

Counter-Islamophobia Kit

Key National Messages – Greece (English)

Dr Matilda Chatzipanagiotou and Iason Zarikos

September 2018

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

CIK Project (Counter Islamophobia Kit)

Dr Matilda Chatzipanagiotou and Iason Zarikos

Key National Messages - Greece

CERS, 2018

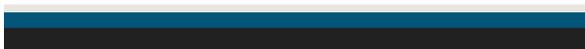
This publication has been produced with the financial support of the Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) Programme of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of Dr Matilda Chatzipanagiotou and Iason Zarikos and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission



Co-funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) Programme of the European Union



Counter-Islamophobia Kit



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.

©CIK

The CIK consortium holds copyright for the papers published under the auspices of this project. Reproduction in whole or in part of this text is allowed for research and educational purposes with appropriate citation and acknowledgement

Centre for Ethnicity and Racism Studies, 2018.

University of Leeds, Woodhouse Lane, Leeds, LS2 9JT, UK.

cik@leeds.ac.uk

www.cik.leeds.ac.uk

Executive Summary

The **Key National Messages (KNMs) for Greece** are grounded in the Research Reports on dominant narratives of and counter-narratives to Muslim hatred and Islamophobia in Greece.

1. **Resist and question sweeping associations of Islam with violence and terrorism**, in response to the generalized perception of Muslims as terrorists or inherently violent, a narrative cross-cutting ideological strands.
2. **Frame and put forward result- and data-driven messages corroborating the ability of Muslims to integrate and contribute to the development and growth of Greece and its economy**, in response to the conservative and liberal narrative that Muslims will sever, as an unassimilable community, the social and cultural cohesion of Greece and Europe.
3. **Broadly publicize and advocate positive state action towards guaranteeing the fundamental rights of Muslims, such as the recently approved first official Muslim mosque to be constructed in the capital of Greece**, in response to context- and country-specific narratives.
4. **Bring forward and critically reflect on the essence of human rights and the value of shared humanity as key elements of European heritage and identity and, in this light, refrain from stereotyping and demonstrate how/that Muslims are not monolithic, but rather incorporate intersecting multiple identities**, in response to the perception of Muslims as a threat to or at odds with the European political and cultural heritage, including human rights and the secular state.
5. **Address diverse audiences in a language they are familiar with and relate to, drawing on various counter-narratives such as the appeal to Christian ecumenical ideals, Liberal/democratic narratives on tolerance, European legacy and human rights, as well as the “national” ideal of a “patriotism of solidarity”**, in response to equally diverse Islamophobic narratives and by appealing to their target audiences.

The effectiveness of Key National Messages is reinforced by fact-based statements complemented and enhanced by historical and political positioning on the facts and empathy-evoking content, the sophisticated definition of target audiences within the context of Greece, result-driven responses emphasizing positive outcomes of the adaptation and application of best practices for integration and utilizing success stories of mutual respect and good neighboring within local communities, and, finally, by prompting the collective memories of the challenges that Greeks who emigrated faced abroad towards stimulating and cultivating empathy and compassion for Muslim migrants as the “other”.

Key National Messages for Greece

The Key National Messages below originate in the research conducted to, first, map and analyze the phenomenon of Islamophobia in contemporary Greece, remaining particularly mindful of the main ideological cleavages that define anti-Muslim narratives (Workstream 1), and, second, identify and put forward effective counter-narratives to Islamophobia, shedding light on their discursive content, forms, relative prevalence within Greece and interactions with external counter-narratives (Workstream 2).

The purpose of the KNMs is to communicate the most crucial for the national context findings of the country reports produced in Workstreams 1 and 2 back to audiences in Greece.

It is the most dominant narratives of Muslim hatred in Greece, associated with three main ideological strands: Extreme Right, Conservative Right and Liberal, that give rise to the prevalent counter-narratives addressing the nexus between Muslim identity and violence and terrorism on the one hand, and the claim that Muslims are not able to integrate in the Greek/European/Western society on the other. These narratives mutually nurture one another: marginalization and exclusion can lead to violence and terrorism; and then violence and terrorism become inherent traits of cultural and religious Muslim identity. Other narratives are particular to the country context and history and, thus, significantly relevant as sources of KNMs for Greece. In the context of Greece, the recent migration waves, particularly refugees, inform who is perceived to be the “other” in the society.

Of course, not all refugees are – or are self-determined as – Muslims, thus, clarifying whether it is Muslims or refugees that the narratives and counter-narratives are about is an important methodological task.¹

Counter-narratives to xenophobia, racism and discrimination against migrants and refugees in Greece afford valuable insights into key messages for effectively addressing Islamophobia in Greece, especially in view of the fact that the term is secondary to the relevant discourse if compared to the dominantly featuring framing of xenophobia.

