



European Network Against Racism

Réseau européen contre le racisme

ENAR Shadow Report 2011/12 on Racism in Europe: Key findings on Muslim communities and Islamophobia

The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) 2011/12 Shadow Report on racism in Europe includes a special focus on Muslim communities, and an assessment on how these communities experience discrimination and how Islamophobia manifests itself. It represents the first pan-European qualitative survey of Islamophobia.¹ The findings are based on data and information from ENAR's national Shadow Reports, prepared by ENAR members in 26 European countries. Statistical evidence of discrimination against Muslims is often uneven because not all countries collect such data. Nevertheless, Islamophobia is widespread and prejudice towards Muslims has been more visible than that experienced by other religious or ethnic minority groups.

Manifestations of Islamophobia and discrimination against Muslims

❖ **Muslims continue to experience discrimination in a range of areas, in particular in employment, education, and access to goods and services.**

- In **Ireland**, preliminary findings of a study on anti-Muslim racism in Ireland demonstrate that over a third of participants reported they have experienced some form of anti-Muslim hostility. Muslim women were almost twice as likely to be targeted as Muslim men.
- In **Bulgaria**, while the overall unemployment rate is around 12%, this ratio is around 35-40% among the Muslim community.
- In **Germany**, muslim pupils, in particular Muslim girls wearing headscarves, reported facing harassment from teachers.
- A survey undertaken in **Lithuania** found that 39-40% of respondents would not let accommodation to Chechens, refugees or Muslims.
- In **France**, some doctors or other healthcare workers have refused to treat patients because of their ethnic origin or religion; and in some cases doctors have required ethnic minority patients (usually Muslim men with beards and Muslim women wearing the headscarf) to wear 'neutral clothing'.
- In **Spain**, Muslims and people of Arabic origin face greater problems accessing bars and leisure premises compared to other groups.

¹ Other similar studies include: The EU Fundamental Rights Agency EUMIDIS - Minorities and Discrimination Survey on Muslims, published in 2009, which covers 14 EU Member States; and Amnesty International's report on discrimination against Muslims in Europe, published in 2012, which focuses on five countries: Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Spain and Switzerland.

❖ **Muslim women and girls are most affected, in particular in the fields of employment and education, and face double discrimination on the basis of both their religion and their gender.**

- In **France**, women are the main victims of Islamophobia, with 85% of Islamophobic acts targeting women.
- In **Italy**, a Bill was introduced to ban the wearing of veils because it is considered oppressive to women.
- In the **Netherlands**, some employers have banned the veil in the workplace, arguing that the ban is justified under equality and human rights laws.
- In **Poland** and **Spain**, Muslim women who wear the hijab are often rejected for public-facing jobs or asked to remove the hijab when dealing with clients.

❖ **Islamophobia manifests itself as opposition to, as well as protests against, the building of mosques; criminal damage to Islamic buildings and violence against Muslims.**

- In **Austria**, there are height restrictions on buildings which are designed to prevent mosques from being built.
- In **Greece**, unknown assailants launched multiple arson attacks against several informal mosques as well as ordinary mosques in downtown Athens in 2011.
- In **Bulgaria**, Muslims were victims of attacks by activists from the political party ATAKA. Protestors threw eggs and stones at the Sofia mosque and hard objects at people; five worshippers were injured.

❖ **Islamophobia is promoted by both extremist political parties as well as mainstream parties to gain votes and popularity generally.**

- In **Finland**, members of the True Finns Party, including a Member of European Parliament, have been fined by the court for expressing anti-Muslim views on blogs.
- In **Italy**, Mr. Mario Borghezio, of the Lega Nord Party and an MEP, recently proposed taxing Muslims who have too many children in order to slow down 'the great Islamic advance in Europe'.

❖ **Islamophobia has been fuelled by some biased media reporting.**

- In the **Netherlands**, according to the Reporting Centre for Discrimination on the Internet, most of the discriminatory statements reported on the Internet and social media websites were Islamophobic in content.
- In **Belgium**, 51% of complaints on the ground of religion targeting Muslims related to the media and internet in 2011.

Recommendations

- ❖ EU institutions should recognise Islamophobia as a specific form of racism.
- ❖ EU institutions should undertake consultation with experts and civil society on religion and belief discrimination in employment and develop guidelines on “reasonable accommodation” of religious and cultural diversity in the workplace
- ❖ Member State governments should take a courageous approach to tackling hate speech and racist rhetoric in the public discourse and adopt a zero tolerance policy to stigmatising comments and terminology likely to incite violence, racism or other forms of discrimination
- ❖ Member State governments and employers should ensure that any restriction on the wearing of religious and cultural symbols and dress at work is limited to very narrow circumstances, pursues a legitimate goal and represents a proportionate requirement, in accordance with international human rights standards including European Court of Human Rights case-law.
- ❖ EU Member States should adopt without further delays European Commission proposal of 2008 for a Council Directive on protecting equal treatment outside employment irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, which represents one of the main and most complete EU instruments to promote and guarantee genuine equality in the EU.

To read the full report, visit www.enar-eu.org/Page_Generale.asp?DocID=15294&langue=EN