
EUROPEAN
ISLAMOPHOBIA
REPORT
2016



ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ (Eds)

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ISBN: 978-975-2459-00-7

Cover and Layout: Erkan Söğüt

Printed in Turkey, İstanbul by Turkuvaz Haberleşme ve Yayıncılık A.Ş., 2017

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THE STATE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN EUROPE

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ

This is the second edition of the annual *European Islamophobia Report (EIR)* which was presented for the first time in 2015. New countries are included in this year's *EIR*; while 25 countries were covered in 2015, the report for 2016 includes 27 country reports. *EIR 2016* is the result of 31 prominent scholars who specialise in different fields such as racism, gender and Islamophobia Studies. In the years to come we will attempt to include more countries in our report. Our final aim is to cover and monitor the developments of Islamophobia in all European countries.

Islamophobia has become a real danger to the foundations of democratic order and the values of the European Union. It has also become the main challenge to the social peace and coexistence of different cultures, religions and ethnicities in Europe. The country reports of *EIR 2016*, which cover almost all the European continent from Russia to Portugal and from Greece to Latvia, clearly show that the level of Islamophobia in fields such as education, employment, media, politics, the justice system and the Internet is on the rise. Since the publication of the last report there is little improvement. On the contrary, one can see from the country reports that the state of democracy and human rights in Europe is deteriorating. Islamophobia has become more real especially in the everyday lives of Muslims in Europe. It has surpassed the stage of being a rhetorical animosity and has become a physical animosity that Muslims feel in everyday life be it at school, the workplace, the mosque, transportation or simply on the street.

The refugee movement and the turmoil it has created in Europe, the unprecedented rise of far right parties all across the continent and the UK's Brexit decision, which took many by surprise, have revealed the importance and relevance of this report, which covers incidents and developments in 2016. The short-term political significance of Islamophobia is as much relevant as Islamophobia's structural dimension. As mentioned before, small successes can be witnessed in some European countries yet great challenges lie ahead for deepening the values of human rights and freedom of religion in Europe.

The Rise of Islamophobia

As a survey conducted by the Chatham House Europe Programme shows, public opposition to any further migration from predominantly Muslim states is by no means confined to Trump's administration (implementation of the 'Muslim-Ban'). Respondents in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Spain and the UK were presented with the statement 'All further migration from mainly Muslim countries should be stopped'. As the report reveals, the majorities in all but two of the ten states agreed to this statement, ranging from 71% in Poland, 65% in Austria, 53% in Germany and 51% in Italy to 47% in the United Kingdom and 41% in Spain. In no country did the percentage that disagreed surpass 32%.¹

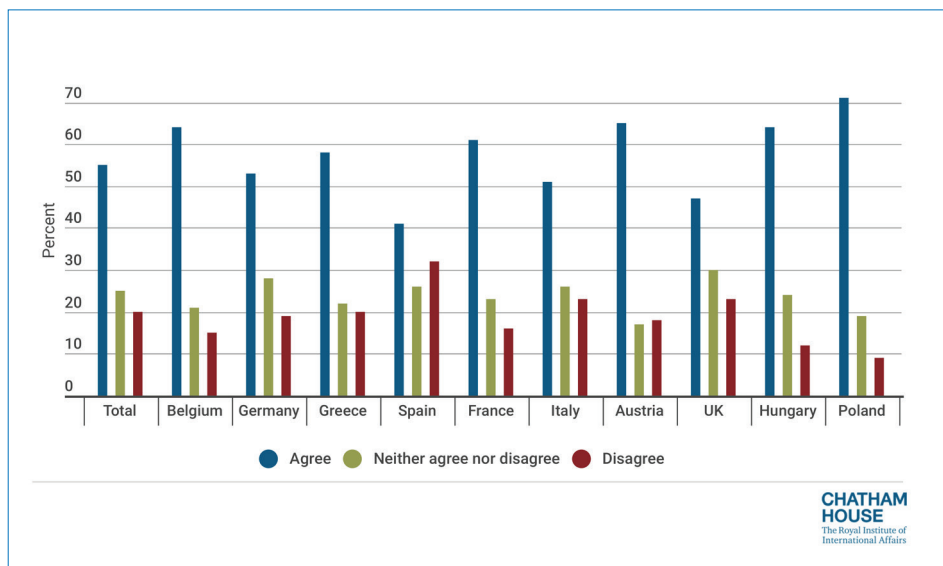


Figure 1: Public opposition to any further migration from predominantly Muslim states in Europe.²

The findings of this report go hand in hand with similar surveys on this topic. The Ipsos Perils of Perception Survey 2016 found that the current and the future Muslim population in Europe are enormously overestimated in most countries. Out of the list of all 20 countries where respondents overestimated the Muslim population by more than 10%, 12 are European, while the USA and Canada are among the remaining 8 countries. When asked "Now thinking about 2020, out of every 100 people, about how many do you think will be Muslim?", the top 20 countries where proponents overestimated the Muslim population again were in majority European (11). The average guess in France is that 40% of

1. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/expert/comment/what-do-europeans-think-about-muslim-immigration#sthash.O6J7kQrj.dpuf>

2. Chatham House, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/expert/comment/what-do-europeans-think-about-muslim-immigration>

the population will be Muslim in 2020 when the actual projection is 8.3%. Italy comes third with 26% overestimation, and Belgium and Germany fourth with 24% overestimation.³

Connecting this to a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, we can suggest that this overestimation is connected to unfavourable views regarding Muslims. The report states,

“Opinions of Muslims vary considerably across Europe. Half or more in Hungary, Italy, Poland, Greece and Spain have a very or somewhat unfavorable view of Muslims. And in Italy (36%), Hungary (35%) and Greece (32%), roughly a third hold very unfavorable opinions. Majorities in the other nations surveyed express positive attitudes about Muslims. Nonetheless, at least a quarter in each country have negative views of Muslims.”⁴

These numbers are not shocking if we look at the incidents of Islamophobia and its pervasiveness in power structure across Europe. Muslims are seen as the enemy ‘within’. There is wide consent in Western societies to Muslims not being seen as equal citizens. Othering and differential treatment may also overlap with the dehumanization of Muslims. Thus, physical attacks and political restrictions can often be carried out and even defended in an atmosphere of wide distrust and enmity. Islamophobia is by no means confined to the working poor or the middle class, who have been misinformed about Islam and Muslims. It is especially true for the so-called educated elite. Discriminating policies like the ban of the hijab for certain professions, the ban of the niqab in public, bans of minarets and other laws restricting Muslim’s freedom of religion speak volumes. If politicians can take such decisions and the media, along with large parts of society, accept them, why should we wonder about the strong opposition to immigration of Muslim people in Europe?

Hence, these numbers reveal the necessity of the *EIR*, which looks at the challenge of Islamophobia from a qualitative and not a quantitative research perspective. Its aim is to document and analyse trends in the spread of Islamophobia in various European nation states. There cannot be a claim of full comprehensiveness, since European nation states by majority still lack data collection. Hence, a central recommendation of the *EIR* is that Islamophobia or anti-Muslim hate crime should be included as a category in European nation states’ statistics – a development that has not occurred as of yet. The *EIR*’s primary contribution is to reveal the tendencies of Islamophobia and to give representative examples of its overall unfolding in the investigated states.

