mufti, which faced a structural crisis after being informed three months later.

On a European level, the European Citizens’ Initiative against Extremism (Stop Extremism) was founded and recognized on June 7, 2017 by the European Commission. Among its initiators are Seyran Ates and Efgani Dönmez, who are known for their notorious Islamophobic positions. Supporters include well-known Islamophobes such as Abdel-Hakim Ourghi, Ralph Ghadban, Saida Keller-Messahli, and Necla Kelek. The initiative, which came under criticism when leaks by the weekly Falter revealed that more than 20,000 Euros, the budget specified by the EU Commission, could potentially be used to restrict Muslims’ religious activities. Stop Extremism calls for “the introduction of a joint, EU-wide watch list to which individuals and organizations with an extremist background could be added” as well as for the introduction of an “Extremism-free” certification for organizations and businesses.52 Initiatives like this seem to target specifically Muslims, not extremists, and to restrain their scope of activities, which ultimately reflects already existing restrictions as discussed above.

Steps Forward and Policy Recommendations

The picture presented here shows us that there is an urgent need to counter these developments. And there is room for hope. Critical assessment of the current situation regarding Muslims in Europe is growing within parts of civil society. Not only are there more and more institutions that are working to bring attention to the rise in hate crime towards Muslims such as the Spain-based Observatorio de la Islamofobia en los Medios53 but there are also favorable developments such as in the Norwegian justice system which has developed positive steps regarding monitoring and convicting cases involving hate speech or discrimination against Muslims. Also, the German Federal Police has made a first important institutional step to combatting Islamophobia by documenting it: for the first time, Islamophobia has been included as a category of hate crime.

There are more and more politicians, who dare to openly speak out against the threat of Islamophobia. President of the Slovak Republic Andrej Kiska stood up for Muslims in his New Year’s speech. Also, Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen took a stance of solidarity with Muslim women wearing the hijab. Finnish Prime Minister Juha Sipilä called people not to respond to “hate with hate”54 in the aftermath of the stabbings by a Muslim citizen, which led to increased harassment, violent physical attacks as well as acts of vandalism against Muslim properties van-

dalism towards Muslims. These examples of political courage give hope that there still exist reasonable politicians, who look beyond their ephemeral political careers, keeping the good of the whole of society in mind. With an increase of alternative right-wing media and social media bubbles as well as a general swing to the right, hate speech is becoming more and more normalised. In an especially extreme incident in the Czech Republic, children in a primary school in the city of Teplice were threatened with death in gas chambers; the class was comprised predominantly of children of Arab or Romani origin. Such incidents call for an unambiguous reaction on behalf of politicians and opinion leaders.

The authors of every respective national report have suggested specific recommendations regarding the country they have covered. This will support all those forces within European societies, who work towards a more equal society and fight every form of racism. The editors of the EIR support the following recommendations which were made by the OSCE ODIHR office, the FRA, the ENAR, the European Coalition against Islamophobia, and other NGOs:

- In the face of the increased and generalized suspicion and marginalization of Muslims in the post-terrorist attacks and migration contexts and the deep impact the former have had on Muslims’ lives, including newly arrived migrants, the recognition of the specific form of racism targeting Muslims (or those perceived as such) is crucial.

- The misconceptions and demonization surrounding the fight against Islamophobia and visible Muslims, in general, need to be challenged; data, facts and concrete solutions need to be visible in order to improve the recognition of Islamophobia and influence policy changes.

- This should lead to informed anti-racism/anti-discrimination policies and support the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation on the national and European levels. EU institutions need to recognize and address Islamophobia politically as a form of racism that can lead to human rights violations.

- While the issue of Islamophobia has gained more visibility in recent years at the EU level, there is a clear need for stronger actions that will materialize recognition into concrete political actions.

- Considering their competence on the issue of anti-racism and non-discrimination, EU institutions have the possibility to support progress and change in this area. The appointment of the European Commission’s coordinator on combatting anti-Muslim hatred following the European Commission’s 2015 colloquium on anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim hatred has created a momentum for the EU to act.

• The legal and political recognition of Islamophobia is of utmost importance. Therefore, a European-level conference on Islamophobia should be organized with the support of at least one EU Member State or the European Parliament.

• In this context, the European Parliament should adopt a resolution on combating Islamophobia with concrete policy recommendations and ways forward - as it did to combat anti-Semitism and anti-Gypsism.

• The adoption of EU standards for National Action Plans against Racism that take into account specific forms of racism, and include specific measures on Islamophobia with objectives and targets is necessary.

• EU member states should adopt national action plans against racism addressing Islamophobia as a specific form of racism.

• The European Commission should develop a roadmap detailing main policy instruments, issues and examples of good practice by Member States. This would function as a standard document that would be the basis for concrete operational objectives and action plans for the EU coordinator on combating anti-Muslim hatred.

