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.
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FOREWORD

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, legitimates 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-

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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 reposting 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 combating anti-Muslim hatred, David Friggieri, made clear, a “stronger and more concrete commitment and actions” are needed to combat

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. Combatting 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.
Islamophobia. 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-Gypsism.

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.”\(^\text{19}\) 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.”\(^\text{20}\)

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.”\(^\text{21}\) 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!” \(^\text{22}\)

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


\(^{21}\) Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, “Eiroskeptiķu Ricības partija”, retrieved December 27, 2017, from http://pv2017.cvk.lv/CandidateLists/CandidateList?candidateListId=8k1v7yBEuCMERYWBkqIfTQ%3D%3D.

\(^{22}\) Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, “Nacionālā savienīga Taisnīgums”, retrieved December 27, 2017, from http://pv2017.cvk.lv/CandidateLists/CandidateList?candidateListId=0zFqoAsLJE456cxFZERqoQ%3D%3D.
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.

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.” 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).

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, 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.

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. In Slovakia, former president Robert Fico argued that he will “not allow the creation of an integrated Muslim community in Slovakia.”

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

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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-fi&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

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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.”45 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.46 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,47 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.48

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.49 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.50

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

planning attacks on French politicians and on Muslim places of worship.\(^{51}\)

In Russia, between 2012 and 2016, five imams were killed in the Stavropol region. The cases remain unresolved to this today. 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 **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. 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 Medios 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” 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.


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 the 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

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)

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).

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)
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Executive Summary

This report examines Islamophobia in Greece in 2017 taking all local, national and international developments into consideration. The primary outcome of this year’s report is that Islamophobia continues to exist in different fields across Greece. Compared to last year’s report, Islamophobia in Greece did not seem to decline in 2017. It remains manifested primarily on the level of hate speech towards Muslims and to a lesser extent on the level of physical violence. Yet, attacks against a young Muslim immigrant’s house in Athens took place in 2017. Also, three masjids that had been functioning for years were closed down by the Greek police while demonstrations were also organised so as to prevent the education of refugee children at Greek public schools. Meanwhile, even if it is likely to open in 2018, public discussions and protests against the construction of an official house of prayer for Muslims in central Athens continued throughout 2017.

