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EUROPEAN ISLAMOPHOBIA REPORT 2018

PROJECT EVALUATION REPORT



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GENERAL DESCRIPTION

- “European Islamophobia Report 2018” (EIR) is a 13 months-long project that aims at raising awareness of Islamophobia among European and national representatives, journalists, scholars and public through publicly presenting the state of Islamophobia in Europe.
- The EIR 2018 as the main output of this project investigates in detail the underlying dynamics that directly or indirectly support the rise of anti-Muslim racism in Europe in 2018.
- The report gathered 39 local scholars, experts, and civil society activists specialized on racism and human rights.
- Much more than publishing a report on Islamophobia EIR 2018 funded by the Civil Society Dialogue Grant Scheme became a platform that merges the main civil society organizations that are fighting Islamophobia at both European and national level.
- For the first time, the EIR 2018 included two interactive workshops, 6 short clips, and publishing a booklet that shortly presented the most striking results of the whole project.
- Thanks to the Civil Society Dialogue Programme, the EIR 2018 project contributes to strengthening the dialogue between European and Turkish civil societies through providing a vital contribution in the fight against Islamophobia in Europe.
- The project constitutes the first attempt in the history of the Turkey-EU “Civil Society Dialogue Programme” to reinforce EU-Turkish dialogue through the monitoring and the analysis of Islamophobia in Europe.

OVERALL OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of our project “Islamophobia in Europe: 2018 Report” (EIR 2018) is to contribute to strengthening the dialogue between European and Turkish civil societies through raising awareness of Islamophobia in Europe. By deconstructing misconception, prejudices, racism and hate crimes that target the Muslims in Europe, EIR 2018 project is enhancing EU-Turkish relations and thus Turkey’s efforts towards EU accession. Especially, the 23rd acquis chapters on Judiciary and Fundamental Rights stresses out the objectives of respect of human rights, well-integration and social cohesion. This project shares these goals in contributing to build a greater solidarity and connection between Turkish and European societies. The partnership between SETA (lead applicant, Turkey) and Leopold Weiss Institute (co-applicant, Austria) represents this concrete dialogue in every step of the project.

Islamophobia: A Challenge for European Democracies

Islamophobia is about a dominant group of people aiming at seizing, stabilising and widening their power by means of defining a scapegoat – real or invented – and excluding this scapegoat from the resources/rights/definition of a constructed ‘we’. Islamophobia operates by constructing a static ‘Muslim’ identity, which is attributed in negative terms and generalised for all Muslims. In Europe, Islamophobia occurs in many ways: physical and verbal attacks to individuals and institutions; discrimination in the job market and real estate based on the (assumed) Muslimness of a person; systematic anti-Muslim rhetoric in media; racist propaganda and spread of fake news on Internet; discriminative laws that restrict the freedom of Muslims etc. As a result, 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. Thirdly, Islamophobia

poses a problem of internal security as it intensifies tensions between communities, legitimizes hate crimes against individuals, and undermines the EU 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 Turkey.

For all these reasons, the EIR 2018 contributes to pave the way for the respect of human rights and the preservation of the values of wisdom and tolerance. Moreover, this project participates at increasing the civil dialogue both inside European societies – between communities – and outside, that is between European member states and other countries, especially Turkey.

Islamophobia: A barrier for EU-Turkey Civil Society Dialogue and Coexistence

Islamophobia, alongside with extremism and xenophobia, constitutes one the strongest barrier against the Turkish candidature for EU membership. Indeed, normalization of Islamophobia in the public sphere – including racist rhetoric, social stigmatization, subconscious prejudices and physical attacks – directly impact the perception of Turkey as well as of Turkish traditions and values in Europe. In other terms, some European politicians and citizens start to argue that Turkish state and society are too antagonistic to Europe because of their real or invented linkage to Islam. In reaction, many among Turkish people feel rejected and insulted by Islamophobic discourse that is growing in importance in Europe, and thus start to disbelieve in European-Turkish cooperation and dialogue.