• The European Commission’s coordinator on anti-Muslim hatred should develop a clear action plan for combatting Islamophobia.

• A high-level roundtable should be organized with the European Commission’s coordinator on anti-Muslim hatred and NGOs on the issue of Islamophobia.

• Europe needs courageous leaders and activists who can confront the Islamophobic discourses and narratives in the age of rising far-right parties.

• A Guidance handbook should be developed on the collection methodology of hate crime data for EU Member States in order to ensure that Islamophobia is dully recorded according to the victims’ and witnesses’ perceptions and lived experiences; other bias indicators should be included in the data collection as well.

• The recording of anti-Muslim/Islamophobic crimes as a separate category of hate crime by the police is essential to uncover the real extent of this problem and to develop counter-strategies to combat it.

• Muslim women’s access to employment should be improved since they are the most discriminated group among Muslims. Gender equality departments and the corresponding committees of EU institutions should give specific attention to situations of discrimination affecting Muslim women by documenting the issue and pushing for specific programs and measures to combat it.

• While protecting free speech, developing good guidelines to tackle online hate speech and considering primary legislation to deal with social media offences and online hate speech are also vital since the Internet plays an important role in the spread of Islamophobic discourses and also in the radicalization of far-right terrorists.
• Discrimination in the workplace should be tackled to address the low level of economic activity among Muslims through targeted interventions at the stages of recruitment, job retention, and promotion.

• Preserving the Human Rights Act and the protection of minority rights including religious slaughter, circumcision and the wearing of religious attire or symbols are imperative for a multicultural Europe.

• Counter-terrorism policies should work with Muslim communities, not against them, in the so-called “de-radicalization” programs. These programs should also incorporate the fight against far-right and far-left terrorist groups and should not only target Muslims.
ISLAMOPHOBIA IN NUMBERS

• The overwhelming majority of European states do not record Islamophobic incidents as a separate category of hate crime. The recording of anti-Muslim/Islamophobic crimes by the police as a separate category of hate crime is essential to uncover the real extent of this problem and to develop counter-strategies to combat it.

• In the EU, only 12% of Muslims who have been discriminated against report their cases to the authorities. (Source: FRA) The non-exhaustive list that follows hints at the extent of underreporting of anti-Muslim hate crimes in Europe by states and NGOs, which has serious implications regarding the awareness of Muslims and the bureaucracy to tackle these issues.

DENMARK
In 2016, 56 Islamophobic incidents were reported. 20% of all hate crime committed in 2016 targeted Muslims, while the group make up 5% of the general population, making Muslims the most targeted minority. (Source: National Police)

BELGIUM
In the month following the terror attacks in Brussels, 36 Islamophobic incidents were recorded. (Source: CCIB).

AUSTRIA
256 Islamophobic incidents were documented. (Source: EIR Report, Antidiscrimination Office Styria, ZARA, and Initiative for a Discrimination-Free Education [IDB]).
THE STATE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN EUROPE

FRANCE
- **121** Islamophobic incidents were reported. (Source: Observatory of Islamophobia)
- **19** Muslim places of worship were closed by the government; **749** individuals were placed under house arrest; over **4,500** police raids were conducted; and the list of individuals under government surveillance has reached **25,000**.
- **17,393** individuals were enrolled in the Terrorism Prevention Database (FSPRT).

GERMANY
- **100** attacks occurred on mosques. (Source: DITIB and German State)
- **908** attacks took place targeting German Muslims.
- **60%** of all Muslim teaching staff felt discriminated. (Source: Karim Fereidooni)
- There were **1,906** criminal attacks on refugees (5.2 attacks per day).
- There were **286** attacks against refugee shelters (0.8 attacks per day).
- **132** criminal acts and physical attacks against (refugee) aid workers occurred (0.4 attacks per day). (Source: German state)

MALTA
- **7%** of Muslims have experienced physical violence.
- **25%** of Muslims have experienced harassment.
NORWAY
• In 2017, 14% of Muslims experienced harassment.

NETHERLANDS
• 364 incidents of discrimination against Muslims occurred in 2016.
  (Source: Verwey Jonker Institute and Anne Frank Foundation)

POLAND
• In 2017, Muslims were the most targeted group representing 20% of all hate crime cases.
  (Source: National Prosecutor’s Office)
• Between January and October 2017, there were 664 hate crime proceedings regarding attacks against Muslims.
  (Source: Ministry of Interior)
• 193 (29%) of those proceedings resulted in an indictment.
  (Source: Ministry of Interior)
UNITED KINGDOM

- The terrorist attack in Manchester in May resulted in a fivefold increase in Islamophobic hate crime in the Greater Manchester region. (Source: Greater Manchester Police)

- Hate crime cases targeting Muslims in Greater London for the entire year of 2017 increased to 1,204 from 1,678 in the previous year, which is equal to a 40% rise. (Source: Scotland Yard)

- Between March and July 2017, the number of attacks on mosques climbed to 110 from 47 in the previous year. (Source: Tell MAMA UK)

- In 2016, 1,223 cases of Islamophobic attacks were reported to Tell MAMA. Twenty percent of these incidents involve physical attacks; 56% of the victims were women, while two-thirds of the perpetrators were men.