Based on the report’s existing findings, Islamophobia is primarily manifested in Greek politics, printed and electronic media, and among some Orthodox Church officials, while it is relatively marginal in the education and justice system. Also, the Greek law is not robust enough in fighting anti-Muslim hatred inside Greek society. In general, the vast majority of perpetrator(s) of Islamophobic attacks remain unidentified; even those reproducing Islamophobic discourses, such as certain Metropolitans or politicians, are not penalised for their hate-motivated behaviour. With the exception of a few state and NGO initiatives, almost no progress has been achieved countering Islamophobia across Greece. For the purpose of addressing this vacuum, an observatory mechanism should immediately be formed that will monitor and record any type of Islamophobic incidents. A series of training seminars particularly for civil servants and journalists could be organised to develop their knowledge about Islam in Greece.
Περίληψη
Η παρούσα έκθεση εξετάζει την Ισλαμοφοβία στην Ελλάδα για το 2017 λαμβάνοντας υπόψη όλες τις εξελίξεις σε τοπικό, εθνικό, αλλά και διεθνές επίπεδο. Το βασικό συμπέρασμα της έκθεσης είναι ότι η Ισλαμοφοβία συνεχίζει να υπάρχει στην Ελλάδα σε διάφορα πεδία και συγκρινόμενη με την προηγούμενη χρονιά βρίσκεται μάλλον στο ίδιο επίπεδο. Κατά κύριο λόγο εκδηλώνεται με τη μορφή ‘ρητορικής μίσους’ εναντίον των Μουσουλμάνων και λιγότερο μέσω της άσκησης βίας. Παρά ταύτα έχουν καταγραφεί ορισμένες επιθέσεις, όπως εναντίον της οικίας ενός μαθητή από το Αφγανιστάν στην Αθήνα. Επίσης, ορισμένες χώρες προσευχής που λειτουργούσαν για χρόνια έκλεισαν έπειτα από παρέμβαση της αστυνομίας, ενώ καταγράφηκαν και φέτος αντιδράσεις για την ενσωμάτωση παιδιών προσφύγων στα ελληνικά δημόσια σχολεία. Ως προς το αναμενόμενο πρώτο επίσημο τζαμί της Αθήνας, το οποίο αναμένεται να λειτουργήσει εντός του 2018, οι δημόσιες συζητήσεις και αντιδράσεις για την κατασκευή του συνεχίστηκαν και το 2017. Με βάση τα διαθέσιμα στοιχεία της έκθεσης, η Ισλαμοφοβία εντοπίζεται κατά κύριο λόγο στο πεδίο της πολιτικής, στα έντυπα και ηλεκτρονικά ΜΜΕ, και στον χώρο της Ορθόδοξης Εκκλησίας, ενώ είναι σχεδόν ανύπαρκτη σε τομείς όπως η εκπαίδευση και το δικαστικό σύστημα. Είναι σημαντικό να τονιστεί ότι το ελληνικό νομικό σύστημα δεν αντιμετωπίζει επαρκώς τη ρητορική μίσους και τις επιθέσεις κατά των Μουσουλμάνων καθώς η πλειονότητα των δραστών ή όσων αναπαράγουν Ισλαμοφοβικό λόγο, π.χ. ορισμένων πολιτικών ή Μητροπολιτών, δεν εντοπίζεται ή δεν τιμωρείται, αν και πολλοί εξ αυτών είναι γνωστοί. Με την εξαίρεση ορισμένων πρωτοβουλιών από τη μεριά του κράτους και κάποιων ΜΚΟ, δεν εμφανίζεται κάποια ιδιαίτερη πρόοδος στην αντιμετώπιση της Ισλαμοφοβίας. Για την αντιμετώπιση αυτού του κενού θα ήταν χρήσιμη η σύσταση ενός παρατηρητηρίου για την Ισλαμοφοβία, το οποίο θα μπορεί να καταγράφει όλα τα περιστατικά, επιπλέον, θα ήταν χρήσιμη η διοργάνωση σειράς σεμιναρίων ειδικά για δημόσιους ιερέες και δημοσιογράφους, προκειμένου να ενημερωθούν σχετικά με το τι είναι το Ισλάμ και για την παρουσία του στην Ελλάδα.
Introduction

Islamophobia in Greece is mainly found on the discursive level, while physical attacks against immigrants and refugees based on religious motivation are fewer compared to other European countries - although they are difficult to record. There are three main fields that have played a crucial role in the reproduction of Islamophobia in the public sphere: politics, i.e. political parties and organisations mainly of the right and the extreme right; religion, i.e. certain church figures of the Orthodox Church of Greece; and finally the media and the Internet. The main issues for the reproduction of Islamophobic discourses were the terrorist attacks in Western societies; the so-called refugee issue and the presence of immigrants and refugees mainly in Athens and the Aegean islands; the construction of the mosque of Athens; and issues related to the Muslim Turkish minority where Islamophobia is sometimes reflected through the lens of Turcophobia.1 The report is based on data collected during 2017 and takes into consideration international events that might have influenced the appearance or the rise of Islamophobia. The material was mainly collected from printed and electronic media, websites and blogs, reports of NGOs, international organisations and state authorities, and formal or informal contacts with members of the Muslim communities.2

Significant Incidents and Developments

There were four important incidents and developments that affected Islamophobia in Greece during 2017. First, the so-called “refugee crisis” continued to play a significant role in the increase of hatred especially towards Muslim refugees settled primarily in Athens, Thessaloniki and the Greek islands in the Aegean Sea. Similarly to 2016, Islamophobic discourse and physical attacks continued to increase as the route of refugees to major European countries such as Germany, known also as the Balkan Route, remained closed and around 55,000 refugees remained in Greece in 2017. Meanwhile similarly to previous years, certain circles continued to exploit international developments, i.e. the terrorist attacks around the world, for the sake of boosting Islamophobia inside Greek society. Second, the determination of the Greek government to include refugee children into the Greek public schooling mechanism and enable the continuity of their primary education at these schools continued to meet with strong reactions from some parents of schoolchildren of

