



**TACKLING ISLAMOPHOBIA IN CYPRUS
ENAR NATIONAL PROJECT
30 JUNE 2016 – 30 NOVEMBER 2016**

EUROPEAN NETWORK AGAINST RACISM

ENAR is the only pan-European anti-racism network that combines advocacy for racial equality and facilitating cooperation among civil society anti-racism actors in Europe. The organisation was set up in 1998 by grassroots activists on a mission to achieve legal changes at European level and make decisive progress towards racial equality in all EU Member States. Since then, ENAR has grown and achieved a great deal. For more information please visit www.enar-eu.org.

AEQUITAS

AEQUITAS is an NGO working with human rights education as a tool to promote human rights and non-discrimination. It implements educational projects in the form of seminars and training courses for a variety of audiences such as professionals, staff of competent authorities, young people, educators, migrants, minority groups and others to raise awareness and develop skills and attitudes on a variety of human rights and non-discrimination themes. Other activities includes lobbying and advocacy through strategy papers and related deliberations with competent authorities and through innovative mechanisms such as the creation of documentaries. AEQUITAS receives funding from the Erasums Plus programme of the European Commission, the Anna Lindh Foundation, the Open Society Foundations and the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe. It is governed by a board of seven members and has a supervisory board. It is a member of the European Network against Racism, the Anna Lindh Foundation and the Euro-Med Youth Platform. For more information visit www.aequitas-humanrights.org



PART 1: INTRODUCTION TO PROJECT

AEQUITAS was contracted by ENAR (The European Network against Racism) to support its 2016 work programme. The national project was funded by the OSF (Open Society Foundation). AEQUITAS opted to work on the field of Islamophobia through:

1. A study of the perceptions towards Muslims in Cyprus;
2. A study of the experiences of Muslims living in Cyprus;
3. An educational seminar bringing Muslims and non-Muslims together to discuss Islamophobia through a human rights lens;
4. A stakeholder's roundtable to discuss the findings of the surveys.

AEQUITAS thanks ENAR for all its support during this project.

PART 2: EDUCATIONAL SEMINAR

The educational seminar brought together Muslims and non-Muslims with the aim of providing a collaborative environment through which participants discussed their experiences, concerns and ideas regarding Islamophobia in Cyprus. This was done using human rights education methods and particularly activities from Council of Europe handbooks such as COMPASS, All Different All Equal and Bookmarks (No Hate Speech Movement). The overarching objective of the seminar was to develop the participants' knowledge, skills and attitudes in relation to Islamophobia in Cyprus so as to empower and inspire participants to take an active stance against it.



PART 3: ISLAMOPHOBIA IN CYPRUS: A PILOT STUDY

Introduction: Aims and objectives

This pilot study has been commissioned by ENAR in order to determine the issues pertaining to islamophobia and islamoprejudice in Cyprus. The focus of this study is two-fold: *(a)* To determine levels of islamophobia/islamoprejudice among the native population of Cyprus and *(b)* to recognise any levels of perceived or felt discrimination among the muslim population in Cyprus. This minority group is consisted mainly by migrants, asylum seekers, and recognised refugees living in Cyprus.

Background

In recent years, there has been a rise of populist parties and movements in the European Union (EU) which have explicitly anti-muslim agendas as part of their platform (e.g. PVV in the Netherlands, FPÖ in Austria, Golden Dawn in Greece, Pegida movement in Germany etc.) (ENAR, 2015; Imhoff & Recker, 2013). Moreover, there is a rise of wariness and suspicion against Muslims, especially after recent terrorist attacks in Europe (see Paris and Brussels attacks) and beyond (see gay club attack in Orlando, US). This has been linked to 'islamophobia', which can be defined as a fear of Islam, and particularly discrimination against individuals based on their religious beliefs (Doebler, 2015; ENAR, 2015).