Indeed, considering the fact that Muslim Turkish citizens and second and third generation Muslim Turkish citizens residing/working in European countries have become the target of recent and increased Islamophobic discourse and attacks, this project is a significant tool to present current situation. By contributing to holding back the spread of anti-Muslim racism in Europe, the EIR 2018 helps to renewing Civil Society Dialogue between EU member states and Turkey. In details the EIR 2018 enhances EU-Turkish relations and thus Turkey's efforts towards the EU accession by deconstructing misconception, prejudices, racism and hate crimes that target Muslims in Europe.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

Today, even if Islamophobia objectively constitutes a threat for the EU, 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, among who we find millions of Turkish-origin inhabitants. Thus, this project raises awareness of Islamophobia among European policy-makers.

The project also aims to collect and share updated data regarding Islamophobia in each European countries and to improve and enhance cooperation platform between civil society organizations and stakeholders regarding Islamophobia. All the outputs mentioned above participate in achieving these two specific objectives. The first highlights the importance of reliable data in the promotion of the fight against Islamophobia whereas the second underlines the need of cooperation and common action plan between European and Turkish civil society organizations that share this same struggle. Both objectives lead us to provide concrete policy recommendations at European and national levels.

Moreover, many surveys such as the EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report points out the growing danger of right-wing terrorism in the member states. Yet, they do not mention the anti-Muslim ideological framework working behind this trend. Hence the EIR 2018 aims at filling this gap. Related to this the EIR 2018 project is concretely supporting the European Commission's programme "Combating anti-Muslim Hatred" as well. Established in December 2015 following the "Annual Fundamental Rights Colloquium Tolerance and Respect: Preventing and Combating anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim Hatred in Europe" organized in Brussels in October 2015, the programme overall aims at "preventing and combating hate speech, hate crime as well as discrimination directed against groups (Muslim community) or individual members (Muslims) of such groups based on their religion or ethnic origin".

HUMAN RESOURCES OF THE PROJECT

During project timing SETA employed one project consultant, two assistants (one of them was co-financed), one project coordinator of the lead applicant and one project coordinator of the co-applicant.

ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

ACTIVITY 1: EUROPEAN ISLAMOPHOBIA REPORT 2018

The European Islamophobia Report 2018 is actually the main output of this project. Consisting of an introduction, 9 long and 25 short country reports, the EIR 2018 was published online on 27th of September, 2019 on the European day of action against Islamophobia and religious intolerance. The report having 35 chapters (including an introduction) in total was a product of 39 local scholars, experts, and civil society activists specialized in racism and human rights. Meanwhile five thematic infographics were published along with the report: Islamophobia in Numbers, Violent Acts against Muslims in Europe, Islamophobic Statements of Politicians, Legalizing Islamophobia and Islamophobia in the Media.

All country reports include in the EIR 2018 followed the same structure, convenient for comparing country reports as well as for selecting readings on a particular topic such as politics, employment, or education with regards to Islamophobia across Europe.

The 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 EIR 2018 discusses the impact of anti-Muslim discourse on human rights, multiculturalism, and the state of law in Europe.

Furthermore, this 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 in France or the network Hannibal in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland confirms EUROPOL's alarming surveys on the growing danger of right-wing terrorism.

On the other hand, the report provides some critical recommendations for supranational and international organizations and those that target European-wide trends: (pp. 27-29)

- “Today, the legal recognition of the specific form of racism targeting Muslims (or those perceived as such) is still crucial. We need a working definition of Islamophobia/anti-Muslim racism to challenge Islamophobia at a legal level.
- European Parliament should adopt a resolution on combatting Islamophobia with concrete policy recommendations and ways forward - as it did to combat anti-Semitism, anti-Gypsyism, and Afrophobia.
- There is a need for nation states and/or the European Commission to create spaces in which national and local governments can meet with anti-racist NGOs to share their experiences and work together on how to tackle Islamophobia.
- EU budget negotiations should support the development of funding programs enabling civil society working against Islamophobia to develop long-term projects for capacity building, advocacy for equality, strategic litigation, educational programs, etc. Facilitating access to these funds is also crucial to allow civil society to benefit from them. Improving eligibility criteria to suit the realities of small NGOs is crucial to allow them to benefit from such funds.
- Following the Council of Europe's example, the European Day against Islamophobia on September 21 should be established as a date for raising awareness across Europe on the challenges faced by Muslims and the need for their protection.
- With the support of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights and the ODIHR at the OSCE, governments should develop and promote the harmonization of data collection in areas of hate crime and equality, recognizing anti-Muslim bias as a category.