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2. It is worth noting that Greece has also been included in the OSCE Hate Crimes reporting mechanism since 2012. Apart from official statistical data from the Greek state, some minority and majority NGOs dealing with human and minority rights in Greece also contribute by reporting Islamophobic actions to this mechanism. The Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association and the Western Thrace Turks Federation in Europe primarily report about biases against Muslims in Western Thrace, Rhodes and Kos, while the Greek Helsinki Monitor and Racist Violence Recording Network offer reports on Muslims in the rest of Greece.
majority-Greek schools - though to a lesser extent compared to 2016. Others manifested their disapproval of the new textbooks for religious education introduced in 2017 on the grounds that the overall content included more information about basics tenets of Islam and other religions that was not only biased in their favour but also concealed their fanaticism and racism. Third, even if debates and reactions about the mosque in Athens persisted, its construction was almost completed at the end of 2017. Earlier, in August 2017, the Ministry of Education, Research and Religion had already appointed 14 people - only four of them Muslims – to the board of directors of the mosque, which is planned to open in 2018. Fourth, some masjids located inside the premises of NGOs, owned and functioned by members of the Muslims Turkish minority of Western Thrace, were closed down on the grounds that they lacked official permission.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Politics

In the field of politics, Golden Dawn (GD) is the most significant agent with regard to the reproduction of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred. Such views and attitudes have been consistently present in the party’s ideology and agenda since 2010 when for the first time it entered the political sphere in the local elections in Athens. During 2017, GD continued reproducing such discourses almost on a weekly basis through the party’s official website arguing that through the arrival of immigrants and refugees the Islamisation of Greece has already started.3 A text uploaded on the party’s official website reads,

The presence of Islam in Europe is the arm of the New Order for the terrorisation and enslavement of all the autochthonous people having as an ultimate goal the demolition of every European country through the mixture of races that will take place via the unstoppable illegal immigration of Muslims from Asia and Africa. […] If we don’t fight for our values and civilisation, then ethnic cleansing and submission to the ‘barbarians’, that arrive [in Greece] in thousands without meeting any kind of resistance, is certain.4

GD’s Islamophobic discourse was also evident in the parliamentary discussions on the construction of the mosque of Athens or immigration in which GD’s MPs


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- especially after the terrorist attacks in Europe (e.g. in Manchester or Barcelona) - have argued that jihadists are killing children throughout Europe⁵ implying that a mosque in Athens and immigrants and refugees constitute a direct threat, and, in this way, promoting a politics of fear.⁶

Apart from GD, politicians from the right, liberals or even of the centre-left have expressed views which could be considered as Islamophobic especially in relation to immigration and following the terrorist attacks in European cities. The former Prime Minister Antonis Samaras, for example, argued in a talk during a meeting of the European People’s Party think tank that Europe is threatened by a ‘tsunami of immigrants’ who come and practice every kind of smuggling, trafficking or even Jihad.⁷ In the same direction, Andreas Loverdos, an MP of the centre-left socialist party (PASOK), after the attack in Barcelona argued that the problem of Islamic (sic) terrorism is related with immigration and this is where the main focus of Europe should be.⁸ Thanos Tzimeros, on the other hand, the president of a small neo-liberal party, after the attack in Barcelona argued that Europe should forbid halal food for Muslims because that way they will have nothing to eat, and they will leave Europe.⁹

In the same spirit, the mayor of Argos in Peloponnese, has also argued that Europe and, of course, Greece is in a process of Islamisation through immigrants and refugees and that there is a plan to destroy national identities and eliminate the national consciousness of the next generation.¹⁰

On September 12, the leader of a political party in Greece made a clear link between preserving for a long time the threshold for entering parliament in the general elections and the presence of Muslims in the region of Western Thrace. During his press conference at the 82nd Thessaloniki International Fair, Vasilis Leventis, the leader of the Union of Centrists – a Greek political party with seven MPs at the Greek Parliament – underlined that the main reason for keeping the 3% election barrier since 1993 has primarily been to prevent the one political party of the Muslim Turkish minority in Western Thrace from entering the Greek Parliament. He openly stated the following,

Tsipras [i.e. the Prime Minister] was ready to lower it to 2%. I insisted that it remains at 3% since it is a matter of Muslims. Votes of Muslims range between 1.8% and

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2.2%. We could not allow a Muslim party to enter the Greek Parliament. In the case that the votes of Muslims reach 5%, then, we would rise the entrance barrier to the parliament to 5%. We need to be clear. Above all is the interest of Greece.11