SWEDEN

- In 2016, 439 hate crimes with Islamophobic motives were recorded. (Source: Swedish Crime Survey-NTU)

SPAIN

- In 2017, 546 attacks took place against Muslims. (Source: Plataforma Ciudadana contra la Islamofobia)
The Author

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Executive Summary

In 2017, Islamophobic discourse and incidents in Finland were marked by the tragic events of a knife attack by a young Muslim asylum seeker and its political and social consequences. Even though the Finnish Parliament’s official stance was to condemn any hate towards any group, comments by individual politicians motivated further confrontation and dichotomies in the population. The incident also sparked tensions among the public which resulted in experiences of increased harassment and attacks against Muslim citizens. The Young Muslims NGO monitored the attacks and recorded 10 reports of Muslim individuals being either physically attacked or verbally harassed. Nationalist groupings continue to spread their anti-Islamic ideology on the grassroots level. The Finnish branch of the Nordic Resistance Movement (PVL) dressed statues of female figures in a burqa and the “Finland First” movement organized a demonstration against “Islamization” by a school in Helsinki. To the latter the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman reacted with an investigation request relating to possible incitement to hatred during the demonstration. Polls suggest that antipathy towards the visible practice of the Islamic faith in the workplace prevails. Surveys and studies by academicians, however, show alarming results of discrimination against Muslims in different fields of life. The Non-Discrimination Ombudsman gathered eight complaints of a suspected anti-Islamic discrimination. The hate crime report by the Police University again showed that Islam is the most frequent motivator in suspected hate crimes motivated by religion. Initiatives to advocate for a “burqa ban” after the example of France have not however been successful and most political actors do not consider such laws necessary in Finland.

In 2017, the mainstream print media has developed positively so that uncritical journalistic practice has decreased from previous years and fewer news articles and media events have focused on Muslims in an Islamophobic way. Also, journalists themselves have started to advocate for more responsible reporting when writing about Muslims and other minorities.
Tiivistelmä

Introduction

In 2017, much of the public discussion centred on the topic of Finland’s 100th anniversary as an independent country. Within this frame questions were raised on minorities’ – such as the Tatars’ – heroic contributions during the wars in the first half of the 20th century and their role as representatives of the Islamic faith as part of the Finnish national identity today.¹ However, the discussion whether Islam can be part of the Finnish religious landscape and if yes, in which form, still suffers from the contrasting juxtaposition of the Tatar community, on one side, and all other Muslim identities, on the other. Hereby the first is “the best practice example of integration” and the latter are those who mostly receive antipathies due to their difference - be it skin colour, dress or adherence to certain practices and demands for the right to do so.² However, since the peak of the arrival of asylum seekers in 2015, Finnish society has witnessed a new era of social activism. Throughout the year, several civil society organizations, universities and other institutions organized informative events that promoted the dismantling of prejudices and fostered dialogue. For instance, included in the official “Finland 100” program was an art exhibition titled “Islam and I” (Islam ja minä) whose topic were young Muslims’ views of their life in contemporary Finland. It was organized by the University of Helsinki as part of a bigger research project on young Muslims and resilience.³ Despite such positive developments, Islamophobic discourse still prevails in Finnish society.

Significant Incidents and Developments

A knife attack by a young Moroccan asylum seeker against passers-by on a market square in the city of Turku triggered a new wave of antipathy towards Muslims and Islam as well as discussions on the consequences of the “relaxed” immigration policies of the Finnish government. Although the official stance of Finnish politicians was to condemn hate speech⁴ and the Prime Minister Juha Sipilä himself called people not to respond to “hate with hate,”⁵ in the aftermath of the stabbings, Muslim citizens experienced increased harassment, violent physical attacks, as well as vandalism.⁶

⁴. Cf. Politics section.
The tragic incident also raised questions similar to those in other European countries as well as in the USA, regarding why media and political discourse define only Muslim actors as terrorists whereas, for example, Finnish white men who commit school shootings are “individual actors” despite the fact that such actors often call their acts political terrorism in their manifestos.\(^7\)

Several studies published in 2017 show alarming statistics on the antipathy, violence and discrimination faced by Muslims in Finland. The yearly report on hate crimes in Finland published by the Police University College in 2017, shows that regarding the year 2016 the amount of all suspected hate crimes decreased by 14% when compared to statistics from year 2015.\(^8\) However, the amount of reported suspected crimes with motivation based on the religious affiliation of the victim increased by 12%. Here the victims’ Muslim background composed 40% out of all 149 reports, Islam being the most frequent motivator in the suspected hate crimes motivated by religion. Another study on discrimination of Muslims in the European Union found that Muslims in Finland face discrimination more often than the EU median would suggest. However, the study also found that Muslims in Finland have the greatest sense of belonging to their country of residence in comparison with Muslim populations in other EU countries.\(^9\) Milla Aaltonen from the Finnish League of Human Rights commented on the survey in an interview with YLE News and said that structural discrimination is difficult to dismantle in Finland. As she analysed the report’s results, she noted that even though Finnish Muslims appear to have a good level of trust in institutions, most of the survey respondents had not reported on their last experience of discrimination.\(^10\) This would indicate that the range of experiences goes beyond factually reported discrimination cases.