¹ Expert interviewees (Workstream 2, Research Report) affirms the historical relation of Islam and Greece, noting that Islam is viewed as something entirely cut off from the Greek context and, nowadays, on occasion of the refugee crisis, as a core feature of the influx of refugees. In that sense, the main narrative to be addressed is that of cultural threat, and therefore drawing the association between the refugee and Islam seems valid. (K Papaioannou, personal communication, 06.10.2017). A bold statement is that Islamophobia has now replaced xenophobia in Greece. Once a migrant was just a migrant, but now the migrant is a Muslim migrant, the unassimilated migrant (E Takou 2017, personal communication, 05.10.2017). Migrants are categorized in two main groups, Muslim and non-Muslim and, while the former suffer from xenophobia and racism, Muslim migrants suffer from xenophobia, racism and Islamophobia (A Huseyinoglou 2017, personal communication, 25.08.2017). The problem of anti-Muslim sentiment in Greece is an apparent one. The anti-refugee sentiment is actually an anti-Islam sentiment. (A Burweila 2017, personal communication, 27.09.2017). Fear for the Islamic religion in Greece is attributed to the radical example of ISIS (D Esdras, personal communication, 23.08.2017). An interesting remark, also highlighting the intersectionality of identity and stereotyping, is that, although a person's race or skin color might not be dark and Greek fluency might be evident, if one's name is not Greek, but rather Muslim, for instance “Ali”, the name alone limits meritocratic and equal access to opportunities (A Huseyinoglou, *ibid*). (Workstream 2 Research Report).

The five KNMs for Greece are elaborated on and discussed below:

1. Resist and question sweeping associations of Islam with violence and terrorism

The perception of Muslims as terrorists or inherently violent cross-cuts ideological milieus. The key message to be addressed to diverse audiences in Greece is to resist and question sweeping associations of Islam with violence and terrorism, scrutinizing and challenging their justificatory basis, and to understand how/that terrorism is socially constructed, rather than religiously ordained. Central to this Islamophobic narrative, both domestically and internationally, is the association of Muslims with terrorism in light of the rise of ISIS extremism. In the Greek context, the refugee crisis became a central element of this narrative and led to the depiction of Muslim refugees as potential terrorists. Far from being perceived as an exception, this portrayal constitutes the norm. Fact-based and data-driven approaches, for instance that, since 2001, jihad has attracted only one in 100.000 Muslims, and that, consequently, “over a billion Muslims around the world reject hate speech” (Demertzis, N., 2016), are key to demonstrating that the great majority of Muslims reject extremism and live by moderate versions of Islam. Muslim voices preaching that Islam is a religion of peace (Fotopoulos, N., 2015) are important sources of counter-narratives and play a significant role in the effective communication of this key message to national audiences in Greece. The content of this KNM can be enhanced by treating this manifestation of Islamophobia as a global issue, and by drawing on the interaction between internal and external counter-narratives, evidenced, for instance, in international studies that showcase the rejection of terrorism by Muslims worldwide and in Greece (The Press Project, 2017).

In response to narratives linking Muslims with terrorism and/or inability to integrate, this KNM encourages citizens to focus, on structural causes – marginalization, poverty, institutional racism – of marginalization. To those ends, equipping refugees, and overall socially vulnerable individuals and groups, with the necessary skills to increase their employment and promotion possibilities is urgent and crucial (Anonymous 2017, personal communication, 24.10.2017).

Marginalization at the institutional level can be prevented through effective integration policy targeting the stigma of exclusion (Z Lialiouti 2017, personal communication, 10.10.2017) and ghettoization (E Maragou, 2017, personal communication, 27.11.2017), taking into consideration the experiences and background of the “other”, towards attributing, for instance, aggression, to context and circumstances, rather than religious identity (E Chazapi 2017, personal communication, 7.11.2017).

2. Frame and put forward result- and data-driven messages corroborating the ability of Muslims to integrate and contribute to the development and growth of Greece and its economy

In response to the conservative and liberal narrative that Muslims will sever, as an unassimilable community, the social and cultural cohesion of Greece and Europe, the key message to national audiences is best communicated through the result- and data-driven communication of the positive outcomes of best practices and innovation in education, cultural exchange, the media, and housing programs for refugees across Greece, with an

emphasis how such integration initiatives and efforts benefit both Muslims and the local communities.

An aspect of the mutually beneficial coexistence is, of course, the prospect of Muslim migrants' contribution to the economic development and growth of Greece.

“Our qualitative research with focus groups [...] showed us that the fear Muslims will not culturally assimilate is the dominant concern. To combat this narrative, we have successfully launched what we call our Tilos Project, where we show that Muslim refugees and local Greek communities can not only live together, but [actually] thrive together.”² The Tilos project by Solidarity Now is an example of how the counter-xenophobic narrative can be supported by an active and successful demonstration of how Muslim refugees can and do in fact integrate, given the opportunity. Publicity of this success, Burweila notes, contributes to countering prevalent xenophobic attitudes and misconceptions. (Burweila, *ibid*)³

Variations of this KNM must address the social and spatial marginalization of Muslims and emphasize the advantages of diversity in education, the workplace, and society at large. Sources and audiences of this KNM are/can be highly diversified: policy makers across levels of governance, both state and regional/municipal, hiring managers, field and social workers, educators and educational institutions, the media.

