

Recommendation Paper

for the 2026-2030 EU Anti-Racism Strategy

June 2025

Intercultural Dialogue Platform

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The Urgent Challenge:

Rising Anti-Muslim Hatred in Europe

Recent data reveals a troubling increase in anti-Muslim sentiment and discrimination across the EU. According to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) 2024 report, *Being Muslim in the EU*, nearly half of Muslims (47%) have experienced racial discrimination in the past five years, a significant rise from 39% in 2016. Discrimination is most prevalent in employment, housing, education, and access to public services.

Muslim women face compounded discrimination, particularly those who wear visible religious attire. Among young Muslim women aged 16–24 who wear a headscarf, 58% reported being discriminated against when looking for a job, compared to 38% of their peers who do not wear such attire. Furthermore, 29% of visibly Muslim women said they avoid certain places or activities due to fear of harassment, pointing to a widespread sense of insecurity in daily life.

Key additional findings from the 2024 FRA report include:

- **Employment discrimination:** 30% of Muslims actively looking for work reported discrimination in the job search process. The rates are even higher in countries with restrictive policies on religious expression.
- **Hate-motivated harassment:** 39% of Muslim respondents experienced harassment in the past 12 months, with verbal abuse, threats, and offensive gestures being the most common forms. Worryingly, only 11% of these incidents were reported to the police.
- **Police profiling:** 34% of Muslim men said they had been stopped by police in the past year, and nearly half (48%) of these felt the stop was due to ethnic or religious profiling, raising concerns about institutional bias.
- **Sense of belonging vs. trust in institutions:** While a majority (70%) of Muslims said they feel strongly attached to the country they live in, only 49%

expressed trust in public institutions to address racism effectively. This discrepancy highlights a critical trust gap between Muslim communities and public authorities.

These figures illustrate not only widespread individual experiences of bias but also entrenched structural inequalities and systemic issues that hinder the full participation of Muslim communities in European societies. The persistence of hate crimes, discriminatory policing, and socio-economic exclusion suggests that anti-Muslim hatred is both a social and institutional issue that necessitates comprehensive strategies to address both overt and covert forms of racism.

In light of these realities, the need for robust, inclusive, and sustained policy measures, rooted in dialogue and intercultural understanding, is more urgent than ever. Comprehensive strategies must go beyond punitive legal measures to include education, empowerment, representation, and community engagement as tools for lasting change.

Recommendations for the 2026-2030 EU Anti-Racism Strategy

1. Strengthen Institutional Support for Dialogue-Based Initiatives

The European Union should provide sustained funding, increased visibility, and institutional recognition for civil society organisations engaged in fostering intercultural and interfaith dialogue. These organisations play a crucial role in creating inclusive spaces where citizens from diverse backgrounds can interact meaningfully, particularly during shared cultural or religious celebrations, community events, or thematic civic forums.

Such initiatives are essential in building mutual understanding, reducing prejudice, and promoting social cohesion. The 2024 FRA report highlights that Muslims who have regular positive interactions with people from different religious or ethnic backgrounds are significantly less likely to perceive discrimination or feel excluded from society. However, only 18% of Muslims surveyed said they had frequent interfaith or intercultural exchanges in their local communities, an engagement gap that dialogue-based programs can help to close.

2. Ensure Inclusive and Participatory Policy Development

Anti-racism policies must be developed with the direct participation of those most affected by discrimination, including Muslim communities. Co-creation ensures that policies are both culturally sensitive and practically effective.

To this end, the EU should promote the use of Citizens' Panels and structured consultations at national and regional levels. These participatory platforms can offer space for deliberation on specific challenges, such as Islamophobia in public services, policing, or employment, and contribute to building trust between institutions and communities. According to the FRA's findings, 48% of Muslims feel that public institutions do not take their concerns about discrimination seriously. Inclusive policy-making would help close this trust gap.

3. Introduce Local Monitoring and Feedback Mechanisms

Robust monitoring and accountability systems are essential to ensure that anti-racism measures are working as intended. The EU should establish local and regional anti-racism rapporteurs or representatives to monitor developments, collect data, and serve as liaison points with affected communities.

The 2024 FRA report found that nearly one in four Muslims who experienced discrimination did not report it, often due to a lack of trust in institutions or the belief that reporting would not make a difference. Community-based monitoring mechanisms, coupled with transparent evaluation frameworks, can ensure that initiatives are responsive to local realities and can adapt based on community feedback and evidence of impact.