3. <https://www.ipsos-mori.com/Assets/Docs/Polls/ipsos-mori-perils-of-perception-charts-2016.pdf>

4. <http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/07/Pew-Research-Center-EU-Refugees-and-National-Identity-Report-FINAL-July-11-2016.pdf>

Recognition of Islamophobia

There are various definitions of Islamophobia. However, the definition of Islamophobia used by the *EIR*, as defined by its editors, is as follows,

“When talking about Islamophobia, we mean anti-Muslim racism. As Anti-Semitism Studies has shown, the etymological components of a word do not necessarily point to its complete meaning, nor how it is used. Such is also the case with Islamophobia Studies. Islamophobia has become a well-known term used in academia as much as in the public sphere. Criticism of Muslims or of the Islamic religion is not necessarily Islamophobic. Islamophobia is about a dominant group of people aiming at seizing, stabilising and widening their power by means of defining a scapegoat – real or invented – and excluding this scapegoat from the resources/rights/definition of a constructed ‘we’. Islamophobia operates by constructing a static ‘Muslim’ identity, which is attributed in negative terms and generalised for all Muslims. At the same time, Islamophobic images are fluid and vary in different contexts, because Islamophobia tells us more about the Islamophobe than it tells us about the Muslims/Islam”.⁵

We think that with this definition, we clearly address many of the suspicions, which are put against the term as such. As a matter of fact, while supranational institutions such as the OSCE embrace the terminology Anti-Semitism, the OSCE still refuses to use Islamophobia, which we see as part of the problem. Again, we recommend that Islamophobia/anti-Muslim Racism or anti-Muslim hate crime should be included in the collection of “equality data” in all European states. Institutions such as the OSCE need to establish solid monitoring and recording mechanisms for discrimination, hate crime and hate speech towards Muslims. In order to have reliable data, it has to be segregated by bias/category and also segregated by gender. This is even more problematic in countries that do not allow collection of data on religion or race. This seemingly egalitarian approach in reality hides the discrimination of Muslims. Also, response mechanisms seem to be unclear and not adequately used. When there is an incident of discrimination/hate crime/hate speech, there are different response mechanisms available, yet, none of these are familiar to the vast majority of Muslim citizens of European countries. Thus, we recommend that response mechanisms should be made more available, accessible and clear. Last but not least, an empowerment of the Muslim community is needed to strengthen critical citizenship and help European states deepen their democracies.

5. Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2015*, Istanbul, SETA, 2016, p.7.

Policy Recommendations for European Countries

The authors of every respective national report have suggested specific recommendations regarding the country they have covered. The following list of recommendations serves to underscore some of these recommendations and to add some additional suggestions on the supranational level.

We think it is important for civil society to understand that Islamophobia is a problem of institutional racism. The illusion that Europe is a post-racial society prevents large parts of European societies from recognising the severe challenge of Islamophobia to local societies. The focus has to shift from Muslims' actions to those of European societies. Racism, including Islamophobia, tells us more about the racists than about their imagined scapegoat or their victims. Hence, Islamophobia reveals aspects of Europe and the internal problems European societies continue to face. A recognition and a critical consciousness of this societal disease is of utmost importance to be able to create more just societies in Europe. At the same time, Muslims must be allowed to enjoy their spaces of freedom like other dominant religious and political groups in European societies without being securitised or criminalised. The securitisation of Islam, especially policies countering violent extremism and their impact on the freedom of religion of belief for Muslims, and even freedom of movement or free assembly have to be challenged by all democratic forces in Europe. Communities must be consulted and human rights frameworks must be respected. National security is not among the criteria that should permit the limitation of freedom of religion or belief.

We especially urge politicians to speak out against Islamophobia as one of the most pressing forms of racism in our days. Europe needs more courageous politicians who do not only challenge the politics of right-wing populist parties, but also challenge institutionalised forms of racism targeting Muslims in the fields of employment, education, state bureaucracy, and media. We also call for journalists and editors to challenge Islamophobic reporting in their news media and give space to more balanced views. Generally, the issue of religious literacy is a huge problem that does not only concern media but also the police, prosecutors and civil servants. We see that people simply lack basic knowledge on Islam and Muslims' practices. We see a need for the introduction of more comparative religion courses, or religious teaching, in a formal and informal educational setting.

We see that Muslim women are among the most vulnerable direct victims of Islamophobia. ENAR has conducted a report on the impact of Islamophobia on Muslim women and presented 37 recommendations, which we can only underscore given the findings of our report.⁶ Women who are visibly Muslim are socially ostracised in many places. The combination of internal community prob-

6. http://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/forgottenwomenpublication_lr_final_with_latest_corrections.pdf

lems, discrimination (education and employment) and hate crimes against Muslim women (data shows that it is 70% more likely for a muslim woman to be attacked in the street) are leaving their horrible mark on Muslim women. Hence, the protection and the empowerment of Muslim women have to be on the central agenda of states and NGOs. The ruling of the European Court of Justice regarding Esmâ Bougnaoui's dismissal by a French company for wearing a hijab when dealing with clients as unlawful discrimination is an important step towards equality and an anti-discriminatory society.⁷ At the same time, the case of Belgian Samira Achbita vs. Belgium, where it was argued that a dismissal due to the headscarf would be permissible against the backdrop of a general prohibition of all outward signs of political, philosophical and religious beliefs exhibited by employees in the workplace, is worrying and challenges the reality of a diverse Europe.⁸

7. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/14/world/europe/france-head-scarf-court.html?_r=0

8. <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=179082&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=678370>

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
NETHERLANDS
NATIONAL REPORT 2016

INEKE VAN DER VALK

The Author

Dr Ineke van der Valk (Political Sciences, University of Amsterdam) specialises in the study of racism, Islamophobia, extremism, (de)radicalisation, ethnic relations and diversity in multicultural societies, and the history of immigrants in the Netherlands. She has published numerous articles and books on these issues. She holds degrees in Educational Studies and Ethnic Studies and a PhD in Discourse Studies from the University of Amsterdam. She obtained her doctorate on the interface between social sciences and discourse analysis with a comparative study of the perception of ethnic issues in the political discourse of the Netherlands and France, paying special attention to the extreme right. She participated in a joint research project of the University of Vienna and the University of Amsterdam on racism in European countries. She was a community worker and human rights activist in the 70s and 80s and worked as a policy advisor for institutions, municipalities and NGOs. Van der Valk currently works on Islamophobia and manages the project Monitor Islamophobia in the Netherlands at the University of Amsterdam. Her book '*Islamofobie en discriminatie*' (Amsterdam University Press, 2012) was translated into English, French, German and Italian. Her last publications include *Monitor Moslim Discriminatie, derde rapportage*, University of Amsterdam 2017; *Dutch Islamophobia* (LIT-Verlag 2015); and 'Racism, a Complex Human Rights Issue', in B. Weston & A. Gear (eds.) *Human Rights in the World Community: Issues and Action*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.

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To cite this report: Ineke van der Valk (2017): *Islamophobia in the Netherlands. National Report 2016*, in: Enes Bayraktli & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2016*, Istanbul, SETA, 2017.

Executive Summary

This report discusses Islamophobia in the Netherlands in 2016. Discriminatory aggression against Muslims has continued to be a hot topic. Islamophobic incidents occurred in particular at 49 mosques and at reception centres for asylum seekers. Periodical reports that were issued in 2016 by the anti-discrimination provisions show an increase in reports of anti-Muslim discrimination by 45 tot 100%.

The PVV, the parliamentary party that politically organises Islamophobia, has become even more isolated at the level of mainstream Dutch politics after Geert Wilders was found guilty of defaming a group and inciting racial discrimination for leading a chant calling for 'fewer, fewer' Moroccans. For the first time an arson attempt against a mosque was considered a terrorist act. The perpetrators have been condemned to several years of imprisonment. Another important development is the growth of right-wing extremist groups and their campaigns against 'Islamization'.

The police services have continued to move towards a better system of registration of discrimination cases. For the first time the national police together with anti-discrimination institutes published a common report with data on reported experiences of different forms of discrimination.

The government gradually develops more elaborate policies and measures to increase tolerance and counter discrimination based on skin colour, origin and religion. The European ECRI however estimates that more specific policies for different groups and different fields are still lacking and that too much emphasis is placed on local policies instead of a national approach.

More and more stakeholders have joined force to counter Islamophobia. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) counter Islamophobia by creating hotlines and notification sites, campaigning against Islamophobia, carrying out research, and presenting data. Islamophobia is also increasingly becoming a focus of attention in politics and social research.

