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

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

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

About SETA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Combatting Islamophobia on the European and the Supranational Levels

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

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

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

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

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

8. Ibid.
bism. 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.\(^{12}\) 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.”\(^{13}\) The ECRI concludes that the “negative experiences of Muslims in Europe can fuel feelings of isolation within a larger community and hinder inclusive societies.”\(^{14}\) 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,\(^{15}\) 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 combatting Islamophobia as it did on combatting anti-Semitism and anti-Gypsyism.\(^{16}\)

14. Ibid.
15. The members of this coalition are the following: European Forum of Muslim Women; Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations; Karamah EU; European Muslim Initiative for Social Cohesion; European Network against Racism; and the Collective against Islamophobia in France.
A resolution adopted by the UN Human Rights Council on March 23, 2016 (Resolution 31/16) expressed “concern over violent attacks motivated by anti-religious bias, targeting individuals belonging to religious minorities, as well as religious places, and recommended that states prevent, investigate and punish such acts.” Although this is more a general resolution on freedom of religion it is still relevant to EU states which are witnessing an unprecedented rise of anti-Muslim hate crimes in the last decade. More concretely, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance reported that “the fear of terrorism and racist and xenophobic speech often translate into increases in hate crimes targeting Muslims, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.” Like many others, the special rapporteur reiterated the importance of collecting disaggregated data on hate crimes targeting Muslims and others.

The Rise of the Far Right in Europe

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

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

18. Ibid.
The Right Wing in Opposition

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The successful Swiss right-wing party SVP tried to introduce a full-face veil ban in Sweden. Another parliamentary initiative by National Councillor Yannick Buttet (CVP) demanded a “mandatory labelling of imported halal meat at all stages of sales as well as an increase in the price of imported halal meat.”23 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.”24

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,25 which argued that “the love offer of Jesus Christ and Muhammad’s use of violence are as different as day and night.”26

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.”27 During a local council election in Bucharest in June 2016, several leading Bucharest mayoral candidates argued for a referendum on the mosque, amongst them the current mayor Gabriela Firea of the Social Democratic Party (Partidul Social Democrat – PSD).28

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

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

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

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

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

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

Denying the Suffering

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

The (Mis-)Use of Education and Academia

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

Online Islamophobia

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

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

Legalizing Islamophobia

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

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

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

The fact that Islamophobia goes hand in hand with other forms of racism, such as anti-Semitism in this case, should be a symbolic reminder for those, who are aware of European history. Beyond this example of a right-wing extremist movement, the case of Hungary, where the ruling Fidesz party mobilizes against George Soros while portraying him as a conspirator alongside Muslims to change the European population, reveals again that racism will eventually target every minority.

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

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

On October 17, 2017, 10 far-right militants were arrested by French anti-terrorist police in France. According to the TV station M6, they were suspected of
planning attacks on French politicians and on Muslim places of worship.  

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

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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.\(^5^2\) 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\(^5^3\) 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”\(^5^4\) 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.

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\(^{52}\) Stop Extremism, “Six Actions That We Demand to Secure a Safer Europe”, retrieved March 24, 2018, from https://www.en.stopextremism.eu/about.

\(^{53}\) Observatorio de la Islamofobia en los medios, http://www.observatorioislamofobia.org/.

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)
The Author

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Executive Summary

In Slovenia right-wing politicians and radical groups, who are very active on social media and through the organization of public events and protests, overtly and explicitly display Islamophobic discourses. They continuously warn against the threat of Islamization and for this reason they object to Islamic cultural activities, the construction of the first and only mosque in Slovenia and the name “Mosque Street,” halal food practices, multicultural dialogue, and the acceptance of refugees, who became inextricably linked to Islam and Muslim identity.

Although breaching the Slovenian Constitution and international legal standards, the Aliens Act was amended (also with the support of the left-wing Modern Centre Party) and now allows for emergency measures denying entry and protection to refugees. The asylum seeker Ahmad Shamieh was about to be deported to Croatia after living in Slovenia for a year but eventually public protests prevented the deportation.