Consequences of Islamophobia/Islamoprejudice

Consequently, and because of the discrimination emanating from religious differences, there is a number of impacts for individuals facing stereotypes, subtle and blatant discrimination and prejudice (e.g. verbal abuse, physical abuse etc.). Due to the lack of a European-wide or national monitoring systems, it is difficult to determine the scale of this physical abuse and violence (Lee, 2013). In spite that, there are recorded incidents of abuse of Muslims, in a number of countries, including the UK. These experiences of discrimination are related to perceived threat, subtle discrimination, and overt prejudice against both of Muslim women and men (Allen, 2013). Moreover, Laird et al. (2007) argue that there are health disparities and inequalities with regard to Muslim families in the UK. However, due to the lack of epidemiological data, specifically focusing on religious background, the health realities of Muslim individuals remain mostly unexplored.

The National Context

Of particular interest to this study is the situation in Cyprus vis-à-vis islamophobia. The Muslim population in Cyprus has been on the rise, in recent years¹. However, there is a considerable lack of research in that aspect and in the Cypriot context. Thus, the only data we can draw on in order to (partially) begin painting an indicative image of Islamophobia and its consequences in Cyprus emanate from unsolicited, anecdotal testimonials² from persons, members of the Muslim communities; from media and internet statements of native individuals, service providers, parties and organisations; and finally from a special Eurobarometer on discrimination (2015). The Special Eurobarometer has highlighted the fact that Cyprus is the second least comfortable country (after Bulgaria) in electing a head of state from a religious minority (42%). Further, respondents indicated that they are the least comfortable (23%) accepting a Muslim person (in comparison with all other religions) as a partner for their children. However, we need to stress here that the majority of the Greek Cypriot respondents has illustrated that they would be comfortable in having as a colleague a Muslim individual (63%). In conclusion, it is paramount to note that these contradicting data are not detailed enough; thus, further investigation of the matter is required.

Rationale

Taking into consideration the previous tenets of: *1) Rising Islamophobia in Europe, 2) the consequent impacts and inequalities due to Islamophobia, and 3) secondary data in Cyprus* we conclude that there is a lacuna in knowledge of Muslim populations in Cyprus vis-à-vis enacted and perceived islamophobia and discrimination.

Method – The surveys, questionnaires

The two different surveys were administered to 299 Greek Cypriots and 156 Muslim individuals. These questionnaires were devised based on a number of difference scales

¹ We mostly include individuals from immigrant communities. The native Turkish-Cypriot community's intergroup relations with Greek Cypriots are the outcome of a complicated matrix of variables, not only religion.

² Which makes the refuting of the experiences of these marginalised individuals easier.

created and tested in other countries in Europe and the world, in order to tap on constructs pertinent to perceived islamophobia, enacted islamophobia, experiences of discrimination, issues related to gender perception etc. Short qualitative questions were used in order to capture more deep understandings of the phenomenon explored. Further, demographic items have been used (e.g. gender, age, profession etc.). Sections of the surveys were based on the following previous research:

- Perceptions of Discrimination and Islamophobia: Voices from Muslim communities in the European Union (2006).
- Special Eurobarometer on discrimination (2015).
- Every and Perry (2012). The relationship between perceived religious discrimination and self-esteem for Muslim Australians.
- Kunst, Sam and Ulleberg (2012). Perceived islamophobia scale.
- Nadal et al. (2012). Subtle and overt forms of Islamophobia – Microaggressions towards Muslim Americans.
- Williams (2012). Measuring discrimination resource.

This investigation is considered as a pilot study. Would important findings arise from the data, we aspire to expand the investigation by taking a more elaborate research design approach (e.g. focus groups, individual interviews, validated questionnaires etc.) which will provide us with more in-depth, and comprehensive understandings of the topic.

Data analysis

These quantitative were analysed via the statistical software SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Scientists). Descriptive statistics and basic T-Test analyses were used. A simple thematic analysis of the brief qualitative aspects was also employed.

Results

Sample Characteristics:

We managed to reach 299 Greek Cypriots living in Cyprus. The Greek Cypriot cohort had 173 women (57.9%) and 126 men (42.1%). In terms of education 27.8% of Greek Cypriots taking part in the study had a secondary education degree, 45.5% had an undergraduate degree and 26.8% had a postgraduate degree. Of the 299 people taking part 40 (13.4%) were unemployed, 13 (4.3%) retired whilst the overwhelming majority were employed (82.3%). Finally, the majority were single (56.9%) and 40.8% in a committed relationship and 132 (44.1%) had children. The mean age of the participants was 37.6 ($SD= 14$) with a range of 16 - 80.