Samenvatting

Dit rapport bespreekt de ontwikkelingen in 2016 rond het verschijnsel islamofobie, als vorm van racisme in Nederland. Incidenten vonden met name plaats bij 49 moskeeën en rond de opvang van asielzoekers. Een groot aantal moskeeën ontvingen (vaak dezelfde) dreigbrieven. In Enschede vond in het voorjaar een aanslag met molotovcocktails plaats op een moskee. Voor het eerst werd een dergelijke aanslag aangemerkt als een daad verricht met terroristisch oogmerk en de daders zijn zwaar bestraft. Publicaties die in 2016 verschenen over discriminatie ervaringen in 2015 laten het volgende beeld zien. Het aantal gerapporteerde ervaringen van moslimdiscriminatie steeg. Antidiscriminatiebureaus rapporteerden een stijging van 45%. Bij de politie was sprake van een verdubbeling vergeleken met het aantal meldingen van een jaar daarvoor. Ook bij de meldpunten voor internetdiscriminatie was sprake van een verdubbeling tot 472 meldingen. Extreemrechtse en anti-islam groepen maakten in de afgelopen periode een opmerkelijke groei door. Wilders werd op 9 december veroordeeld wegens groepsbelediging en het aanzetten tot discriminatie vanwege zijn 'minder, minder' uitspraak in de campagne voor de gemeenteraadsverkiezingen. Daarmee heeft de rechtbank een duidelijke grens getrokken tussen de vrijheid van meningsuiting en het recht om te worden gevrijwaard van discriminatie. Steeds meer belanghebbenden zetten zich in om islamofobie als een vorm van racisme in het kader van een bredere antiracismestrijd tegen te gaan. Maatschappelijke organisaties hebben meldpunten in het leven geroepen, voeren campagnes tegen islamofobie, doen onderzoek naar en verschaffen informatie over het verschijnsel. De Nederlandse overheid treedt geleidelijk steeds actiever op tegen van moslimdiscriminatie en discriminatie in het algemeen, hoewel ECRI van mening is dat verdere intensivering en een meer op deelgroepen en deelproblemen gericht landelijk beleid nog teveel ontbreekt. Moslimdiscriminatie is in toenemende mate onderwerp van onderzoek.

Introduction¹

The Netherlands has a population of around 17 million, of which 900,000 are Muslims or of Muslim origin. The main groups are immigrants from Morocco and Turkey and their descendants, as well as refugees from the Middle East; 88% of Dutch people with a Turkish background and 93% of Dutch people with a Moroccan background consider themselves Muslims. Concerning the number of Muslims, the Netherlands occupies the sixth place in Western Europe after France, Germany, the UK, Italy and Spain. Dutch Muslims experience a relatively high degree of discrimination. Since the second half of the last century, Muslims have established around 450 mosques and centres of prayer in the Netherlands.

In 2016, many Dutch citizens experienced an increase in social differences such as differences between Muslims and non-Muslims (73%), indigenous Dutch people and immigrants (70%), rich and poor (71%); these citizens² these developments are a strong cause of concern in the country. Social differences are not unchangeable, but are historically and socially determined. Sometimes they fade away or alternatively increase in relevance, depending on societal conditions and political developments. An example is the difference between Muslims and non-Muslims that has become increasingly relevant since the beginning of the present century. This is expressed in prejudices but also in less social and political confidence in (the policies of) the government and the EU, especially with regard to diversity issues. A recent survey has shown that one in ten citizens is in favour of the unequal treatment of Muslims;³ while 73% is of the opinion that Muslims and ethnic minorities in general should adapt to the Dutch way of living (an increase of 6% compared to 2010). It is remarkable that voters of left-wing parties also agree with this statement. Only 55% of Dutch citizens disagree with the statement that all mosques should be closed down, 21% were neutral, and 21% of citizens want them to be closed down. Meanwhile, 48% were in favour of an interdiction on wearing a headscarf in public functions and 85% want a prohibition of face-covering attire in public functions. Social differences may result in wider gaps between groups and people. The Dutch Minister Edith Schippers of the liberal party VVD discussed this in a lecture in the fall of 2016. She argued that polarisation as such is not harmful if people continue to meet and engage in discussion with each other. It may be harmful and lead to parallel, segregated worlds if encounters and discussions are lacking. The paradox of her lecture was that in discussing the present-day problems of diverse societies she spoke about ‘cultures’

1. Research for this report was carried out in the context of the project “Monitor Islamophobia”.

2. I&O Research, “Politieke peiling I&O Research,” *ioresearch.nl*, (September 2016), retrieved January 16, 2017, from <http://www.ioresearch.nl/Portals/0/1%26O%20Research%20politieke%20peiling%20september%202016%20v3.pdf>. In reality, social differences in the Netherlands are less prominent compared to those in many other European countries.

3. IPSOS, “NOS Prinsjesdagonderzoek2016,” *ipsos-nederland.nl*, (2016), retrieved January 16, 2017, from http://www.ipsos-nederland.nl/uploads/documenten/16065690_Ipsos_rap_v.1.0.pdf.

even ‘clashing cultures’ and ‘our culture’ that is much better ‘than all others I know of.’ Without explicitly mentioning it, she obviously juxtaposed Western culture and Islamic culture as if these are homogenous, fixed entities that lack internal variation and dynamic development, and do not mutually influence each other. She thus contributed to the creation of wider gaps herself.

The following report is about Islamophobia and its manifestations in the Netherlands in 2016. Discriminatory aggression and violence against Muslims continued to be a hot topic. Other issues that were at the heart of the public debate on discrimination in 2016 were ethnic profiling by the police, labour market discrimination, the arrival of large numbers of refugees and the racist character of the folkloric figure of Black Pete.⁴

It should be pointed out, however, that data on 2016 from anti-discrimination agencies and official institutions such as the police, the public prosecutor and the Netherlands Institute of Human Rights will not be published until mid-2017 and will thus be reported in the *European Islamophobia Report* of next year.

Significant Incidents and Developments

The following important developments have stood out in 2016. First, on 9 December, Geert Wilders, founder and only member of populist party PVV, was found guilty of defaming a group and inciting racial discrimination for leading a chant calling for ‘fewer Moroccans’ in the Netherlands. He was found not guilty of the charge of inciting racial hatred in mid-March 2014 at a meeting concerning the municipal elections in The Hague. A punishment was not imposed because the court considered the conviction of defaming a group and inciting racial discrimination as sufficient punishment for a politician and democratically elected lawmaker. Wilders asked his followers if they wanted more or fewer Moroccans in the city. The crowd shouted “fewer, fewer, fewer” and Wilders answered “we shall arrange that”. After almost 6,500 official complaints were made to the police, amongst others by local authorities, Wilders was prosecuted. Although Geert Wilders was not specifically accused or convicted of Muslim discrimination, this conviction by the Court of Amsterdam is among the most important developments related to Islamophobia. As a matter of fact Wilders is the main political actor organising and promoting Islamophobia and racial discrimination in the Netherlands and abroad. He has sought to advance a conspirational anti-Muslim agenda for many years. The condemnation is also of major importance because the judges have now set clear limits to the freedom of speech, which he has abused for many times. The court carefully investigated the event that occurred at the election meeting and its

4. Black Pete is imagined to be a Moorish servant of the white bishop Saint Nicolas who gives presents in particular to children in annual festivities in December the 5th. Black Pete is criticized of having a racist appearance.

context and discovered that Wilders had orchestrated it on purpose. Reacting to the verdict, Wilders showed his disrespect for the judges and the constitutional system with its separation of powers. He made it clear that the verdict will not stop him from repeating his words. His lawyer will appeal. The judges in return called Wilders' behaviour unworthy of a politician.

A second major development has been the fact that for the first time an arson attempt against a mosque in Enschede in February was considered a terrorist act. Following the claim of the public prosecutor, the five perpetrators of an arson attack against a mosque were condemned to several years of imprisonment for committing a terrorist act.

Another important development is the growth of right-wing extremist groups and their campaigns against 'Islamization'. Mainstream media programmes have occasionally given the leaders of these movements the opportunity to spread their Islamophobic discourse.

Since 2009, every municipality in the Netherlands has been under obligation to offer its citizens a provision against discrimination. The reports about complaints of discrimination received in 2015 by anti-discrimination providers such as regional offices and the national police services were published in 2016. (see table 1) The anti-discrimination offices received in total 240 reports of discrimination against Muslims. This is 5% of all complaints received and an increase of 45% compared to the number of reports received in the previous year. The offices in Amsterdam and The Hague in particular show a high number of reports compared to other cities and regions.