Successful housing programs for refugees, the majority of whom are Muslims, educational initiatives and programs for cross-cultural dialogue⁴, cultural events inviting and attracting a diverse audience⁵, as well as safe settings within which Muslims and non-Muslims can interact one-on-one⁶, what is widely affirmed to be the most effective means of breaking stereotypes, are, as such, the content of this KNM, which is predominantly result-driven and can only unfold effectively through concrete examples of impactful integration efforts. Manifestations of this

² For a description of the project, see <https://www.solidaritynow.org/en/home-for-hope/> and <https://www.solidaritynow.org/en/bbc-channel/>.

³ See also the program “Together” in the city of Trikala, Thessaly, aiming at bringing refugee populations in contact with the locals through joint activities such as theatrical plays and visits to museum (C Krithari 2017, personal communication, 08.08.2017).

⁴ Education should play an important role in helping students to understand that stereotypes should not shape our sense of reality, because stereotypes are constructed and misleading. Education should cultivate in young people tolerance for the different. (E Maragou 2017, personal communication, 27.11.2017).

⁵ Culture contributes to countering environments of hate by co-creating safe and positive spaces of interaction and dialogue. The mind-set of neighbourhoods can change through open-to-all cultural events, such as cinema, theatre and language learning (M Kontomichali 2017, personal communication, 24.07.2017; Chazapi, *ibid*).

⁶ One-on-one interaction and dialogue with the “other” (M Nakasian 2017, personal communication, 15.11.2017) or simulations of this immediate encounter and exchange are recognised by experts as the most impactful means for overcoming stereotypes, empathizing and coexisting peacefully with refugees and Muslims. It is grassroots efforts engaging small groups of Muslims and non-Muslims interacting at the local level that create the environment within which effective counter-narratives of integration originate (Burweila, *ibid*; S Gkournelou and S Kyriakopoulou 2017, personal communication, 27.07.2017). Also, dialogue cultivates peaceful co-habiting (G Kalampokas 2017, personal communication, 24.08.2017). The importance of one-on-one communication with refugees is highlighted and the immediate change experienced when one speaks to refugee, rather than seeing refugees on TV, is observed. (Macdonell, *ibid*). (Workstream 2 Research Report).

KNM are also found in refugees' testimonials and story-telling, highlighting visually and verbally how Muslims respond to their civic rights and duties within Greek society and how they fight racist victimization⁷ (K Macdonell 2017, personal communication, 13.11.2017).

In defining the role of media as the source of this KNM, emphasis must be cast on the heightened moral responsibility when they portray the "other". As the experience of the coverage of the refugee crisis in Greece has shown, the media is a powerful tool and channel of testimonials, namely the closest a wide audience can get to experiencing a one-on-one interaction with the "other" and learning first hand about different lived experiences (see Burweila, *ibid*). Most importantly media should be/become a channel for the voices of migrants and refugees talking about their own matters. Media can also play an active role in the integration of Muslims into local communities as, for instance, in the city of Trikala, Thessaly, where E-trikala published a newspaper in Arabic in order to welcome the refugees, inform them about the city and express their support. Ioanna Niaoti, journalist at ERT, the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation, and participant in the program 'Ethical Journalism against Hate Speech', the RESPECT WORDS project, which "raises the need to rethink how media and its professionals deal issues related to migratory processes, ethnic and religious minorities" clarifies that the role of journalist is to present the different sides of a subject matter in order to refrain from producing stereotypes, and to give the audience a balanced view allowing them to decide for themselves (I Niaoti 2017, personal communication, 21.11.2017).

3. Broadly publicize and advocate positive state action towards guaranteeing the fundamental rights of Muslims, such as the recently approved first official Muslim mosque to be constructed in the capital of Greece

This KNM aspires to respond to the context- and country-specific narratives that Muslims constitute a national threat, serving as the blind instruments of Turkish expansionist views on Greece by settling on the Aegean Islands (extreme and conservative right), or being the cause of loss or corruption of Greek national identity, as well as a religious threat, deliberately trying to de-Christianize the dominantly Christian population, turning Greece into an Islamic country (mostly conservative and, secondarily, extreme right).

To address these manifestations of Islamophobia, the KNM must use successful integration practices (see *supra*) as a reference point, and stress the importance of safeguarding social cohesion and national interests related to the peaceful coexistence of Muslims and other populations (Lakasas, 2016). The KNM must also appeal to humanistic values, human and democratic rights, and our shared humanity (see *infra*), and to cultivate empathy for those living away from their homeland (L Papagiannakis 2017, personal communication, 22.08.2017). Most importantly, the KNM should publicize positive examples of state action – speaking louder than words – to guarantee the fundamental rights of Muslims to practice their religion in official religious spaces. The recently approved first Muslim mosque to be constructed in the capital of Greece, Athens, has dominated the public dialogue in Greece for decades.

