

Counter-Islamophobia Kit

Key National Messages – Germany (English)

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Countering Islamophobia through the Development of Best Practice in the use of Counter-Narratives in EU Member States.

CIK Project (Counter Islamophobia Kit)

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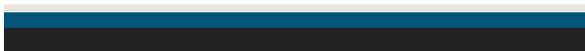
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About the CIK Project

The *Countering Islamophobia through the Development of Best Practice in the use of Counter-Narratives in EU Member States* (Counter Islamophobia Kit, CIK) project addresses the need for a deeper understanding and awareness of the range and operation of counter-narratives to anti-Muslim hatred across the EU, and the extent to which these counter-narratives impact and engage with those hostile narratives. It is led by Professor Ian Law and a research team based at the Centre for Ethnicity and Racism Studies, School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds, UK. This international project also includes research teams from the Islamic Human Rights Commission, based in London, and universities in Leeds, Athens, Liège, Budapest, Prague and Lisbon/Coimbra. This project runs from January 2017 - December 2018.

About the Paper

This paper is an output from the third workstream of the project which was centred on describe the key national messages pertaining to Islamophobia and countering-Islamophobia in each context considered in the framework of this project: Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Portugal and United Kingdom. The key national messages, findings and toolkit, the Counter-Islamophobia Kit (CIK) will be disseminated to policy makers, professionals and practitioners both across the EU and to member/regional audiences using a range of mediums and activities.

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Executive Summary

- Against the background of escalating waves of violence against Muslims, mosques, mosque associations, refugees, and refugees' shelters there is an urgent necessity to develop and establish policies, programs, political interventions, and police protection to safeguard them. This task falls into the obligations of the German state as stipulated in the Basic Law. For instance, risk assessment mechanisms and perimeter protection have proven to be supportive measures in protecting synagogues from anti-Semitic attacks.¹
- Moreover, Islamophobia needs to be recognized as a form of racism permeating German society. Such recognition should be followed by measures that thwart and prevent the manifold manifestations of this phenomenon in legislation, media representation, labour market, education, and housing.
- One of the most widespread deployments of gendered Islamophobia pertains to its effects in the labour market. Muslim women wearing headscarves have been particularly vulnerable to discriminatory practices and barred to access job positions both in the public and private sector. The current bans on headscarves upheld in some federal states despite the Federal Constitutional Court's decision ruling them as unconstitutional should be repealed. In a similar vein, the paragraph 9 of the Equal Treatment Act allowing Christian churches to discriminate on grounds of religion or sexual orientation in the private sector should be repealed.
- Due to the pervasive nature of Islamophobia and its dehumanizing effects on Muslims, spaces for Muslims where they can empower, politically engage, and develop artistic expressions, among other activities, should be funded and fostered. Arts can be a powerful medium to create empathy, understanding, and humanize Muslims through bringing forth their lived experiences.
- Another crucial task in countering Islamophobia involves the building of alliances and solidarity with other groups affected by racism and discrimination. These actions can not only aid to establish platforms of cooperation against racial discrimination, but also

¹ Amnesty International, 2016. *Living in Insecurity, How Germany is Failing Victims of Racist Violence*, London: Amnesty International Ltd; Lewicki, A., 2017. 'Islamophobia in Germany, National Report 2016'. In E. Bayrakli & F. Hafez, eds. *European Islamophobia Report 2016*. Istanbul: SETA, pp. 215–236.

contribute to the construction of a plural and more fair society in which Islamophobia along other forms of racism are not a normality that has to be accepted.

Narratives of Islamophobia in Germany

German federal elections in 2017 and the positioning of the far-right anti-Islam and anti-refugees political party Alternative for Germany (AfD) as the third political force and major oppositional party revealed to German society what many Muslims have been experiencing for decades, Islamophobia is deeply ingrained in German society, and it has become an effective racially inspired political currency.

One of the structural and historical problems in dealing with the existence and expansion of Islamophobia in Germany concerns the long-standing myth of the country as a post-racial society. Paradoxically, this idea has sustained racial imaginaries about who is German and who belongs to the nation, while it has also foreclosed the enactment of policies and programs, let alone discussions, to prevent and stop Islamophobic practices ranging from discrimination against Muslims on schools, the labour market, and state institutions to violent crimes against individuals and property identified as Islamic.