In addition, 159 Muslim individuals took part in the second part of the study concerning the perceptions of Muslims in Cyprus and with regard to Islamophobia. Of these 159 a plurality was of Palestinian origin (45.3%), 31.4% were Iraqi, 13.2% Syrians and the rest Lebanese, Egyptian and Jordanian. Unlike the Greek Cypriot cohort the majority were male (54.1%). The overwhelming majority of these were refugees (58.5%) or asylum seekers (33.3%) and a small minority (7.5%) migrants. In terms of employment, only 23.3% had a job whilst the overwhelming majority was unemployed (76.7%). Their mean age was 43.30 ($SD = 14.56$) and the range 18-76. Finally, the majority had children (64.8%).

THE GREEK CYPRIOTS

The analysis of the data provided us with some initial understandings in regards to Islamophobic beliefs and behaviours among Greek Cypriots. More specifically, frequencies of specific items from the surveys helped highlighting issues pertinent to the beliefs of Greek Cypriots, and the experiences of Muslims.

First, the results in regards to the subscales which are pertinent to Contact with Muslims, Attitudes in regards to Islam and Muslims; Attitudes in regards to Muslims and their connection with Cyprus; and Attitudes with regard to services and benefits for Muslims are presented. These results showcase a mixture of positives and negatives. For example, thankfully, the overwhelming majority of Greek Cypriots are against discrimination (70%) or deportation of Muslims (65%). However, a plurality is worried about a potential rise of the number of Muslims (43%) with 34% remaining neutral. In addition, almost half believe that Muslims are exploiting the benefits system (49%) and almost one third of the sample (31%) remains neutral. Also, a large minority (31%) does not feel safe among Muslims. In detail:

Contact with Muslims:

I avoid Muslims:

Rarely to Never (64.2%), Sometimes (20.4%), Often to Always (15.4%)

I am suspicious of Muslims:

Rarely to Never (48.5%), Sometimes (28.8%), Often to Always (22.8%)

I feel safe among Muslims:

Often to Always (46.5%), Sometimes (22.1%), Rarely to Never (31.4%)

Attitudes in regards to Islam and Muslims

Muslims are highly likely to be terrorists:

Disagree to Strongly Disagree (36.5%), Neutral (27.4%), Agree to Strongly Agree (36.1%)

Islam is a peaceful religion:

Disagree to Strongly Disagree (42.5%), Neutral (31.8%), Agree to Strongly Agree (25.7%)

Islam is a backward religion:

Disagree to Strongly Disagree (8.7%), Neutral (24.4%), Agree to Strongly Agree (66.9%)

Women in Islam are considered inferior to men:

Disagree to Strongly Disagree (6.7%), Neutral (9.7%), Agree to Strongly Agree (83.6%)

Attitudes in regards to Muslims and their connection with Cyprus:

Muslim women in Cyprus should be allowed to be veiled:

Disagree to Strongly Disagree (24.1%), Neutral (22.4%), Agree to Strongly Agree (53.2%)

Muslims are a positive part of Cypriot society:

Disagree to Strongly Disagree (25.4%), Neutral (41.5%), Agree to Strongly Agree (33.1%)

Ramadan should not be observed by Muslims in Cyprus:

Disagree to Strongly Disagree (64.9%), Neutral (23.4%), Agree to Strongly Agree (11.7%)

Muslims should be deported from Cyprus:

Disagree to Strongly Disagree (64.9%), Neutral (23.7%), Agree to Strongly Agree (11.3%)

Discrimination against Muslims is condemnable:

Disagree to Strongly Disagree (10%), Neutral (20.1%), Agree to Strongly Agree (69.9%)

I am concerned with the possibility of the rise in the number of Muslims in Cyprus: Disagree to Strongly Disagree (22.1%), Neutral (34.1%), Agree to Strongly Agree (43.4%)

Islam is a threat to the cultural values of Cyprus:

Disagree to Strongly Disagree (40.2%), Neutral (26.8%), Agree to Strongly Agree (33.1%)