⁷ The narrative about the refugee who is hurt and vulnerable should be avoided, and it is acknowledged that the image of refugees has changed because of the implementation of housing programs and integration best practices. (T Stavriniaki 2017, personal communication, 30.08.2017).

The mosque in Athens is framed as a question of democracy and human rights (Baskakis, 2016), but also as a matter of national security and the fight against terrorism (Filis, newsbeast 2016), as it will prevent minoritarian, extremist voices within the Muslim community from fanaticizing moderate Muslims. This third line of argumentation can inform the presently discussed and the first KNM against sweeping associations of Islam with violence and terrorism.

4. Bring forward and critically reflect on the essence of human rights and the value of shared humanity as key elements of European heritage and identity and, in this light, refrain from stereotyping and demonstrate how/that Muslims are not monolithic, but rather incorporate intersecting multiple identities

The essence of human rights and the value of shared humanity as key elements of European heritage and identity are at the core of the KNM addressing the Islamophobic perception of Muslims as a threat to or at odds with European political and cultural heritage, including human rights and the secular state. Producing messages in this light, necessarily calls for reacting to stereotypes, and demonstrating how/that Muslims are not monolithic, but rather incorporate intersecting multiple identities.

Specific variations of anti-Muslim narratives targeted by this KNM include the fear that Muslims are used by EU bureaucrats and/or other 'globalists' to dismantle the European nation state (extreme right voices), that they will help diffuse a culture of disrespect towards human rights (mostly liberal and, to a lesser extent, conservative voices) and reject the secular state (liberal voices). Empirically grounded counter-narratives about the intersecting multiple identities manifested in Muslims are feeding on the richness of story-telling by Muslim migrants/refugees, as recorded by international organizations and NGOs and publically shared towards raising awareness about their lived experience in Greece.

The universal scope of the counter-narrative of shared humanity (R Vasilaki 2017, personal communication, 6.10.2017) renders it a suitable response to any narrative of Islamophobia. Shared humanity emphasizes the overarching similarity that can nullify the significance of any differences (Nakasian, *ibid*; see Workstream 2 Research Report) that provide grounds for narratives of Islamophobia.

However, it is the employment of concrete, empathy-evoking stories, rather than abstract values, that lead to the identification of target audiences with the lived experience of Muslims – discrimination, exclusion, hatred – and inspire civic engagement, action and advocacy on the part of each citizen⁸. The aim of this KNM is for “[p]eople [...] to understand that they [the “other”] are human as well. Human like us.” (V Mitsiadi 2017, personal communication, 11.07.2017). Experiential activities exposing participants to manifestations of xenophobia and simulating contexts of hatred are particularly effective methods for sensitizing and raising awareness (G Kouvaras 2017, personal communication, 16. 08. 2017). The title of the forum theater interactive educational program “What if it were you?” (Mitsiadi⁹, *ibid*; C Krithari

⁸ See Action Aid's social experiment: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sGONjaHUHFw>

⁹ Mitsiadi elaborates on that point: “We need to adopt a balanced approach to the situation; they have rights and needs and we need to provide for them in order for the situation to be normalised.” (Mitsiadi, *ibid*).

2017, personal communication, 08.08.2017; N Choleva 2017, personal communication, 05.09.2017) is in itself an impactful phrasing of this KNM. The methodology of the “What if it were you?” program affords valuable insights into the impact this KNM is envisioned to have. The question triggers participants to, first, utter and share stereotypes and racist perceptions of the “other” and, then, using this material as a basis, to challenge own and others’ positions.

Questions as a phrasing pattern for this category of messages are exceptionally effective, as they prompt critical reflection, activate the imagination of the audience and can initiate dialogue. The tools afforded by interdisciplinary methods, such as theatre and education, allow for dialogue through verbal and non-verbal communication, thus enabling direct and meaningful interaction with Muslim refugees despite possible language gaps. Other communication tactics are self-critical reminders, activating the collective memories of Greek diaspora and migration (Esdras, xxx), social experiments (Gkournelou and Kyriakopoulou, *ibid*)¹⁰, and individual “human” stories, rather than numbers and statistics, to which audiences have become desensitized (Burweila, *ibid*).

Shifting to the other side of this coin, the monolithic depiction of Islam and Muslims constitutes the underlying premise of any manifestation of Islamophobia. This KNM aims to fight the monolithic perception by communicating the multiple and intersecting, primarily religious, gender and refugee, identities of Muslim refugees who arrived in Greece after 2015 (Kontomichali, *ibid*). Such messages address and remedy anti-Muslim hatred “while pointing at a pathway for integration in the wider civil society through targeted affiliation with its diverse branches, such as the LGBTI communities.¹¹ From a liberal/democratic perspective, what this KNM should convey is a historicized version of Islam that exposes the myth of monolithic Muslims (Papageorgiou, F., and Samouris, A., 2012, 322).