4. Promote Positive and Accurate Narratives in Media and Public Discourse

The media plays a decisive role in shaping public perceptions of Muslim communities. The EU should encourage partnerships between civil society, journalists, and media regulators to foster responsible reporting and amplify diverse voices. This includes funding for positive storytelling campaigns, journalist training on Islamophobia and inclusive language, and support for Muslim-led media initiatives.

The FRA's 2024 report revealed that over one-third of Muslims believe they are portrayed negatively in the media. Young Muslims, in particular, noted that persistent negative framing affects their sense of belonging. Media reform and narrative change must be at the heart of a forward-looking anti-racism strategy.

Addressing Anti-Muslim Hatred Through Dialogue and Social Interaction

1. Community-Based Initiatives

Engaging local communities in dialogue initiatives can foster understanding and reduce prejudices. Programs that bring together individuals from diverse backgrounds to share experiences and perspectives can humanise "the other" and build empathy. Through community engagement initiatives, including citizens' dialogues, Iftar and Christmas dinners, it is easier to bring people of different communities closer, allowing them to better understand each other's values and ultimately discover their similarities. IDP has observed on multiple occasions that such activities are highly effective in addressing stereotypes and prejudice.

2. Educational Programs

Implementing educational programs that focus on cultural competency, religious literacy, and anti-racism can equip individuals with the tools to recognise and challenge discrimination. Such programs are essential in schools, workplaces, and public institutions. Organising training on cultural awareness and intercultural understanding to equip citizens and organisations with the necessary tools and critical thinking to prevent Muslim-hatred and any other type of intolerance and discrimination has proven to be very effective based on IDP's experience.

3. Media and Communication Strategies

Developing media campaigns that highlight positive stories of Muslim individuals and communities can counteract negative stereotypes. Training journalists and media

professionals on responsible reporting can also mitigate the spread of Islamophobic narratives. Considering the impact of media and social media on people's lives, IDP recommends working closely with journalists, media professionals, and tech companies to contribute to responsible reporting and create safe and respectful digital spaces.

Conclusion

The EU should work towards a more open and welcoming society and play an active role in addressing anti-Muslim hatred in Europe through its commitment to dialogue, empowerment, and collaboration. By integrating civil society recommendations into the 2026-2030 EU Anti-Racism Strategy, the Union can make significant strides toward a more inclusive and equitable society. The above-mentioned four strategic pillars- dialogue, inclusive policymaking, monitoring, and narrative change – form a comprehensive framework for addressing anti-Muslim hatred and broader structural discrimination.

Intercultural Dialogue Platform

The [Intercultural Dialogue Platform](#) (IDP), established in Brussels in 2000, is a non-profit civil society organisation dedicated to fostering meaningful dialogue, active citizenship, and harmonious interactions among individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Rooted in democratic values, IDP aims to enhance social cohesion and civic participation across Europe.

IDP's strategic priorities include:

1. Strengthening social cohesion and intercultural dialogue.
2. Promoting civic and democratic engagement aligned with EU Fundamental Rights and Values.
3. Supporting the social inclusion of individuals with migrant or minority backgrounds.
4. Encouraging positive cultural expression and education.
5. Combating racism, discrimination, and all forms of intolerance and hatred.

6. Preventing extremism and radicalisation.

IDP actively works to foster intercultural and interfaith dialogue within Europe, with a particular emphasis on engaging with Muslim communities. Its mission aligns closely with the objectives of the EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020–2025, aiming to combat racism and promote equality across the Union.

Dialogue Platform's Contributions to the EU Anti-Racism Strategy

1. Facilitating Intercultural and Interfaith Dialogue

The Dialogue Platform actively promotes conversations between diverse communities, fostering mutual understanding and respect. Creating spaces for dialogue helps dismantle stereotypes and build bridges between Muslim communities and broader society, aligning with the EU's goal of promoting inclusive societies.

2. Empowering Muslim Communities

Through workshops, seminars, and community engagement initiatives, the Dialogue Platform empowers Muslim individuals and organisations to voice their experiences and perspectives. This empowerment is crucial for ensuring that anti-racism policies are informed by those directly affected.

3. Collaborating with Civil Society and Policy Makers

The Dialogue Platform collaborates with civil society organisations, educational institutions, and policymakers to develop and implement strategies that address anti-Muslim hatred. These collaborations ensure that policies are grounded in the realities of affected communities and are more effective in combating discrimination.

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