In his statement he also underlined that in case the access of a Muslim party is allowed, then, Greeks should be ready to hear slogans from Muslims (implying members of the autochthonous Muslim Turkish minority of Western Thrace) stating “Long live Erdoğan” inside the Greek Parliament. Doing so, Leventis also implied that any possible entrance of an Islamic political party into the Greek Parliament would also work for the national interest of the neighbouring country, namely Turkey. The strongest reaction to Leventis’ statements came from the political party of Muslim Turks in Western Thrace. In its written statement, the Friendship, Equality and Peace Party condemned Leventis for using racist and Islamophobic discourse and targeting all Muslims living in Greece as dangerous and a threat to the country.12

Reflections of politics can also be observed in some decisions taken by the Greek state authorities on the religious liberties of Western Thracian Muslims residing inside or outside of Western Thrace. That is, in 2017, three masjids located inside non-governmental organisations belonging to members of the Muslim Turkish minority were closed by the Greek police. On February 17, the masjid located inside the Education, Culture and Sports Association of Muslims in Imathia-Vera;13 on March 9, the one inside the Educational and Cultural Association of Muslims in Didymoticho;14 and on June 30, the Osmaniye Masjid located inside the Educational and Cultural Association of Macedonian-Thracian Muslims in Thessaloniki were shut down by the Greek police.15 The reason for their closure was the same: they all lacked the necessary permission to function a house of prayer inside their premises. Nevertheless, the heads of all three NGOs emphasised that as citizens of Greece they were entitled to the right of freedom of religion. Moreover, the possibility to perform religious activities had already been highlighted in their constitutions. Therefore, they had the right to teach the basic tenets of Islam and the Quran and pray collectively with other Muslims. It is useful to underscore that all masjids functioned without having any kind of problem with local Greek authorities; the one in Imathia had functioned for two years, while the one in Thessaloniki had been open for almost 12 years. Therefore, it seems that the decision regarding the closures of the masjids had political aspects that should not be underestimated.

Justice System

With regard to the justice system there were no particular events or developments that could be considered as Islamophobic. What could be mentioned, though, is that during 2017 the trial of a well-known author who wrote an Islamophobic text after the attacks of November 2015 in Paris was to take place on July 21, but it was postponed for 2018. She is going to be on trial for violating the anti-racist law (n.4285/2014) and certain articles of the penal code and more particularly for public incitement of violence and hatred. It should be noted that the author was supported by other authors and journalists arguing either that her prosecution was in violation of her right of freedom of speech or that she said nothing wrong because Islam is indeed a problem and is not a moderate religion.

Education

Regarding education and in relation to the policies implemented by the Ministry of Education there are no particular events to mention. On the contrary significant policies contributed to the direction of confronting Islamophobic attitudes (see section on civil society and political initiatives to counter islamophobia in this report). Three issues could be mentioned in this section, however, which are directly related to education. The first one is the reaction by a group of parents with the support of extreme-right groups, GD among others, the church and certain theological circles, against the new textbooks for religious education, which began to change last year and included more information about other religions and, of course, Islam. These parents compiled a document stating that they did not accept their children being taught about other religions in a biased way which concealed their true teachings that, in their view, include fanaticism, racism and hatred – the accusations were mainly aimed at the new teaching material regarding Islam. As a result, they returned the school textbook their children had received in the first days of the school year to the ministry and in the accompanying letter characterised them as “unacceptable”.

The second issue worth mentioning is the reactions on October 28, the national commemoration day, when an 11-year-old student from Afghanistan was chosen in a lottery to carry the Greek flag in the student parade, according to the new edu-

cational legislation. The school administration and the school’s parents association decided otherwise and gave him the sign with the school’s name instead. 20 Finally, although not to the same extent as in the previous year, there were some reactions against the decision to matriculate refugee children at public schools in order to incorporate them into society and avoid their social exclusion in various regions of Greece (e.g. Oraiokastro and Filippiada). 21

**Media**

As was mentioned in the previous reports, the media of the extreme right plays the primary role in the reproduction of Islamophobic discourses, e.g. the newspaper of Golden Dawn, or *Makeleio*, *Stohos* and *Eleftheri Ora*. This situation remains true for 2017 as well. (Figures 1 and 2)

Other examples come not only from right-wing or centre-left newspapers but also from some lifestyle and gossip press. (Figure 3) *Dimocratia*, similarly to the previous years, is a newspaper which reproduces Islamophobic discourses, es-

