

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON YOUTH (CCJ)

21 September 2021

English only

Statement by the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) on European Action Day Against Islamophobia

On this European Action Day Against Islamophobia, the Advisory Council on Youth reiterates the importance of fighting against all forms of racism and discrimination as part of the commitment to the European Convention on Human Rights and to a peaceful co-existence in a pluralistic society.

Islamophobia is a form of racism that denotes prejudice and discrimination of Muslims or those perceived to be Muslims, grounded in deterministic views of Islam and an essentialisation of a religious community. Anti-Muslim public discourse in Council of Europe member states constructs cultural differences between Muslims and the majority population as irreconcilable, which in turn fuels discrimination, hostility and violence.¹ Anti-Muslim discrimination manifests in various areas of society such as education, employment, vocational training, public services and political participation. It particularly affects young Muslims who are proactive and publicly visible. These discriminations are manifested in conduct that creates an “intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment”.² The Advisory Council on Youth expressed its concerns early in this year ([see Advisory Council statement of 10 March 2021](#)) on the normalisation and increase of structural Islamophobia across Europe.

Moreover, anti-Muslim discrimination can take the form of violent attacks against individuals, as well as damage to mosques and property owned by or associated with Muslims or those perceived to be Muslims.³ Islamophobia is also strongly manifested in the online space where there is a growing negative trend, as analysed by a recent Council of Europe consultation with Muslim organisations. This consultation, conducted by the Special Representative on antisemitic, anti-Muslim and other forms of religious intolerance and hate crimes, for which a number of national and European-wide Muslim youth organisations were consulted, points to strong concerns of anti-Muslim violence, death threats and conspiracy theories, underlining that public authorities are not doing enough to protect Muslims.⁴

A commitment to a peaceful coexistence in a pluralistic democratic society means recognising the detrimental consequences of reproducing hostile stereotypes about a religious group in national legislation and the public discourse. In the member states of the Council of Europe, our commitment to the values of democracy and human rights demands that legal, cultural and social principles of coexistence are given for all individuals regardless of their religion or ethnicity. The Advisory Council on Youth recognises the voice

¹ OHCHR Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief (2021). Report on Countering Islamophobia/Anti-Muslim Hatred to Eliminate Discrimination and Intolerance Based on Religion or Belief, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/HatredAndDiscrimination.aspx>

² ECRI General Policy Recommendation N°7 (revised) on national legislation to combat racism and racial discrimination - adopted on 13 December 2002 and revised on 7 December 2017

³ OSCE Hate Crime Reporting (2019), <https://hatecrime.osce.org/what-hate-crime/bias-against-muslims>

⁴ Council of Europe Special Representative on antisemitic, anti-Muslim and other forms of religious intolerance and hate crimes (2021). Online hate speech is a growing and dangerous trend. Initial results of a consultation of Muslim organisations. Working document, July 2021. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/antisemitic-anti-muslim-hatred-hate-crimes/-/online-hate-speech-is-a-growing-and-dangerous-trend>

of Muslim communities who are committed to the values of the Council of Europe, and especially the efforts of young Muslim organisations at national and international levels who actively fight for more inclusive and pluralistic societies. Through programmes funded by the European Youth Foundation, such as the recent ones of the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Students' Organisations (FEMYSO), young Muslims are empowered and empowered to act as human-rights activists and democratic citizens.

The opinions expressed in this statement are those of the Advisory Council on Youth and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Council of Europe or its member states.