- Given the rise of violent attacks on mosques, authorities in dialogue with the communities involved have to ensure the safety of Muslim places of worship.”

In short, the EIR 2018 is a critical provider of useful insights and data for any policy-maker or institution willing to seriously tackle anti-Muslim racism in Europe.

ACTIVITY 2: ENGLISH PROOF-READING

Before the publication of the EIR 2018, the whole report was edited by a professional English proof-reader in order to guarantee high-quality of the reports.

ACTIVITY 3: PRINTING

After publishing the EIR 2018 online, 2.300 hard copies of the report were printed. It was essentially necessary to publish the report and to disseminate it to civil society organizations, policy-makers, journalists and scholars.

ACTIVITY 4: REPORTS IN LOCAL LANGUAGE FOR 5 SELECTED COUNTRIES

The authors who wrote the reports of Austria, France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands were asked to rewrite their report in their local languages. Therefore, it was not translation per se but rather rewriting. The online publication of these five reports made it possible to reach a local public (either activists or policymakers) that does not necessarily speak English.

ACTIVITY 5: WARSAW PANEL

The panel under the name of “Presentation of European Islamophobia Report 2018” was organized during the annual OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting on 24th of September, 2019. In the panel, the findings of the EIR 2018 and the events related to Islamophobia happened in the past year in European countries were discussed. The opening speech was held by Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims H.E. Mehmet Paçacı. The speakers of the panel were Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez (co-editors of the EIR 2018) as well as En-

rique Tessieri (author of the Finn national report) and Gabi Göbl (co-author of the Hungarian national report). The questions/answers session at the end of the panel gave a room to debate the issue of Islamophobia in Europe with all the attendees present in the room.

ACTIVITY 6: OPENING CEREMONY AND ANKARA PANEL

The “Opening Ceremony of the European Islamophobia Report 2018 Project” and the panel under the name of “Presentation of the European Islamophobia Report 2018” were organized in SETA Ankara office on 17th of October, 2019. During the event firstly the EIR 2018 project funded by the Civil Society Dialogue was introduced, and later main findings of the report were discussed. The opening speech of the panel was held by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Director of EU Affairs H.E. Faruk Kaymakcı. The speakers of the panel were Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez (co-editors of the EIR 2018) as well as Leyla Yıldırım (author of the Dutch national report) and Ali Hüseyinoğlu (co-author of the Greek national report). Approximately 100 guests including journalists, diplomats, academics, scholars and activists followed the event. The questions/answers session at the end of the panel gave a room to debate the issue of Islamophobia in Europe with all the attendees present in the room. Finally, this panel was live broadcasted on YouTube on the SETA account. Hundreds of people followed the panel online as well.

ACTIVITY 7: BRUSSELS PANEL

The panel under the name of “Countering Anti-Muslim Racism in Europe” was organized in the European Parliament building on 21st of January, 2020. Drawing on the EIR 2018, this event shed light on the rising levels of Islamophobia in European countries. Additionally, the event addressed the issue of tackling this growing phenomenon. Member of European Parliament Magid Magid hosted the panel. Enes Bayraklı, co-editor of the EIR, moderated the discussion in company of Farid Hafez, Amina Easat-Daas, Aristotle Kallis, Carmen Aguilera and Alfredo Alietti, who were respectively the authors of the Austrian, Belgian, UK, Spanish and Italian country reports. The questions/answers session at the end of the panel gave a room to debate the issue of Islamophobia in Europe with all the attendees present in the room.