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especially after terrorist attacks have occurred abroad, talking about “the monsters of Islam” and “the crazy [people] of Islam” on its front pages. Another interesting theme was the headlines and front pages of some newspapers regarding the danger Greece might face because of the presence of extremists in Greek society who preach in some of the tens of unofficial or even illegal prayer houses in Athens. According to Dimocracia, the police were keeping a close eye on an imam who they characterised as a “moving-bomb” - because he was considered very dangerous - while other newspapers like Eleftheria tou Typou argued that there are mosques of hatred in Athens which threaten the country’s security. (Figure 4) It has to be noted that most of these articles included very confusing information of what exactly is taking place, with very little documentation, speaking only with police sources and, in most cases, reproducing information from previous years (2014-2015) without any new ‘sources’.

Similar articles, however, were published in moderate right-wing newspapers like Kathimerini22 where one can find articles by Takis Theodoropoulos who in the last years regularly writes about the so-called clash of civilizations, the violent character of Islam or the invention of Islamophobia.23 What needs to be underlined is that in most of these cases and despite the validity or the novelty of the information a

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kind of moral panic is constructed through attractive headlines and photos on front pages trying to disseminate a fear about Islam and Muslims.\textsuperscript{24}

Furthermore, an online newspaper based in Komotini, \textit{Antifonitis},\textsuperscript{25} expressed intolerance against Islamic places of worship and hatred against Greece’s Ottoman past in its news coverage of the devastating fire in the Çelebi Mehmet Mosque (referred in the following section) in Didymoticho on March 22. With the headline “Will We All Cry for the Bayazid Mosque?”, the content reflected Çelebi Mehmet as an Asian invader of Greek soil because of whom many Greeks had suffered. Eventually, the article claimed, he barbarically built a mosque in his name in the centre of the city. According to \textit{Antifonitis}, not even a penny should be spent for the restoration of this mosque. Rather, the money should be spent for the restoration of the Hellenic heritage monuments in Thrace.\textsuperscript{26} Even though the Greek officials acted in the opposite direction and immediately started restoration works, it seems that it will take some time to completely restore the structure since the damage from the fire was extensive.

Certain newspaper publications, along with a documentary prepared by Vice Greece and broadcasted on Antenna TV channel on February 20, clearly indicate how Islamophobia in Greece is also reflected through the lens of anti-Turkish discourse. The head of a group who occupied the construction site of the central mosque being constructed in Athens underlined that “any Greek who demands the construction of a mosque in Athens is a traitor with Turkish seed”.\textsuperscript{27}

\textbf{Physical and Verbal Attacks}

One crucial problem in Greece is the lack of evidence regarding assaults which are perpetrated based explicitly on religious motivation. Reports in Greece are usually categorised under xenophobic and racist attacks with no particular focus on the religious motivation; this can be attributed perhaps to the fact that in most cases the motivation is not clear. Attacks against immigrants, for example, which during the second half of 2017 were on the rise in Aspropyrgos, a region near Athens, mainly targeted Muslims from Pakistan. However, it is not always easy to record them as clearly Islamophobic - the most appropriate characterisation might be xenophobic and Islamophobic. These attacks are believed to have reached 70 or 80 in 2017 and it is argued that the per-

\textsuperscript{24} It is important to mention that various studies show negative views about Islam and Muslims in Greece. See for example “Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe”, Pew Research Center, (May 10, 2017): 161; and a study of the National Centre for Social Research, Dimitris Angelidis, “We Live …Our Myth about Immigrants”, (March 21, 2017), Efimerida ton Syndakton, retrieved December 6, 2017 from https://www.efsyn.gr/arhio/azyme-ton-mytho-mas-gia-toys-metanastes.

\textsuperscript{25} Antifonitis was a local newspaper, which circulated fortnightly between 1998-2015.