One-to-one interactions, allowing specific aspects of one’s identity and roles, such as the universal role of motherhood, to surface reinforce the sense of shared humanity (Chazapi, *ibid*) and can prove appropriate settings for communicating this KNM and, more importantly, practicing this message.

Finally, Muslim identity as a subtotal of intersecting multiple identities, is not to be concealed or neutralized; it is to be celebrated along with other facets of one’s identity towards allowing for building various, different bridges with groups and individuals within the civil society.

5. Address diverse audiences in a language they are familiar with and relate to, drawing on various counter-narratives such as the appeal to Christian ecumenical ideals,

¹⁰ See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JN_TygoVXic

¹¹ Representing SolidarityNow, Dr. Kontomichali is running the Safe Refugee program, a specialized assistance program of SolidarityNow for LGBTI refugees and asylum seekers. As part of this program, LGBTI refugees are linked with humanitarian organizations as well as local LGBTI communities. See: <https://www.solidaritynow.org/en/safe-refugee/> [*“LGBTI refugees frequently face multiple risks in all phases of the displacement cycle and need additional protection. They are often at heightened risk for discrimination and exclusion from access to basic services, and they are also subjected to different forms of abuse, marginalization, and exclusion. For the above reasons, we could not leave this vulnerable group without support and assistance”, says Margarita Kontomichali, the coordinator of the Safe Refugee program; and she continues: “In SolidarityNow, we believe in the respect of human dignity, freedom, equality, and in the respect of human rights for vulnerable people.”*]

Liberal/democratic narratives on tolerance, European legacy and human rights, as well as the “national” ideal of a “patriotism of solidarity”

In response to any of the various manifestations of Islamophobia in Greece, and by appealing to their target audiences. This KNM professes the patriotism of solidarity, European patriotism, liberal/democratic counter-narratives, conservative anti-nationalist narratives, and Christian ecumenical ideals such as peace, ^[1]_{SEP}hospitality and care towards the vulnerable – especially towards the refugees. The power and effectiveness of this message lies in the recognition that diverse audiences require different approaches. A liberal counter-narrative may not prove successful when addressed to conservatives and vice-versa.

Liberal arguments that perceive of Muslims as unassimilable within European societies, on account of the rejection of liberal, secular values that lie at the very core of European culture have culminated since the rise of ISIS that led to the interlacing of this narrative with security issues. As liberal ideas are popular in the country, the further diffusion of liberal narratives of Islamophobia is particularly alarming in crisis-ridden Greece, despite the fact that these voices are not dominant in the liberal discourse. Target audiences of this KNM are the extreme right, conservatives and liberal Islamophobes. The liberal KNM is a negation of the position that Muslims cannot integrate, and the endorsement of the fact that “the great majority (of Muslims) ... maintain progressive ideas” (Papageorgiou, F., and Samouris, A., 2012, 21) and that Muslim citizens of Europe protest against terrorism (Karatrantos, 2016, 102-3). The KNM must also emphasize the importance of protecting the “multicultural and tolerant character of Europe” (Sokou, 2015).¹²

This KNM calls for protection against “the nightmarish world of excessive security measures, Islamophobia, malevolence and trenches” (Karaiskaki, 2017) and for inter-cultural trust towards preserving the European values of democracy, liberty, tolerance and justice.

In this argument, the Islamophobic narrative is turned on its head: it is not Muslims that threaten European values but the irrational phobia against them which could cause the weakening of European, pluralistic values. Europe can be defeated only by fear, that is, by herself. (Workstream 2 Research Report)

A re-evaluated European historical legacy that recognizes the Islamic contribution and incorporates citizens of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds (Papageorgiou, F., and Samouris, A., 2012, 322 -335), treating them as, Muslim and Christian, active global citizens (Kouvaras, *ibid*) features centrally in this KNM. At the same time, Muslim extreme conservatism must also be historicized and relativized apropos Western realities (D Keridis 2017, personal communication, 20.10.2017; Choleva, *ibid*). A variation of this message is to recognize our bias and how our reaction to the unequal treatment of women in the West and in Muslim countries varies. It seems that Western discrimination is condemned less than that attributed to Islam, though none of them should be tolerated (Papaioannou, *ibid*).

¹² Following the Charlie Hebdo attack, a liberal commentator dissected “amid sorrow and recollection” the liberal dilemma in concrete terms: Europe should rise against terrorism, yet in a way that would prevent the further diffusion of Islamophobia, finding a way to “fight the extremists...without defeating its own fundamental values.” (Kounalaki, 2015).

Since the outbreak of the refugee crisis in 2015 Islamophobic narratives have depicted the refugees as invaders who would de-Christianize Greece and/or serve alleged Turkish expansionism against the enfeebled country. In this light, an effective counter-narrative should incorporate national sentiments. Dr. Efthymios Papataxiarhis, who conducted field research in a village of Northern Lesbos, an island that has been gravely affected by the refugee crisis, observes that migration waves from 2000 and onwards were “irregular immigrants”, whereas recent migrants are perceived as “refugees”, namely as “transitory traveller[s] in need”.