Moreover, an academic study\(^11\) on discrimination in Finnish private rental housing markets showed that especially male applicants with Arabic sounding names are


\(^8\) The report can be considered for this study retrospectively; at the end of each calendar year, a report regarding suspected hate crimes for the previous calendar year is published. Thus, the target year of the report relevant to the current EIR National Report on Finland is 2016.


most discriminated against. This highlights the intersectionality of race and religion in Islamophobia. The study’s focus was especially on gender and ethnicity as motivations of discrimination.\textsuperscript{12} The Non-Discrimination Ombudsman again reported\textsuperscript{13} that in 2017 they were contacted about eight cases of a suspected discrimination case due to religious affiliation in which the victim/complainant was a Muslim individual. These cases concerned the use of the scarf at the workplace (2), the mistreatment of Muslims by the authorities (2), the opportunity to pray during the workday, the use of the headscarf in the army, anti-Muslim hate speech on the Internet, and allowing a specific medication to be administered to a child based on religious beliefs. There were also two cases in which a Muslim individual’s background was recorded as a possible secondary discrimination criterion. These were cases of bullying in the workplace and the mistreatment of a person at a reception centre.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Politics

Generally speaking, in party politics antipathy towards Islam and Muslims is common for members of the right-wing Finns Party (\textit{Perussuomalaiset}), whereas other parties such as the the Green League (\textit{Vihreät}) or the Left Alliance (\textit{Vasemmisto}) rather speak against racism and discrimination. However, the vice-chairman of the National Coalition Party (\textit{Kokoomus}) commented on the now cancelled construction plan of the central mosque of Helsinki stating that the mosque project was not about freedom of religion but purely about the pursuit of power by Islam and political Islamization.\textsuperscript{14}

Sebastian Tynkkynen, former chairman of the Finns Party youth branch, complained to the Finnish Supreme Court about the conviction he received due to incitement to hatred in January 2017.\textsuperscript{15} He had published a text in his Facebook profile stating, “The fewer Muslims there are in Finland, the safer Finland will be.” The Supreme Court dismissed Tynkkynen’s application for an appeal.\textsuperscript{16}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12} YLE News, “Study: Men with Arabic-Sounding Names Have Much Harder Time Renting Flats in Finland”, Yle.fi, (August 31, 2017), retrieved January 31, 2018, from https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/study_men_with_arabic-sounding_names_have_much_harder_time_renting_flats_in_finland?9808112
\item \textsuperscript{13} A report by Senior Officer Aija Salo received by the author through email on January 26, 2018. Numbers based on statistics retrieved from the database until December 31, 2017.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Kokoomuksen ex-varapuheenjohtaja: “Islam on alistumista mutta islamisaatio on alistamista”, (April 5, 2017), demokraatti.fi, retrieved February 10, 2018, from https://demokraatti.fi/kokoomuksen-ex-varapuheenjohtaja-islam-on-alistumista-mutta-islamisaatio-on-alistamista/
The chairmen of the Finnish Parliament parties signed a public appeal against hate speech by stating that “no form of terrorism is acceptable, and neither is any form of hate speech.”\(^{17}\) This was after the Turku stabbings. Only a day after this appeal was published, the vice chairman of the Finns Party and then presidential candidate Laura Huhtasaari, who as a representative of her party co-signed the appeal in question, commented in her speech during a parliamentary question hour that Finland was being Islamized due to the large number of immigrants from Muslim countries. She argued that because Islam was incompatible with Western societal norms, Muslim immigration would lead to the segregation of Muslims in society and their ghettoization into areas governed by Islamic values. She was confronted by representatives of other parties who were shocked by her statements since she had also attended the meeting where the appeal against hate speech had been signed.\(^ {18}\) However, Huhtasaari stated in an interview that the appeal against hate speech should be understood only in terms of “hate speech against the West” as that is how she understands the meaning of the concept of “hate speech.”\(^ {19}\)

