By gathering 39 local scholars, experts, and civil society activists specialized in racism and human rights, the fourth edition of the European Islamophobia Report addresses a still timely and politically important issue. All 34 country reports included in this book follow a unique structure that is convenient, first, for comparing country reports and, second, for selected readings on a particular topic such as politics, employment, or education with regards to Islamophobia across Europe.

The present report investigates in detail the underlying dynamics that directly or indirectly support the rise of anti-Muslim racism in Europe. This extends from Islamophobic statements spread in national media to laws and policies that restrain the fundamental rights of European Muslim citizens. As a result, the European Islamophobia Report 2018 discusses the impact of anti-Muslim discourse on human rights, multiculturalism, and the state of law in Europe.

This fourth edition of our report highlights how European societies are challenged by the rise of violent far-right groups that do not only preach hatred of Muslims but also participate in the organization of bloody terror attacks. The rise of far-right terrorist groups such as AFO (Action of Operational Forces) in France or the network Hannibal in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland confirms EUROPOL’s alarming surveys on the growing danger of right-wing terrorism.

This year, SETA worked in cooperation with the Leopold Weiss Institute, an Austrian NGO based in Vienna dedicated to the research of Muslims in Europe. In addition, the European Union has funded the European Islamophobia Report 2018 through the program "Civil Society Dialogue Between EU and Turkey (CSD-V)".

### About SETA

Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA) is a non-profit research institute based in Turkey dedicated to innovative studies on national, regional and international issues. SETA is the leading think tank in Turkey and has offices in Ankara, Istanbul, Washington D.C. and Cairo. The objective of SETA is to produce up-to-date and accurate knowledge and analyses in the fields of politics, economy, and society, and inform policy makers and the public on changing political, economic, social, and cultural conditions. Through research reports, publications, brainstorming sessions, conferences and policy recommendations, SETA seeks to guide leaders in government, civil society, and business, and contributes to informed decision making mechanisms.
EUROPEAN ISLAMOPHOBIA REPORT
2018

This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the authors of the national reports; and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union and Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Directorate for EU Affairs.
ABOUT EDITORS

Enes Bayraklı
Enes Bayraklı earned his BA, MA and PhD from the Department of Political Science at the University of Vienna, and conducted research for his PhD thesis at the University of Nottingham in Britain between 2009 and 2010. He was a deputy director at the Yunus Emre Turkish Cultural Center in London in 2011-2013. Bayraklı also served as the founding director of the Yunus Emre Turkish Cultural Centers in Constanta and Bucharest, Romania in August-December 2012. He has been a faculty member at the Department of Political Science and International Relations at the Turkish-German University since 2013. Currently he is also the coordinator of SETA Brussels office and director of European Studies at SETA Foundation. His fields of research include Islamophobia in Europe, far-right movements in Europe, the transformation of Turkish foreign policy, foreign policy analysis, and German foreign policy.

Farid Hafez
Farid Hafez, PhD (Political Science, University of Vienna), is currently lecturer and researcher at the University of Salzburg, Department of Political Science and Sociology and senior researcher at Georgetown University’s “The Bridge Initiative” at the School of Foreign Service. He defended his habilitation thesis on “Islam-Politics in the Second Republic of Austria” at the University of Salzburg. In 2017, he was a Fulbright visiting professor at the University of California, Berkeley and in 2014, he was a visiting scholar at Columbia University, New York. Since 2010 he has been the editor of Islamophobia Studies Yearbook, and since 2016 the co-editor of European Islamophobia Report. Hafez has received the Bruno Kreisky Award for the “Political Book of the Year” for his anthology Islamophobia in Austria (co-edited with John Bunzl). He has more than 80 publications in leading journals such as Politics and Religion, Patterns of Prejudice, and German Politics and Society. His latest publications are Islamophobia in Muslim Majority Societies (Routledge, co-edited with Enes Bayraklı) and Feindbild Islam. Über die Salonfähigkeit von Rassismus (Böhlau).

For more information about the EIR:  
www.islamophobiaeurope.com  
islamophobia@setav.org
ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
CZECH
REPUBLIC
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

SELMA MUHIĆ DIZDAREVIĆ
The Author

Selma Muhič Dizdarević is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Humanities, Charles University where she chaired the Department of Civil Society Studies. She was a visiting scholar on a Fulbright scholarship at the School of Social Welfare, University of California, Berkeley. Her main research interests are immigration and integration policies, feminism, social exclusion, intersectionality, and human rights. She holds a degree in Public Policy and Political Philosophy. She is a board member of the International Network Against Cyber Hate and the Czech Helsinki Committee.