Attitudes with regard to services and benefits for Muslims

Muslims are exploiting our hospitality:

Disagree to Strongly Disagree (41.4%), Neutral (26.1%), Agree to Strongly Agree (32.2%)

Muslims should have equal access to services as Greek Cypriots:

Disagree to Strongly Disagree (26.5%), Neutral (24.7%), Agree to Strongly Agree (48.8%)

Muslims receive more benefits than Greek Cypriots:

Disagree to Strongly Disagree (27.4%), Neutral (44.5%), Agree to Strongly Agree (28.1%)

Muslims are exploiting the benefits system:

Disagree to Strongly Disagree (19.4%), Neutral (31.4%), Agree to Strongly Agree (48.8%)

Reactions to vignettes

In the bus:

*Threatened (16.4%), Relaxed (8.4%), Disgusted (5%), Neutral (57.5%), Angry (5.7%), *Afraid (22.1%)**

In the airplane – men

*Threatened (12.7%), Relaxed (13.7%), *Afraid (23.4%)*, Disgusted (2.3%), Neutral (56.5%), Angry(4.3%)*

In the airplane – women

*Threatened (8.7%), *Relaxed (20.7%)*, *Afraid (14.7%)*, Disgusted (1.3%), Neutral (61.5%), Angry(3%)*

One-stop-shop - Family

*Threatened (1.7%), *Relaxed (23.4%)*, *Afraid (0.7%)*, Disgusted (4.7%), Neutral (69.2%), Angry (5%).*

Participants were presented with three different scenarios in regards to potential every-day interactions with Muslims (1. In the bus, 2a. In the airplane with Muslim men, 2b. In the airplane with Muslim women, 3. At the one-stop citizen shop with a Muslim family) and they were asked to express their feelings in each scenario. It is interesting to note here that the participants had neutral feelings in all the situations in their majority (56.5% bus; 56.5% airplane men; 61.5% airplane women; and 69.2% one-stop-shop family). However, a significant minority did state that they experience/would have experience negative feelings (43.5%). In specific, in the bus scenario, they stated that they were/would have felt afraid (22.1%), threatened (16.4%) or disgusted (5%); in the airplane(men) scenario that drops to 38.4%, in the airplane(women) to (24.7%) and in the one-stop-shop(family) situation only 7.1% had/would have had negative feelings.

Further research is needed as to explore why there are these differences between the scenarios. Are they related to gender perceptions, family concepts or is it something else?

Son relationship with a Muslim woman

Agree to Strongly Agree (27.1%), Neutral (30.8%), Disagree to Strongly Disagree (46.1%)

Daughter relationship with a Muslim man

Agree to Strongly Agree (23.4%), Neutral (25.8%), Disagree to Strongly Disagree (50.8%)

Participants disagreed or strongly disagreed in regards to the questions about their children's relationship with a Muslim person. Further analysis also indicated that there were statistically significant differences between the two questions. In order to determine that we have conducted a paired samples T-test. The mean score in the Son relationship with a Muslim woman question was 2.64* ($SD=1.3$), whereas the mean score in the Daughter relationship with a Muslim man was 2.45* ($SD=1.3$). The difference in the score between the son and the daughter question was found to be statistically significant using a paired-samples t -test, $t(289) = 5.35, p < 0.001$, indicating that participants were more inclined to be more agreeable with a son-Muslim woman relationship than with a daughter-Muslim man relationship.

*1 to 5. 1 stands for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree.

Further research is needed in order to untangle these nuanced particularities.

Have you ever witnessed discrimination and/or hate speech against a Muslim person?

Yes (35.5%), No (64.5%). Of that 35.5% (n=106), almost one third (n=31) of the incidents occurred on the street, 18 on the internet, 16 at work, and 15 at Public Services. Other places

where the participants witnessed islamophobic incidences included shops, schools (e.g. one girl was teased for wearing a head scarf), other public departments etc.

A worrying statistic is related with the willingness of participants to intervene when incidents like these occur. More specifically, 81% of the participants indicated that they did/would do nothing out of fear and bystander effect. Nevertheless, some participants indicated (even though, in very low numbers) that they have intervened or that they are willing to intervene in multiple ways which is hopeful. Needs further exploration.