The National Police Services adopted a new policy formulated in the document titled 'The Strength of Diversity' that contains a programme for diversity policies in the police services and improvement of existing anti-discrimination policies. The four main focuses are a better connection with civil society; an inclusive working culture; better antidiscrimination policies; and a diverse workforce. In addition, by taking a variety of measures and providing for training facilities, police services at the work floor level are subject to awareness-raising projects and urged to improve their approach in cases of discrimination that are reported to their services. The police services have continued to improve the registration system. Moreover, from 2016 onwards, police data are reported in collaboration with antidiscrimination provisions by the organisation Art1.⁵ The latest data from this common report show an increase in Muslim discrimination in 2015. Both the reports on Muslim discrimination made by victims to the police and the reports that were received by notification bureaus regarding Internet discrimination doubled compared to the previous year. The police received 206 reports on Muslim discrimination in 2014 and 439 in 2015. This was 9% of all discrimination reports received by the national police services.

5. Saskia van Bon/Ilse Mink, "Discriminatiecijfers in 2015," *politie.nl*, (2016), retrieved January 16, 2017, from <https://www.politie.nl/binaries/content/assets/politie/nieuws/2016/00-km/np-rapport-discriminatiecijfers-2015.pdf>.

There continues to be a huge gap between the discrimination experienced, as it is reported in representative surveys, on the one hand, and on the other, the number of complaints and reports to the police and anti-discrimination agencies.⁶ While surveys show high numbers, the number of reports to official institutions is generally low. It is estimated that only one of eight experiences of discrimination (on all grounds) is reported to the police or a notification bureau. Therefore, the National Police Services investigated the reasons Muslims are reluctant to report the discriminatory behaviour that they experience to the police.⁷ There appeared to be a close correlation with the reluctance to report felt by other groups whose members are victims of discrimination. The most important reasons for not reporting to the police are that the victims do not expect any results from reporting because discrimination is difficult to prove, police officers discourage them to report, and victims themselves take other initiatives to counter discrimination such as engaging in dialogue. Moreover reporting is time-consuming. In addition, it is often hurtful for victims to be confronted again with these experiences or victims are reluctant because they want to avoid escalation. Sometimes victims do not trust the police. They find the police services lack neutrality or are even discriminatory themselves. Moreover, they do not want to appear vulnerable when confronted by this powerful institution. They fear negative consequences such as losing their job or registration of their private data.

	2014	2015
Police services	206	439
Anti-discrimination bureaus	165	240
Total	371	679

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Aggression against mosques

Thirty-five mosques witnessed cases of discriminatory aggression in 2016.⁹ Certain acts of aggression that stand out are discussed below.

In February 2016, a large number of Moroccan mosques in the Netherlands received a leaflet with the picture of an eagle on a swastika and the text: ‘To all Islamic

6. See e.g. Iris Andriessen/ Henk Fernee/ Karin Wittebrood, *Ervaren discriminatie in Nederland* (Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2014). Available from: https://www.scp.nl/Publicaties/Alle_publicaties/Publicaties_2014/Ervaren_discriminatie_in_Nederland (retrieved December 18, 2016).

7. Arnoud Ens, *Discriminatie melden bij de politie?* (Den Haag: Nationale Politie, 2016). Available from: http://www.nikthemadag.nl/doc/69/NIK_69-7.pdf (retrieved December 18, 2016).

8. *Van Bon & Mink 2016*

9. Sources on attacks against mosques are from reports to the author by Muslim organisations and press articles. Links to original press reports may be found on the website of Republiek Allochtonie <http://www.republiekallochtonie.nl/update-van-lijst-met-geweldsincidenten-gericht-tegen-moskeeen> See also I. van der Valk, *Monitor Moslim Discriminatie*, University of Amsterdam, 2017.

houses of prayer, expect an important visitor!! Pigs'. In addition, it is stated that Islam is a false, devilish religion (see picture below).

28 February, Enschede. An arson attempt takes place in a mosque during the time of prayer. Around thirty people, including women and children were in the mosque at the time of the attack. Worshippers succeeded in extinguishing the fire.



Figure 1: Moroccan mosques in the Netherlands received a leaflet with the picture of an eagle on a swastika and Islamophobic insults.

Five men were arrested and accused of an attack with a terrorist aim. In November 2016, four of them were convicted in a court of law to four years' detention, one of which conditional. Only one person who spoke in court and showed remorse was sentenced to four years' imprisonment with two conditional years. The press coverage was substantial. It was the first time that this kind of aggression was considered a terrorist act. The actors were in their mid-thirties and one in his mid-twenties. Before committing their crime they exchanged WhatsApp messages with extremist content such as 'All refugees to Auschwitz'. They also campaigned against the reception of asylum seekers and were organised in the Dutch Self Defense Army.

In February, two mosques in Almelo and Drunen received mail with partially burnt pages from the Quran. The increasing number of incidents in big cities, in particular in Rotterdam, has attracted attention, since previous research has shown that fewer incidents occurred in cities than in small municipalities.

TABLE 2: NATURE OF THE AGGRESSION AGAINST MOSQUES AND RELEVANT MUNICIPALITIES (2016). ⁹⁴⁴		
	Number	Municipalities
Arson	3	Enschede, Alkmaar, Culemborg
Graffiti	7	Rotterdam (6) Dongen
Vandalism	4	Gorinchem, Medemblik, Maassluis, Zaandam, Zwijndrecht, Rotterdam
Personal threat	-	-
Threatening letter or e-message	23	Nijmegen, Leiden, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Almelo, Drunen, Zaandam (among others)
Various incidents	8	Rotterdam, Alblasserdam, Almelo, Arnhem, Doesburg, Maassluis, Groningen, IJmuiden
Depositing pigs' heads	3	Mijdrecht, Nijkerk, Berkel & Rodenrijs
Telephone threat	1	Amsterdam
Total	49	

10. See note 8.

A particular action against a mosque took place in Roosendaal. On 19 September, the mosque received a letter from a lawyer on behalf of 15 members of a special army unit from a nearby barracks urging that the weekly Azaan, the call for prayer from the minaret, should stop. They also complained that their institution might be spied upon from the minaret. The Ministry of Defence had not been informed about the case and a TV programme clearly showed that the claim lacked validity. Four months have passed since the last Azaan was heard, the window from which the barracks can be seen is covered and the minaret itself is not accessible.

On 28 December, the buildings of a former swimming pool in Culemborg were burned down. The local Islamic association had bought the buildings several months earlier with the intention of transforming them into a mosque. The police are still investigating the case and do not exclude arson. During the same night, several cars in the municipality were also set on fire.

Employment

In spite of a gradual improvement over the years, the position of citizens with a non-Western immigrant background in the labour market is clearly worse than that of their indigenous counterparts. Research has repeatedly shown that members of minority groups permanently lag behind when it comes to entering the employment market and in terms of their employment participation. Unemployment in this group is relatively high, in comparison with indigenous Dutch citizens, especially during the low points of the economic cycle.

Students with a migrant background also have more difficulties in finding internships for vocational training.¹¹ In particular female students wearing a headscarf are confronted with prejudices and discrimination and often do not succeed in getting an internship, notably in commercial firms with functions that demand frequent contacts with clients.

In 2016, the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) issued a research report investigating how women in eight European countries experienced Islamophobia, in particular in the domain of labour, racist discourse and racist violence.¹² In 2016, the city of Utrecht and The Hague started pilot projects with anonymous job applications.

Politics

In March 2017, general elections will take place. Wilders' programme for these elections is only a page long. Measures against Muslims and immigration continue to be number one in PVV politics. 'De-Islamization' is the objective. The PVV wants to

11. Eva Klooster/ Suzan Kocak/ Mehmet Day, *Mbo en de stagemarkt, wat is de rol van discriminatie?* (Utrecht, VJI&KIS, 2016). Available from <https://www.kis.nl/sites/default/files/bestanden/Publicaties/mbo-stagemarkt-rol-van-discriminatie.pdf> (retrieved December 18, 2016).

12. For the full European report see: http://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/20095_forgottenwomenpublication_v5_1_.pdf (retrieved December 27, 2016).

close the borders to immigrants from Islamic countries. The party wants to withdraw the temporary residence permit of asylum seekers and close reception centres. In addition, the party wants to close down all the mosques and Islamic schools, prohibit the Quran, prohibit women from wearing headscarves in public functions, such as in education, the courts etc and forbid all other Islamic symbols 'that are against the public order'. What these are is not explained in detail.