In 2017, persistent problems faced by the Muslim community living in Slovenia continue to present serious obstacles in performing their rights (especially in the employment and education areas) including access to halal food, Islamic holidays, spiritual care and place for worship, circumcision of boys, and Muslim head covering of women. Therefore, we recommend policy changes in five main areas: politics, media, employment, education, and management of refugees. Namely,

• Awareness raising and education about the dangers of hate speech, xenophobia and (neo) racism in the media and on the Internet, as well as in politics.
• Monitoring and collection of information about discrimination based on religious grounds in the employment area as well as implementing and facilitating options for halal dietary regimes at workplaces, schools, kindergartens, hospitals, state institutions, etc.
• Update of textbooks and school curricula regarding Islamic history; education about Islam, and diverse Islamic practices and traditions on an institutional level including political institutions as well as employment and educational organizations.
• The development of integration programs and the facilitation of the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in Slovenian society.
Povzetek

V Sloveniji politiki desnice in radikalne skupine, ki so zelo aktivne na socialnih omrežjih in preko javnih prireditev in shodov, odkrito in izrecno prikazujejo islamofobične diskurze. Nenehno opozarjajo na grožnjo islamizacije in zato nasprotujejo islamskim kulturnim dejavnostim, gradnji prve in edine mošeje v Sloveniji in imenu “Đamijska ulica”, HALAL prehrambeni praksi, multikulturnemu dialogu in sprejemanju beguncev, ki so postali neločljivo povezani z islamom in muslimansko identiteto. Kljub kršitvi slovenske Ustave in mednarodnih pravnih standardov je bila sprejeta sprememba Zakona o tujcih (tudi ob podpori leve SMC) in sedaj omogoča nujne ukrepe, ki zavračajo vstop in zaščito beguncev. Prosílec za azil Ahmad Shamieh se je po letu dni prebivanja v Sloveniji soočil z deportacijo na Hrvaško, ki pa so jo javni protesti preprečili. V letu 2017 so še vedno prisotni problemi muslimanske skupnosti živeče v Sloveniji, saj se še naprej srečujejo z ovirami pri izvajanju njihovih verskih pravic (zlasti na področju zaposlovanja in izobraževanja), vključno z dostopom do HALAL hrane, islamskih praznikov, duhovne oskrbe in kraja čaščenja, obrezovanja dečkov in muslimanskega pokrivanja žensk. Zato priporočamo spremembe politik na petih glavnih področjih: politika, mediji, zaposlovanje, izobraževanje in upravljanje beguncev:

• Ozaveščanje in izobraževanje o nevarnostih sovražnega govora, ksenofobije in (neo)rasizma v medijih ter na spletu in v politiki.
• Spremljanje in zbiranje informacij o diskriminaciji na podlagi verskih razlogov na področju zaposlovanja ter omogočanje HALAL prehranskega režima na delovnih mestih, v šolah, vrtcih, bolnišnicah, državnih institucijah itd.
• Posodobitev učbenikov in učnih načrtov o islamski zgodovini; izobraževanje o islamu, raznolikih islamskih praksah in tradicijah na institucionalni ravni, vključno s političnimi institucijami ter zaposlitvenimi in izobraževalnimi organizacijami.
• Razviti integracijske programe in olajšati vključevanje beguncev in prosilcev za azil v slovensko družbo.
Introduction

In November 2017, Slovenia witnessed the presidential elections, where the previous President Borut Pahor won the second mandate for 5 years. The elections were a disappointment for the right-wing political parties, since their candidates all received very little support. However, a surprise was the 2.2% of votes for the candidate of the group Zedinjena Slovenia (United Slovenia), who is known for his patriotic and nationalistic opinions and activities. The electoral participation in the first and second round was the lowest until now (44% and 42% respectively).

After a series of unsuccessful attempts to resolve the dispute over their land and maritime boundary, Slovenia and Croatia signed an arbitration agreement in 2009 establishing an arbitral tribunal tasked to determine the border. On June 26, 2017, the arbitral tribunal rendered its final decision, which was very welcomed by Slovenia.