Disclaimer: Statements of fact and opinion in the national reports of the European Islamophobia Report are those of the respective authors. They are not the expression of the editors or the funding institutions and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union and Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Directororate for EU Affairs.

Executive Summary

According to available studies intolerance towards Muslims in general and Arabs in particular is prominent in the Czech Republic. The longitudinal study found that Islamophobia is on the rise, becoming stronger over the years. This phenomenon is closely related to the strong anti-immigrant sentiments of the Czech voters and the corresponding policies of accepting not a single refugee.

Since 2015, in the Czech Republic, we have witnessed the full normalization of Islamophobia in public discourse, in media, in the Parliament, the Office of the President and Prime Minister and, most notably on the Internet. The content that would be considered extreme or fringe a couple of years ago is now given a platform in the Czech Senate and other public spaces. The monitoring exercise carried out by ROMEA found that incidents of xenophobia, including anti-migrant hate, followed by Islamophobia are the most frequent types of illegal hate speech on the Czech Internet.

The proliferation of fake news and hoaxes related to Muslims is on the rise. It leads to the radicalization of individuals. That is what contributed to the first case in the Czech Republic of a person being convicted of terrorism for chopping down trees which fell onto train lines while spreading flyers in poor Czech so as to fake a Muslim terrorist attack.

The election success of the Party of Direct Democracy led by one of the most prominent figures in the Islamophobia network, Tomio Okamura, opened space for the full-blown mainstreaming of Islamophobia through announced initiatives to ban Islam as a non-religion.

On the front of combating xenophobia and Islamophobia we find NGOs that are often exposed to the same degree of hate as the groups whose rights they try to uphold. The existence of a voluntary informal network of citizens who help refugees (often seen as Muslims only) is encouraging. So is the only party in the Parliament with a moderate view of the issue of tolerance to different groups and cultures, the Pirate Party.
ISLAMOPHOBIA IN CZECH REPUBLIC

Shrnutí

Dle dostupných studií je netolerance zaměřená na muslimy obecně a na Araby konkrétně v České republice významná. Longitudinální studie zjistila, že je islamofobie na vzestupu a že posiluje v průběhu zkoumaného období. Tento jev úzce souvisí se silnou proti-uprchlickou náladou českých voličů a voliček a s ní spojenou politikou nepřijímání žádných uprchlíků. Od roku 2015 pozorujeme celkovou normalizaci islamofobie ve veřejném diskurzu, v mediích, v Parlamentu, z Kanceláře prezidenta, z Úřadu vlády skrze výroky premiéra a zejména na internetu. Obsah, který by dříve byl považován za extrémní či okrajový nyní dostává platformu na půdě Senátu a v jiných veřejných místech. Hodnocení kodexu chování internetových platforem, které za Českou republiku provedla ROMEA, umožnilo zjistit, že xenofobie, včetně nenávisti vůči migrantům, a islamofobie představují nejčastější typy nelegálního hovoru z nenávisti na českém internetu. Proliferace falešných zpráv a hoaxů tykajících se muslimů stoupá a vede k radikalizaci občanů. Tento fenomén přispěl i k v prvním případech odsouzení za teroristický čin v ČR. Penzista totiž byl odsouzen za kácení stromů na železniční trati za účelem vyvolání dojmu, že se jedná o teroristický čin spáchaný muslimy. Volební úspěch Strany přímé demokracie, vedené jednou z hlavních postav na české islamofobní scéně, Tomio Okamura, otevřel prostor pro zcela otevřený mainstreaming islamofobie skrze iniciativu za zákaz islámu jakožto ne-náboženství. Pokud jde o odpor vůči islamofobii, ten zůstává doménou neziskového sektoru, jehož zástupci jsou často vystaveni stejně intenzivní nenávisti jako skupiny, jejichž práva se snaží chránit. Existence dobrovolných neformálních sítí občanů, které pomáhají uprchlíkům (kteří jsou často vnímáni jako muslimové) se povzbuzující, stejně jako působení jediné strany v Parlamentu s mírněnými názory na toleranci k odlišným skupinám a kulturám, Pirátské strany.
Country Profile

