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EUROPEAN  
**ISLAMOPHOBIA**  
REPORT  
2016

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ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ (Eds)

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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%.<sup>1</sup>

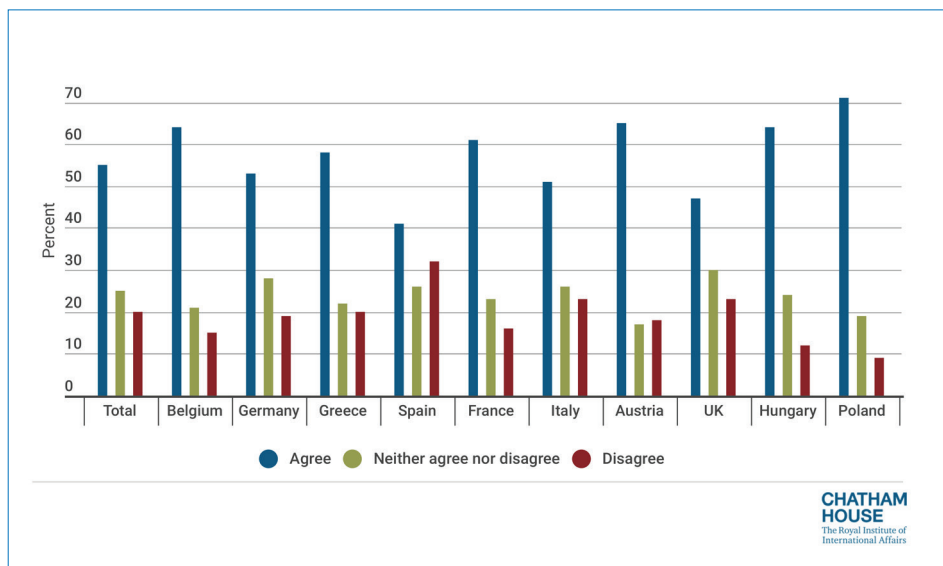


Figure 1: Public opposition to any further migration from predominantly Muslim states in Europe.<sup>2</sup>

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.<sup>3</sup>

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.”<sup>4</sup>

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”.<sup>5</sup>

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.

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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.<sup>6</sup> 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](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.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup>

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7. [https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/14/world/europe/france-head-scarf-court.html?\\_r=0](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  
**POLAND**  
NATIONAL REPORT 2016

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KONRAD PĘDZIWIATR



## The Author

**Konrad Pędziwiatr**, PhD, is Assistant Professor at the Department for European Studies, Cracow University of Economics. He is the author of the monographs *The New Muslim Elites in European Cities* (VDM Verlag, 2010), *From Islam of Immigrants to Islam of Citizens: Muslims in the Countries of Western Europe* (Nomos 2005, 2007), and *Polish Migration Policy: In Search of a New Model* (co-authored, UW 2015), as well as numerous other scientific publications on migrations and social movements in Europe and the Middle East, and on Islam and Muslims in Europe. Pędziwiatr is coordinator of the project 'Islamism and Pluralism - The Islamist Movements in Egypt and Tunisia after the Arab Spring' financed by the Polish National Science Centre.

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## Executive Summary

Although the Muslim community in Poland does not exceed 0.1% of the total population, Polish society believes that 7% of the country's population is Muslim - that is well over 2 million citizens. The exaggeration of the size of the Muslim community in Poland in the eyes of its inhabitants is clearly linked to the perception of Islam as a threat. As several comparative studies have shown, Poles, who have very limited contact with Muslims, are one of the European nations that is most afraid of Islam and its followers. In 2015, as the year of parliamentary elections in the midst of the so-called "refugee crisis" marked a significant rise in the public expression of anti-Muslim sentiments, 2016 saw Islamophobic views become even more mainstream not only in politics, but also in media, education and other spheres of life. The report analyses the processes of banalisation of Islamophobia in Poland in 2016 and bringing it into mainstream public discourse, and shows how these processes have also contributed to the rising level of hate crimes and in particular those of anti-Islamic character. The report also highlights the fact that the most significant change in comparison to the situation in 2015 is the attitude of the key ministries responsible for dealing with these kinds of crimes: the ministries now refuse to properly address the issues lurking behind Islamophobia. In spite of numerous calls to the ministries to follow through with their responsibilities by the Ombudsman and various civil society actors the relevant ministers either seemed not to see the problem of the rising number of racist, xenophobic and Islamophobic attacks or downplayed the actual cases of hate crimes by considering them as simple instances of hooliganism. The report begins with the assessment of key developments and Islamophobic incidents in 2016 and then analyses Islamophobia in various spheres of social life. It points out key institutions that used Islamophobic speech last year as well as some counter-Islamophobia initiatives. It ends with concluding remarks and with recommendations for ways that Poland could be less prejudiced and become a more tolerant and inclusive country towards all types of "Others" including "Muslim Others".