THE MUSLIM INDIVIDUALS

The analysis of the data provided us with some initial understandings in regards to Muslim persons' beliefs about the Cypriot society and their experiences within Cypriot society. More specifically, frequencies of specific items from the surveys helped highlighting issues pertinent to the beliefs of Greek Cypriots, and the experiences of Muslims.

First, the results in regards to the subscales which are pertinent to What Muslims think are the beliefs of Greek Cypriots about Muslim individuals; the perceptions concerning Greek Cypriot media and their presentation of Muslims and Islam; the perceptions concerning Greek Cypriot politicians and their rhetoric around Muslims and Islam; and finally their experiences in regards to discrimination. In detail:

What do Muslims think are the beliefs of Greek Cypriots

Many Greek Cypriots avoid Muslims

Disagree to Strongly Disagree (21.4%), Neutral (37.1%), Agree to Strongly Agree (41.5%)

Greek Cypriots are suspicious of Muslims

Disagree to Strongly Disagree (33.3%), Neutral (28.9%), Agree to Strongly Agree (37.8%)

Many Greek Cypriots get nervous in the presence of Muslims

Disagree to Strongly Disagree (35.3%), Neutral (32.1%), Agree to Strongly Agree (32.7%)

Many Greek Cypriots are worried that the number of Muslims in Cyprus will rise

Disagree to Strongly Disagree (10.7%), Neutral (25.2%), Agree to Strongly Agree (54.1%)

Many Greek Cypriots consider Islam a threat to Cypriot society

Disagree to Strongly Disagree (37.1%), Neutral (24.5%), Agree to Strongly Agree (38.4%)

The perceptions concerning Greek Cypriot Media

Often Greek Cypriot media present Muslims as dangerous people

Disagree to Strongly Disagree (39.0%), Neutral (19.5%), Agree to Strongly Agree (41.5%)

In the media, Islam is often presented as a threat to Cypriot society

Disagree to Strongly Disagree (37.1%), Neutral (20.8%), Agree to Strongly Agree (42.1%)

Greek Cypriot media spread fear of Muslims and Islam

Disagree to Strongly Disagree (34.6%), Neutral (25.8%), Agree to Strongly Agree (39.6%)

The perceptions concerning Greek Cypriot Politicians

Often, Greek Cypriot politicians present Muslims as persons exploiting the benefits system

Disagree to Strongly Disagree (15.7%), Neutral (24.5%), Agree to Strongly Agree (59.8%)

Greek Cypriot politicians spread stereotypes of Muslims and Islam

Disagree to Strongly Disagree (20.8%), Neutral (35.8%), Agree to Strongly Agree (42.8%)

The experiences in regards to discrimination

The majority of the participants reported that they have not felt or rarely felt discrimination, especially concerning abuse by the police (94.3%), feelings of threat in a social context (90.5%), and been threatened or harassed (83.6%). However, a large minority did report incidents of discrimination, especially in the street (34% sometimes; 8.2% frequently); concerning people's acts as if they are better than the participants (23.9% sometimes and 23.3% frequently); and also, a large minority reported incidents with landlords and their refusal to rent to them (17% sometimes; 26.4% frequently which is the highest often to very often response). In detail:

Have you ever experienced open discrimination in the street?

Rarely to Never (57.8%), Sometimes (34.0%), Often to Very Often (8.2%)

Have you ever felt threatened in a social context?

Rarely to Never (90.5%), Sometimes (5.7%), Often to Very Often (3.8%)

Have you ever been treated with less courtesy than other people are?

Rarely to Never (58.4%), Sometimes (32.1%), Often to Very Often (9.4%)

Have you ever been treated with less respect than other people are?

Rarely to Never (59.8%), Sometimes (25.2%), Often to Very Often (18.1%)

Have you ever received poorer services than other people at stores (eg supermarket, kiosks, restaurants, coffee shops etc?)

Rarely to Never (73.6%), Sometimes (17.6%), Often to Very Often (8.8%)

Have you ever received poorer health services than other people (e.g. hospital, doctor's office etc?)