\textsuperscript{27} Retrieved on December 28, 2017 from https://video.vice.com/ge/video/the-mosque-of-athens/58a1d561841ef40f32b666c4 (seconds between 14:30 and 14:50).
petrators meet and use the local GD offices as their point of departure. Since October 2017, a new extremist group emerged in Athens, under the name ‘Crypteia’ inspired by an ancient Spartan group. They claimed responsibility for an attack on the house of the young Afghan boy who was chosen to participate in the national celebrations of October 28 as his school’s flag-bearer - although the school administration decided otherwise. (See Education section) They also claimed responsibility for an attack against two Muslim immigrants, one of them an imam, in November 2017. It should also be mentioned that outside the location where the official mosque of Athens is going to be built many anti-Muslim slogans have been written on the walls. (Figures 5 and 6)

Regarding Western Thrace, two incidents of robbery occurred in 2017 and resulted in minor material damage to mosques in central Komotini. On April 4, the entrance of the Kırmahalle Mosque was found vandalised early in the morning and some money located inside the muezzin’s room was stolen. A similar attempt had also been reported two months earlier while unidentified individual(s) tried to steal some items from the yard of Şehreküstü Mosque. Apart from these two incidents, interviews with Muslims living in different parts of the country confirm that there were no other physical attacks on any

30. “They Broke the Entrance Door of Kırmahalle Mosque in Komotini”, Millet, (April 4, 2017), 5. Since the perpetrators were unidentified, this action might not be considered as Islamophobic but an incident of theft without any anti-Muslim intention.
functioning official mosque, masjid or cemetery property located in Western Thrace, Thessaloniki, Rhodes and Kos Island throughout 2017.

Last but not least, Çelebi Mehmet Mosque (known also as Bayazid Mosque, built in 1420 and located in central Didymoticho) is one of the oldest mosques in the Balkan Peninsula. During restoration works, a catastrophic fire broke out on the night of March 22 which resulted in serious damage to the monument. Initially, there were some rumours about a possible attack by Islamophobes targeting the centuries-old relic of Greece's Ottoman cultural heritage. Yet, the final findings of the investigation by Greek authorities have indicated that the cause of fire was welding materials used for restoration purposes.

On the whole, from discussions with Muslims it became clear that Islamophobia in Greece is not as severe as in other European countries and has probably decreased compared to previous years, especially with regard to physical attacks. However, it was mentioned that a key issue is the Islamophobic attitudes and views held by state authorities and more particularly the police or the secret services which seem to uphold an Orientalist perspective and which sometimes leads to Islamophobia. An interesting parameter is that according to a study of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Muslims themselves consider these attacks as mainly based on their ethnic or immigrant background, secondly on their skin colour and thirdly on their religion. It should be added that in most cases they hesitate or are afraid of reporting the attack to the authorities.

Internet
The Internet is a fertile ground for the reproduction of Islamophobic views and the expression of hatred against Islam and Muslims. Similarly to previous years’ reports, many extreme right-wing websites continue to disseminate ‘news’ about Muslim countries in relation to violence (e.g. killings, rapes, murders, etc.) which in most cases are not reliable. These stories are used to cultivate and spread the fear of Islam and to create a repulsive image of Islam and Muslims. Such websites include, of course, the official website of GD and of its youth division (http://www.xryshaygh).

31. On both islands, there were a number of mosques established during the Ottoman administration of the Dodecanese region. Yet, contrary to demands of the Islander Turks for opening some already-existing mosques for religious purposes, only one mosque is open for use on each island. The rest remain closed, dilapidated and require immediate restoration so as not to collapse. Ali Huseyinoglu, “Past and Present of Islam in the Balkans: The Case of Greece”, Avrasya Etüdleri, 50 (2), 2016, 38-41.

32. Kostas Kantouris, “This Is How the Bayazid Mosque Collapsed Because of Fire”, Makedonia, (10 April, 2017), retrieved December 22, 2017 from https://makthes.gr/%CE%AD%CF%84%CF%83%CE%B9-%CE%BA%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B1%CF%83%CF%84%CE%AC%CF%86%CE%B7%CE%BA%CE%B5-%CE%B1%CF%80%CF%8C-%CF%84%CE%B7-%CF%86%CF%89%CF%84%CE%B9%CE%AC-%CF%84%CE%BF-%CF%84%CE%AD%CE%BC%CE%B5/.