It was not until 2017 that the German government started to collect statistics about hate crimes motivated by Islamophobia (*Islamfeindlichkeit*). The combined figures of the four quarters reported by the Bundestag amounts to 804 crimes (46 attacks targeting mosques and 758 Islamophobic crimes).²

These figures shed light on two interrelated issues. First, they reveal the deplorable widespread of Islamophobic violent crime throughout the country. And second, they expose the belated and still insufficient attention and response of the German government to a reality that harks back beyond 2017.

Moreover, these figures do not include the rampant and pervasive racial violence against refugees, refugees shelters and workers, which, more often than not, is as well intertwined with and fuelled by Islamophobic hatred. In addition to this, Muslims in Germany tend to not report experiences of discrimination for variety of reasons: more often than not their

² Deutscher Bundestag, 2017. Drucksache 18/12535; Deutscher Bundestag, 2017. Drucksache 18/13330; Deutscher Bundestag, 2017. Drucksache 19/148; Deutscher Bundestag, 2018. Drucksache 19/987.

experiences of discrimination have been dismissed and not taken seriously, which might lead to accept Islamophobia as part of their reality.

In sum, and against this context, one of the most important counter-narratives to Islamophobia in Germany has centred on unearthing Islamophobia as a major racial content structuring and influencing institutions and institutional practices, perceptions about Muslims and Islam, how they are represented in the media, blocking the access of Muslims to the labour market, sustaining discriminatory practices in schools, universities, and the provision of health services.

In spite of the Federal Constitutional Court's decision in 2015 ruling the ban on headscarf for public servant as unconstitutional, some federal states still upheld this discriminatory law barring Muslim woman access to these positions. Not only this discriminatory legislation has had deep effects in curtailing the aspirations of Muslim women, but it has also expanded and incentivised discrimination against Muslim woman in the private sector.

The effects of Islamophobia and its interlocking with gender inequality upon Muslim women and Muslim women wearing headscarves is one of the most pressing tasks to be addressed regarding the fight against Islamophobic hatred and its effects. Not only the prospects of becoming a teacher, a jury or a police officer have been blocked for more than a decade, and still a future to come, but also Muslim women routinely face everyday violence and insults, discrimination on schools and universities, in the labour market, and housing. All these discriminatory effects are now well documented, so there is no doubt about the buttressing of Islamophobia in Germany. Ironically, Islamophobic narratives have been stubbornly portraying Muslim women as victims of Islam, of their families and communities, and of Muslim men, but, in effect, the Islamophobic attitudes and imaginaries of German society, the state and its institutions are primarily and deeply affecting the lives of Muslim women and their possibilities.

Furthermore, discrimination against Muslim women in particular and Muslims at large in the private sector is exacerbated by the legal provision of the General Equal Treatment Act (AGG) allowing Christian churches to discriminate on the basis of religion or sexual orientation. Repealing both the ban on headscarves and the legal provision allowing discrimination imprinted in Germany's first anti-discrimination legislation are much-needed steps to counter the effects of Islamophobia in the labour market. Seemingly, the disappearance of

these discriminatory legislations will represent a positive measure in the still long road to dismantle the architecture of Islamophobia in Germany.

Dominant narratives of Islamophobia in Germany

The first Workstream of the research project “Countering Islamophobia Through the Development of Best Practice in the Use of Counter-Narratives in EU Member States” mapped the 10 most dominant Islamophobic narratives in Germany. Some of these narratives possess a larger trajectory within the German framework such as the construal positing Muslims as inherently violent. Some other narratives have been targeting not only Muslims but also migrants, refugees and subjects deemed out of the boundaries of “Germanness”, such as the racially charged construct of the “parallel society”, or the distinction between “Germans” and “non-Germans”.

An all-embracing and unchallenged Islamophobic narrative pertains to the lack of integration of Muslims. Here integration is presented and deployed as a state-guided form of social engineering whereby a deficient and problematic Muslim subjectivity can be reformed and attuned with German culture. At the basic level, the discourse on integration positions Muslims as subjects not ready yet to be included in the German nation due to some “deficiencies” in terms of historical development, culture, values, attitudes and whatnot.