Subsequently, this perception blunted the religious, ethnic or class characteristics of the refugees and allowed the “metaphorical identification of the refugee with the human being” (Papataxiarhis, 2016, 13). [...] The identification of refugees as humans in dire need allowed the intertwining of the notion of refugees with a recurring concept of the Greek economic crisis, the concept of solidarity (Papataxiarhis, 2016, 16). This intertwining led to “a great...conscientious rift” that contributed to mobilization of locals and the positive reception of refugees. (Workstream 2 Research Report)

The interplay between solidarity and the national ideal, arguably the strongest ideal in the Western world, led to the formation of a narrative that rendered solidarity towards refugees a “national characteristic” and the “moral strength” of Greece (Papataxiarhis, 2016, 20)¹³. Though fragile and dependent on the overall handling of the refugee crisis, the patriotism of solidarity is a valuable message in the effort to counter Islamophobia, as 97% of Greeks feel nationally proud (Pew, 2016). More importantly this message highlights positive aspects of Greek identity, such as openness and hospitality (Takou, *ibid*; Kalampokas, *ibid*, arguing that this message contributed to the smooth execution of the housing program for refugees in Levadeia).

Given the narrative about how the presence of Muslims will de-Christianize Greece and Islamophobic conservative voices within the Orthodox Christian Church, it is vital to inform this category of KNMs by turning to dominant counter-narratives coming from the Church and, thus, addressing a distinct and important part of Greek society.

Christian counter-narratives are of great importance, if Islamophobia is to be opposed to in the public sphere in Greece. The pervading influence of the Orthodox Church, exemplified by its high status and its designation as the dominant religion in Greece, necessitate that anti-racist voices stressing the ecumenical character of Christian religion are brought to the forefront. (Workstream 2 Research Report)

These include: the remark that fundamentalism is not uniquely a trait of Islam (Betzou, 2004; Ignatios, 2004); that an enlightened, humanistic aspect of Islamic religion exists (Betzou, 2004, 62) and there is a need to reinforce it (Kalaitzidis, 2004, 23); that the ethno-centric foundations of nationalist Christian thought negate the ecumenical character of Orthodox Christianity (Kalaitzidis, 2004; Bekridakis, 2004; Mouzelis, 2004) as evidenced in the Old and New

¹³ Both Papataxiarhis and Macdonell stressed the historical experience of Greeks with migration and the refugee drama. Greeks have a built-in understanding of what being a refugee means. It is empathy, says Macdonell, and links the refugee crisis with the one of 1922, when 1.5 million refugees arrived and settled in Greece. (Macdonell, *ibid*).

Testament, for instance, in the Good Samaritan parable (Ignatios, 2004) and the ecclesiastical tradition (Ignatios, 2004, 36). These messages are suitably framed, and thus effective, for addressing the respective audience¹⁴. The variations of this KNM intersect in the statement by Archbishop Ieronymos, Head of the Greek Church, who expressed his pride for the solidarity and humanism that Greeks demonstrated towards refugees, and contrasting this stance to the “humanistic bankruptcy of Europe” (Ieronymos, 2016).

¹⁴ Certainly, non-conservative critiques of Christian superiority against Islam are also applicable. Angeli reminds us that horrendous acts have been practiced in the name of Christianity. We need to get to know Islam better and contextualize other religions. We need to critically compare religions. (D Angeli 2017, personal communication, 24.08.2017).