## Streszczenie

Choć społeczność muzułmańska w Polsce stanowi nie więcej niż 0,1 procent populacji, to społeczeństwo polskie uważa, że 7 procent, czyli znacznie ponad 2 miliony muzułmanów mieszka w kraju. Przeszacowywanie wielkości społeczności muzułmańskiej przez mieszkańców Polski jest bezpośrednio związane z postrzeganiem islamu jako zagrożenia. Jak pokazało wiele studiów porównawczych, Polacy, którzy mają bardzo ograniczony kontakt z muzułmanami, są jednym z narodów europejskich, który najbardziej obawia się islamu i jego wiernych. Jeśli rok 2015, w którym odbywały się wybory parlamentarne w cieniu kryzysu migracyjnego, cechował się znaczącym nasileniem się publicznej ekspresji poglądów anty-muzułmańskich, to w 2016 można zaobserwować dalszą popularyzację postaw islamofobicznych w polityce, mediach, edukacji i innych sferach życia. Niniejszy raport analizuje procesy popularyzacji i banalizacji islamofobii w Polsce w 2016 i pokazuje jak przyczyniły się one do wzrostu nasilenia przestępstw nienawiści, a w szczególności tych o charakterze anty-muzułmańskim. Zauważa również, że jedną z rzeczy która uległa znaczącej zmianie w porównaniu do sytuacji z 2015, to postawa kluczowych Ministerstw odpowiedzialnych za zwalczanie tego typu przestępstw. Pomimo licznych apeli Rzecznika Praw Obywatelskich i rozmaitych aktorów społeczeństwa obywatelskiego Ministrowie odpowiedzialni za takie działania albo wydawali się nie dostrzegać wzrastającej liczby ataków rasistowskich, ksenofobicznych i islamofobicznych albo traktowali je jako przypadki chuliganizmu. Raport rozpoczyna się od omówienia głównych przemian i incydentów islamofobicznych w minionym roku, a następnie analizuje islamofobię w różnych sferach życia społecznego. Wskazuje również na główne instytucje, które używają anty-muzułmańskiej narracji oraz wybrane inicjatywy mające na celu walkę z islamofobią. Kończy się podsumowaniem oraz rekomendacjami wskazującymi w jaki sposób Polska może stać się nie tylko krajem mniej uprzedzonym do „obcych”, ale również bardziej tolerancyjnym i inkluzywnym dla różnych grup „innych”, w tym „muzułmańskich innych”.

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

While the latest Ipsos Mori poll has shown that all the EU societies analysed in the study overestimate the number of Muslims in their countries<sup>2</sup>, it is the Poles who are in Europe the unquestionable champion of such overestimations. If the peoples' perceptions are taken into account there should be in Poland 2,6 million Muslims which would make Polish Muslim population one of the largest in the European Union after French, German and the British one. If the expert's suggestions of the size of the Muslim population are taken into account then the estimation based on perception is 70 times higher than in the reality, and over 500 times higher than in the reality when it is based on the GUS official size<sup>3</sup>. The Ipsos "Perils of Perception" study shows also that Poles believe that their country will experience in the next years a massive conversion to Islam or huge wave of immigration of 600,000 Muslims per year (both equally unlikely) as the size of Muslim population in the country in their eyes is supposed to grow up to 13% of the total population (5 million people) in 2020. If this was to happen the Muslim population in Poland would have overpassed not only that of Italy, Spain and the Netherlands but even the British one which has grown dynamically from 1,6 million in 2001 to 2,8 million in 2011<sup>4</sup>. In terms of the speed of expected growth of the country's Muslim community Poland has been overtaken in the Ipsos study only by Hungary.<sup>5</sup> In contrast to Hungary though, that experienced a particularly large inflow of migrants in 2015 as it stood on the Balkan migration path, Poland has not served even as a transit country in the last years' increased migratory mobility across Europe<sup>6</sup>. Interestingly the Ipsos research shows also that Poles who are so mistaken about the size of the country's Muslim population in many other issues and phenomena researched were quite accurate. The 'Perils of the Perception' study showed actually that that their overall level of accuracy among the 40 analyzed

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1. Some data included in this report were collected within a project "Islamophobia in Germany, Poland and Russia, with Particular Attention to Its Christian Dimension" carried out in collaboration with the School of Historical and Contemporary Studies at the Södertörn University (Sweden).