**Country:** Czech Republic

**Type of Regime:** Parliamentary representative democracy

**Form of Government:** Unitary parliamentary constitutional republic

**Ruling Parties:** ANO 2011 (centrist, populist) and Czech Social Democratic Party (center-left, populist)

**Opposition Parties:** Civic Democratic Party (center-right), Czech Pirate Party, Freedom and Direct Democracy (far right), Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (far left), Christian Democratic Union (center-right), TOP 09 (center-right), Mayors and Independents (local issues party)

**Last Elections:** 2018 Presidential election (Miloš Zeman won 51.37% of the vote in the second round); 2017 Legislative election (ANO 2011 78 seats; Civic Democratic Party, center-right 25; Czech Pirate Party 22; Freedom and Direct Democracy, far right 22; Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, far left 15; Czech Social Democratic Party center-left 15; Christian Democratic Union, center-right 10; TOP 09, center-right 7; Mayors and Independents, local issues party 6)

**Total Population:** 10.58 million people (in 2017)

**Major Languages:** Czech

**Official Religion:** No official religion

**Statistics on Islamophobia:** In 2017, the Czech police registered 3 criminal acts motivated by hate towards Muslims, 4 less than in 2016. At the same time, it registered two criminal acts motivated by hate towards Arabs, 6 less than in 2016.

**Statistics on Racism and Discrimination:** Statistics of the Public Defender of Rights for 2017: 384 complaints (113 less than in 116), discrimination found in 13 cases (direct, indirect, cases of harassment). Grounds for complaints in descending order: other; disability; race, ethnicity; sex; age; nationality.

**Major Religions (% of Population):** According to the census of 2011: no religion (34.5%), Catholics (10.5%), Protestants (1%), believers with no affiliation to religious institutions (6.8%), undeclared/no answer (44.7%).

**Muslim Population (% of Population):** According to the census 3,358 persons (0.03%); according to estimates 22,000 (0.2%).

**Main Muslim Community Organizations:** Center of Muslim Communities, General Union of Muslim Students in the Czech Republic, Muslim Union

**Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia:** ROMEA, Multicultural Center, Organization for Aid to Refugees, Czech Helsinki Committee, Association for Integration and Migration

**Far Right Parties:** Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD)

**Far Right Movements:** We Do Not Want Islam in the Czech Republic, 7. Republiká, National Resistance
Far Right Terrorist Organisations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic practices
- **Hijab Ban**: Limitations at schools and work regulated by dress codes of the given institutions
- **Halal Slaughter Ban**: No
- **Minaret Ban**: No (depends on local decision)
- **Circumcision Ban**: No
- **Burka Ban**: No specific regulations but there are no burqa-clad women residing in the country as of yet
- **Prayer Ban**: No
Introduction

According to the longitudinal study “European Values Study” carried out by the Faculty of Social Studies at Masaryk University in Brno, general trust in the Czech Republic is on decline and intolerance towards certain minorities is on the rise. According to a report by ROMEA, while in the year 1991 roughly 20% of respondents did not want a Muslim as a neighbor, in 2017 58% of respondents felt that way. Experts have noted similar developments for the categories of foreign workers and immigrants.1 When asked how they felt about individual nationalities, the respondents from the survey gave the worst marks to Arabs and Roma. The experts who produced the study explain the intolerance towards Muslims and Arabs (frequently confused terms in the Czech Republic) by incidents of Islamic terrorism and the so-called migration wave. It should be added that the “migration wave” has not affected the Czech Republic much but it did produce enormous fear and served as a slogan for the mobilization of populists and extremists.

Pew Research Center’s 2018 report on differences between Western and Eastern Europeans’ attitudes to religion, minorities, and key social issues found that “Czechs are highly secular, generally favor same-sex marriage and do not associate Christianity with their national identity, similar to most Western Europeans. But Czechs also express low levels of acceptance toward Muslims, more closely resembling their neighbors in the East.”2

Given the results of the studies and the evaluation of the security situation in the Czech Republic in the Ministry of Interior’s 2017 report, which is discussed below, we may conclude that Islamophobia is not part of fringe fractions, groups, or individuals but has gone full-blown mainstream. It happens in the open and dominates the public scene. It happens in the Parliament, through the Presidential Office and most notably on the Internet. According to the Annual Report on Extremism, the Internet is increasingly used as a tool for spreading hate towards various groups and by those who would not be traditionally understood as members or supporters of extremist groups.3