Various opinion polls since 2013, have pointed to the PVV as the most popular party in the Netherlands, if elections had taken place at that point in time. This did not change after Wilders was sentenced for insulting Muslims and inciting discrimination. The PVV, which got only 10% of the votes in the last general election and has 15 seats in Parliament, is actually in the lead for the general elections in some recent opinion polls.

After the terrorist attack on a Christmas market in December 2016 in Berlin, Geert Wilders retweeted a message with a photo of Angela Merkel with blood on her hands, implying her responsibility for this cruel act because of her policies in favour of the generous reception of refugees.

Not only the PVV but also new political parties of the extreme right such as *Forumvoor Democratie* try to instrumentalise different issues in their Islamophobic and anti-immigrant agenda which subsequently go viral in the online and offline public domain. When supermarkets for various reasons change names of certain products related to traditional Dutch or Christian festivities such as Christmas or Easter these parties and their followers frame them as signs of submission to Islam. This, for example, was the case with Easter eggs that are traditionally hidden in gardens for children to find. A supermarket used the name 'hiding eggs' instead of 'Easter eggs' which was taken as an example of the denial of Dutch Christian traditions. When the public broadcast and Dutch embassies abroad wished 'Happy Holidays' instead of 'Happy Christmas' in December 2016, *Forumvoor Democratie* attacked 'the self-hating elites who collaborate enthusiastically to destroy our culture ... in the name of diversity and inclusivity.'¹³ Surprisingly the prime minister joined the complainers - obviously for electoral reasons.

The right-wing Christian party SGP wants to prohibit the Azaan. By allowing the Azaan, so the argument goes, the state contributes to the Islamization of the public space. The public call for prayer will give rise to unease and protests, in particular because of the association with terrorism. The SGP wants the authorities to be reluctant to grant permission for the construction of new mosques and minarets. In its election programme, the SGP emphasises that the authorities should remain vigilant to the differences between religions.

In the parliamentary discussions on the annual budget on 16 September, 2015, Geert Wilders called for resistance against the reception of refugees. From that point

13. Forum Voor Democratie, "Stop de zelfhaat! Behoud het Kerstfeest," *forumvoordemocratie.nl*, (December 16, 2016), retrieved December 29, 2016, from <https://forumvoordemocratie.nl/actueel/kerstmis>.

onwards, a large number of discriminatory actions against asylum seekers took place, almost on a daily basis. Buildings, in particular reception centres, were painted with racist graffiti or vandalised, reception centres and cars set on fire, local authorities, mayors, councillors and politicians intimidated or threatened and local meetings disturbed by people yelling and shouting. Sometimes violence was used to disturb information meetings.¹⁴ This situation continued in the first months of 2016. For example, on 13 January, two dead pigs were found in Heesch on the site where the building of a reception centre was in preparation and riots took place on 18 January. The local council was attacked, among others with eggs and the like (?). Fireworks were thrown at the police. Several people were arrested in the months after the riots. The municipality received a letter with a bullet on 21 January. Again rioters attacked the local council and threw fireworks, eggs and wooden sticks at the police.

On 21 February, after a Pegida rally against the reception of asylum seekers dead pigs were found in Ede on a site where the building of a reception centre was planned.

On 14 March, the graffiti 'go home' and 'not welcome' was found on a house of Syrian refugees.

On 20 March, a building that was meant to become a reception centre for refugees was set ablaze with an arson attack.

However, in the course of 2016, the situation gradually changed. This was not only due to the fact that fewer refugees came in and plans for various reception centres were cancelled but also that politicians and policymakers seemed to have learned to better manage emotions and protests. Sometimes quite simple changes were made such as setting limits to public meetings that were no longer open to anyone but only to neighbours who were directly involved and local people - not to people from outside the municipality. Policymakers chose a more realistic approach by emphasising that meetings were about informing people and that it was not up to local citizens to decide whether a reception centre should be opened; the meetings were instead promoted as an opportunity to brainstorm together about how the reception should be organised. Sometimes police officers visited rioters and people inciting hatred on the Internet at home to press them to respect democratic limits by their actions. Also in practice the situation and conditions of the reception of refugees turned out to be less threatening than people had initially expected. Local people got to know the refugees and they sometimes became allies. Now and then, there were encouraging initiatives that brought people together and increased social cohesion.¹⁵ Because of the opportunities of direct contact, people are able to evaluate their prejudices in real life situations and they often discover the error of their ways. In the fall of 2016, the central institution for the

14. Information was obtained from the numerous press reports in Dutch media and reports of court cases.

15. See for example, Jenny Velthuys, 'Met mij haat het hoed', *Asielzoekers in Zaandam*, *De Groene Amsterdammer*, September 19, 2016.

reception of refugees COA had enrolled 60,000 volunteers contributing to the reception of refugees in municipalities all over the country.

Right-wing extremist groups in particular have been very active in protest actions against the reception of refugees. They disturbed many information meetings at different municipalities. Established right-wing extremist groups that participated in the protest movement against the reception of asylum seekers include the NVU (active since the seventies) and Voorpost, alongside recently formed groups such as the Identitarian Movement (2012); Pegida (2015); and *Demonstranten tegen Gemeenten* (DTG) (Picketers Against Municipalities) (fall 2015). They were also joined by new groups that were formed in 2016 such as Dutch Self Defence Army (DSDA) (January 2016) and Soldiers of Odin (winter 2016). Sometimes these groups lead a short existence such as the DTG (Picketers Against Municipalities) which was dissolved in March 2016.¹⁶

The Dutch Self Defence Army (2016) opposes the 'Islamization of the Netherlands and Europe' and supports Geert Wilders. It wants 'the Netherlands to be given back to the Dutch' and to maintain 'our culture, norms and values'. The struggle against Islam is the first priority for this young extremist group which openly encourages using violence. Of the 22 action targets in the group's programme, 13 pertain to migrants, refugees and Muslims. The group has almost ceased its activities after the condemnation of several members for a terrorist attack against a mosque in Enschede.

Soldiers of Odin (2016) was first created in Finland in reaction to the refugee crisis and now has different sections in parts of the Netherlands. Several of its adherents were previously organised in other right-wing extremist groups. The group obtained national coverage in the press when members in the north of the country 'arrested' a refugee and handed him over to the police because of 'misbehaviour against a woman.'

In 2016, Pegida was the most active among these groups. Pegida was formed in Germany in October 2014 and campaigns in weekly rallies against what they call 'the Islamization of the Occident.' A Dutch counterpart was formed a year later. Being against Islamization for Pegida means the closing of Islamic schools, no new mosques, closing of mosques that allow 'hate preachers' to spread their messages, no more immigrants from Islamic countries and a prohibition of ritual slaughtering and religious expressions and symbols in public buildings. In 2016, Pegida organised a number of rallies against the reception of refugees in various municipalities and towns, such as The Hague and Amsterdam, where people were incited to deposit pigs' hats in front of the mayor's house. On 8 March, on International Women's Day, Pegida distributed flyers with women in high heels trampling on verses of the Quran.

16. The sources for the information on right extremist groups that are discussed in this section include their websites, media reports and the reports by research group Kafka: www.kafka.nl (retrieved January 2, 2017). See also I. van der Valk, *Monitor Moslim Discriminatie*, University of Amsterdam, 2017; B. Tierolf, M. van Kapel & N. Hermens, *Vijfde rapportage racisme, antisemitisme en extreemrechts geweld in Nederland*, Utrecht: Verwey Jonker Instituut 2016, p.42-54..

Justice system

On 29 November, 2016, a majority in the Dutch House of Representatives voted for a law regarding the partial interdiction of face-covering attire. Although the law aims at non-religious face covering as well, it is self-evident that the primary targets are the burqa and niqab. Earlier governmental and parliamentary proposals to ban these Islamic veils were raised in various ways in 2006, 2008, 2009, and 2011/12. The present proposal aims to ban face covering in a limited number of public domains i.e. the care sector, state institutions and public transport. Transgression of the law will be punished with a fine of 400 euros. Only the political parties *Groen Links*, D66 and DENK voted against the law.

On 15 December, 2016, the Dutch House of Representatives discussed a law proposal by the political party VNL (*Voor Nederland*) to eliminate two antidiscrimination articles from the Penal Law in favour of the enlargement of freedom of expression. A large majority was against such changes to the antidiscrimination laws.¹⁷

Court cases¹⁸

31 March

The police court condemned a 59-year-old man to 80 hours community service (conditional) because of incitement. After the terrorist attacks in Paris he posted on his Facebook page ‘20 Muslims in jail for every innocent victim and confront them with MG 42 and 10,000 bullets.’