**Justice System**

Following the news about the face veil ban that came into force in Austria in October, the news website MTV.fi reported\(^ {20}\) that most members of the Finnish Parliament who had answered to a survey conducted by the STT/Suomen Tietotoimisto did not advocate a legal ban on face veils in Finland, rather, some of them would agree in favour of the model used in Germany and Holland where the face veil is prohibited only in certain public spaces and professions in which visibility of the face is necessary. Simon Elo, a member of the Blue Reform party, would for instance accept a ban for professions in education and military forces. Only the representatives of the Finns Party parliamentary group were ready to advocate a total ban. Leena Meri, a member of the group said, “Discussions with representatives have clearly highlighted the need to deny covering the face in public spaces as a main rule, with the exception of costume parties or as protection against cold air and so on.”\(^ {21}\) The chairmen of the parliamentary groups of the National Coalition Party and the Left Alliance comment-

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21. Translated quote from the news article mentioned in Footnote 20.
ed that they did not see such a ban necessary for Finnish society in which religious face veils have not become a problem. Also, Antti Kaikkonen, the chairman of the Centre Party parliamentary group, commented that in education professions such bans could be needed but he recognized that the wearing of face veils is connected to basic rights and religious identity, if it is worn voluntarily. Krista Mikkonen (Green League) commented that in Finland everyone should be able to dress as they wish, but in some professions within public authorities the face should be visible.

On November 5, 2017, a citizens’ initiative to advocate for a law amendment in favour of a “burkha ban” in Finland was originated by a group of private persons, among them Terhi Kiemunki, a former member of the Finns Party with a conviction for incitement to hatred due to her blog texts defaming Muslims. One of the named responsible spokesmen of the initiative was Jukka Ketosen, the current chairman of the Finnish Defence League (FDL), an organization very similar to the EDL. One of the FDL’s agendas is to “[…] oppos[e] the concession policy towards the Sharia law in all its forms. The generalization of Halal food, the appreciation of Islamic courts and the full respect of Islam are part of the Sharia law and are intended to undermine other forms of law, as well as the traditional way of life on the road to total Sharia law.” The citizen initiative’s proposition reads,

We propose that Article 17a (Illegal Disguise) of the Criminal Code be amended to read: “Anyone who is in general or in a public place unrecognizable shall be sentenced for unlawful disguise to a fine or imprisonment of up to three months.”

The initiative’s description reasoned for the amendment by referring to past events in which masked groups of people had violently disturbed the Finnish Independence Day festivities organized by the Finnish president. However, the second part of the description argued explicitly against the face veil, niqab, worn by Muslim women,

According to our presentation, disguise as an unidentified person based on religious, ethnic and cultural dress would be illegal. It would therefore also prohibit the use of veils used by Muslim women in a public place. (…) As is the case in France, in Finland one would also receive a more severe punishment for forcing a person to use the face veil than for its actual use. In Europe, the general use of the face veil is

22. “Initiative submitted by at least 50,000 Finnish citizens eligible to vote and containing a proposal that an Act be enacted” as defined in “MOT Eduskuntasanasto”, a multilingual parliamentary glossary, prepared jointly by parliament and the Government Terminology Service of the Prime Minister’s Office, retrieved January 31, 2018, from https://mot.kielikone.fi/mot/eduskuntasanasto/netmot?UI=fi&height=147
24. For a detailed description of Terhi Kiemunki’s court case, see “Islamophobia in Finland: National Report 2016.”
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not interpreted as a matter of religious freedom, since the use of burqa or niqab is not specifically provided in the scriptures of Islam. The ban does not thus violate the freedom of thought, religion and conscience guaranteed by Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights or Article 11 of the Finnish Constitution.

By the time of the submission of this report, the citizens’ initiative had reached 4,086 support votes. The necessary 50,000 votes (cf. Footnote 20) should be collected by May 5, 2018.27 Another citizens’ initiative in favour of criminalizing the practice of the niqab/burkha was also originated by a private citizen in October 2017 with similar demands with the one endorsed by the FDL. By the submission of this report, the initiative had gathered 5,041 support votes.28

In June 2017, the newspaper Helsingin Sanomat reported29 that the Deputy Ombudsman Jussi Pajuoja had given an official statement30 about a controversial practice conducted by the Finnish Police towards several female asylum seekers who had experienced the practice as humiliating. The statement was about asylum application processes from 2015, when police officials had required Muslim female asylum seekers to remove their headscarves for photographs during the registration process. From a functional point of view the ID photos of asylum seekers serve a purpose different than a passport photo, i.e. even significant bodily markings such as tattoos can be photographed as indicated in the Aliens Act – hence the need to possibly undress certain areas of the body. Since the Aliens Act does not further specify which areas of the body can be required to be undressed and for which exact identifying purposes, photographing asylum seekers is thus a question of an unregulated borderline area of the Aliens Act. Therefore, the Deputy Ombudsman was not convinced that the actions taken in the reception centre of Tornio in 2015 were justified and necessary.