Slovenia was still affected by the so-called refugee crisis and this was evident in the Amendment to the Aliens Act, which denies entry to refugees and provides measures for their deportation if they have already entered the country. The initiators and supporters of the Amended Act were the right-wing Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) and the left-wing Modern Centre Party (SMC) whose majority even supported the proposed right-wing complements. The Amended Act is a breach of the Slovenian Constitution, international legal order and human rights standards. By its very broad definition of “changed circumstances” it enables the state to close the borders for asylum seekers and limits their access to international protection. An absolute majority (46 parliamentary votes) is sufficient to reach a decision on the closure of the border, and not two-thirds of votes as it was initially proposed by the government as a “guardian” against abuse. For these reasons many legal experts, politicians (some from the SMC party) and activists reacted very harshly to this amendment; however, it was voted in the parliament with 47 votes in favour and 18 against.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

In 2017, the main issue regarding Islam and Muslims in Slovenia revolved around the name of the street in Ljubljana where the newly constructed Islamic Religious and Cultural Centre (IRCC) is based. The IRCC construction consisted of an architectural and urban infrastructural adaptation, which included a newly constructed street leading to the centre. For this purpose, suggestions for the street’s name were collected and the municipality decided on the name “Mosque Street” (Đamijska ulica). The name itself raised objections in politics and media, especially from right-wing parties and newspapers.
Among other things, although not directly connected to Muslims living in Slovenia, the Amendments to Aliens Act, which denies protection to refugees, on the symbolic level steered the debate about threats from Muslim countries. The amendments to the Aliens Act were problematic from the human and asylum rights point of view since in its latest form it allows for special emergency measures denying entry to people arriving at the borders and automatically expelling migrants and refugees who have entered Slovenia irregularly. Thus, migrants are bereft of proper assessment of their asylum claims or the risks to which they would be exposed upon return. Slovenia has also witnessed a deportation to Croatia of a Syrian family with a baby born in Slovenia, after a year and a half of living in Slovenia. Another deportation of Syrian Ahmad Shamieh was stopped due to the strong engagement of human right activists.

On the Internet and especially in social media, radical groups and their Islamophobic discourses persist. Especially active is the group Generation Identity Slovenia, a Slovenian form of the Europe-wide activities of the group Generation Identity. In their Facebook posts they warn against the threat of Islamization in Slovenia which is going on, on their opinion, through entry and acceptance of refugees, Islamic cultural activities, halal food practices and certificates, and multicultural dialogue.

Politics
In 2017, the construction of the Islamic Religious and Cultural Centre (IRCC) has been slowly finalized. The IRCC construction consisted of an architectural and urban infrastructural adaptation, which also included a newly constructed street leading to the centre. (Fig. 1) For this purpose, suggestions for the street’s name were collected and the Municipality of Ljubljana during the session on September 25 decided to name the street “Mosque Street” (Đamijska ulica) with 24 votes for and 9 votes against. The name itself raised objections in politics and media, especially the right-wing parties (SDS, Nsi) and newspapers (Demokracija, Reporter, Nova 24).

Right-wing actors and media have also expressed outrage upon the statement of Nevzet Porić, the secretary of the Islamic Community, who expressed gratitude to the Ljubljana Mayor Zoran Janković after the decision to name the street “Mosque Street,” but who also noted that “Muslims will remember those who were against the construction of the mosque.” Right-wing politicians and groups perceived this statement as a direct threat by Slovenian Muslims against the Slovene population.1

A round table was organized in November 2017 about safety issues in Slovenia and Europe. Two members of the SDP party, Dr Vinko Gorenak and Branko Grims, MA, were the main speakers. They spoke about the threat of terrorist attacks in connection with radical Islam. Grims stated, “The door to radical Islam, which is slowly penetrating through legal channels, opened very carefully with migrants who came legally and stayed here.” He explained that “[a]bove all, the main thing that threatens Slovenia as a national state and the EU as a community, is the link between the political left and radical Islam.” He further emphasized that “the silent, yet apparent invasion and the Islamization of Europe is taking place, and causes radical changes in the old continent.” The speakers explicitly connected the so-called refugee crisis with Islamization and presented terrorism as a threat to European and Slovenian territories and nations.

