



ADVISORY COUNCIL ON YOUTH

21 September 2020

English only

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. The Advisory Council commemorates and remembers all victims of Islamophobia, from the July 1995 Srebrenica genocide, the March 2019 Christchurch mosque shootings to the recent February 2020 Hanau attack. The Advisory Council also recognises the suffering, especially by women, of daily physical and verbal Islamophobic harassment, as well as the continuous institutionalisation of Islamophobia through new legislation and policies.

Islamophobia is a specific form of discrimination and must be tackled in all its aspects. **Muslim youth or those perceived to be Muslims suffer from stigmatisation and exclusion in all areas of life such as education, employment, vocational training, services and political participation.** They also are direct targets of racist violence and of online and offline hate speech. In a post-9/11 and migration crises era, Europe has been witnessing a spike in Islamophobic episodes. Hate crimes and racist attacks against Muslim communities have been reported in different European countries ranging from the United Kingdom to Greece. However, the majority of episodes are not reported to the authorities.

The Advisory Council would like to draw attention to the gendered aspect of Islamophobia. Muslim women and girls in Europe suffer intersectional discrimination based on different grounds: religion, gender, ethnicity. Intersectionality is a nexus of identities that renders certain individuals ideal targets. Indeed, **women are the targets of most Islamophobic acts** due to their dress and the idea that Muslim women are oppressed and must be liberated.

Gendered Islamophobia is:

- The dehumanisation and erosion of a Muslim woman's right to exist in the public space;
- The debating and discussion of Muslim women's choice of dress in national conversations without them being there, allowing an unfounded legitimacy to the regular citizen to judge, control and police Muslim women's dress;
- The aim of convincing Muslim women that their bodies do not belong to themselves, but are for others to liberate;
- The message that Muslim women are either oppressed, or complicit in their own oppression: but always in need of liberation.

Gendered islamophobia can have long-term consequences on young Muslim women. It systematically excludes them from many societal arenas, thereby preventing them from participating in and contributing to society. We call on member states to take this issue seriously, **condemn and punish discrimination when necessary, and actively support education for diversity and pluralism within educational systems** targeted at both students and teachers.

Furthermore, the Advisory Council on Youth remains a committed ally of Muslim youth movements in their quest to claim their narrative, fight for their civic rights and build intercultural and interreligious bridges, and especially recognises the special role of Muslim women in youth organisations. **The Advisory Council supports the demand of European Muslim youth when tackling structural manifestations of Islamophobia for the adoption of measures in key policy areas**, such as:

- Adopting or improving national policies against racism;
- Adopting guidelines to implement an intersectional approach to religious dress restrictions;
- Developing and promoting the harmonisation of data collection in areas of hate crime and equality, recognising anti-Muslim bias as a category;
- Assessing and acknowledging the discriminatory impact of counter-radicalisation and counter-terrorism measures and ensuring that counter-terrorism measures comply with fundamental rights safeguards.

Finally, **the Advisory Council on Youth acknowledges the power of non-formal education as an impactful tool that supports the empowerment of young European Muslims** by creating spaces where they can nurture and strengthen their Muslim and European identities, such as in the Council of Europe's European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest.

Read more here:

- [CoE European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance \(ECRI\) country monitoring reports](#)
- [Fundamental Rights Agency \(FRA\) EU-MIDIS II \(2017\). Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey, Muslims selected findings.](#)
- [European Commission. Combating Anti-Muslim Hatred.](#)
- [ODIHR hate crime against Muslims, country reports](#)
- [University of Leeds \(2018\). "Counter-Islamophobia Kit \(CIK\)"](#)
- [European Islamophobia Report \(2019\)](#)
- [ENAR \(2016\). "Forgotten Women: the impact of islamophobia on Muslim Women."](#)
- [ENAR \(2016\). "Racism and Discrimination in the context of migration in Europe, Shadow Report 2015-2016."](#)

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.