References

- Baskakis, G. 2016. Racist "blockade" in the Botanical mosque [Ρατσιστικό «μπλόκο» στο τζαμί του Βοτανικού]. *efsyn*. [Online]. [Accessed 25 November 2017]. Available from: <http://www.efsyn.gr/arthro/ratsistiko-mploko-sto-tzami-toy-votanikoy>
- Bekridakis, D. 2004, *The resurgence of religion*, in Metropolis of Demetrias, 2004. *Islam and Fundamentalism, Orthodoxy and Globalization*. Athens: Indictos, 117-132
- Betzou, M. 2004. *Islam and Fundamentalism Today*, in Metropolis of Demetrias, 2004. *Islam and Fundamentalism, Orthodoxy and Globalization*. Athens: Indictos, 59-64
- Demertzis, N. 2016. From islamophobia to interculturality [Από την ισλαμοφοβία προς τη διαπολιτισμικότητα]. *To Vima*. [Online]. [Accessed 24 August 2017]. Available from: <http://www.tovima.gr/opinions/article/?aid=771222>
- Fotopoulos, N. 2015. The religion and violence relations [Οι σχέσεις θρησκείας και βίας]. *efsyn*. [Online]. [Accessed 1 December 2017]. Available from: <http://www.efsyn.gr/arthro/oi-sheseis-thriskeias-kai-vias>
- Ieronymos, 22.03.2016, Greece may be poor but not inhuman. *Voria.gr* [Online]. [November 2017]. Available from: <http://voria.gr/article/archiepiskopos-i-ellada-mpori-na-ine-ftochi-alla-ochi-apanthropi>
- Ignatios, 2004, *Islam and Fundamentalism, Orthodoxy and Globalization*, in Metropolis of Demetrias, 2004. *Islam and Fundamentalism, Orthodoxy and Globalization*. Athens: Indictos, 31-41
- Kalaitzidis, P., 2004. *Orthodoxy and Islam, From modernity to Globalization in Holy Metropolis of Demetrias*, 2004. *Islam and Fundamentalism, Orthodoxy and Globalization*. Athens: Indictos, 9-29
- Karatrantos, T. 2016. *Sfaxe me Aga mou na Agiaso* [Σφάξε με Αγά μου να Αγιάσω]. Epikentro.
- Karaiskaki, T. 2017. In societies of risk [Στις κοινωνίες του ρίσκου]. *Ekathimerini*. [Online]. [Accessed 24 August 2017]. Available from: <http://www.kathimerini.gr/902086/opinion/epikairothta/politikh/stis-koinwnies-toy-riskoy>
- Kounalaki, X. 2015. Europe - Islam after Charlie [Ευρώπη - Ισλάμ μετά το Charlie]. *Ekathimerini*. [Online]. [Accessed 24 August 2017]. Available from: <http://www.kathimerini.gr/798568/opinion/epikairothta/politikh/eyrwph---islam-meta-to-charlie>
- Lakasas, A. 2016. Time of truth for us, the "others" and the mosque [Ωρα αλήθειας για εμάς, τους «άλλους» και το τζαμί]. *Ekathimerini*. [Online]. [Accessed 25 November 2017]. Available from: <http://www.kathimerini.gr/881917/opinion/epikairothta/politikh/wra-alh8eias-gia-emas-toys-alloys-kai-to-tzami>

Mouzelis, N. 2004, Cosmopolitanism, globalization of values and their enemies, The Challenge for Orthodoxy in Holy Metropolis of Demetrias, 2004. *Islam and Fundamentalism, Orthodoxy and Globalization*. Athens: Indictos, 107-116

newsbeast.2016. *Filis: The real elephant is that Europe does not accept that Islam is here* [Φίλης: Ο πραγματικός ελέφαντας είναι ότι η Ευρώπη δεν δέχεται ότι το Ισλάμ είναι εδώ]. [Online]. [Accessed 25 November 2017]. Available from: <https://www.newsbeast.gr/politiki/arthro/2332700/filis-o-pragmatikos-elefantas-ine-oti-i-evropi-den-dechete-oti-to-islam-ine-edo>

Papageorgiou, F. and Samouris, A. 2012. *Islamism and Islamophobia* [ΙΣΛΑΜΙΣΜΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΙΣΛΑΜΟΦΟΒΙΑ]. Taksideutis.

Papataxarhis, E. 2016. A major overthrow: The "European refugee crisis" and the new patriotism of "solidarity" [Μια μεγάλη ανατροπή: Η «ευρωπαϊκή προσφυγική κρίση» και ο νέος πατριωτισμός της «αλληλεγγύης»]. *Synchrona Themata*. [Online]. 132-133, pp.7-28. [Accessed 25 November 2017]. Available from: <http://www.synchronathemata.gr/mia-megali-anatropi-i-evropaiki-prosfigiki-krisi-ke-o-neos-patriotismos-tis-allilenghis/>

Pew Research Center. 2016. Europeans Fear Wave of Refugees Will Mean More Terrorism, Fewer Jobs. Pew Research Center.

Sokou, K. 2015. Testing European values [Δοκιμάζοντας τις ευρωπαϊκές αξίες]. *Ekathimerini*. [Online]. [Accessed 24 August 2017]. Available from: <http://www.kathimerini.gr/839020/opinion/epikairothta/politikh/dokimazontas-tis-eyrwpaiques-a3ies>

The Press Project. 2017. *The myth that "Muslims do not condemn terrorism" collapses* [Ο μύθος ότι «οι μουσουλμάνοι δεν καταδικάζουν την τρομοκρατία» καταρρίπτεται]. [Online]. [Accessed 1 December 2017]. Available from: <https://www.thepressproject.gr/article/109442/O-muthos-oti-oi-mousoulmanoi-den-katadikazoun-tin-tromokratia-katarriptetai>

List of Experts/Interviewees, Workstream 2, Research Report (incl. only personal communications referred to in the Key National Messages, Workstream 3*)

Dr. Danai Angeli, *Lawyer; Researcher; Lecturer at Bilkent University*, personal communication, 24.08.2017

Aya Burweila, *Senior Researcher and Public Policy Officer at Solidarity Now*, personal communication, 27.09.2017