2. For example in Italy 6 times more than the actual size, in France almost 5 times more and Belgium 4 times more. Ipsos Mori, *Perceptions are not reality: what the world gets wrong*, 15.12.2016, <https://www.ipsos-mori.com/research-publications/researcharchive/3817/Perceptions-are-not-reality-what-the-world-gets-wrong.aspx>, 17.12.2016.

3. According to the Central Statistical Office of Poland (GUS) the Muslim population in the country is made up of 5,108 persons, whereas the expert estimations suggest that there are around 35,000 Muslims among circa 38 million inhabitants of the country.

4. MCB, *British Muslims in Numbers*, Muslim Council of Britain, London 2015.

5. Hungarians think that their Muslim population will grow within the next four years to 14% of the population from the current size similar to Polish one that is less than 0,1% of the society. Significantly politicized in the country migration crisis and then the referendum on reception of refugees that Victor Orban lost only because the turnout was lower than the expected 50% of eligible voters, had clearly played a key role in such perceptions.

6. At the same time it is worth recalling that Poland has significantly contributed in the last 2 decades to EU mobility pushing out of the country over 2 million of its own citizens searching for work and better living conditions. GUS, *Informacja o rozmiarach i kierunkach czasowej emigracji z Polski w latach 2004–2015*, GUS, Warszawa 2016.



countries was quite high and even higher than the one recorded for example in France, Spain, Hungary, Japan and Belgium.<sup>7</sup> The aforementioned exaggeration of the size of Muslim community in Poland is clearly linked with perception of Islam as threat. This report aims at shedding light on how this perception has been produced and re-produced over 2016 and how it influenced various spheres of life.

## Production and Re-Production of the Muslim Other

As several comparative studies have shown Poles are one of the European nations that is most afraid of Islam and its believers<sup>8</sup>. This fear in a way obstructs the inhabitants of the country to see the reality behind their simplified perceptions of the followers of Islam. Muslims are quite widely viewed as the ‘other’ and a serious threat to ‘our way of life’ and ‘our social and cultural norms and values’ as well as if not yet, then ‘prospective terrorists’. Thus, apart from socio – cultural fears the figure of a Muslim arouses economic fears (about the distribution of public resources), political fears (resulting from a sense that supranational bodies are eroding national sovereignty) and last but not least security fears (due to concerns about crime and terrorism).<sup>9</sup> The research on the perception of foreigners by Poles carried out in 2016 by Ipsos for the International Organisation for Migration found that there has been a growth of social fears and anxieties related with the prospective inflow of migrants in comparison with the similar poll in 2015. The most afraid were those over 60 years old and those who have never had contact with foreigners. 6 out of 10 said that “foreigners are a threat to the country” whereas 80% believed that “foreigners are a threat to our security” and every third person claimed they “take our jobs”. The study has also shown that Arabs, who are most commonly associated in Poland with Muslims, are seen as the most culturally distant group from Poles and the group that is viewed with the least trust. Three fourth of the respondents would not accept an Arab as a member of their family – an attitude very rare when matched with any other analysed national or ethnic group.<sup>10</sup>

7. Ipsos Mori, „Perceptions are not reality: what the world gets wrong”, op. cit.

8. A. Zick, *Intolerance, Prejudice and Discrimination: A European Report*, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Berlin 2011, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/do/07908-20110311.pdf>; Amnesty International, *Refugees Welcome Index shows government refugee policies out of touch with public opinion*, 19.05.2015, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/05/refugees-welcome-index-shows-government-refugee-policies-out-of-touch/>, 24.05.2016; CBOS, *Postawy wobec islamu i muzułmanów (Attitudes towards Islam and Muslims)*, Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej, Warszawa 2015.

9. B. Bachman, *Diminishing Solidarity: Polish Attitudes toward the European Migration and Refugee Crisis*, 15.06.2016, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/diminishing-solidarity-polish-attitudes-toward-european-migration-and-refugee-crisis>, 22.12.2016; M. Buchowski, *Making Anthropology Matter in the Heyday of Islamophobia and the “Refugee Crisis”: The Case of Poland.*, „Český lid”, 2016, no 103, pp. 67–51.

10. IOM, *Badanie na temat postaw wobec cudzoziemców w Polsce*, International Organisation of Migration, Warszawa 2016.

Other research shows also that such negative attitudes towards Muslims have developed in Poland by and large in the absence of any contact with followers of Islam. Only one or two out of ten Poles has ever had any contact with a Muslim and if they did it was only temporary one (e.g. during holidays to Egypt or Turkey – particularly in the past favourite tourist destinations among Poles).<sup>11</sup> Similar results were also revealed in research carried out last year by the Centre for Research on Prejudice at University of Warsaw and Foundation Common Space. According to it 80% of Poles did not know any Muslim and 73% had negative attitude towards them.<sup>12</sup> However, if Polish citizens remain to have limited contact with Muslim persons in their daily life they have been flooded with a wave of orientalist and Islamophobic views and images in the larger public sphere. The “Muslim alien” is thus not completely unknown or alien to Poles since the society clearly recognizes Muslim persons as alien without knowing them. Muslims are in a way well known to the wider society since it views them as “aliens”<sup>13</sup>.