33. Information collected from interviews with Muslims.

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com/ and http://www.antepithesi.gr/); ethnikismos.gr, which is related to GD since many articles appear on both websites; the website of a journalist, writer and turcologist (sic), i.e. a specialist in Turkey, where a special section dedicated to Islam can be found (http://nikosxeiladakis.gr/); and all the websites of the newspapers, which belong to the extreme right, mentioned in the media section of the report (http://www.stoxos.gr/, http://www.makeleio.gr/, https://www.elora.gr/portal/). Apart from the above, one can find blogs with Islamophobic content and images supporting that Islam and Muslims should leave Greece because Islam is a “violent and savage religion” (Figure 7) and that all illegal immigrants - mainly Muslim - are threatening Greece.35 It is also very common to find Islamophobic pages and comments on Facebook or Twitter, such as the Facebook groups “Stop Islam in Greece” and “No to a mosque in Athens”.36

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

As has been presented in previous sections of this report, the extreme right and more particularly GD are central figures in the Islamophobia network, building on what has been termed “politics of fear”. Specific websites also play a key role in the construction of panic regarding Islam and the presence of Muslims in Greek society. In this section two additional players in the field are mentioned. The first is a neo-liberal former minister of the conservative party Nea Dimocratia, Andreas Andrianopoulos, who teaches at the American College of Greece (Deree) and is the director of the Institute of Diplomacy and International Developments at the same college. Through speeches, articles, books, his website and mainly his Twitter account, he continuously (re-)produces Islamophobic messages talking about “Islamic beasts” after terrorist attacks, about the threat of the thousands of immigrants coming to Greece, and, on the whole, implying that there is a cultural


37. From the blog http://myrmithonas.blogspot.gr.
chasm between Islam and the West and that those who are friendly and open to Muslims will pay the price in the future.38

The second player is some members of the Orthodox Church of Greece, especially some Metropolitans. It is important to note that the Church on the whole is not Islamophobic and does not express hatred towards Muslims. However, there are some cases that need to be taken into serious consideration. The Metropolitan of Piraeus Serafeim is a central figure in Islamophobic discourses since he continuously argues that Islam is a fake religion and Muhammad a fake prophet, adding that Islam is violent and very dangerous.39 Similarly, the Office for Heresies and Para-religions of the Metropolis of Piraeus launched an announcement arguing that it is impossible to see Islam in any other way [i.e. as a religion of peace] because nowadays Islam is conquering the West using jihad.

Islam gallops conquering the Western world! Islamic expansionism and its all the more greater infiltration of Western societies during the last decades is now an unquestionable reality visible to the bare eye. […] Under such appropriate circumstances many Muslim organisations wish to dominate in the European space and establish this theocratic, fascist and imperialist construction of the ‘prophet’ Muhammad.40

The Metropolitan of Kalavryta Ambrosios, who is another central figure in such discourses, has repeatedly expressed views against immigrants, especially Muslims. For Ambrosios, Greece and Europe have already been invaded by Muslims who started their criminal activity with attacks, thefts, injuries and murders of innocent Greek people.41

Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia
There were three developments in 2017 from the part of the state that could be considered as important in confronting Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred. In 2016, a new curriculum and textbooks for the class of religious education were introduced as a pilot in selected schools. This year, it was decided to expand the new introductions to cover all Greek schools despite the reactions mentioned above. Furthermore, the programme of the Ministry of Education about the incorporation of refugee children continued to be implemented in 2017 in various regions

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39. “Letter of the Metropolitan of Piraeus, Serafeim, to the President of the Turkish Republic”, (April 12, 2017), retrieved December 7, 2017 from goo.gl/mqStGV.
of Greece despite local reactions and obstacles.\footnote{For the legal background of these two cases see Konstantinos Tsitselikis and Alexandros Sakellariou, “Greece” in Oliver Scharbrodt et al (ed.), Yearbook of Muslims in Europe (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2018): 320.} Finally, in 2017, the construction of the official mosque proceeded, although not as fast as scheduled; in the summer, the mosque’s board of directors was selected and the relevant legislation was signed by the Ministry of Education.

With regard to the media, a new European project was launched about the way journalists should cover issues related to immigrants and ethnic or religious minorities throughout Europe. In this project the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation (ERT) was a partner and one of the project’s main outcomes was a booklet of guidelines including, among other topics, a special section on ethical
reporting of Muslim communities. Adding to the above, in January 2017, a new European project, including a partner from Greece, was launched, called the Counter Islamophobia Kit (CIK), the overall aim of which is to produce a transferable toolkit of counter-narratives to Islamophobia, building on an assessment of the range and content of counter-narratives to Muslim hatred and hostility in eight national case study contexts and their application, operation and impact on prevailing narratives of hate and hostility.