ACTIVITY 8: BRUSSELS DIALOGUE WORKSHOP

A dialogue workshop was organized in SETA Brussels office on 22nd of January, 2020. During the workshop Enes Bayraklı, co-editor of the EIR, moderated the discussions in company of Farid Hafez, Amina Easat-Daas, Aristotle Kallis, Carmen Aguilera and Alfredo Alietti, who were respectively the authors of the Austrian, Belgian, British, Spanish and Italian country reports of the EIR 2018. Also, representatives of the local and EU wide NGOs present in Brussels attended the event and shared their know-how, experiences and current agenda on Islamophobia.

ACTIVITY 9: ISTANBUL DIALOGUE WORKSHOP

The dialogue workshop was organized in SETA Istanbul office between 31st of January and 1st of February, 2020. During the workshop representatives of 15 key European civil society organizations that fight against Islamophobia in Europe shared their know-how and experiences about the strategies to develop against far-right propaganda and pressure. At the concluding session, the NGOs underlined the fact that this workshop was a starting point for future common initiatives. They stressed out the importance:

- of organizing pan-European training sessions of 3-4 days for younger colleagues that are not experienced in the field of Islamophobia;
- of presenting legal solutions and concrete examples to NGOs in need;
- of developing social media strategies;
- of creating a manual that may show the main guidelines in case of far-right defamation attacks.

ACTIVITY 10: BERLIN PANEL

The panel under the name of “Presentation of the European Islamophobia Report 2018” was organized in SETA Berlin office on 20th of February, 2020. Drawing on the EIR 2018, the event shed light on the rising levels of Islamophobia in European countries. Additionally, the panel addressed the issue of tackling this growing phenomenon. Enes Bayraklı, the co-editor of the report, moderated the discussion in company of the author of Austria country report Farid Hafez, author of

Kosovo county report Adem Ferizaj and author of Czech Republic country report Selma Muhic Dizdarevic. The questions/answers session at the end of the panel gave a room to debate the issue of Islamophobia in Europe with all the attendees present in the room.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

- **Visibility Materials:** Block-notes, pens and pocket folders were printed; then distributed in the events for free.
- **Website:** The official website (www.islamophobiaeurope.com) was redesigned.
- **Short Clips:** Based on the infographics 5 thematic video clips were published. Please find the clips on the YouTube page: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgnX8zQAYFK5b4QsOuaTqBg>
- **Dissemination:** Hard-copies of the EIR 2018 were posted to approximately 550 different addresses in Europe. The online version of the report was e-mailed to more than 500 different addresses as well.
- **Social Media:** Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube channels were effectively used in order to enhance the visibility of the project and the report.
- **Project Evaluation Report:** This summary report is published at the end of the project in order to publish the main results.

CHALLENGES

SETA and Leopold Weiss Institute planned to organize a panel in the European Council based in Strasbourg in March or April of 2020. However, since all events in the Council have been cancelled because of the Covid-19 pandemic, it could not be organized.

GOOD PRACTICES

According to the Google Analytics data the official webpage of the report has been clicked 30.625 times in total from the launch of the project on 1st of April, 2019 to 30rd of April, 2020. The report also has been downloaded 8.885 times in total from its own webpage. However, the report is also available in other online platforms such as SETA's main website or academia.edu. Therefore, one can assume that the report has been reached to more than 30.000 users worldwide so far.

Another good practice of the project is about the media appearance of the project and the EIR 2018. Since the report was published on 27th of September, 2019 the main findings in the EIR 2018 in general and some national reports in particular have appeared in national and international media channels. The following appearances are just one of the many examples:

- “Large Increase in anti-Bosnian, anti-Muslim Bigotry: Report”, *Al Jazeera*, 23.09.2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/increase-anti-bosnian-anti-muslim-bigotry-report-190923053105055.html>
- “Anti-Muslim Racism in Europe on Rise in 2018: Report”, *Hawzah News Agency*, 30.09.2019, <https://en.hawzahnews.com/news/359046/Anti-Muslim-racism-in-Europe-on-rise-in-2018-Report>
- “Europe: Montée de l’islamophobie en 2018”, *TRT Français*, 01.10.2019, <https://www.trt.net.tr/francais/europe/2019/10/01/europe-montee-de-l-islamophobie-en-2018-1279621>
- “Turkey Joining EU ‘Antidote’ to Islamophobia: Diplomat”, *Anadolu Agency*, 17.10.2019
- “SETA’dan AP’de İslamofobi Paneli”, *Hürriyet*, 22.01.2020, <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/avrupa/setadan-apde-islamofobi-paneli-41425302>

Likewise, since the EIR 2018 is an academic study the findings in the national reports have been cited in other academic researches. The following studies represent just a small part of the many examples:

- Jana Sobotová, “How the Czechs and Spanish Perceive Islam: Islamophobia in the European Context”, *Folia Geographica*, Vol: 61, No: 2, 2019.

- Riada Asimovic Akyol, “For Bosnian Women, No Justice-and No Seats”, *Foreign Policy*, 03.10.2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/10/03/bosnian-women-balkan-war-no-justice-and-no-political-power/>
- Laçın İdil Oztuğ, Türkan Ayda Gürkan and Kenan Aydın, “The Strategic Logic of Islamophobic Populism”, *Government and Opposition Cambridge University Press*, January 2020.
- Matthew James Hone, “How Ethnic and Religious Nationalism Threaten the Bosnian State”, *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, Vol: 40, Issue: 1, February 2020.

SUSTAINABILITY

- **Environmental Sustainability:** The project minimized the carbon footprint by privileging non-material means (e-mails, website etc.) instead of using paper as far as possible. Moreover, all materials published in project like the EIR 2018, report in local languages, infographics and video clips are available online for free.
- **Institutional and Financial Sustainability:** The EIR 2019 will be published in May 2020 by SETA’s own funds.
- **Political Level Sustainability:** Throughout the project SETA cooperated with many international and supranational organizations and non-governmental organizations. These relationships will be maintained as long as the EIR continue to be published.

EIR 2018 PROJECT IN SHORT

- FUNDED BY SUPPORTING CIVIL SOCIETY DIALOGUE BETWEEN EU AND TURKEY GRANT SCHEME (CSD-V)
- ACTION TIME: 01.04.2019-31.04.2020
- HUMAN RESOURCES
 - * Project consultant
 - * Two project assistants
 - * Project coordinator of the lead applicant
 - * Project coordinator of the co-applicant
- EUROPEAN ISLAMOPHOBIA REPORT 2018
 - * Introduction
 - * 9 long reports
 - * 25 short reports
- ENGLISH PROOF-READING OF THE REPORT
- REPORTS IN LOCAL LANGUAGES
 - * Austria, France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands
- 2.300 PRINTED VERSIONS OF THE REPORT
- THEMATIC INFOGRAPHICS
 - * Islamophobia in Numbers
 - * Violent Acts against Muslims in Europe
 - * Islamophobic Statements of Politicians
 - * Legalizing Islamophobia
 - * Islamophobia in the Media

- **THEMATIC VIDEO CLIPS**
 - * Islamophobia in Numbers
 - * Violent Acts against Muslims in Europe (1 – 2)
 - * Islamophobic Statements of Politicians (1 – 2)
 - * Legalizing Islamophobia
 - * Islamophobia in the Media

- **PANELS**
 - * Ankara
 - * Berlin
 - * Brussels
 - * Warsaw

- **WORKSHOPS**
 - * Brussels
 - * Istanbul

- **DISTRIBUTION OF THE REPORT TO ABOUT 550 ADDRESSES IN EUROPE**

- **VISIBILITY MATERIALS**
 - * Block notes
 - * Pens
 - * Pocket folders

- **OFFICIAL WEBSITE**

- **SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS**
 - * Facebook
 - * Instagram
 - * Twitter
 - * YouTube

- **PROJECT EVALUATION**