The exaggeration of the size of the current Muslim community in Poland in the eyes of the Polish citizens and unrealistic predictions of its future growth are clearly linked also with the believe people put in the information disseminated by the mass media and public figures. In 2015 several mass media outlets and key politicians using the images from countries experiencing increasing inflow of migrants and refugees argued that the same faith will be shared by Poland and soon the country will be “flooded” or “invaded” by migrants. The right wing weekly *W Sieci*, for example, put on its cover (first from the left below) the well known scene from the beginning of the Second World War when Nazi Germans were entering Poland but this time with Muslim supposedly “migrants and refugees” in place of Wehrmacht soldiers. The title on the cover stated “They are coming”. Another right wing weekly *Do Rzeczy* showed crowds of migrants on the Balkan path (second from the left) and stated “They are invaders not refugees”. The cover of the bimonthly Catholic magazine *Polonia Christiana* from November-December 2015 featured a masked person with a bomb and a clock in the hands and the title “Immigrants - Caliphate’s Fifth Column” (see the aforementioned covers below).

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11. CBOS, *Postawy wobec islamu i muzułmanów (Attitudes towards Islam and Muslims)*..., op. cit.

12. J. Klimowicz, *19-letni uczeń nawoływał do podpalenia meczetu w Kruszyńskich*, n.d., <http://bialystok.wyborcza.pl/bialystok/1,35241,18317737,19-letni-uczen-nawolywal-do-podpalenia-meczetu-w-kruszyńskich.html>, 23.02.2016.

13. The critical view on the contact theory with regards to Islamophobia in Poland is explored in more depth in Narkowicz, K. and Pędziwiatr K. (2017) *Aliens in the Urban Space: Residents of Warsaw Towards the Mosque-building Projects*. In: Górny, A. et al. *Po sąsiedzku z różnorodnością*. Warszawa: WUW.



Figure 1: Covers of weeklies *W Sieci* ("They are coming") and *Do Rzeczy* ("They are invaders not refugees") and the bimonthly *Polonia Christiana* ("Immigrants - Caliphate's Fifth Column").

All these covers and many other similar images and statements made by the key politicians in the country resulted in the serious exaggeration of the threat and had also significant impact on the perception of the size of the Muslim community in the country. In line with the Thomas's theorem ("If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences") – Poles defined the supposed inflow of Muslim as real although in reality it was not taking place, and thus produced significant increase of the size of Muslim population that was totally imaginary. The theorem suggests also that it is not only our thoughts that are affected by our perception of the social reality but also our deeds. The interpretation of a situation in the country as the "Muslim invasion" and attack on "our culture or our way of life" quickly caused also certain supposedly "defensive actions" (see below subchapter Verbal and Physical Attacks).

What has significantly changed in comparison to the situation in 2015 is the attitude of the persons in the key position of state authority responsible for dealing with these kinds of crimes to properly address the issues behind them. In spite of numerous calls to do that by various civil society' actors (e.g. Coalition of Equal Chances - *Koalicja Równych Szans*) the relevant Ministers either pretended not to see the problem of rising number of racist, xenophobic and Islamophobic attacks or downplayed the actual cases of hate crimes considering them as only instances of hooliganism. The Minister of Interior Affairs and Administration Mariusz Błaszczak on several occasion said for instance that recurrent xenophobic attacks on foreigners in Poland in 2016 were "not common" but "marginal".<sup>14</sup> At the same time similar kind of attacks on Polish nationals in the United Kingdom resulted in high rank visit to London of the Polish Ministers (including Minister of International Affairs and Minister of Interior Affairs and Administration) and calls on the British government to address the issue of growth of anti-immigrant sentiments of increased xenophobic attacks in the country in the post-Brexit context which the government of Theresa May did acknowledge

14. S. Bujalski, „Polska walczy z obcymi. Rośnie liczba ataków rasistowskich i ksenofobicznych”, op. cit.

and address.<sup>15</sup> In one of the interviews after the “emergency visit” to London Minister Błaszczak said that the reason why Britons are attacking Poles is because “due to political correctness they cannot show their frustration with Muslims.”<sup>16</sup>