Finally, throughout the year, discussions against Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred were organised around Greece, mainly by anti-racist and anti-fascist left-wing groups (Figures 8, 9, 10).

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

According to the existing data it could be argued that the level of Islamophobia in Greece has remained constant in 2017. Islamophobia is primarily manifested in the public discourse of specific political parties, by certain politicians of the right and far-right, some clerics of the Orthodox Church of Greece, and on different platforms of the Greek media. The SYRIZA-ANEL coalition government continues to take steps in combating xenophobic and Islamophobic behaviour. However, they are far from being adequate.

• First, confronting Islamophobia requires the establishment of an official observatory mechanism that will monitor and record Islamophobic incidents on the level of discourse and that of physical attacks.

• Second, the legal mechanism in Greece is not effectively tackling Islamophobia and the Greek law is not robust enough to discourage Islamophobic actions and hate speech. As a result, many of the perpetrators remain unidentified and unpunished. There is a need for the effective implementation of the existing anti-racist legislation (n4285/2014), which punishes hate speech and the incitement of violence that takes place in public, through the media, the Internet or in any other way.

• Third, the Orthodox Church of Greece should not only punish its Metropolitans who insist on using Islamophobic discourse, but also discourage any attempt of reproduction of anti-Muslim hatred by its clerics.

• Fourth, even though Islam is an old religion in Greece dating back to the Ottoman times, knowledge about the fundamentals of Islam is highly limited, which provides another space for Islamophobia to flourish inside Greek society. In this respect, the new textbooks for religious education introduced this year, which

44. For more information see the project’s website https://cik.leeds.ac.uk/.
include more information about Islam, are likely to assist the overall understanding of Islam in Greece. For the same purpose, training seminars should also be provided particularly for those journalists, teachers, police officers, coastguards and other civil servants who have contact with Muslims.

- Finally, it is significant to remember that Muslims should not be excluded from decision-making mechanisms combating anti-Muslim hatred in Greece. An effective mechanism of dialogue and cooperation should immediately be formed, such as a platform where views of Muslims will be taken into full consideration by Greek decision makers in Greece’s fight against Islamophobia.

**Chronology**

- **17.02.2017**: The masjid located inside the Education, Culture and Sports Association of Muslims in Imathia-Veria was closed by the Greek police.
- **04.03.2017**: An assembly and discussion entitled “No to Islamophobia, we welcome refugee children in our schools” took place in Thessaloniki.
- **09.03.2017**: The masjid inside the Educational and Cultural Association of Muslims in Didymoticho was closed by the Greek police.
- **22-23.03.2017**: Catastrophic fire broke out inside the Çelebi Mehmet Mosque in central Didymoticho during restoration works.
- **04.04.2017**: The entrance door of the Kirmahalle Mosque was found vandalised early in the morning.
- **17.06.2017**: Demonstration in Samos against the alleged Islamisation of the island.
- **23.06.2017**: Discussion organised in Thessaloniki entitled “Islamophobia, imperialism and anti-racist fight today”.
- **25.06.2017**: Discussion takes place in Ptolemaida under the title “Islamophobia, imperialism, extreme right and anti-racist fight today”.
- **30.06.2017**: The Osmaniye Masjid located inside the premises of the Educational and Cultural Association of Macedonian-Thracian Muslims in Thessaloniki is shut down by the Greek police.
- **12.09.2017**: Islamophobic statements by Vasilis Leventis, the leader of the Union of Centrists, targeting the entry into the Greek Parliament of any political party of the Muslim Turkish minority in Western Thrace.
- **24.09.2017**: Event organised by Golden Dawn in Almyros, Volos entitled “Against the impoverishment and the Islamisation of Greece”.
- **September – October 2017**: Reactions against the new textbooks for religious education from parents, theological and church circles and the extreme right.
- **18.10.2017**: Discussion in Xanthi takes place entitled “Marxist Forum: Islamophobia – The Modern Racism”.
• **06.11.2017**: An attack against the house of an Afghan pupil is perpetrated by the extreme-right group Crypteia, who make their debut appearance.

• **16.11.2017**: Event organised in Thessaloniki by Golden Dawn together with the Serbian nationalist party “Radical Serbian Party”. A common decision is taken to form an Orthodox coalition in the Balkans against Islamisation and globalisation.

• **22.11.2017**: Attack by Crypteia against two immigrants; one of the victims is an imam.
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 crimes 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.