Employment

The issue of allowing employees to pray during working hours has sporadically received the media’s attention in Finland. While in 2011, an official statement by the then Non-Discrimination Ombudsman stated that an employer could forbid praying in the facilities of the workplace if it disturbed other employees31 in 2017 a rejected request by

27. For a discussion about how the initiative was advertised on right-wing and racist Internet platforms, see Internet section.
30. The official decision statement with the case file number eoak 5352/2015 can be downloaded as a PDF from the official website of the Parliamentary Ombudsman; http://www.eduskunta.fi/triphome/bin/coar3000. sh?HAKUSANA=eoak+5352%2F2015.
an employer to use his lunch break for Friday prayers was ruled as discriminatory. An engineer's work contract with an office affiliated with the City of Helsinki was terminated. When signing the contract, he had informed the employer about his wish to leave the workplace for the Friday prayers, however, a few weeks after the contract had been signed, the employer told him they could not hire him as such arrangements were not possible. The Regional State Administrative Agencies officials ruled that the employer had discriminated against the man since other employees had been granted the possibility of flexible working hours and could run private errands during lunch breaks.

Whereas in the previous years, discussions on problems arising from female Muslim employees' rights to wear the headscarf at work have been infrequent, the ruling given by the European Court of Justice in March 2017 was discussed in several media outlets. Professor of Labour Law Seppo Koskinen commented in an interview for the newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* that in Finland, decisions for or against headscarves at the workplace are influenced by the Non-Discrimination Act and an employer should therefore justify the ban of headscarves by factual reasons, such as pertaining to hygiene or safety, for it to be lawful. Koskinen, however, admits that introducing a ruling on "dress neutrality" for all employees of a company could prove to be a difficult procedure if the company has not had a similar ruling before, and equal treatment of all employees in this regard would have to be proven factually.

Unfavourable opinions by the public towards Islamic practices at the workplace were reported by the newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat*. The newspaper reported a survey on Finnish people's attitudes on immigrants' integration into the society. Among the issues were questions on whether the headscarf should be allowed to be worn by employees and whether praying should be allowed during worktime. The survey's questions on the headscarf addressed however only four professions which have already been discussed in media: police officers, teachers, salespeople, and bus drivers. For the first two, which were considered as “public office” positions, the respondents were less understanding than for the latter two professions. In the case of prayer, the attitudes were even less accepting than in the case of the headscarf.

**Education**

Before the start of the summer holidays, a demonstration against “Islamization” in Finland was organized in front of a Helsinki school. The demonstration was initiated by

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35. Cf. Also Network section.
the Finland First movement, who were disapproving of the school having replayed a passage of the Chapter al-Baqarah from the Qur’an through the central radio of the school. As the school director explained in an interview, it had been part of a multicultural morning opening program that the school’s pupils had organized on their own. However, actors who are generally known to spread Islamophobic attitudes and discourses such as the fake news website MV-lehti, wrongly accused the school of having played the Islamic call to prayer. The video recording of the replay, that has been used to refer to the event, shows that only the verses 185 and 186 of Chapter al-Baqarah, i.e. those that describe the month of Ramadan, were included. Nevertheless, Former MP Reijo Tossavainen claimed in his blog, that the replay included further verses of the same chapter which describe the rules of war against disbelievers in a historical context. Robin Harms, an expert with the Finnish Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, commented in an interview that his office had submitted a request of investigation to the Prosecutor General about the demonstration with the intent to find out whether participants in the demonstrations perpetrated incitement to hatred or slander with their comments.

**Media**

In “Islamophobia in Finland: National Report 2016,” the authors reported on biased journalist representations of Muslims and lack of counter narratives, relating to main stream media reports. Suomen Tietotoimisto, the Finnish News Agency, published an article in the beginning of 2017 addressing the issue of representation of minorities and advocated for a more balanced reporting. It is to be emphasized that especially the issue of using certain descriptive words such as “normal” is among aspects of journalism that may contribute to the formation of generalizing stereotypes or confrontative dichotomies, which again produce Islamophobic images of Muslims. The article also mentioned using “anonymous” pictures of veiled women when speaking of issues relating to immigration, pointing to the dehumanizing effect it has on members of minorities.


Another positive contribution in dismantling Islamophobia within media was an opinion piece published in June in the journal affiliated with the Union of journalists in Finland that criticized newspapers’ uncritical use of vocabulary such as “Islamization.” The author, pointed to the danger of news journalists adopting such words from the Islamophobic discourse without questioning their assumptive meanings and failing to raise questions such as whether there is a factual “Islamization” in Finland and who benefits from such discourse.42

The publishing house Kiuas announced that on October 25 they were to distribute copies of the Finnish translation of Islam: 11. vitsaus, (Islam, The 11th Plague) to Finnish members of parliament and Finnish members of the European Parliament.43 The book is written by the Norwegian activist Hege Storhaug – a prominent figure of the Islamophobia Network in Norway – who has previously, for instance, compared Muslims to Nazis.44 According to the description on the publisher’s website the book is about the question whether the Nordic secular welfare state shapes Islam to comply with itself or whether “Islam will integrate as a fixed part of that state arranged marriages, honour killings, religious courts and terror.”45