In spite of the calls of the Rectors of Polish Universities<sup>17</sup> to the government to address the issue of increased number of attacks on foreign student and especially those visibility different and visibly/possibly Muslim, the Minister of Science and Higher Education Jarosław Gowin on several occasions refused to take any action. In one of the latest communications on this subject during the Ministry’s conference in Wrocław he said that “There is no racism at the Polish universities and no attack has taken place on their premises but in other localities. This kind of attacks are disgraceful but only incidents. Generally, we do not have a problem of racist attacks on foreign students”.<sup>18</sup> Earlier in April 2016 the Prime Minister Beata Szydło, clearly sharing the views of Minister Gowin with regards to the level of tolerance of the Polish society towards largely understood others, resolved the Council for Fight with Racism and Xenophobia that was launched in 2011 by then Prime Minister Donald Tusk. At the same time the government cut out from the educational materials about the hate crimes for Police forces the chapter dealing with symbolics and ideas of the Far Right. These actions have been aptly summed up the Polish Ombudsman Adam Bodnar who pointed out that “The politicians who refuse to take actions against racist or xenophobic attacks and pretend that these are only incidents of hooliganism and that the problem does not exist only create a consenting atmosphere for such attacks”.<sup>19</sup>

## Significant Incidents and Developments

If 2015, as the year of presidential and parliamentary elections, marked the significant rise in the public expression of anti-Muslim sentiments that in the context of the so-called “refugee crisis” moved from the margins of society and became elements of the political battle, in 2016 Islamophobic views were brought further mainstream not only in politics, but also in media, education and other spheres of life. Islamophobic views did not only pass the “dinner table tests”, to use the famous

15. J. Watts, *Theresa May called the Polish PM to express “deep regret” over attacks on EU citizens*, 9.09.2016, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/theresa-may-has-called-the-polish-prime-minister-to-express-deep-regret-over-post-brex-it-attacks-a7235046.html>, 26.12.2016.

16. M. Albin, *Mariusz Błaszczak już wie, dlaczego Brytyjczycy biją Polaków. „To wina muzułmańskich imigrantów”*, 2016, <http://natemat.pl/190783,blaszczak-wie-dlaczego-brytyjczycy-bija-polakow-to-wina-muzulmanskich-imigrantow>, 26.12.2016.

17. Politechnika Warszawska, *Uczelnie przeciw rasizmowi – rektorzy reagują na ksenofobię*, 11.05.2016, <https://www.pw.edu.pl/Uczelnia/Aktualnosci/Uczelnie-przeciw-rasizmowi-rektorzy-reaguja-na-ksenofobie>, 25.12.2016.

18. Wyborcza.pl, *Jarosław Gowin: Nie ma problemu rasizmu wobec zagranicznych studentów*, 8.12.2016, <http://wroclaw.wyborcza.pl/wroclaw/1,35771,21089956,jaroslaw-gowin-nie-ma-problemu-rasizmu-wobec-zagranicznych.html>, 26.12.2016.

19. S. Bujalski, „Polska walczy z obcymi. Rośnie liczba ataków rasistowskich i ksenofobicznych”, op. cit.

expression by Warsi,<sup>20</sup> by becoming self-explanatory in the context of the private sphere, but also became increasingly present and accepted in public debates. The terrorist attacks carried out by the operatives of DAESH in Europe (in particular the attacks in Brussels in March, in Nice in July, and in Berlin in December) strongly reaffirmed the perspective of those who held essentialist views of Muslims and Islam, and served as a powerful weapon to fight against those who think differently. Thus, Islamophobic views became increasingly banalised in the course of 2016 similarly to the ideas and symbols of nationhood in the conception of banal nationalism.<sup>21</sup> If contemporary nationalism is banalised through the everyday representations of the nation which builds a shared sense of national belonging amongst a given group of people, Islamophobia in the same way is banalised in today's Poland: throughout the omnipresent unquestioned representations of Muslims as bloodthirsty, violent, aggressive, undemocratic, etc. which are taken for granted by the majority of society. As a consequence, the unquestioned, essentialist views of Muslims and Islam are being increasingly and widely held across the political spectrum, not only by right-wing elites, intellectuals and voters, but also increasingly by those who traditionally vote for central and left parties.