26 May

The National Human Rights Institute judges that the court of Rotterdam has made an unlawful distinction by refusing an applicant because of her headscarf.¹⁹ The court of Rotterdam did not employ the woman because she refused to uncover her head in court. Since the judicial system has convened that no sign of religion whatsoever is allowed in court, which have to remain neutral in this regard the court of Rotterdam was convinced that its refusal was lawful. However, this was not the case in the eyes of the Human Rights Institute which was subsequently overruled by the Council of Jurisdiction that maintained that jurisdiction has to observe absolute neutrality

11 February

Eight people who participated in an attack against a reception centre for asylum seekers in Woerden in October 2015 were found guilty of using violence and threats

17.<https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2016/12/15/debat-vrijheid-meningsuiting-5810507-a1536852>

18.This overview of cases that were brought to court in 2016 is based on data from the media and the official website www.rechtsspraak.nl. It does not exclude the possibility of more cases having been brought to court which might not have attracted the attention of the media or may not have been interesting enough to be mentioned on the aforementioned website.

19.College voor De Rechten Van De Mens, “Rechtbank Rotterdam discrimineerde een moslima door haar af te wijzen als buitengriffier omdat zij tijdens de zitting haar hoofddoek niet wilde afdoen,” *mensenrechten.nl*, (May 26, 2016), retrieved January 16, 2017, from <https://www.mensenrechten.nl/publicaties/oordelen/2016-45>.

and sentenced to 120 hours of community work. They also had to pay 2000 euros to the security personnel. Seven people were sentenced to 40 hours of community work. Others were acquitted. The reception centre was attacked with fire bombs and eggs by a group of young men (18-35 years old). Beforehand they had exchanged sent Whatsapp messages such as 'Death to Muslims', and 'We will show our faces so that those typhoid apes know that it is us who destroy them.'

13 June

Five men were sentenced for using violence in order to disturb a meeting of the local council in Geldermalsen in December 2015. Three persons (22, 29 and 53 years old) were sentenced to 6 months in jail (two months conditional). One 20-year-old was sentenced to two months in jail (one conditional). In addition, two of them were ordered to pay a police officer 450 euros in compensation for damage. One person (35 years old) was sentenced to 100 hours of community service.

22 June

A 62-year-old man from Horst was fined by the police judge for inciting hatred on Facebook. He commented upon an article about arson in a mosque by saying "They should do that here too". Previously the judge had fined him 450 euros but he had refused to pay. Again he repeated before the court that he would be pleased if a mosque was attacked.

22 July

The court of North Holland ordered a man to pay a (conditional) fine because of insulting discourse about Muslims on Facebook. "The words of the suspect contribute to creating a climate in which discriminatory and violent behaviour against Muslims may thrive," the judge said.

12 October

A spokesperson from Pegida Holland was sentenced by the court of Utrecht to pay a fine of 800 euros (400 conditional). The court sentenced the person for insulting a group and inciting hatred and discrimination against Muslims. The fact that this was done during a public meeting and that she repeated her words afterwards on Facebook contributed to the sentence. The conditionality of 50% of the fine was motivated by the fact that the person continues to speak on this issue in public meetings.

27 October

The perpetrators of an arson attack with terrorist motives in Enschede were sentenced to 4 years imprisonment.

9 December

Geert Wilders was sentenced for insulting a group and inciting discrimination against Muslims by the court of Amsterdam because of his call for 'fewer, fewer, fewer Moroccans' at a public meeting in The Hague during the local election campaign in 2014.

9 December

A 72-year-old woman who tried to pull off the headscarf of a Muslim girl in March 2016 in Zutphen was sentenced by the police court to pay a fine of 500 euros (of which 200 conditional). The woman associated the headscarf with terrorist attacks and DAESH. The judge argued that this act, which was committed only a few days after the terrorist attacks in Brussels, was insulting because most Muslims also condemn terrorism or are indeed among the victims. The perpetrator was ordered to pay the victim 350 euros as compensation for damage done.

Internet

In the past, politicians used to make a major contribution to the formation of public opinion. In recent years however, this role has been more and more taken over by actors on the Internet via more or less organised expressions and discourses on websites, blogs, forums and, in particular, increasingly via social media. The use of the Internet changes constantly. From an instrument to find information it has evolved to a site for joining like-minded people with all the related echo-chamber effects and consequences. Websites, forums and posters on social media exploit these effects. Nowadays the world is increasingly confronted with the phenomenon of fake news with far-reaching political effects. All these media feature hostile utterances against Muslims on an almost daily basis.

Data about online discrimination is registered by the Internet hotlines MDI and MIND. Their annual reports give an overview of discrimination data on grounds that are subject to criminal law i.e. race, religion, philosophy of life, gender, sexual orientation and disability.²⁰ In order to better contextualise the new data that was provided in 2016 and that concerned reports made to the agencies in 2015, they are compared to data of the previous year in Tables 3 and 4. Most reports on discrimination in recent years concern social media such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, more than weblogs, websites and discussion forums. In 2015, discrimination of Muslims became the most important category of complaints, followed by anti-black racism, discrimination of other nationalities (such as refugees) and anti-Semitism (Table 3). Discrimination of Muslims reported to the MDI and MIND doubled compared to the previous year. The MDI received 330 (33%) reports about anti-Muslim discrimination, whereas 145 reports received by the MIND were about anti-Muslim discrimination. Most of the reports were made in the context of the debates on the reception of refugees and in the context of terrorist attacks carried out in Europe.

20. Stichting Magenta. Afdeling Meldpunt Discriminatie Internet, *Jaarverslag 2014*, (Amsterdam: MDI, 2015); Stichting Magenta. Afdeling Meldpunt Discriminatie Internet, *Jaarverslag 2015*, (Amsterdam: MDI, 2016).

TABLE 3: COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY THE MDI.⁹⁵⁵

Category	2014	2015
Anti-Semitism	328	142
Anti-black racism	255	220
Discrimination of Muslims	219	330
Discrimination of Moroccans	103	90
Other descent or nationality	93	198

The MDI considers the legality of the expressions and accordingly requests the owner of the website to remove the statement if it is illegal. In most cases the owner is willing to do so and the statement is removed. If not, it is reported to the police. In 2015, 176 of 330 anti-Muslim expressions were punishable by law; likewise 36 of 90 that targeted Moroccans, and 7 of 22 that targeted Turks.

TABLE 4: DISCRIMINATORY ONLINE EXPRESSIONS.⁹⁵⁶

	2014 Reports	2014 Punishable	2015 Reports	2015 Punishable
Against Muslims	219	118	330	176
Against Moroccans	103	41	90	36
Against Turks	41	23	22	7

Civil Society and Political Initiatives Undertaken to Counter Islamophobia

CSOs counter Islamophobia by managing hotlines and notification sites where victims can report outside of the official system of antidiscrimination bureaus and the police. Organisations that collect complaints are the Facebook initiative *Meld Islamofobie!*; the Collective against Islamophobia (CTID) based in Amsterdam; SPIOR, a platform organisation of Islamic organisations and mosques in Rotterdam; the Muslim Women organisation Al Nisa; and the Turkish Forum. Other organisations that campaign against Islamophobia are the *Contact Orgaan Moslims en Overheid* (Contact Body Muslims and Government) and EMCEMO.

The Dutch government has increasingly developed policies to counter Islamophobia, in particular, and ethnic discrimination, in general, although more needs to be done. This is also emphasised by the ECRI, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance of the Council of Europe.²³ The recommendations of the

21. Source: MDI, *Yearly report 2015, issued 2016*

22. Source: MDI, *Yearly report 2015, Amsterdam 2016*

23. European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), "ECRI Conclusions on the Implementation of the Recommendations in Respect of the Netherlands Subject to interim Follow-Up," *coe.int*, (June 7, 2016), retrieved January 16, 2017, from <http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Netherlands/NLD-IFU-IV-2016-024-ENG.pdf>.

