



Highlights of EUMC Report

“Muslims in the European Union: Discrimination and Islamophobia”

Translations of this summary into all EU languages have been provided for information purposes. The English version prevails.

“Muslims in the European Union: Discrimination and Islamophobia” is a report by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) on the situation of Muslims in the Member States of the European Union.

This report examines available data and information on the extent and nature of discrimination against Muslims and of Islamophobic incidents in the EU. These acts remain severely under-documented and under-reported. The report also presents examples of good practice in Member States, and puts forward proposals for action to combat discrimination and racism, and to foster integration.

Key findings and conclusions

- ✓ Regardless of their ethnic background and/or approach to religion, many European Muslims are facing discrimination in employment, education and housing.
- ✓ Discrimination against Muslims can be attributed to Islamophobic attitudes as well as to racist and xenophobic resentment, as these elements are often intertwined. Hostility against Muslims must therefore be seen in the more general context of xenophobia and racism towards migrants and minorities.
- ✓ It is evident that Muslims are experiencing Islamophobic acts, ranging from verbal threats through to physical attacks, even though data on religiously aggravated incidents is collected on a limited scale.
- ✓ The available data on victims of discrimination show that European Muslims are often disproportionately represented in areas with poorer housing conditions, while their educational achievement falls below average and their unemployment rates are higher than average. Muslims are often employed in jobs that require lower qualifications. As a group they are over-represented in low-paying sectors of the economy.
- ✓ Many European Muslims, particularly young people, face barriers to their social advancement. This could give rise to a feeling of hopelessness and social exclusion.
- ✓ Racism, discrimination and social marginalisation are serious threats to integration and community cohesion.

Evidence of discrimination against European Muslims

Employment

In some Member States, Muslims tend to have high unemployment rates. For example, in the UK, unemployment rates for Muslims are higher than those for people from any other religion for both men and women. In Ireland, the 2002 census revealed that 11 per cent of Muslims were unemployed as opposed to a national average of 4 per cent.

Discrimination testing shows that Muslims experience discrimination and face limited employment opportunities. For example, in the UK, a radio programme produced by the BBC in 2004 carried out an exercise where 50 firms received applications from six fictitious candidates with names strongly suggesting white British, African or Muslim background. The white candidates were more likely (25 per cent) than the black (13 per cent) applicants to be invited to interview, while those with a Muslim name (9 per cent) had the least success. In France in 2004 the University of Paris sent out standard curricula vitae identifiable as being from a variety of ethnic groups in response to 258 job advertisements for a sales person. It was found that a person from North Africa had five times less chance of getting a positive reply.

Education

Poor levels of educational achievement are another factor in the discrimination faced by European Muslims. In several Member States where a notable part of the migrant population consists of Muslims (e.g. Denmark, Germany and France), migrants and descendants from third countries show lower educational completion rates and attain on average lower qualifications than the majority population.

OECD PISA studies on migrant student performance show that non-native born pupils have much lower literacy scores than native pupils. Particularly in countries where the educational and socio-economic status of migrant families – many with Muslim background – is comparatively low, the performance gaps between students with and without migrant backgrounds tends to be larger.

With regards to the provision of religious education, Member States follow different approaches. These include formal secular religious education; cross-curriculum teaching of Islam; separate Islamic teaching provided within or outside the state school context. Muslim communities also provide supplementary classes in Islamic religious instruction, but there is concern over the practice of inviting Imams from third countries without formal qualifications and little, if any, understanding of the local social and cultural context.

Housing

Migrants, including those from predominantly Muslim countries, generally appear to suffer poorer housing conditions and comparatively greater vulnerability and insecurity in their housing status. There has been some improvement in patterns of housing conditions, but inequalities in housing remain largely due to the inadequate stock of social housing for low income groups, such as migrants or migrant descended persons.

Evidence of Islamophobic incidents

Available official data needs to be strengthened in order to identify religiously motivated or aggravated offences. Currently only the UK and Finland have official criminal justice data collection mechanisms, which show details on the origins of victims of a racist crime. Only

the UK publishes criminal justice data which specifically identify Muslims as victims of hate crime.

Nonetheless, the combination of official data and unofficial information by NGOs shows that Islamophobic incidents have been reported in several EU Member States. These incidents range from verbal threats through to physical attacks on people and property.

The EUMC identifies Islamophobia and its manifestations on the basis of internationally agreed standards on racism and the ongoing work of the Council of Europe and the United Nations.

Facts on the Muslim Communities of the European Union

Existing demographic statistics offer only estimates of the number of Muslims residing in the European Union. The most conservative figure based on official calculations and NGO estimates, is approximately 13 million, corresponding to 3.5 per cent of the EU's total population.

Muslims constitute the second largest religious group of the EU's multi-faith society. Muslims living in the EU are a highly diverse mix of different ethnicities, languages, secular and religious tendencies, cultural traditions and political convictions.

Muslims from Turkey, North Africa, the Middle East, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and the former Yugoslavia predominate among the Muslim populations of the European Union. A substantial number of them are EU citizens. Some Muslims residing in the EU also have a long historical presence in the countries in which they live.

The EUMC calls in particular for the following legislation and policy responses:

The EUMC believes that measures and practices which tackle discrimination and address social marginalisation should become policy priorities. Policy responses need to acknowledge that many Muslims in the EU have experienced discrimination, which has impacted on employment opportunities and education standards, thus leading to social marginalisation.