Justice System
Although at first sight not directly connected to Muslims in Slovenia, the Amendments to Aliens Act enacted in 2017, which denies protection to refugees, on the symbolic level steered the debate about threats from Muslim countries. The amendments to the Aliens Act were problematic from the human rights and asylum rights point of view since in the latest form it allows for special emergency measures denying entry to people arriving at the borders and the automatic expulsion of migrants and refugees who have entered Slovenia irregularly. Thus migrants are bereft of proper assessment of their asylum claims or the risks to which they would be exposed upon return. The amended act was, however, very welcomed by right-wing groups and political parties. Their xenophobic and populist discourse created a link between refugees, Muslim faith and the recent terrorist attacks in Europe.
against the amendments were labelled by right-wing SDP party member Dr Vinko Gorenak as “extortionists, hypocrites, and threats.”

The ban on slaughtering animals without stunning was adopted by the National Assembly in 2013. Article 25 of the Animal Protection Act requires that the animal be stunned before slaughter. Until then, ritual slaughter was possible, but it was necessary to obtain permission. Now, the permit is no longer possible. This prohibition was already resisted by both the Muslim and Jewish communities living in Slovenia. Their representatives are since then convinced that the state, by prohibiting ritual slaughtering without stunning, violates the right to religious freedom. Both the Jewish and the Islamic faith require that the animal be slaughtered when conscious, that is, it must not be stunned in order to ensure its proper bleeding. The Slovenian Veterinarian Association insisted that slaughtering without stunning animals caused additional suffering, which is why the aforementioned amendment to the law on the protection of animals was adopted. In October 2017, Dr Andraž Teršek, professor of Constitutional Law, published the legal text of the initiative, which was filed in 2014 by the Slovenian Muslim Community, to assess the constitutionality of the law to the Constitutional Court and proposed the possibility that animals be slaughtered without stunning. They both claim that Muslim’s human rights have been violated and that the law violates Article 7 (equality and freedom of religious communities) and Article 41 (freedom of conscience) of the constitution; and in connection with the articles 7 and 41 also Article 1 (principle of democracy), Article 2 (principle of the rule of law) and Article 14 (equality before the law). Since the Muslim community is a national organization representing Slovenian citizens of the religion of Islam, to whom the constitution guarantees the practice and confession of faith (which involves ritual slaughter), they claim that the Animal Protection Act directly interferes with the constitutional rights and freedoms of Slovene Muslims and members of the Slovenian Muslim Community. The Constitutional Court of Slovenia has yet to decide on the proposal to repeal Article 25 of the Animal Protection Act. The right-wing media and


6. In Slovenia there are two officially registered Islamic Communities: the Slovenian Muslim Community (Slovenska Musliminska Skupnost) led by the former Slovenian Mufti Osman Dogić, and the Islamic Community in Slovenia (Islamska skupnost v Sloveniji) led by Secretary General Nevzet Porić. The main reason for their ideological split was the intention of Mufti Osman Dogić to establish an independent and autonomous Slovenian Muslim community, not attached and subject to the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A group under his leadership thus split from the Islamic Community in Slovenia and established its own community in 2006.

parties reacted to this initiative and claimed that animal rights should be protected from this cruel Islamic practice: “For Muslims it is necessary to slaughter their animals in the way prescribed by Islam, that is, in a cruel manner with bleeding.” Opponents of this practice claim that although in most European countries this kind of slaughter is permitted, there are more and more calls for its ban, since “Europe does not share anything with this Islamic tradition.”

**Employment**

The problems for Muslims in the employment area continue to persist due to the lack of any legal framework (except for the religious rights as protected nominally by the constitution) guaranteeing the actual performance of their religious rights in the workplace, among which are the time and place for worship, possibilities of consuming halal food, celebration of Islamic holidays (only Christian holidays are celebrate as official holidays), and the possibility to wear religious clothing such as headscarves. From research and interviews it is evident that potential female workers are even afraid of demanding these rights since they fear losing the job or not even being employed. Women either choose not to cover themselves or not to work (many indeed cannot find work because they wear headscarves).