Kiuas also published a book written by the Finns Party politician Olli Immonen, whose Islamophobic statements are known from previous years’ EIR reports. The website of the magazine Sarastus, affiliated with Kiuas publishing house, advertises Immonen’s book titled Kansallinen kipinä (The National Spark) with an excerpt. Immonen links Muslims to the “European demographic crisis” and the overgrowth of populations on earth.46 The magazine Sarastus, which is extremely critical of immigration, has frequently also published other texts with quite strong Islamophobic discourses. For instance, an article from 2016, offered the threatening image of an Islamization of Europe and proposed the ethnic cleansing of Muslims from European lands as an inevitable preventive measurement for the protection of the “European population.”47

After the Turku stabbings, scapegoating and pointing fingers at certain mosques commenced. Itälehti news magazine named one of the local mosques as a “radical

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mosque”. However, the elder of the mosque commented in an interview, that such accusations were false and that their mosque would not tolerate or even discuss politics. The mosque representatives said that they were afraid of confrontations and violent revenge attacks against their mosque because of the Iltalehti article and its polarizing message.48

Physical and Verbal Attacks
In the aftermath of the Turku stabbings, Nuoret Muslimit ry (Young Muslims NGO) collected information about physical and verbal attacks against Muslim individuals. In addition to two reports about assaults, they received eight reports about threatening situations where Muslims were subjected to hate speech in, for example, public transport or other public spaces such as shops - some of the cases included death threats. The Turku Emergency Response Centre also received calls in which the caller threatened to harm foreigners with violence. In Helsinki, someone spray-painted the words “Kill Muslims” on asphalt.49 Moreover, media reported about a case of a young man who had been attacked with a knife by a stranger. The attacker asked his victim before stabbing him, whether he was a Muslim. Fortunately, the attack did not result in a death of a person.50

Internet
The citizen’s initiative on a so-called “burqa ban” was advertised on the websites of Suomi Turvalliseksi.fi (Safe Finland)51 and on the “alternative news” platform Oikea Media52 (“True Media”). In the former, the article was accompanied by several pictures, for instance of extreme leftist groups in demonstrations. They also used a picture of Muslim women wearing the face veil53 and next to it a picture of the empty seats of a bus. The same picture had gone viral on social media earlier in 2017 due to its distribution by a Norwegian racist group who juxtaposed blue-colored bus seats and burkha-covered Muslim women54 (Fig. 1). On the Oikea Media website, however, the article describing the

49. Report by Nuoret Muslimit ry spokesperson Ali Assefa, received by the author through email September 24, 20187.
53. The photo stems from a Guardian collage about elections in Afghanistan and shows a group of women showing their identity cards. https://www.theguardian.com/world/gallery/2009/aug/20/afghanistan-election
citizens’ initiative was accompanied merely by a photo of a woman wearing a face veil. Although the citizens’ initiative largely justifies its proposition based on a need for security in demonstrations, adding pictures of veiled women – especially in the campaign by “Safe Finland” in which the images are effectively out of the context of Finnish society –, nonetheless, indicates how both platforms attempt to steer impressions on the reasons behind the law amendment in the direction of fighting against Islamic religious practices.

**Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network**

The Finnish branch of the Nordic Resistance Movement (Pohjoismainen vastarintaliike PVL) had several campaigns against the so-called “Islamization” of Europe. In March 2017, the movement dressed statues depicting female figures in different cities with a black headscarf or face veil to “remind Finnish people of the ongoing demographic change in Europe.”57 (Fig. 2) One of the statues was that of the famous Finnish novelist and social activist Minna Canth.58 A personality of Finnish cultural history, Canth is important for her activities as a pioneer of public discussions on women’s rights. In November 2017, the veilings were ordered to be declared illegal by the District Court of Pirkannaa based on a complaint filed by the National Police Board.59

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Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

The initiative “Open doors to intercultural and interfaith dialogue” (Avoimet ovet kulttuuri- ja uskontodialogiin) managed by different congregations of the Helsinki Evangelic Lutheran Church organized an event in support of Helsinki’s Shia community when their mosque was vandalized with an Islamophobic graffiti (“Fuck Islam”) on its façade. The event gathered around fifty individuals from different religious affiliations but also individuals with no faith affiliations to help in cleaning the mosque façade.60

In August 2017, the Shia congregation Resalat and its youth branch Mahdin Nuoret co-organized an event at a market square in Helsinki, inviting passerbys to discuss Islam and its relation to terrorism, thus contributing positively to the dismantling of wrong assumptions and raising awareness about the diverse interpretations of Islam.61