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

According to the Annual Report on Extremism by the Ministry of the Interior for the year 2017, which was approved by the government in 2018, the right-wing scene, which is the main source of Islamophobia, has become fragmented and less prominent. However, it is partly because of the rise of the Party of Direct Democracy (SPD) and its leader Tomio Okamura, who own the agenda of anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant attacks. Because the SPD was so successful in the 2017 general election, it is now in the position to monopolize and mainstream the issues that were previously the domain of non-parliamentary extremist movements. The SPD gained 10.64% of votes, which translates into 538,574 actual votes. The Ministry of Interior does not classify the SPD as an extremist party but stresses in its report that “[I]n some cases the statements by SPD representatives are even more radical than the statements by representatives of extremist parties on the right as traditionally understood.”

It is exactly such speech, according to the Ministry of the Interior that could contribute to radicalizing Muslims residing in the Czech Republic. For example the video on the page of the president of the SPD is entitled “Islam as Hitler’s Nazism.”

According to the same report by the Ministry of Interior, the Muslim community in the Czech Republic is moderate and well integrated. However, considering the increase in rhetoric fueling hate, it might become radicalized.

Physical and Verbal Attacks

The most prominent Islamophobic incident in the Czech Republic happened in 2017. The culprit was discovered and put on trial in 2018. In June and July 2017, a senior citizen, Jaromír Balda (72), chopped down trees on two occasions so that they fell across a railway line. He was also involved in the dissemination of threatening flyers in which the perpetrator pretended to be a jihadist planning assaults on Czech citizens. The goal of his activities was to fake terrorist attacks and Muslim infiltration. In a recorded telephone call with a local representative of the SPD (Party of Direct Democracy), Balda said that he is willing to “go after migrants” who in his view are “spreading through Europe like worms” – whereupon Blanka Vaňková, the local district coordinator, express-
es her agreement with the sentiment. “Like one goes after pests, after rats, after vermin in the forest,” the man says in the recording. “As for those pussies that wear those Arabic cowls here, all it takes is a little tiny Molotov cocktail, throw it right beneath their feet until their cunts and their asses catch fire, they’ll change their mind about walking around here like that. It’s easy, all it takes is two deciliters of gasoline,” he said as she again expresses agreement.8 The recording of this conversation was presented to the court. In neither incident were there victims, but in both cases the trains hit the trees. This case is significant from many points of views: the pensioner went through a process of radicalization as he became a fanatical supporter of Tomio Okamura so much so that he plastered Okamura’s portrait on his house. Even though Okamura and his followers operate under the Islamophobic trope of “Muslims are terrorists,” Balda was ironically accused of terrorism himself. Despite the fear of a non-existent “Muslim invasion,” which is central to all Islamophobic activists in the Czech Republic, the first conviction of terrorism actually involved an indigenous Czech. However, because he was Czech and not “the other,” he received lower punishment than that envisaged by the law, namely he received only 4 years. And again, significantly, unlike cases involving Muslims, his sanity while committing the attacks was questioned and used as a mitigating factor. Apparently he was taking blood pressure medicine which influenced his capacity to reason during the incidents. Journalist for ROMEA, an NGO specializing in human rights and focused on journalism and media literacy, called the verdict a mockery saying, “A brief note on this idea of reduced sanity. Let’s ask ourselves this question: if a similar crime had been committed by a Muslim, would the assertion that the perpetrator had allegedly been in a state of reduced sanity prevent the prosecutor from proposing a lengthy sentence as punishment?”9 Additionally, the journalist pointed out that those who are responsible for flaming hate and fear, most notably, politicians of the SPD and the president of the Czech Republic, should be held responsible too. In a further Islamophobic twist, an MP for the SPD in a heated debate in February 2019 in the Parliament accused other, not so immigrant-hostile, parties of Balda’s radicalization by saying “You, welcomers [i.e. those who welcome immigrants], you created Mr. Balda. You scared him with the realistic possibility of a terrorist attack in the Czech Republic.”10 The SPD originally supported Balda calling

him even a “modern-day Jan Palach” but later deleted the Facebook status distancing itself from him. Despite a lenient punishment for Balda, due to his reduced sanity and advanced age, Judge Wažik in his verdict stressed, “He should have been far more aware of the fact that hatred just yields more hatred.” In the judge’s opinion, what makes Balda’s crimes even more dangerous is the fact that he committed them because he himself was motivated by religious hatred.