Muslims have also been trying to be granted the right of religious spiritual care in the Slovenian Armed Forces, police, hospitals, prisons, etc. which is officially available for Roman Catholic members but not for the members of the Islamic faith. In January 2017, the Council for Dialogue on Religious Freedom of the government of the Republic of Slovenia met in its regular session and upon the initiative of the Islamic Community debated on the issue of the religious spiritual care of Muslims in the army and police forces, as well as in hospitals and prisons. These issues are not systematically organized, imams and pious members of the community usually do not have any special place available for ritual practices and the problem continues to persist.


In the October session\textsuperscript{11} of the council, they discussed the question of circumcising Muslim boys in accordance to religious requirements and the possibility of performing this surgery in state hospitals, since the surgery is not allowed on the grounds of religious belief. Instead, parents make individual and private arrangements for the surgery either in private clinics or abroad. Some state hospitals, however, make it possible to perform the surgery (upon agreement); the Islamic community, however, states that they cannot demand this surgery because of religious belief and that the price for the operation (550€) is for many families a huge expense. Furthermore, the Islamic community expressed concern over the Ombudsman’s statement from 2012 that circumcision other than for medical reasons is a crime representing a “[p]hysical intervention to the integrity of the child merely because of the desire of its legal representatives or caregivers and therefore means an inadmissible interference on a child’s body. In our conviction, it represents a criminal behavior.”\textsuperscript{12} The Islamic community strongly opposes such an interpretation, which ignores religious practice and Muslim rights.

Education
As mentioned in the previous report on Slovenia,\textsuperscript{13} the main issue with the curricula is the stereotypical representation of Muslims through images of Turkish/Ottoman expansion and intrusions. No change has been undertaken yet on this issue by the relevant school authorities, i.e. the ministries. No suggestion at the institutional level has been made to change and update the curricula.

In schools and preschool day-care centres, Muslim parents have no legal or administrative possibilities to arrange for halal food for their children. The arrangement can be made only upon individual agreement between parents and school authorities, which oftentimes are not keen to change dietary regimes for some children who would eat halal food. Parents most of the time have tried to arrange a medical report stating that their child does not eat pork or is allergic to pork meat; however, many doctors/paediatricians do not write this type of reports (anymore). Some school authorities only accept medial reports from specialists, who usually do not issue such reports when no medical reasons are present. Parents, thus, compromise either by not putting their children in public schools, or, if an individual agreement is reached, by accepting their children not being given pork. However, since halal dietary practice consists of more than just not eating pork, children


have no other dietary options (elements of pork in other processed foods, the slaughter method is usually not halal, etc.).

**Media**

Media houses connected to the right-wing and conservative parties (*Demokracija*, *Nova 24TV*, and *Reporter*) regularly publish Islamophobic material. (Fig. 2) In 2017, most of the themes revolved around the acceptance of refugees being allocated to Slovenia according to the EU refugee quotas. They constantly blame the parliamentary left-wing Modern Centre Party for accepting Muslim refugees into Slovenia.

*Nova 24TV* has published news about Islamic terrorists disguised as refugees with explicit hate speech; some examples follow.

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; and they bring with them much more than just a hungry mouth. They do not respect our laws, but we are talking about tolerance and equality, while most of them don’t even understand the meaning of these words.15

In the following extract a very open Islamophobic discourse dividing “us” and “them” is employed to introduce fear of Islam among Slovenian people.

Not only are they responsible for rapes and terrorist attacks, they also bring Islam to our places. This is itself a violent and aggressive culture, which teaches its members from the time they are born that they must rule the world. It teaches that they should not choose the means and should not look at the consequences. They are taught to be more important than all the rest, while the rest should fear them. In their opinion, women live only to serve and provide sexual services. Consequently, if they do not want to, they simply rape them and do not feel regret for their actions. They want to subordinate and convert everyone to Islam - if they do not succeed, they kill them.16

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16. Ibid.
They also raise irrational fear for the future of nations in Europe and blame Muslims for being categorically different from European people and invert the discourse on racism.