Rarely to Never (62.9%), Sometimes (20.1%), Often to Very Often (17%)

People act as if they think you are not smart

Rarely to Never (62.9%), Sometimes (20.1%), Often to Very Often (17%)

People act as if they are afraid of you

Rarely to Never (69.2%), Sometimes (22%), Often to Very Often (8.8%)

People act as if they think you are dishonest

Rarely to Never (62.9%), Sometimes (27%), Often to Very Often (10.1%)

People act as if they are better than you are

Rarely to Never (52.8%), Sometimes (23.9%), Often to Very Often (23.3%)

You have been called names and/or insulted

Rarely to Never (75.4%), Sometimes (20.1%), Often to Very Often (4.4%)

You have been threatened and/or harassed

Rarely to Never (83.6%), Sometimes (13.2%), Often to Very Often (3.2%)

Have you ever been unfairly stopped, searched, questioned, threatened or physically abused by the police?

Rarely to Never (94.3%), Sometimes (5.7%), Often to Very Often (0%)

Has a landlord ever refused to rent you his/her property?

Rarely to Never (56.6%), Sometimes (17%), Often to Very Often (26.4%)

Do you ever try to prepare for possible insults before leaving home?

Rarely to Never (83.1%), Sometimes (10.7%), Often to Very Often (5.3%)

Furthermore, a large minority (42.1%) reports at least one incident of discrimination related

to the concepts just explored, which is a worrying number.

Have you ever experienced discrimination as a Muslim?

Yes (42.1%), No (56.6%)

If yes, what form did it take? Insult

40.9% of those who said yes they were insulted

If yes, where did that happen? On the street

Of those experiencing discrimination 37 individuals stated the street, 33 public services

Would you ever report religious discrimination?

Yes (1.9%), I don't know (20.8%), No (77.4%)

When asked of specific reasons why they wouldn't report anything

The overwhelming majority indicated that they haven't faced any discrimination thus far. However, other participants have given us a glimpse of multiple reasons through very brief qualitative extracts. For example, a group of participants stated language as an obstacle: "I can't speak Greek" and "I cannot communicate with Cypriots"; also, "I didn't know how to call someone". Further, other participants felt that their actions would have been in vain: "Nothing will happen", "Nothing will change", "Wouldn't change anything. Finally, even though the survey is not a qualitative exploration a woman indicated that they expect better treatment, in regards to their psychological well-being:

"I didn't face a discriminatory incident. I am a woman and feel respect from both men and women. In the Asylum Service they behave like we are people who come to Cyprus because of the money but on the contrary we are looking for safety for us and our children which makes me feel like I am a beggar. We lost our men and children in Iraq and they don't care about our psychological state"

PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION

The majority of the participants have **positive** understandings in some of the key items and questions. For example, the overwhelming majority are **against discrimination**.

However, some **worrying signs**: There is a plurality among the Greek Cypriot respondents that believes that Muslims are more likely to be terrorists and in general high minorities have **some negative or discriminatory beliefs**. For example, and in relation to the vignettes, a high number of participants indicated that they have negative feelings. We need to explore that further and determine why is that the case.

Further, the overwhelming majority of Greek Cypriots indicated that they were **not willing** to **intervene** in situations of **blatant islamophobic discrimination**.

Muslims indicated in their overwhelming majority that they **have not experienced** abuse **security forces** or they rarely **felt threatened** in a social context and by the general public. However, a **very high number** of participants maintained that they experienced at least **one form of discrimination** (either subtle or blatant).

Further, participants from a Muslim background indicated that the **politicians**, and the media in a lesser extent, were sources of **discriminatory rhetoric**.

Finally, the *sample descriptives* showcased that the overwhelming majority of the Muslim population that took part *were either refugees or asylum seekers* and they were in their majority *unemployed*. Thus, prompting us to think further pathways of research and exploration of the experiences of these people.

Limitations

This is a pilot study. The researchers had limited time and resources to collect data and conduct a preliminary analysis.

The Muslim participants were overwhelmingly from a refugee/asylum seeker background which might have biased or confounded some of the findings.