ECRI have not been adequately taken into account. The commission argues that an effective structural approach to combat racism is still lacking. Indeed policies against discrimination in the labour market have been developed but the same is not true for other social domains. The action programme that is being implemented against discrimination is too general in the eyes of the ECRI and does not make any distinction between different groups and different fields. The government relies too much on local policies while expertise at the local level is lacking. In other words, structural national policies that not only target discrimination in general but also more specific forms as experienced by different groups are lacking.

In 2016, in its annual policy paper on discrimination the government expressed concern about the increase of intolerance and announced concrete policies to counter discrimination in the labour market, in education and in other fields. The 2016 National Action Programme against all forms of discrimination pointed to the following areas of attention: prevention aiming at promoting an inclusive society – with special focus on inclusive public institutions and private businesses - and awareness raising; reinforcement of the infrastructure of the antidiscrimination provisions of effective local policies; and support by research and development.²⁴ Muslim discrimination is one of the fields of action in the context of the Action Programme. Specific areas of attention pointed out by national authorities in relation to Muslim discrimination are the increase of knowledge and insight, the increase of willingness to report among victims and the reinforcement of local policies and forms of cooperation with CSOs in countering Muslim discrimination. The ministry also initiated research on trigger factors for Muslim discrimination among young people. This research project examines the contextual conditions of prejudices and the influence of important political and media actors in the formation of public opinion. Another research project examines effective interventions and good practices in the field of awareness raising and countering prejudice and discrimination by training, dialogue and debate. In May 2016, the Ministry of Social Affairs launched a campaign against discrimination in the labour market.

Islamophobia in politics is not about the PVV alone. Wilders would not have reached the notoriety, reputation and support he currently enjoys in the Netherlands if the media and mainstream politics had not supported him and paid him so much attention. The PVV/Wilders have obtained more media coverage than any other party. At the same time, democratic political parties gradually but increasingly take a stance against (the racism of) the PVV, against racism in general and Islamophobia in particular trying to isolate Wilders in the political domain. After the murder of Jo

24. Rijksoverheid, “Kamerbrief Nationaal Actieprogramma tegen discriminatie,” *rijksoverheid.nl*, (January 22, 2016), retrieved January 16, 2017, from <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2016/01/22/kamerbrief-nationaal-actieprogramma-tegen-discriminatie&> “Nationaal Actieprogramma tegen discriminatie,” *rijksoverheid.nl*, (January 22, 2016), retrieved January 16, 2017, from <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2016/01/22/nationaal-actieprogramma-tegen-discriminatie>.

Cox in June 2016 in the UK, several Dutch political parties appealed to the PVV to moderate anti-refugee speech. Several MPs have raised questions on Muslim discrimination in Parliament. Various political parties have raised the issue of discrimination and how to improve and reinforce the fight against it in their programmes for the upcoming parliamentary elections in spring 2017.²⁵ The following proposals pertain to forms of discrimination on different grounds including Muslim discrimination. The political parties PvdA (social democrat), D66 (liberal left), *Christen Unie* (Christian) and DENK (a new party formed by MPs with a migrant background) pay explicit attention to anti-Muslim discrimination/Islamophobia. PvdA and DENK want more police forces to combat discrimination. DENK also pleads for special provisions in the field of (forced) education for persons convicted of discrimination. Persons convicted of discrimination should be registered to prevent them from assuming public office jobs and the government must develop an action plan against extreme right violence. PvdA wants to facilitate reporting to the police, by various measures such as by allowing online reporting. Pubs and the like should be punished for discrimination by withdrawal of their licence. PvdA, SP, D66, Groen Links and DENK have raised proposals to combat discrimination in the labour market. Proposals vary from better equipment of the labour inspection services to the introduction of more neutral hiring procedures, 'naming and shaming' and exclusion from public tenders in case of discrimination. The same parties together with the *Christen Unie* want to counter ethnic profiling by the police forces by taking various measures such as diversity policies, training and education and the introduction of special forms to be used by the police forces. DENK wants a special notification provision for ethnic profiling. Finally, the liberal party VVD wants to improve the fight against discrimination by improving law enforcement and initiatives in the field of information and education. A new political party aiming primarily at combating racism was formed in December 2016 under the name "Art1" - Article 1 of the constitution stipulates that all citizens are equal.

A positive trend is observed in relation to information and research about the phenomenon of Islamophobia. First of all, this form of discrimination has become more visible in the reports of various services which have been engaged for many years in reporting on discrimination, such as the police services and antidiscrimination bureaus. In addition, CSOs have installed their own notification provisions which issue periodic reports. The weblog *Republiek Allochtonie*²⁶ and the website *polderislam.nl* periodically provide various reports, articles and background information. Finally, more focused, in-depth research projects have recently been carried out. In 2016, the following projects provided information on the phenomenon of Islamophobia and Muslim discrimination.

25. For a full overview of the programme's items on discrimination and related domains see: Ewoud Butter, *Verkiezingsprogramma's over immigratie, integratie, discriminatie en tegengaan van radicalisering* (Utrecht, KIS, 2016).

26. Republiek Allochtonie, www.republiekallochtonie.nl, retrieved January 16, 2017.

The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) investigated how women experienced Islamophobia, in particular in the domain of labour, racist discourse and racist violence.

At the local level in the city of Rotterdam, SPIOR tries to combat underreporting with the special project ‘*Islamofobie in Zicht*’ (Looking at Islamophobia). A first report on Muslim discrimination in Rotterdam was issued in spring 2016.²⁷ The *Bureau Discriminatiezaken Zaanstreek Waterland* did the same for this the region Zaanstreek Waterland in North Holland.²⁸

As a follow-up to previous research on attacks against mosques, a special edition of the *Monitoring Islamophobia Report* discusses factors of risk and protection against violent aggression against mosques.²⁹

Arnoud Ens of the National Police Services investigated factors that make Muslims reluctant to report experiences of discrimination to the police services.³⁰ Ewoud Butter wrote the fact-checking report *Neemt moslimhaat toe in Nederland?* (Is Muslim hatred increasing in the Netherlands?).³¹ Eva Klooster, Suzan Kocak and Mehmet Day researched the problems that students encounter in finding an internship.³²

Two ongoing research projects that are carried out in the context of the programme Religion and Society of the Dutch Scientific Research Council are of particular relevance in the context of Islamophobia. Yolanda Jansen (University of Amsterdam - UvA) and Thijl Sunier (Free University Amsterdam - VU) manage the project Islam and Jewishness in Public Debates and Modern Political Theories. This project investigates the representation of Muslims and Jews and the role played by arguments from the Enlightenment about the relationship between religion and politics. Annelies Moors, Martijn de Koning and Fouzia Outmany (University of Amsterdam) investigate the role of Muslim activists in the debate about Islam since 1989, paying special attention to gender and social media. The research institute of the Ministry of Security and Justice (WODC) published the results of an investigation pertaining to perceived discrimination, victimhood and discrimination data registered by the police and the public prosecutor and their route through the criminal justice system.³³

27. Stichting Platform Islamitische Organisaties Rijnmond, “*Islamofobie in Zicht*,” *spior.nl*, (May 2016), retrieved January 16, 2017, from <http://www.spior.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Rapport-Islamofobie-in-Zicht.pdf>.

28. Bureau Discriminatiezaken, “Islamofobie in de Zaanstreek en Waterland,” *bureaudiscriminatiezaken.nl*, (February 2016), retrieved January 16, 2017, from <http://bureaudiscriminatiezaken.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/rapportislamofobie2016.pdf>.

29. Ineke Van Der Valk, *Incidenten bij moskeeën: risico en bescherming* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 2016)
30. Arnoud Ens, *Discriminatie melden bij de politie?*

31. Ewoud Butter, “Factcheck: neemt moslimhaat toe in Nederland?,” *republiekallochtonie.nl*, (August 30, 2016), retrieved January 16, 2017, from <http://www.republiekallochtonie.nl/factcheck-neemt-moslimhaat-toe-in-nederland>.

32. Eva Klooster/ Suzan Kocak/ Mehmet Day, *Mbo en de stagemarkt, wat is de rol van discriminatie?*

33. Peter Kruize/ Paul Gruter, ‘*Discriminatie van aangifte tot vervolging*’, *de gang van discriminatie door de strafrechtketen* (Den Haag: WODC, 2015).