Other SPD representatives have also been active in verbal attacks on various groups but most prominently on Roma, Muslims, and immigrants. Thus, Dominik Hanko, vice-chair of the SPD in the Ústecký region, published the following remark on a social network: “According to them we are sinners, unbelieving dogs. The more of them there will be here, the more they will force their truth on us until it turns out like it does in their countries. They’re like locusts, they destroy everything around them wherever they are.”

Petr Hampl, the anti-immigration and anti-Islam activist and sociologist, launched his new book, *Breaking Walls*, about Islam and the alleged “Islamization” of society on the premises of the Czech Chamber of Deputies in March 2018. Although Hampl himself is not in the Parliament, he drew support from various MPs both on the left and on the right. A Czech Radio moderator Jan Moláček, on his Facebook page commented on the incident as follows, “An open racist is launching his book directly inside the Chamber of Deputies and an MP for a party that calls itself ‘civic’ and ‘democratic’ (i.e. the ODS, Civic Democratic Party) is boasting (on Facebook) about the author dedicating the book to him as his favorite politician. Czechia, 2018.” The spokesperson for the Czech president, Jiří Ovčáček, publicly voiced his support for the hate group Angry Mothers when a library in Liberec refused to host their event where they were supposed to promote another book by Hampl. He defended the group again from the perspective of freedom of speech.

In *Breaking Walls*, Hampl claims that if we allow jihadists from the Middle East who were beheading people to move to Europe, we have to know that we are accepting

---

people who will be beheading us too. His book was somewhat scandalously offered for purchase on the website of the Charles University bookstore.\textsuperscript{16}

The representative of the same party (ODS) in the Czech Senate, Tomáš Jirsa, has proposed Klára Samková for the position of Deputy Ombudswoman. Samková is infamous for equating Islam with Nazism and cursing the Turkish ambassador in the Czech Republic. She was investigated for her statements but it was decided that it is a case of freedom of speech.\textsuperscript{17} However, the Czech Bar Association, of which Samková is a member, fined her CZK 25,000 for defaming the respectful behavior in public expected of legal professionals. At the same time, Samková accused the association of a “modern witch hunt” and said that the association is afraid of the Turkish ambassador.\textsuperscript{18}

**Employment**

Even though we cannot rule out individual cases of discrimination on the job market, it is not a significant phenomenon related to Islamophobia. The number of Muslims is low, they tend to be educated, and hold professional jobs, and are often employed in ethnically run businesses.

**Education**

Islamophobia is not officially promoted in the school curriculum. However, we should mention that attempts to diversify views on Muslims undertaken by NGOs or individuals are often blocked. As a recent example we can refer to the case of the “gymnasium” teacher Antonín Kolář from Pilsen. After 17 years teaching at the same school, he decided to resign because the school management joined some other groups and individuals who condemned the teacher for welcoming first year students in jellaba. Asked whether the reaction would have been the same 5 years ago, the teacher said, “No, a few years ago I taught a whole lecture on Islam and the Arab world…now some of the commentators wanted to castrate or hang me. This is something deep inside the people and it is suppressed. But as soon as a crisis comes, all frustrations show.”\textsuperscript{19}


Politics
The interaction between Islamophobia and politics was described in the previous report as pertains to the 2017 national elections. In 2018, the Czech Republic held local elections where the issue of Islamophobia holds less importance.

Islamophobia is not a phenomenon related only to certain politicians and parties. We may say that the SPD (Party of Direct Democracy) is leading the way in this sense but we find Islamophobes both in the left (Communist Party, Social Democratic Party) and the right (Civic Democratic Party). Particularly encouraging for Islamophobes is that the Czech president himself supports and promotes such views. His attitudes to Islam are now internationally known.

Most politicians use anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant statements in order to mobilize further their voters who share these views. It is almost impossible to hold a political post and advocate for positive attitude to some groups, most notably Muslims. The only party currently in the Parliament with moderate views regarding migration and its related issues is the Pirate Party.