It is important to understand the anti-Muslim sentiments in Poland in 2016 as a continuation of the processes that started in 2015 when the figure of a Muslim traditionally viewed as the external enemy and usually mentioned in relation to external events such as the killings of Polish soldiers participating in the military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, Polish victims of major terrorist attacks (9/11/2002 Bali bombing, 3/11 and 7/7), the controversies surrounding the Danish cartoons of the Prophet, or the Pope's speech in Regensburg, became increasingly viewed as an internal enemy and symbolised by the figure of the immigrant/refugee. As shown above it did not matter that this was mainly an imaginary enemy as there was no substantial inflow of immigrants and refugees to Poland; a significant part of society believed that it actually took place and increasingly started to view Muslim and Islam as an internal problem. This transformation was part of the larger political change in Poland brought by the October 2015 parliamentary elections. These elections, for the first time since 1989, brought a single party to power - the right-wing Law and Justice Party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość PIS) - giving it the majority of seats in parliament. The elections also paved the way to parliament for the members of the far-right National Movement

20. David Batty, "Lady Warsi claims Islamophobia is now socially acceptable in Britain," *The Guardian*, (January 20, 2011), retrieved January 18, 2017, from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/jan/20/lady-warsi-islamophobia-muslims-prejudice>.

21. Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage Publications, 1997).

(Ruch Narodowy) as part of the Kukiz'15<sup>22</sup>. Both parties (as well as KORWIN that narrowly missed the 5% threshold) used very strong anti-refugee slogans in their campaigns portraying the so-called “refugee crisis” as a “Muslim invasion” in disguise. This has clearly played a significant role in the change of Polish society's attitudes towards refugees: from cautious openness in May 2015 to a situation, in July 2016, when the majority of Poles believe that Poland should not accept asylum seekers from the MENA region.<sup>23</sup>

Although the government led by Beata Szydło initially claimed that it would honour the promises made by the former government about the acceptance of circa 7,000 refugees in Poland within the European relocation scheme,<sup>24</sup> very quickly it became apparent, first through the statements of the Ministers of European Affairs and of Foreign Affairs and then by Szydło's statements that the new Polish authorities would do everything in order not to fulfil the agreement's obligations. From the first day in office the members of government of Beata Szydło and the Prime Minister herself claimed that the so-called “refugee crisis” has nothing to do with refugees and is only about economic migration. At the same time, paradoxically, the Prime Minister while giving a speech in the European Parliament portrayed the inflow of Ukrainians to Poland not as economic migration (as it is) but as refugee migration.<sup>25</sup> After the terrorist attacks in Brussels in March 2016, Beata Szydło famously announced that Poland would not accept any refugees under the European plan and said that “I see no possibility at this time of immigrants coming to Poland.”<sup>26</sup> The migration data from the end of 2016 show that the Prime Minister has managed to keep her promise as not a single refugee arrived to Poland within the relocation scheme and very few of those who applied for international protection were granted it: in the first half of 2016, out of almost 7,000 people who applied for asylum only 121 were granted such status and from this limited group 37 persons were Russians (usually Chechens), 25 Syrians, 18 Iraqis and 10 Ukrainians.<sup>27</sup> In contrast to Victor Orban who tried to oppose the relocation scheme by organising a nationwide refer-

22. The electoral block and parliamentary club led by punk musician Paweł Kukiz that achieved very good results (21% of votes) in the first round of the presidential elections in May 2015. The block, which is not formally registered as a political party as one of its key postulates is to “destroy particracy”, is made up of right-wing and far-right elements.

23. CBOS, *Stosunek Polaków do przyjmowania uchodźców*, (Warsaw: CBOS, 2016).

24. Konrad Pędziwiatr/Agnieszka Legut, “Polish Governments on the European Strategy of Dealing with Migration Crisis (Polskie rządy wobec unijnej strategii na rzecz przeciwdziałania kryzysowi migracyjnemu),” Konstanty A. Wojtaszczyk/Jolanta Szymańska (eds.), *Refugees in Europe (Uchodźcy w Europie - uwarunkowania, istota, następstwa)* (Warsaw: Warsaw University Press, 2016).

25. Gazeta Prawna, “Szydło w PE o milionie ukraińskich uchodźców w Polsce. “W 2015 r. było ich dwóch,” *gazetaprawna.pl*, (January 20, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from <http://www.gazetaprawna.pl/artykuly/918747,szydlo-milion-ukrainskich-uchodzcow-w-polsce.html>, 27.12.2016.

26. Jan Cieski, “Poland slams door on refugees,” *politico.eu*, (March 23, 2016), retrieved December 27, 2016, from <http://www.politico.eu/article/poland-slams-door-on-refugees-beata-szydlo>.