Despite these projects the scholarly attention on Islamophobia in particular is very limited. A general look at the research projects that were initiated by the WODC in relation to radicalisation is enlightening. These projects focused predominantly on Islamist radicalisation while hardly any attention was given to right extremist radicalisation – in which anti-Muslim hatred plays an important role. In 2016, a special issue of the WODC journal *Justitiële Verkenningen* entitled ‘Radicalisation and terrorism’ almost exclusively discussed jihadist radicalisation, its background and context.³⁴ Another project investigated potential confrontations and the mutual influence of jihadism and the extreme right in different European countries.³⁵ Unfortunately the Dutch situation was not discussed. A common project of the VU, UvA and Insitute for Diversity Issues, Forum investigated the resilience of the Dutch population against extremist messages. Once again it was about jihadi extremism only. For research on right-wing extremism we have to go back as far as 2012 when a more general approach was offered by the research report ‘System hate among young people’.³⁶

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This report discusses Islamophobia in the Netherlands in 2016. Discriminatory aggression and violence against Muslims has continued to be a hot topic. Other issues that were at the heart of public debate in relation to discrimination in 2016 were ethnic profiling by police forces, labour market discrimination, the arrival of large numbers of refugees and the debate on the racist character of Black Pete. Islamophobic incidents occurred in particular at mosques and at reception centres for asylum seekers. Muslim individuals, in particular women, were targeted.

Alongside the continuity of Islamophobic discourse and practices, some important changes have been taking place in relation to Wilders’ PVV, the parliamentary party that politically organises Islamophobia. The PVV has continued its mobilisation outside Parliament for social action against mosques and against reception centres for refugees. The PVV has become even more isolated at the level of mainstream Dutch politics after Wilders was found guilty of defaming a group and inciting racial discrimination for leading a chant calling for ‘fewer, fewer’ Moroccans. However, various opinion polls continue, as in previous years, to point to the PVV as the most popular party in the Netherlands, if elections were to take place at that point in time.

34. Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Documentatiecentrum (WODC), “JV nr. 6 2016: Empirisch-juridisch onderzoek,” *wodc.nl*, (December 12, 2016), from <https://www.wodc.nl/publicaties/justitiële-verkenningen/index.aspx>.

35. Bert Klendermans/Jacquelienvan Stekelenburg, *Bedreigde identiteiten: de wisselwerking tussen anti-islam bewegingen en de radicale islam* (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2016).

36. Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Documentatiecentrum (WODC), “Systeemhaat onder jongeren,” *wodc.nl*, (2012), retrieved January 16, 2017, from <https://www.wodc.nl/onderzoeksdatabase/systeemhaat-onder-jongeren.aspx>.

Islamophobia occurs in various fields in the social and political domains. More qualitative research is necessary to shed light on the manifestation of Islamophobia in different social domains, and in the media, in particular.

The police services have continued to move towards a better system of registration of discrimination cases. For the first time antidiscrimination provisions and the police published a common report with data on discrimination.

In spring 2016, the government launched its National Action Programme Against Discrimination with more elaborate policies and measures to increase tolerance and counter discrimination based on skin colour, origin and religion.

More and more stakeholders have joined force to counter Islamophobia. CSOs have taken initiatives to counter Islamophobia by creating hotlines and notification sites, campaigning against Islamophobia, carrying out research, and presenting data. This newly created infrastructure needs to be reinforced to become more sustainable. Islamophobia is also increasingly becoming a focus of attention in politics and in social research.

National and local authorities and civil society need to perceive discriminatory aggression and violence against Muslims for what they are: cases of abuse of the right to freedom of religion and the principles of equality and anti-discrimination.

Authorities need to reinforce adequate responses in the case of discriminatory aggression against the Muslim community by

- supporting initiatives by Muslim communities to create reporting systems in coordination with the existing general notification agencies;
- serious and respectful treatment of people who complain and report discrimination to the police;
- improvement of prosecution procedures and practices;
- improvement of communication with the Muslim community to support them in preventing discriminatory and aggressive acts against them and in developing long- term and preventative policies aimed at education and dialogue.

Political parties should reinforce their initiatives against populist and discriminatory slogans by racist parties such as the PVV and not copy them for fear of losing votes. Relevant authorities should take a stance when hate crime and discrimination are fuelled by propaganda in the media and politics. Politicians need to function as role models and emphasise norms and values related to democratic principles and the rules of the constitutional state.

Islamophobia and right extremist radicalisation should be the focus of attention in radicalisation research.

The Muslim community as a targeted group has an important role to play. Muslim organisations should reinforce their cooperation to better cope with the problems of discrimination and to convince their members that reporting acts of discrimination is necessary to get access to political agendas and to influence anti-discrimination policies. Alliances with other discriminated communities may reinforce the struggle against discrimination and human rights violations.

Chronology

- **11 February:** Eight people who participated in an attack against a reception centre for asylum seekers in Woerden in October 2015 were sentenced for using violence and threats and sentenced to 120 hours of community work. They were also told to pay 2000 euros to the security personnel. Seven people were sentenced to 40 hours of community work.
- **28 February:** An arson attempt with Molotov cocktails took place in a mosque in Enschede during the time of prayer.
- **February:** A great number of Moroccan mosques in the Netherlands received a similar leaflet with the picture of an eagle on a swastika and Islamophobic messages.
- **February:** Two mosques, in Almelo and Drunen, received mail with pages of the Quran that were partially burned.
- **May:** The Ministry of Social Affairs launched a campaign against discrimination in the labour market.
- **June:** After the murder of MP Jo Cox in the UK, several Dutch political parties called on the PVV to moderate anti-refugee speech.
- **12 October:** A spokesperson from Pegida Holland was sentenced by the court of Utrecht to a fine of 800 euros (of which 400 conditional). The court sentenced the person for insulting a group and inciting to hatred and discrimination of Muslims.
- **27 October:** Four of the perpetrators of an arson attempt with Molotov cocktails in a mosque in Enschede were convicted in court to four years' detention, one of which is conditional. One person was sentenced to four years with two years conditional.
- **29 November:** A majority in the Dutch House of Representatives voted for a law regarding the partial interdiction of face-covering attire.
- **9 December:** Geert Wilders, founder and only member of the Dutch right-wing populist party PVV, was found guilty of defaming a group and inciting racial discrimination for leading a chant calling for 'fewer, fewer' Moroccans in the Netherlands.
- **15 December:** The House of Representatives rejected a proposal of the political party VNL (*Voor Nederland*) to change two anti-discrimination articles in the Penal Law.
- **December:** A new political party aiming primarily at combating racism was formed under the name "Art1" - Article 1 of the constitution stipulates that all citizens are equal.

This is the second issue of the annual *European Islamophobia Report (EIR)* which was presented for the first time in 2015. New countries are included in this year's *EIR*; while 25 countries were covered in 2015, the report for 2016 includes 27 country reports. *EIR 2016* is the result of 31 prominent scholars who specialise in different fields such as racism, gender and Islamophobia Studies.

Islamophobia has become a real danger to the foundations of democratic order and the values of the European Union. It has also become the main challenge to the social peace and coexistence of different cultures, religions and ethnicities in Europe. The country reports of *EIR 2016*, which cover almost all the European continent from Russia to Portugal and from Greece to Latvia, clearly show that the level of Islamophobia in fields such as education, employment, media, politics, the justice system and the Internet is on the rise. Since the publication of the last report there is little improvement. On the contrary, one can see from the country reports that the state of democracy and human rights in Europe is deteriorating. Islamophobia has become more real especially in the everyday lives of Muslims in Europe. It has surpassed the stage of being a rhetorical animosity and has become a physical animosity that Muslims feel in everyday life be it at school, the workplace, the mosque, transportation or simply on the street.

About SETA

Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA) is a non-profit research institute based in Turkey dedicated to innovative studies on national, regional and international issues. SETA is the leading think tank in Turkey and has offices in Ankara, Istanbul, Washington D.C. and Cairo. The objective of SETA is to produce up-to-date and accurate knowledge and analyses in the fields of politics, economy, and society, and inform policy makers and the public on changing political, economic, social, and cultural conditions. Through research reports, publications, brain storming sessions, conferences and policy recommendations, SETA seeks to guide leaders in government, civil society, and business, and contributes to informed decision making mechanisms.