Will Europe really be filled with millions of such criminals? What will happen in this case? Let’s bring the Muslims to our country and open the doors to them, and we’ll see. What can a million members of a brutal parasitic culture do to us, who hates us and do not want to integrate? If we do not accept them, we are called racists. In reality, the reason that many do not want to accept them is not that they are different. It’s in their beliefs and actions. We would not accept “our” people if they behaved badly, so we lock up the criminals, don’t we?\(^\text{17}\)

Similarly Marko Osolnik, MA, a diplomat, analyst and publicist in Reporter explains Islam in an extremely racist and xenophobic way. He states,

> Muslimness, however, remains largely the same today as in its bloody history - limited, impatient and aggressively expansionist. In fact, Islam is not only a religion, but a de facto mostly totalitarian religious and political ideology that tends to subjugate the whole of mankind... In addition, it is necessary to add that the very word Islam in Arabic means subordination or surrender. Contrary to Christianity, Islam actually does not know (and does not recognize) concepts, such as free will, a personal, loving relationship between God and a believer, forgiveness, etc. No, a man must - willingly or not - just blindly and unconditionally submit to Allah or his representatives on Earth. ... Hatred, intolerance and violence against “unbelievers” is to say to all non-Muslims, are commanded in Islam.\(^\text{18}\)

In January 2017, the newspaper Demokracija\(^\text{19}\) presented the translation of Nabeel Qureshi’s book Answering Jihad, A Better Way Forward into Slovenian (Razumeti islam in đihad, 2016). (Fig. 3) However, the Slovenian Islamic Community and its secretary Nevzet Porić do not recommend reading the book as a work of serious literature, or out of interest in learning about Islam and the concept of jihad. Porić expressed surprise that a Catholic publishing house (Family-Družina) among so many books about Islam chose to translate and publish this book, which is, in his opinion, hostile to Islam and is contrary to Pope Francis's call for tolerance and dialogue between religions.\(^\text{20}\)

\(^{17}\) Ibid.


Drago K. Ocvirk, the translator of the aforementioned book, in an interview with the newspaper *Demokracija* stated that there are “two types of religious rejection of the humanistic critique of Islam, whether it comes from inside or from outside, and it is also encountered in Slovenia. An apologetic, defensive posture is widespread. In this case, even a bona fide criticism of Islam is stigmatized as weak-minded and Islamophobic. For example, Navzet Porić, secretary general of the Islamic Community, proclaimed Nabeel Qureshi, the author of the book, as a former Ahmadinean Muslim, stating that he ‘is an unimportant person who became mister ‘somebody’ because he wrote something negative about Islam.’”

Ocvirk continued,

The second rejection of the humanistic critique of Islam is a doctrinal one. This is based on the basic assumption of the predominant religious groups in Islam that from the human, that is, humanistic point of view, it is not possible to criticize Allah’s and Mohammed’s words - Koran and Hadiths. Man must unconditionally submit to it, for Allah knows better than man, what he demands from him.

According to Ocvirk an example is the initiative of the Slovene Muslim Community to repeal a law prohibiting the slaughter of animals without stunning and consequently preventing Islamic ritual slaughter to the Constitutional Court.

**Physical and Verbal Attacks**

In 2017, no specific physical or verbal attack were recorded. However, a recent insinuation by a member of the Slovenian Democratic Party Grims against the Syrian refugee Ahmad Shamieh who faced the threat of deportation can be considered as a form of a verbal attack. He stated, “Ahmad left three or five children and a wife in the middle of the war in Damascus. But he himself, forgive my expression, took his ass to a better place.”

There were, however, many physical protests against migrants from Muslim countries and protests against the settlement of refugees in some local commu-
nities. (Figs. 4, 5) They usually directly related refugees and migrants with Muslims and, therefore, often the messages at these protests contained Islamophobic material.

**Internet**

On the Internet, social media (especially Facebook groups, but also some forums and blogs) remain the most active virtual arena for Islamophobic discourses. Especially active is the group *Generation Identity Slovenia* (Generacija Identitete Slovenija), a Slovenian version of the group *Generation Identity*, which is active across Europe. In their Facebook posts they warn against the threat of the Islamization of Slovenia which is going on, on their opinion, through the entry and acceptance of refugees, Islamic cultural activities, acceptance of halal food practices and certificates, and multicultural dialogue. They publish posts with events presented in such a manner as to feed hate against Muslims. Thus, they strengthen the feeling of threat from Muslims in Slovenia, Europe and across the world by constantly reminding of the Islamic attacks performed by radical groups and by keeping alive the memory of Turkish invasions and the defence of Slovenian territories in the 17th century. They also warn about supposed attacks performed by Muslims in Slovenia.