The discourse on integration, in its convoluted interlocking with other discourses such as Muslim gender inequality, terrorism, anti-Semitism, and homophobia, functions as the discursive ground whereby Muslims are constructed as different from Germans in terms of racial characterisations, and supposedly distinct and opposed set of values, ideas, norms, and understanding of religion and politics.

Likewise, the discourse on integration has been deployed on (imagined) spatial terms. “Self-segregated” ethno-religious spots known as parallel societies functioned as the theatre where Muslims not only live under their own—and archaic—rules, but also these enclaves have been deemed as the soil of radicalisation, extremism, and terrorism.

In conjunction, these narratives have turned right-wing conspiracy theories, i.e., the Islamisation of Germany and Europe, into mainstream political and media content. By recycling anti-Semitic tropes and combining it with racial stereotypes and emotional appeals of anger, frustration, and fear, the so-called Islamisation of Germany has been a powerful device portraying Muslims and Islam as threatening and cunning enemies trying to destroy “western” values, while trying to replace them with Islamic ones. This has been a narrative of

hatred being extremely popularised during the last years and setting the conditions for the appearance of organised political groups of Islamophobic hatred.

The rise and spread of political movements such as the Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the Occident (PEGIDA) represent precisely the strengthening and materialisation of racial conspiracy theories of hatred against Muslims and refugees as well. PEGIDA and its offshoots throughout Germany and Europe represent the deployment of Islamophobia as an intimidation practice, which rationale and “success” has more recently been appropriated by the AfD.

Empirical studies have shown that narratives of Islamophobic hatred have ingrained negative attitudes and views upon Islam and Muslim in significant sections of the population. Moreover, Islamophobia as a racial content and practice has had detrimental effects for the general livelihood of Muslims in the country; ranging from everyday violence, micro-aggressions, discriminatory practices in schools, in accessing the labour market, in finding a place to dwell, in the provision of and access to health services and education to different discriminatory laws and regulations such as the “Muslim” test of citizenship, the variegated bans on headscarves, and the unequal stance of Islamic organisations vis-à-vis Christian churches.

All in all, Islamophobia in Germany has embedded the view in German society and political institutions positing Muslims as not being a “natural” part of German society, rather perceived as deficient alien subjects who still lack integration. Nevertheless, this construct bears more relation to the racial imprints surrounding how “German identity” has been constructed and defined than with any “objective” measure of integration, encumbering to Muslims with the burden of integrating themselves, while obscuring the highly discriminatory institutional and private environment casting out Muslims from German society, for instance, condemning Muslims for segregating themselves in “parallel societies”, while, merely finding a house to dwell could be extremely arduous in an environment of hate. This constructed sense of difference has had the effect of deflecting problems permeating all of the German society by imputing them only to Muslims, such as violence, gender inequality, anti-Semitism, homophobia, and “deviant” sexuality. Besides, the dominant discourse linking Muslims with terrorism has created politics of fear and suspicion in the society, but also materialised in concrete institutions.

Counter-narratives to Islamophobia in Germany

Given the dismissal and lack of serious attention to Islamophobia as a structural form of racism in German society, making Islamophobia visible has been one of the most important tasks to counter its effects. Denying and belittling experiences of discrimination informed by Islamophobia can be seen as an effect of Islamophobic narratives, downplaying these realities or encumbering Muslims and the “problems” they allegedly represent as the causes of discrimination.

Unearthing the range of content and widespread of Islamophobic narratives and practices, moreover, comprises different layers such as collecting statistics about Islamophobic incidents, understanding the phenomenon, its historical and contextual roots, and surveying its widespread, but also the use of social media as a medium to catapult experiences of racism and discrimination of Muslims onto the public debate, while problematizing racism among a variety of setting and arenas and thereby challenging the long standing mythos that racism in general and Islamophobia in particular are marginal issues in German society. Analytically, the three spheres making Islamophobia visible can be seen as complementary political interventions. First, academic knowledge legitimises and produces a vocabulary to address Islamophobia, second, the engagement in social media creates a powerful and undeniable discourse about the range and effects of this racial reality, and finally, collecting statistics sets the conditions for an accountability to come.