Eirini Chazapi, *Project Manager of the Open Schools program, developed by the Municipality of the City of Athens with the support of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation*, personal communication, 7.11.2017

Nassia Choleva, *Coordinator, Drama Pedagogue, Teacher Trainer in Drama Education projects*, personal communication, 5.9.2017

Daniel Esdras, *Chief of IOM Greece*, personal communication, 23.08.2017

Sissy Gkournelou, *Media Coordinator, ActionAid Hellas*, personal communication, 27.02.2017

Dr. Ali Huseyinoglou, *Assistant Professor, Balkan Research Institute, Trakya University, Edirne, Turkey*, personal communication, 25.08.2017

Georgios Kalampokas, *Project Coordinator, KEDHL – Public Benefit Corporation of the Municipality of Livadia*, personal communication, 24.08.2017

Dr. Dimitris Keridis, *Professor of International Politics, Panteion University of Athens; Director of the Navarino Network (public policy think-tank in Thessaloniki); Senior Research Associate, Karamanlis Foundation; Deputy Director of the Institute of International Relations in Athens*, personal communication, 20.10.2017

Margarita Kontomichali, *Team Leader- LGBTI Program Safe Refugee, SolidarityNow*, personal communication, 24.07.2017

Gerasimos Kouvaras, *General Director, ActionAid Hellas*, personal communication, 16.08.2017

Christina Krithari, *Secretary, Board of Directors of the Hellenic Theatre/Drama & Education Network, (TENet-Gr), implements the “it could be me – it could be you” project in collaboration with UNHCR Greece*, personal communication, 08.08.2017

Sotiria Kyriakopoulou, *Refugee and Migration Program Manager, ActionAid Hellas*, personal communication, 27.07.2017

Dr. Zinovia (Jenny) Lialiouti, *Historian, Post-doctoral Researcher, Centre for Modern Greek History - Academy of Athens*, personal communications, 10.10.2017

Kathleen Macdonell, *Consultant, Education Unites: From Camp to Campus Program*, personal communication, 13.11.2017

Dr. Helena Maragou, *Dean of the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences and Professor, Deree-The American College of Greece*, personal communication, 27.11.2017

Vasilena Mitsiadi, *Vice-President, Research Center – Tsitsanis Museum, Former Vice Mayor for Youth, Education, Culture and Sports at the Municipality of Trikala*, personal communication, 11.07.2017

Maria Nakasian, *Project Manager, METAdrasi – Action for Migration and Development*, personal communication, 15.11.2017

Ioanna Niaoti, *Journalist, ERT*, personal communication, 21.11.2017

Lefteris Papagiannakis, *Vice-Mayor for Migrants, Refugees and Municipal Decentralization, Municipality of the City of Athens*, personal communication, 22.08.2017

Kostis Papaioannou, *former S.G. of Transparency & Human Rights, former President of the National Commission on Human Rights, Educator*, personal communication, 06.10.2017

Dr. Tina Stavrinaki, *Racist Violence Recording Network, UNHCR; International and Human Rights expert*, personal communication, 30.08.2017

Eleni Takou, *Deputy Director and Head of Advocacy, HumanRights360*, personal communication, 05.10.2017

Dr. Rosa Vasilaki, *Research Fellow, ELIAMEP - Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy*, personal communication, 06.10.2017

*See [Workstream 2, Research Report](#) for a full list of personal communications with experts/interviewees.

About the Research

The aim of Workstream 1 was to map and analyze the phenomenon of Islamophobia in contemporary Greece, towards reconstructing the most significant narratives regarding Muslims and Islam, categorizing them, indicating their relative dominance in the Greek context, and explaining similarities and differences between narratives of Islamophobia apropos the ideas, policies and attitudes towards Muslims they entail. The performative definition of Islamophobia proposed by Sayyid (2014) and the Domination Hate Model of Intercultural Relations (Islamic Human Rights Commission 2016) both set anti-Muslim hatred in a wider context and provide tools for processing primary and discussing secondary sources to propose a categorical list of narratives of Islamophobia in Greece.

The aim of Workstream 2 was to identify, describe and explain effective counter-narratives to Islamophobia in Greece and their discursive content and forms, while assessing their relative prevalence within the specific context and presenting how they manifest interactions between internal and external counter-narratives.

Narratives of Islamophobia were informed by articles published in the Greek press, newspapers and websites, from 2013 to present, as well as several books on Islam. The sources of counter-narratives were over 30 expert interviews, website content and online campaigns, the press, educational and cross-cultural exchange program descriptions, social media initiatives, and both Greek and international literature.

[Workstream 1](#) and [Workstream 2](#) Research Reports can be accessed on the [Countering Islamophobia Kit](#) website or by directly reaching the authors, Dr. iur. Matthildi Chatzipanagiotou, LL.M. at mchatzipanagiotou@acg.edu and Mr. Iason Zarikos (Phd Candidate, Modern History) at iasonzar@gmail.com.