27. Daniel Flis, “Komisja Europejska: tylko Polska i Węgry nie przyjmują uchodźców,” *oko.press*, (December 11, 2016), retrieved December 27, 2016, from <https://oko.press/komisja-europejska-polska-wegry-przyjmujacy-uchodzcow>.

endum on the issue, the Polish government used a strategy of ignoring the scheme provisions. This is one of the reasons the Law and Justice Party did not endorse the campaign initiated by Kukiz15 and led by its far-right elements to organise a referendum on the acceptance of refugees. After 10 months of collecting signatures for the petition to organise such a referendum, its organisers were still missing circa 200,000 signatures.<sup>28</sup> The initiative, which to this day has been unsuccessful, provided the far right and many other right-wing actors the opportunity to constantly mobilise people against refugees who were portrayed as “Muslim terrorists” or soon-to-become “Muslim terrorists”. As Bachman aptly notices the Poles’ willingness to utilize EU free movement provisions to their advantage through labour migration, and their unwillingness to share the burden of refugees arriving in Europe has led other EU countries to accuse Poland of hypocrisy.<sup>29</sup>

The Polish authorities seemed not to pay much attention to the voices of criticism from the European capitals focusing more on the social mood in the country. Several studies carried out in the last years showed that Poles are very sceptical about accepting refugees. The study by Amnesty International, for example, showed that only 56% of respondents in Poland said that they would accept people fleeing war or persecutions in their country. Out of 27 countries in which the study was conducted more negative attitudes towards refugees than in Poland were present only in Russia. Thus, according to Amnesty International, Poland has one of the lowest scores on the refugee welcome index.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, the research carried out by the University of Warsaw showed that the majority of Poles (between 55 and 76%), both men and women, supported the use of physical and psychological violence while dealing with refugees, including forced deportation of persons illegally crossing the state borders, control and monitoring of refugees, and use of force.<sup>31</sup> The findings of the quantitative projects are confirmed by the qualitative research. In an interview with the author, Grzegorz Lindenberg, one of the leaders of the association Europe of the Future that plays a key role in the country’s network of promoting the stereotypical vision of Muslims and Islam, proudly pointed out that “What we have been saying about Muslims and Islam

28. Rafał Zychal, “W Polsce nie będzie referendum w sprawie uchodźców,” *wiadomosci.onet.pl*, (October 20, 2016) retrieved December 19, 2016, from <http://wiadomosci.onet.pl/tylko-w-onecie/w-polsce-nie-bedzie-referendum-w-sprawie-uchodzcow/8n85j4>.

29. Bart Bachman, “Diminishing Solidarity: Polish Attitudes toward the European Migration and Refugee Crisis,” *migrationpolicy.org*, (June 16, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/diminishing-solidarity-polish-attitudes-toward-european-migration-and-refugee-crisis>.

30. Amnesty International, “Refugees Welcome Index shows government refugee policies out of touch with public opinion,” *amnesty.org*, (May 19, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2016, from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/05/refugees-welcome-index-shows-government-refugee-policies-out-of-touch>.

31. Aleksandra Świdowska/Mikołaj Winiewski/Karolina Hansen, “Przemoc jako rozwiązanie? Napływ uchodźców w opiniach Polaków,” *Centrum Badań na Uprzedzeniach*, (2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from [http://cbu.psychologia.pl/uploads/images/foto/Raport\\_WinSwiHan2016\\_clean.pdf](http://cbu.psychologia.pl/uploads/images/foto/Raport_WinSwiHan2016_clean.pdf).

for a long time became part of the mainstream. Our views are the views of the majority of people in Poland and the majority of politicians”.<sup>32</sup>

The banalisation and mainstream position of Islamophobic views has been significantly enhanced in 2016 by the post-election transformations in the state-owned Polish Television (Telewizja Polska - TVP) and Polish Radio (Polish Radio - PR). With the new leadership of TVP and PR, placed there by the victorious right-wing Law and Justice Party and its parliamentary supporters, particularly the information programmes of TVP (and to a smaller degree of PR) started to undergo a deep transformation opening the television and radio studios not only to a whole range of new right-wing journalists and commentators but also to far-right and openly Islamophobic individuals. Thus, Miriam Shaded and other so-called “critics of Islam” started to be presented as “experts” on Islam and Muslim populations in Europe and elsewhere, and became increasingly frequent guests on various information programmes and debates.



Figure 2: Graffiti by the football fans of Wisła Kraków in one of the districts of Kraków stating “Every arab<sup>33</sup> (sic) should remember that for us Poland is sacred”. (Photo by Konrad Pędziwiatr)

One of the important developments that have had a significant influence on the country’s key narratives on Islam and Muslims in 2016 was the intensification of the process of sacralisation of the nation.<sup>34</sup> As Michał Buchowski rightly notes in Poland, where one may observe crosses present in almost every school and in many other public spaces, where there are religious classes in public schools, numerous religious monuments, national heroes presented as martyrs, religiously motivated restrictive abortion laws, etc., there is a strong intertwining of Catholicism and nationalism; in other words, Poland is constructed as a hybrid of the sacred and the profane.<sup>35</sup> In a new political context (locally and globally) a profane nation is converted into a holy body of a nation that is endangered not only by cultural Others, but - above all - by religious Others. In this scheme, Islam is presented as the most important enemy and

32. Interview with Grzegorz Lindenberg, member of the Board of Management of the Europe of the Future Association and the portal *Euroislam.pl* in Warsaw (September 20, 2016).

