

# Joint Statement against Gendered Islamophobia towards the European Institutions

## THE SCOPE OF THE STATEMENT

Currently, EU anti-discrimination legislation beyond the spheres of employment, occupational and vocational training only applies to sex and racial or ethnic origin. There is no horizontal approach covering all grounds of discrimination. To close the gaps in protection against any form of discrimination – including gendered islamophobia - we as members of the European Parliament encourage progress towards the required unanimity in the Council to adopt its 2008 proposal to implement equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

## BACKGROUND

In line with principles of dignity and equality inherent in all human beings, as declared in the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* (1969) and in the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union* (2000), the European Union rejects all form of racism and operates to dismantle obstacles to ensure that citizens have full access to rights and support of the victims of hate crimes.

The joint statement is developed in the framework of the project *MEET - More Equal Europe Together. Preventing islamophobia against women and girls* – co-financed by the programme Rights, equality and Citizenship (2014-2020). The action has the goals of empowering key actors at local level to build a culture of tolerance and respect; secondly of fostering a positive narrative of Muslim girls and women targeting youth and young leaders.

## FINDINGS

We the undersigned believe that Muslim women and girls are extremely vulnerable to different types of discrimination due to intersectional discrimination based on different grounds: religion, gender, and ethnicity. This is even more so for those Muslim women who are more visible in their appearance, particularly those who wear the headscarf.

Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) research indicates that that Muslim women are more likely to suffer discrimination and harassment in particular if wearing religious symbols: more than one third of women interviewed wearing a headscarf or niqab experienced harassment because of their identity.

The discrimination suffered by Muslim women develops in a broader context of gender inequality in Europe where women are still underrepresented in media, in policymaking, in the workforce and in senior public positions. The qualitative survey and analysis by EU-funded project **MEET More Equal Europe Together**, implemented between 2019 and 2020 in 6 European countries: Italy,

France, Belgium, Hungary, Poland and Bulgaria, identified these key challenges that must be tackled by policy-makers:

- Widespread discrimination against Muslim women, especially when they wear the headscarf, in the public sphere in general (school and university environments, access to certain professions and access to work in general, obtaining a property rental contract, offenses in public places).
- A decisive role of the media in the proliferation of hate speech and fake news, and therefore, the need for a positive change in this area, towards more respectful and correct communication.
- In some countries, political messaging that feeds hatred towards Muslim communities and that facilitates the false overlap between Muslim people and migrants, thus endorsing the equation: Muslims are foreigners who want to invade our country and distort our culture.
- A deficit in education systems, which do not provide knowledge of Islam. Recognising the important role of the education system in shaping a tolerant attitude, knowledge and culture of diversity in a given society, spreading information on Islam and positive contribution in science, history and politics could help to limit confrontations between students and to promote diversity.

## CALL TO ACTION

On a cross-party basis the European Parliament must take the lead in countering this specific form of racism which affects Muslim women and girls. At current, there is no horizontal approach covering all grounds of discrimination; this results in a lack of legislation to protect this group.

We the undersigned recognize the importance of the *EU-anti racism action plan 2020-2025: a union of Equality* adopted by the European Commission in September 2020 as a step forward in tackling racism by strengthening synergies among CSOs and European institutions.

We, the undersigned, call upon our colleagues across all European Institutions to acknowledge this current state of affairs and make a commitment to strengthen the EU legal framework in order to tackle this long-standing issue, the gendered islamophobia.

## Endorsements from the members of the EU Parliament

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The statement has been designed in the framework of the project MEET - More Equal Europe Together coordinated by Fondazione L'Albero della Vita, co-financed by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme.

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