Furthermore, they took active action to support the decision to deport Ahmad Shamieh to Croatia, thus representing a counter action to all those who protested against the decision and the foreseen deportation. They also support activities against and call for boycott of companies that issue halal certificates and employ


workers who perform halal slaughter. Generation Identity is also very critical of the Roman Catholic Church as being too loose in their stance against Islam.  

Another group called the Uprising of Slovenians – Resistance to the Government and the Settlement of Illegal Economic Immigrants (Upor slovencev – upor proti vladi in naseljevanju nezakonitih ekonomskih priseljencev) warns against the entrance of sharia laws in Slovenia and acted against the acceptance of Ahmad Shamieh, blaming him of not being a refugee but an illegal economic migrant who should be deported. They also warn against halal food claiming that the money from halal certificates ends up in the pockets of radical Muslims and terrorists in Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Furthermore, they argue that halal destroys local economy and tradition of meat production causing local workers to lose their jobs in favour of workers performing halal slaughter.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

On the political level, parties that openly express Islamophobic ideas belong to the right-wing conservative political specter. These are the parliamentary yet oppositional Slovenian Democratic Party (Slovenska demokratska stranka), New Slovenia (Nova Slovenija), and the Slovenian National Party (Slovenska nacionalna stranka), which is not in parliament. These parties have also established their own media that spread the same ideological messages and regularly broadcast xenophobic discourses, namely Demokracija, Reporter, and Nova 24 TV.

Most of the actors/groups that spread xenophobic discourse and hate speech directed against Muslims were established on social media networks such as Facebook during the mass transition of refugees across Slovenia in 2015. However, although the mass transition of refugees across Slovenia has ended, these groups are still active and gain new followers. They spread Islamophobic material and focus particularly on stories of refugees who are allocated to Slovenia according to the refugee quota system. Some of these pages are Generation Identity Slovenia (Generacija identitete Slovenija); Radical Ljubljana (Radikalna Ljubljana); Stop islamizaciji Slovenije (Stop the Islamisation of Slovenia); Slovenia Secure Borders (Slovenija Zavaruj Meje); and We Slovenians are against Multiculture (Slovenci smo proti Multikulturi). The group We do not want refugees and migrants in Slovenia, We do not want a mosque in Ljubljana (Nočemo beguncev in migrantov v Sloveniji, Nočemo džamije v Ljubljani), while previously active, seems not to exist anymore on Facebook.


Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

There are several non-governmental organizations in Slovenia that deal with issues of discrimination and xenophobia and promote equal treatment and human rights. They have been very active during the so-called refugee crisis and continue to participate in activities for the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in Slovenian political and social life. NGOs that are active, among others, in initiatives to counter Islamophobia are the Peace Institute (Mirovni inštitut); Slovene Philanthropy (Slovenska filantropija); Amnesty International; Društvo UP Jesenice/Society UP Jesenice; ROG Factory (Tovarna ROG); SLOGA - Slovenian Global Action; PIC - Legal Informational Centre. The Islamic community in Slovenia and the Slovenian Muslim Community are also active in this field.

There are also some ad hoc groups and initiatives on the Internet (Facebook) that are being established to counter Islamophobia and to address specific issues and events. For example, the Facebook group against the extreme neo-Nazi-fascist group Radical Ljubljana (Proti skrajni neonacifašistični skupini Radikalna Ljubljana). Another initiative was organized to support the Syrian refugee Ahmad Shamieh; it was titled Ahmad has to stay (Ahmad mora ostati). The case of Ahmad Shamieh started when after a year and a half of living in Slovenia (and actively engaging in public social life, learning Slovene, and establishing friendship connections), Shamieh faced deportation to Croatia according to the decision of the Interior Ministry to not accept his asylum request and the assertion that Croatia was responsible for his status. A huge public campaign (http://danesjenovdan.si/ahmad/) Ahmad has to stay directed at the Slovene Parliament took place in November to prevent his deportation. (Fig. 6) Under this initiative a petition was signed by many human rights activists as well as visible academics, artists and sportsmen. Prime Minister Miro Cerar (Modern Centre Party) interfered and stopped the deportation. Consequently, this caused a political turmoil and in November 2017 the right-wing oppositional Slovene Democratic Party pressed charges against the prime minister at the Constitutional Court accusing him of abusing his political position. However, many have commented that this charge is a form of pressure on the government to intensify its strict policy towards asylum seekers.31