Counter-narratives to Islamophobia have appeared also in order to cope with and undo the effects of Islamophobia in Muslim subjectivities. Against this affects and effects, safe places as locations of empowerment are as well of paramount importance as mediums to counter another effect of Islamophobia, its acceptance as normality. Processes of empowerment have been key in trying not only to heal the pernicious effects of being constantly and unequivocally deemed a problem, but also as places harboring political and artistic engagement. In this context, different forms of political engagement have surfaced either focusing on intersectional forms of Islamic feminism, or as platforms fostering the engagement of young Muslims in politics. These counter-narratives not only directly challenge dominant Islamophobic tropes such as the constructed incompatibility of Islam and democracy or the alleged oppression of Muslim women, but also serve to strengthen Muslim subjectivities as

political agents creating their own narratives whereby they define themselves as Muslims in their own terms.

Arts and creative expressions can be seen as some of the most important mediums whereby counter narratives of Islamophobia humanise the dehumanised Muslim subject created by Islamophobic narratives. This task is probably the most urgent one, for racialisation as dehumanisation serves as the ideological basis behind violence. By combining humor, empathy and creativity with a poignant critique of racism and inequality, arts can not only dismantle Islamophobic stereotypes but also offer a different, and much needed, view upon Muslims and Islam in Germany, which moves away from racially inspired discourses deeming Muslims as dangerous problems to the nation. Furthermore, arts and creative expressions tap into one of the most effective Islamophobic strategies, namely, its tactical use of emotions and affects, particularly, fear and hatred.

Another way to present different views on Muslim life has been through underscoring processes of conviviality, in which the sensationalism and scandal associated with Islam and Muslims is replaced by the quotidian and ordinary experiences of Muslims as being integral part of German reality.

This narrative, in turn, relates to the need to altered and replace how Muslims and Islam are appraised in the media and political debates. Spheres where there is an overemphasis in explaining everything that Muslims think and do by an appeal to a distorted image of religion. Likewise, due to the dominance of the discourse on integration imputing a set of lacks and problems to the Muslim self, counter-narratives have emerged engaging with this discourse and its established requisites. In this sense, the counter narrative challenges the one on the lack of integration of Muslims by showing the opposite, namely, that Muslims are integrated in German society in all those required dimensions, and how in spite of this reality Muslims are still perceived as Others and face significant barriers that are in fact the outcome of social structures, and related to the perception of Islam as a threat.

Notwithstanding the back and forth in the legal challenge to Islamophobia, the juridical battle against discrimination informed by Islamophobia is one of the most important battlefronts not only to create a more equitable and fair society, but also as part of the formation of Muslims as political subjects.

About the Research

The Key National Message for Germany is a summary of the most important findings of the first two workstream of the project “Countering Islamophobia Through the Development of Best Practice in the use of Counter-Narratives in EU Member States”, funded by the Directorate-General Justice of the European Commission.

The full reports on Germany and the comparative reports can be found in the following links, or by contacting the author (luis.hernaguilar@gmail.com).

Workstream 1: Dominant Islamophobic Narratives – Germany,

<https://cik.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/36/2017/07/2017.07.26-WS1-Germany-Final.pdf>

Workstream 2: Dominant Counter-Narratives to Islamophobia – Germany,

<https://cik.leeds.ac.uk/publications/workstream-2-dominant-counter-narratives-to-islamophobia/dominant-counter-narratives-to-islamophobia-germany-ws2/>

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry, no matter how small, should be recorded to ensure the integrity of the financial data. This includes not only sales and purchases but also expenses, income, and transfers between accounts.

Next, the document outlines the various methods used to collect and analyze financial data. It mentions the use of spreadsheets, accounting software, and manual ledgers. Each method has its own advantages and disadvantages, and the choice depends on the size of the business and the complexity of its operations.

The document then delves into the process of reconciling accounts. This involves comparing the company's records with the bank's statements to identify any discrepancies. Common reasons for discrepancies include timing differences, errors in recording, and unauthorized transactions. Reconciling accounts is a crucial step in ensuring that the financial statements are accurate and reliable.

Finally, the document discusses the importance of regular audits. An audit is a systematic review of the company's financial records to ensure that they are free from errors and fraud. It provides an independent assessment of the company's financial health and helps to identify areas for improvement. Regular audits are essential for maintaining the trust of investors, creditors, and other stakeholders.