As a response to increased tensions and feelings of fear and uncertainty due to the Turku stabbings, Nuoret Muslimit ry (Young Muslims NGO) published a video titled “Do not give space to hatred” (Älä anna vihalle sijaa). The video contained messages to the public by the NGO members addressing some incidents that had already demonstrated the negative consequences of the tragedy against the Muslim population and called for Muslims to be proud of their identities and for non-Muslims not to let hatred get out of hand but to reach towards dialogue.62

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Considering that Finnish civil society has been doing a lot of work lately in countering Islamophobia and fostering dialogue as well as understanding, the author recommends that policy-makers work closely with these civil society actors to gather first-hand experience. Financial aid should be strengthened for projects in which especially the Muslim community is involved. Monitoring media and political speech as well as the reporting of hateful speech and harassment is still lacking for the Muslim community in Finland and should be established and financially supported by public funds. As Islamophobic discourse – especially when it receives space in media and public discussion – is for the large part initiated by far-right politicians and nationalist groupings, public opinion against hate speech should be strengthened. Projects and training that raise awareness about hate speech and how it differs from

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cultivated discussion and criticism should be made more accessible. As the European Court of Justice’s ruling on headscarves at workplaces has not yet sparked larger scale negative consequences for the role of Muslim women in the labour market, actors such as the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman should work together with the Labour Ministry and inform employers about the ruling’s contents. Campaigns for inclusivity and diversity at the workplace should support this action.

Chronology

- **22.03.2017**: The Finnish branch of the Nordic Resistance Movement dressed several statues depicting female figures in different cities with a black headscarf or face veil to “remind Finnish people of the ongoing demographic change in Europe.”
- **31.05.2017**: A demonstration against “Islamization” in Finland was organized in front of a Helsinki school by the nationalist group Finland First. The Non-Discrimination Ombudsman filed a request for investigation to the Prosecutor General.
- **16.06.2017**: A rejected request by an employer to use his lunch break for Friday prayers was ruled discriminatory by the Regional State Administrative Agency for Southern Finland.
- **24.06.2017**: The mosque façade of Helsinki’s Shia community was vandalized with an Islamophobic graffiti (“Fuck Islam”).
- **18.08.2017**: A knife attack against civilians by a Moroccan asylum seeker sparks increased tensions in society.
- **07.09.2017**: Laura Huhtasaari (Finns Party) commented in a speech in parliament that Finland was being Islamized due to the enormous number of immigrants from Muslim countries.
- **04.10.2017**: A citizens’ initiative in favour of a “burqa ban” in Finland was originated by a group of private persons.
- **24.10.2017**: The publishing house Kiusas announced that they were to distribute copies of the book *Islam, The 11th Plague* to Finnish members of parliament and Finnish members of the European Parliament.
- **05.11.2017**: A second citizens’ initiative in favour of a “burkha ban” in Finland was originated by a group of private persons, including politicians and Finnish Defence League actors.
This is the third issue of the annual European Islamophobia Report (EIR) consisting of an overall evaluation of Islamophobia in Europe in the year 2017, as well as 33 country reports which include almost all EU member states and additional countries such as Russia and Norway. This year’s EIR represents the work of 40 prominent scholars and civil society activists from various European countries.

The denial of the very existence of Islamophobia/anti-Muslim racism/anti-Muslim hate crime in Europe by many demonstrates the need for an appropriate effort and political will to tackle this normalized racism and its manifestations that are deeply entrenched in European societies, institutions, and states.

This denial is not only the case for extremist groups on the political fringe of the society, but rather far-right discourses have moved to the center of political power. Consequently, it is not only right-wing extremist groups that rely on the means of Islamophobic propaganda and discourse - social democrats, liberals, leftists or conservatives are not immune to this form of racism.

As a survey published by the FRA reveals 76% of Muslim respondents feel strongly attached to the country they live in, while 31% of those seeking work have been discriminated against in the last five years. At the same time, only 12% of Muslims say they have reported cases of discrimination. Hence, we can say with certainty that the extent of discrimination Muslims face in Europe is much greater than the numbers revealed in any report on Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime in Europe.

In other words, one can claim that all the available data and statistics about Islamophobia in Europe show only the tip of the iceberg. Therefore, revealing the comprehensiveness of structural anti-Muslim racism lies at the heart of the European Islamophobia Report project, which on a yearly basis analyzes the trends and developments in Europe from Russia to Portugal, and Malta to Norway.

About SETA
Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA) is a non-profit research institute based in Turkey dedicated to innovative studies on national, regional and international issues. SETA is the leading think tank in Turkey and has offices in Ankara, Istanbul, Washington D.C. and Cairo. The objective of SETA is to produce up-to-date and accurate knowledge and analyses in the fields of politics, economy, and society, and inform policy makers and the public on changing political, economic, social, and cultural conditions. Through research reports, publications, brainstorming sessions, conferences and policy recommendations, SETA seeks to guide leaders in government, civil society, and business, and contributes to informed decision making mechanisms.