INITIAL SUGGESTIONS – RECCOMENDATIONS

Further research is needed to explore in-depth the phenomena and investigate the topic in detail. Even though the researchers had a limited amount of time and resources we managed to over-recruit in both groups (299 and 153, having as an initial goal 100 and 40). This has provided us with *a large corpus of quantitative data* which we could analyse in a more advanced manner, if more resources and time are provided. This will give us further, *more elaborate understandings* which touch upon *psycho-social* and *wellbeing* constructs.

Moreover, research pathways should be exploring why some of these beliefs are prevalent (e.g. fear for Muslims/connection with terrorism), or why the majority of the participants from a Muslim background is unemployed and what are the implications of that? We *recommend different* and *multiple research designs* and approaches as to gain a more *holistic insight* of the topic with enhanced understandings. For example, in-depth narrative one-to-one interviews, focus groups, more validated surveys etc.

Nevertheless, even with this primary understanding we are in the position to make *tangible suggestions* for *interventions* or actions to take. Specifically, some of the beliefs might be an immediate effect of ignorance and unfamiliarity. Thus, actions within communities can focus on creating intercommunal, quality relations and interactions via means of community events, awareness campaigns etc.

In addition, and touching upon the *unwillingness* of the general public to intervene in situations of blatant discrimination -based on religious grounds in the context of this study- *collaborations* with *security forces, communities, local government, educational institutions and the state should be organised*. This will allow for empowerment of individuals from the general public in order to be able to *successfully intervene* in discriminatory incidents, mitigating any influences of the by-stander effect.

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PART 4: STAKEHOLDERS' ROUNDTABLE

The stakeholders' roundtable brought together members of civil society, competent authorities, political parties, the Ombudsperson, community groups and leaders. During this activity, participants discussed the findings of the perceptual surveys, the learning outcomes of the educational seminar and good practices from other countries. The participants also discussed potential measures that can be adopted for purposes of tackling Islamophobia in Cyprus.



Recommendations/Ideas put forth during the Stakeholders' Roundtable

Code(s) of Conduct for political parties/members of the executive and legislature:

Code(s) of Conduct to be developed for politicians/representatives and members of political parties/members of the executive/legislature on Islamophobia, its meaning and perils and the need to refrain from making public statements of an Islamophobic nature.

Media:

Training of journalists and media professionals on Islamophobia and enhance their capacity to present news/themes in a manner that is not Islamophobic (e.g. when presenting news regarding terrorists/terrorism)

Training of the general public and internet users on media literacy in the framework of Islamophobia.

National authorities and civil society to make a collaboration with IT companies/forum managers/group managers on social network sites to consider strategies for tackling Islamophobic comments on groups/forums/website commentary etc.

The regulatory framework for racist/xenophobic/Islamophobic media reporting/presenting should be enhanced and should incorporate the public television channel as well as private channels. This should occur through a balance of the freedom of expression and the freedom from discrimination.

Education:

Provisions of activities, seminars and trainings that seek to tackle Islamophobia within the formal and non-formal educational settings. Use of non-formal methodology and Council of Europe handbooks to ensure innovation and long-term impact.

EU directive based on Council of Europe for the implementation of a Guide management and report of racist behaviors and actions must be finalized and introduced in school environments. This guide is common directive for all EU members.

Religious Education in schools:

The public schools are based on the premise that this is a Greek Orthodox society. Pupils can opt not to attend mass or religious education classes but this has the risk of resulting in their stigmatization. This is an issue that needs to be addressed in light of the development of our society into a multi-cultural and multi-faith society.

National Holidays

Only holidays related to Greece, Cyprus and the Greek Orthodox Church are currently celebrated. A way for contributing to integration would be to have, for example, respective national holidays for employees, pupils and students who are Muslim.

Trade Unions

Trade Unions should have an enhanced role in relation to tackling discrimination-related issues such as Islamophobia within the workplace. There is no current mobilisation on such issues and this is something that should be considered by the unions themselves and supported by the State.

Other:

Collaboration of national authorities, political parties and civil society to develop a constructive and sustainable approach to the issue of Islamophobia through an array of interrelated activities in the realm of education, media, capacity building, legislation, campaigning and more.

For more information contact us at info@aequitas-humanrights.org or at +357 25 582333.