Figure 6: The profile for the huge public campaign Ahmad has to stay directed at the Slovene Parliament which took place in November to prevent Ahmad Shamieh’s deportation.
Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

In 2017, Islamophobic discourses took place mostly in media and on the Internet. They targeted refugees and asylum seekers, thus inextricably linking refugees with Muslim identity, which strengthens negative feelings about Muslims who are already living in Slovenia. The problem of hate speech and Islamophobia is widespread also in politics and this precise fact fuels stronger xenophobic and racist discourses among the general public, since such discourses have become widely tolerated. Since 2015 the so-called refugee crisis has strengthened Islamophobia and given rise to specific events that mirror the general atmosphere. Examples of this attitude in 2017 are the Amendments to the Aliens Act and deportations of Syrian refugees as well as protests against the settlement of refugees in Slovenia. The construction of the only mosque in Slovenia and the Islamic Cultural Centre, which was completed in 2017, was again a target of Islamophobic attitudes. Muslims living in Slovenia continue to experience difficulties in the fulfilment of their constitutional rights in all areas of political and social life. They often encounter difficulties and rejections in gaining employment while working Muslims cannot practice their religious requirements. In educational institutions, the stereotypical presentation of Islam and Muslims persists, and Muslim pupils have limited possibilities to fully live and practise their religious requirements.

Taking into account the events and status quo of the problems regarding Islamophobia, we therefore give the following policy recommendations:

- The raising of awareness about the dangers of hate speech, various forms of xenophobia and (neo)racism; especially in the media and on the Internet, as well as in politics.
- The need to accept a speech code for public officials such as parliament members, who often initiate and therefore spread hate speech, xenophobic and racist ideas.
- The monitoring and collection of information about discrimination based on religious grounds in the employment area.
- Implementing and facilitating options for halal dietary regimes at workplaces, schools, kindergartens, hospitals, state institutions, etc.
- The update of textbooks and school curricula regarding Islamic history, targeting pupils as well as teachers.
- The education about Islam, diverse Islamic practices and traditions on a institutional level including top range political institutions such as parliament, the government, ministries and local administration, as well as employment and educational organizations.
- Facilitate spiritual care for the Islamic faith in the armed forces, police forces, prisons, and hospitals.
- Support university and academic research about Islamophobia in politics and among the general public.
• Support the establishment of Islamic studies at universities.
• The education of people working in the media about the importance of how their messages are understood, and education about Islam for media workers.
• Facilitating visibility and participation of Muslims in political, economic, social and cultural life.
• Establishing media for Muslims created by Muslims.
• The development of integration programs, the facilitation of the integration and the monitoring of the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in Slovenian society.

Chronology
• **20.01.2017**: Proposal and discussion by the government about Islamic spiritual care in the army, police forces, hospitals, and prisons.
• **25.01.2017**: Presentation of the newly translated book about Islam and Jihad *To Understand Islam and Jihad* that was not received well by the Islamic Community.
• **25.09.2017**: Polemics about the name “Mosque Street.”
• **05.10.2017**: Publication of the proposal to the Constitutional Court to repeal the ban on the stunning of animals before being slaughtered.
• **05.10.2017**: Discussion at the Government Council about the right to perform surgery for the circumcision of Muslim boys.
• **13.11.2017**: Protests against (and for) the deportation of refugee/asylum seeker Ahmad Shamieh.
• **23.11.2017**: Round table organized by members of the Slovenian Democratic Party about security issues and threats of Islamic terrorist attacks in Slovenia and Europe.
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, brain storming sessions, conferences and policy recommendations, SETA seeks to guide leaders in government, civil society, and business, and contributes to informed decision making mechanisms.