- ✓ **Implementing legislation:** Member States must fully apply the anti-discrimination directives (the Race Equality Directive 2000/43/EC and the Employment Equality Directive 2000/78/EC) and make fuller use of their provisions, including specific measures to promote equality. Member States should also consider going beyond the minimum legal requirements of the Directives, and ensure that groups vulnerable to discrimination are aware of their rights, and are given the means to secure those rights.
- ✓ **Recording and policing Islamophobic incidents:** Member States are encouraged to establish mechanisms to record overall racist incidents, with the aim of breaking these statistics down into incidents involving different victim groups, including Muslims. Member States are encouraged to incorporate anti-racism and diversity training in their police training programmes.
- ✓ **Implementing social integration and inclusion policies for migrants and minorities:** Member States are encouraged to implement support measures for migrants and minorities, including Muslims, in order to provide them with equal opportunities and prevent their marginalisation. Minorities should be actively consulted in the formulation of policies aimed at social integration.

- ✓ **Promoting measures in employment:** Member States are encouraged to intensify their efforts to improve employment opportunities in particular for minority youth, including Muslims. National and local public authorities could lead on promoting equal access to employment.
- ✓ **Promoting education and training measures:** Member States are encouraged to examine the reasons for differences in educational attainment. Member States should avoid that minority pupils are placed in separate classes. Member States should undertake reviews of school textbooks in order to ensure that history of minority groups is presented in an accurate way. Discussion of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia should be part of official school curricula.
- ✓ **Engaging political parties:** All political parties in Europe are encouraged to sign and implement the “Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-Racist Society”¹.
- ✓ **Participation:** European Muslims should be encouraged to engage more actively in public life (e.g. in political, economic, social and cultural institutions and processes).
- ✓ **The media:** The media should examine its reporting to ensure its accuracy and comprehensiveness in the coverage of these issues. Media are encouraged to implement recruitment and training initiatives for journalists to better reflect diversity within the EU. Member States are encouraged to enact or reinforce legislation on Internet service providers to prevent the dissemination of illegal racist material, in accordance with article 14 of the EC Directive on Electronic Commerce (2000/31/EC).

Practical initiatives to combat Islamophobia and to foster cohesion

The EUMC encourages Member States to make active use of examples of existing practical initiatives across the EU, many of which are highlighted throughout the report.

The EUMC believes that integration is a two-way process. Many European Muslims acknowledge that they need to do more to engage with wider society. At the same time Europe’s political leaders must make a stronger effort to promote meaningful intercultural dialogue and tackle racism, discrimination and marginalisation more effectively. The key challenge is to strengthen cohesion in European societies. This means respecting diversity, upholding fundamental rights and guaranteeing equal opportunities for all.

Education initiatives

- ✓ In Luxembourg, the Ministry of Education decided to provide final year pupils with a course on “instruction religieuse et morale” which focuses on inter-faith dialogue and explains the human values of non-Christian religions.

Inter-faith dialogue

- ✓ In Germany, several ‘Islam Forums’ have been established with the explicit objective of reducing prejudices and fears towards the Muslim community, and of fostering a critical discussion between representatives of Muslim organisations and representatives of the majority society. These forums do not have an official status, and were initiated by an NGO.

¹http://www.eumc.eu.int/eumc/index.php?fuseaction=content.dsp_cat_content&catid=3ef0500f9e0c5&contentid=3ef0546396bb5

- ✓ In the UK, leaders from the Muslim, Jewish and Christian faiths have now established the Three Faiths Forum which organises conferences, seminars and meetings with national and local politicians.

Municipal initiatives

- ✓ In Rotterdam, the city municipality subsidises SPIOR, a platform of Islamic organisations. The organisation, which was founded in 1990, promotes the interests of Muslims in the city, and represents 42 organisations, ranging from eight ethnic communities to womens' and youth organisations. In the recent past, an important task has been to promote better understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims. Rotterdam council organised nine 'Islam Debates' between February and April 2005. During these debates several issues regarding Islam were discussed ranging from the height of the minarets of new mosques to education and the economic situation.
- ✓ In the UK, several local government authorities have developed written guidelines on meeting the pastoral, religious and cultural needs of Muslim pupils. One of the most detailed and helpful was produced in Birmingham in collaboration with Birmingham Central Mosque. Local authorities have also developed good practices in addressing and challenging Islamophobia and refer to religious hostility and Islamophobia in their policy documentation.

Police initiatives

- ✓ In the UK the London Metropolitan Police Service (MET) has worked extensively with the NGO FAIR (Forum against Islamophobia and Racism) and other key organisations on the campaign, 'Islamophobia – Don't Suffer in Silence'. This was a major national campaign launched by the MET in 2004 to combat crimes against Muslims, to provide assistance to victims of Islamophobia, and to improve the MET's monitoring of Islamophobia and relations with the Muslim community.

This report is accompanied by a study on **“Perceptions of discrimination and Islamophobia”**, which is based on in-depth interviews with members of Muslim communities in ten EU Member States. This study provides a snapshot of the opinions, feelings, fears, frustrations, and also the hopes for the future shared by many Muslims in the EU.