Media
Increasingly in the Czech Republic we see the phenomenon of supporting hate speech as an issue related to freedom of speech. The proponents of such views claim that they are victims of the prohibition of freedom of speech and that they are the only ones who dare to tell the truth. This is true for their views on Muslims; in such instances they often frame their posts and videos as revealing some big secrets that the mainstream media are hiding from the public. Their target is not only left-wing or moderate media but mainstream media, such as Czech TV, which they accuse of hiding the truth and propagating multicultural ideas. Although such views have been present in the public space for a long time, the new aspect is that they are advocated by the offices of the president, the prime minister, and party representatives. Particularly after the election of SPD representatives, whose core agenda is to combat against Islam and immigrants, the events and promotion of hate speech have been given formal and institutionalized support. There is a great proliferation of media spreading Islamophobia. Some such media outlets are listed below: Parlamentní listy is a news outlet without any editorial policy - basically, anyone can publish on their website and the site does not employ fact-checking; Nová buržoazie; Protiproud; euRabia; We Do Not Want Islam in the Czech Republic (Islám v ČR nechceme), etc.

Particularly prominent in spreading hate speech is the media outlet TV Barrandov and its moderator Jaromír Soukup, who has recently announced his political ambitions and who is supported by President Zeman. In a pre-election debate, he asked his guests to choose who they would not like to have as a neighbor. They could choose among Roma, Muslim, Black, and a politician who Soukup disliked (Miroslav Kalousek).20

On euRabia, as part of the election campaign, we find the claim by Klára Samkóková, one of the most prominent Islamophobes and a lawyer by profession, that while politicians care only about the horizon of elections, Muslims have been planning to conquer Europe for centuries.21

An MP for the ruling party ANO, Bohuslav Chalupa, writes for Parlamentní listy that the real threat is not Russia but Islam. He adds that the goal of political Islam is “total and definitive elimination of all non-believers and our way of life.”22

Most mainstream media could be described as improving balanced reporting on Muslims. However, sometimes unconscious bias plays a role in their reporting. For example, an article describing white right-wing terrorist attacks was illustrated by a picture of a group of visibly identifiable, angry Muslims.23

Justice System
The former Prague imam Samer Shehadeh was accused of supporting terrorism. He left the Czech Republic in 2017 but was allegedly deported from Jordan and is currently in detention. He was accused of supporting terrorism after his brother and sister-in-law traveled to Syria, allegedly to fight in an Al-Qaeda-affiliated organization. Shehadeh was accused of helping them. The former imam was elected by Prague Muslims to head the Muslim Community in Prague and serve the function of imam of the Prague mosque. However, because of internal disputes, he left the position and some representatives of the Muslim community later publically distanced from him.24 In relation to this event, the sociologist Karel Černý from Charles University was interviewed. He said that the former imam was part of his research on Muslims in the Czech Republic and that during an interview Shehadeh had said that he would intervene if someone in the community became radicalized, he would try to talk him out of it, pointing that such activity is against Islam.25

The SPD has not given up on its promise to try to legally ban Islam on the ground that it is not a religion but a violent ideology. Given the Czech Constitu-

---

tion it is currently difficult to imagine this initiative would come into force. The SPD is currently proposing a law to forbid veiling. It has, however, clashed with Minister of Justice Jan Kněžínek, who said that no law can pass if it is focused on a particular religion. He added also that veiling must be allowed in some situations anyway i.e. during carnivals. Finally he questioned the necessity and urgency of such a law given that there are almost no veiled women in the Czech Republic and if they are, they tend to be foreign tourists, who “shop in expensive shops in Prague and spend money.”

Martin Konvička, the original propagator of Islamophobia in the Czech Republic, who was sided and somewhat forgotten when Islamophobia became mainstream, was investigated by the public prosecutor for two years for his statements about putting Muslims in concentration camps. The prosecution was stopped in 2018 with the explanation that it is not possible to prove that it was him who posted the statements online.

Internet
According to experts on extremism, both from the nongovernmental and governmental background, the biggest hotbed for spreading all forms of hate including Islamophobia is the Internet. It develops in two forms: one is threatening or humiliating individuals and groups online, the other is spreading false news and hoaxes.

According to ROMEA, Czech police officer Marek Chrastina of Šumperk while on vacation in Crete, Greece posted online that he had allegedly filmed journalists staging the drowning of migrants and that his footage was proof of how the media is manipulating the public about such matters. In reality, the people he filmed were part of a docudrama crew staging a re-enactment of a 1922 fire which Greeks had to flee. The Czech Police Inspectorate didn’t find that his behavior damaged the image of the Czech police.

