

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM A COALITION OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS AGAINST ISLAMOPHOBIA¹

Secure institutional recognition and mandate to tackle Islamophobia effectively

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Islamophobia (anti-Muslim racism/anti-Muslim hatred) is a specific form of racism that refers to acts of violence and discrimination, as well as racist speech, fuelled by historical abuses and negative stereotyping and leading to exclusion and dehumanisation of Muslims, and all those perceived as such. Many manifestations of Islamophobia are structural in their nature, in the sense that discriminatory patterns against Muslims are embedded in policies, laws and practices of institutional or private bodies.

We welcome the high-level conference on tackling intolerance and discrimination against Muslims in the EU organised by the European Commission and the opportunity to tackle the issue comprehensively, while recognising civil society stakeholders as key partners with unique expertise. While there has been recognition of the issue at European Union level, obstacles remain as evidenced by the [Fundamental Rights Agency's report on Muslims](#) and by the [European Islamophobia report](#) (2017). **European institutions and EU Member States need to strengthen and secure their mandate and actions to tackle Islamophobia**, especially in these times of political transition.

As civil society, we have highlighted the following objectives that can be reached through specific actions, in close consultation, cooperation and full transparency with civil society experts. These are addressed **to Member States and the European Institutions**.

1. Tackle the structural manifestations of Islamophobia by adopting measures in key policy areas

- Support the **adoption or improvement of national policies against racism**, such as **National Action Plans against Racism**, with specific measures or strategies to counter Islamophobia, including measures to tackle intersectional discrimination targeting Muslim women (on the model of the [Barcelona action plan against Islamophobia](#));
- Adopt **guidelines to implement an intersectional approach to religious dress restrictions** by recognising these restrictions mostly target Muslim women and are against full gender equality. These guidelines could promote non-discriminatory approaches to enable full inclusion of all Muslim women in all areas of life. Assessment of existing legislation should be done taking into account this approach;
- **Develop and promote harmonisation of data collection in areas of hate crime and equality**, recognising anti-Muslim bias as a category. These data should be disaggregated by multiple grounds of discrimination, including gender, race, ethnicity and religion.
- **Assess and acknowledge the discriminatory impact of counter-radicalisation and counter-terrorism measures** and ensure that counter-terrorism measures comply with fundamental rights safeguards, especially when implementing the recently adopted EU counter-terrorism Directive.

¹ European Network Against Racism, European Network on Religion and Belief, European Forum of Muslim Women, Collective against Islamophobia in Belgium, Lallab, Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations and others (full list will be available on www.enar-eu.org)

2. Secure safe and decent working conditions for civil society working against Islamophobia

- **Refrain from participating in/supporting often-unfounded accusations** against civil society organisations working against Islamophobia. These are clear manifestations of the generalised suspicion towards Muslims in Europe. Civil society organisations in Europe are key democratic stakeholders which ensure that all communities are heard and empowered and hold governments accountable. However, civil society organisations working against Islamophobia are often severely delegitimised and may have their reputation, resources and integrity threatened.
- **Develop and strengthen funding programmes** enabling civil society working against Islamophobia to develop long-term projects for capacity building, advocacy for equality, strategic litigation, educational programmes, etc. This should be included in the current EU budget negotiations. Facilitating access to these funds is also crucial to allow civil society to benefit from them.

3. Consolidate the mandate of the European institutions to keep Islamophobia high on the agenda

- **Publish an outcome document** following the high-level meeting on combating anti-Muslim hatred, highlighting the main gaps in equality of outcomes for Muslims in the EU and exploring ways forward for Member States to address these gaps. The document could also include main relevant policy areas, existing EU laws or policy initiatives, international standards and examples of promising practices by Member States. This would help gather in one document all existing work and standards, as well as main issues, and would act as a roadmap for European Commission officials when interacting with Member State representatives;
- Based on this document and existing research and recommendations, **develop a list of actions** on combatting Islamophobia with concrete objectives and targets;
- **Organise a good practice exchange seminar** (on the model of the Greek event on multiple discrimination and intersectionality) or an EU Presidency conference (on the model of [Austrian Presidency's conference on antigypsyism](#)) for Member States to follow-up on sharing and implementing actions in this field;
- **Include combating anti-Muslim hatred as a priority** in forthcoming communications related to tackling racism and the future of the EU high-level group on combating racism and related intolerance;
- **Secure the position of the EU coordinator** on combating anti-Muslim hatred as long as it does not replace strong political will, actions and effective policies. Clarity about the role should be ensured by a clear mandate and transparent communication and consultation process.