On the Internet, the Facebook pages of “We Do Not Want Islam in the Czech Republic” have been deleted but the local chapters remain. The Islamophobic, xenophobic, and anti-feminist page “Angry Mothers” has been deleted from Facebook but is present now under the name “Anti-feminist Punch.” The page “We Are Here

“At Home” has also been banned from Facebook but its version “I Am Here at Home” and Zprav.cz resurfaced.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Islamophobia has become a norm in the Czech public space. There is thus no need to look for fringe groups and websites, behind-the-scene think tanks, and advocacy groups since the loudest Islamophobes are to be found in the Parliament, the Senate, the Office of the President, and in various parties, while some of the Prime Minister’s statements are also Islamophobic. It is legally financed through tax payers’ money, which keeps the political establishment going. Currently there is synergy between the voters’ and politicians’ attitudes when it comes to Muslims.

Besides President of the Czech Republic Miloš Zeman, leader of the SPD party Tomio Okamura, and virtually all its members, there are other persons espousing Islamophobia openly. Jaroslav Foldyna from the Czech Social Democratic Party is a Srebrenica genocide denier. Eva Hrindová from the initiative Angry Mothers is particularly active in protecting Western women from the dangers of a Muslim men invasion. The mission of Klara Samková, who has been mentioned before, is to educate the Czech about the dangers of Islam. Petr Hampf, a self-described “private sociologist,” publishes extensively on the defense of Western civilization from Islam.

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

Given the described strong climate of Islamophobia it is no surprise that anyone who publically supports diversity in the images of Muslims and tries to advocate building bridges is exposed to relentless attacks mostly online but sometimes also offline.

It is thus a miracle that the government through its Agency for Social Inclusion with the support of grants from Nordic countries and Czech TV run an initiative called “Hate Free Culture.” Its scope is broad but it also focuses on Muslims, on diversifying their image and on news about Muslims, as well as supporting showing compassion to refugees.29

The other group of counter-Islamophobia initiatives come from NGOs, such as Multicultural Center or ROMEA. They debunk hoaxes related to Muslims and develop programs to fight hateful content online in cooperation with platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, etc.

Finally, particularly amazing are the informal initiatives, funded by the contributions of their supporters, which help refugees who are often Muslims. Of such we should mention Initiative Central Train Station, which is an entirely voluntary

initiative by a group of people who help refugees that are stuck in the Czech Republic while on their way to Western countries. The initiative provides them with food, buys them tickets to Germany or Austria, and buys them temporary phones. The other such initiative is Czechs Help, which collects clothes, shoes, and other necessary supplies and transports them to refugees stuck in Bosnia and Serbia.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Fighting anti-Muslim hate in the Czech Republic remains difficult because of the normalization of Islamophobia in society, on the Internet, in media, and in politics. The only front of resistance is the NGOs, informal initiatives by citizens, individuals who dare to speak publically against Islamophobia, and the current moderate approach of the Pirate Party. The other vein to rely on are EU-funded programs that tackle intolerance generally and are transferred to the NGO and academic sector via the Czech national institutions. In the light of that the following recommendations should be considered:

- It is of utmost importance to secure continuous funding for civil society, which promotes dialogue, fosters a fact-checking approach to Internet content, and reminds society of the benefits and necessity of developing tolerance.
- It is necessary to establish the norms for the acceptable range of free speech online. This should not be done only through enforcement but also by cooperation with commercial platforms which profit from the content online (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram but also the comment sections of individual media outlets).
- Politicians should be held to the highest standard when caught spreading hoaxes and fake news.
- The EU should develop tailor-made programs for tackling Islamophobia in the Czech Republic but also in Central Europe, where it is one of the most prominent types of hatred.
- A diversified curriculum on understanding differences and similarities in culture, including Islam-related content, should become the norm.

Chronology

- 18.03.2018: Petr Hampl, the anti-immigration and anti-Islam activist and sociologist, launched his book about Islam and the alleged “Islamization” of society on the premises of the Czech Chamber of Deputies.
- 06.07.2018: A photograph of the interior of a bus used by Czech police to transport activists arrested after a protest against the surface mining for brown coal at the Bílina mine in the Most district shows a sticker for the
hatemongering Ortel band and an anti-Islam sticker with a red line crossing out a mosque above the driver’s seat.

- **10.07.2018**: Dominik Hanko, vice-chair of the SPD party in the Ústecký district, posted on social media that Muslims are like locusts, who destroy everything around them wherever they are.