33. In the Polish language, similarly to English, the word “Arab” designating the people originating from the Middle East and North Africa should be written with a capital letter. The mistake seems deliberate to linguistically diminish this specific group of people.

34. It is important to stress that this process has a very long history; see for example: Maria Janion, *Niesamowita Słowiańszczyzna*, (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2006). And: Michał Łuczewski, *Odwieczny naród. Polak i katolik w Żmijęcej*, (Toruń: Fundacja na rzecz Nauki Polskiej, 2012).

35. Michał Buchowski, “Making Anthropology Matter in the Heyday of Islamophobia and the ‘Refugee Crisis’: The Case of Poland,” *Český lid*, 103 (2016), p. 51-67.



key threat to the nation. In the most extreme version, this threat (as imminent) was presented in 2016 by a young charismatic Catholic priest, Jacek Międlar, who was suspended by his religious order (Zgromadzenie Księża Misjonarzy) for spreading openly anti-Semitic and Islamophobic views and later announced his intentions of leaving it. He became a symbol of the marriage of certain segments of Polish Catholicism with the far-right movements (Wszecpolacy and ONR), especially after leading a Holy Mass and delivering a sermon in support of the far-right organisation ONR in Białystok Cathedral. This process of intensified sacralisation of the nation that is seen as threatened by cultural and religious aliens is well captured in football fans' graffiti on a street in Kraków with a crossed-out sign of a mosque and of DAESH and the statement "Every arab (sic) should remember that for us (KP – fans of Wisła Kraków) Poland is sacred". (Figure 1)

The increase in anti-Muslim prejudice in the public sphere in 2016 began straight after New Year's Eve as the information about the attacks by groups of men (many of North African descent) on women in German cities, in particular Cologne, started to emerge in the media. The complaints of theft, sexual harassment and other abuse fed into an already growing backlash against European policies welcoming migrants and refugees, particularly an influx from war-torn Syria. In spite of the fact that according to police reports there were almost no refugees amongst the attackers,<sup>36</sup> many newspapers, especially right-wing ones, in Poland depicted the incidents as directly linked with the influx of refugees to Germany in 2015. The newspapers that earlier described the so-called "refugee crisis" in terms of a "Muslim invasion" now found proof that the only reason the migrants came to Europe was to "rape our women" and "steal our money". The most provocative in the Islamophobic framing of the New Year's Eve attacks was the conservative weekly magazine *W Sieci* (The Network) whose February cover with the title "The Islamic Rape of Europe" and a blonde woman draped in a European Union flag being groped by three men (six dark-skinned arms and hands) sparked international outrage. (Figure 2) As the *Washington Post* aptly pointed out "The message of the cover is so clear that it barely needs the brutal cover line" and that the cover fits into a long history of racism.<sup>37</sup> The magazine blurb promised "a report about what the media and Brussels elite are hiding from the citizens of the European Union". In its editorial Aleksandra Rybińska wrote that "The people of Old Europe after the events of New Year's Eve in Cologne painfully realised the problems arising from the massive influx of immigrants." She

36. Kirsty Major, "Polish magazine causes outrage with cover showing white woman being sexually attacked by 'migrants'," *The Independent*, (February 17, 2016), retrieved December 31, 2016, from [/www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/polish-magazine-causes-outrage-with-cover-showing-white-woman-being-sexually-attacked-by-migrants-a6879551.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/polish-magazine-causes-outrage-with-cover-showing-white-woman-being-sexually-attacked-by-migrants-a6879551.html).

37. Ishaan Tharoor, "The so-called "Islamic rape of Europe" is part of a long and racist history," *Washington Post*, (February 16, 2016), retrieved December 31, 2016, from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/02/18/the-so-called-islamic-rape-of-europe-is-part-of-a-long-and-racist-history>.

went on to say, “The first signs that things were going wrong, however, were there a lot earlier. They were still ignored or were minimised in significance in the name of tolerance and political correctness.” The February edition of the magazine also carried articles headlined “Does Europe Want to Commit Suicide?” and “The Hell of Europe” dealing with the issues of the so-called “refugee crisis” and its consequences.<sup>38</sup> This type of narrative was strengthened by more nuanced articles by central and left-wing mass media outlets, which however maintained the same “clash of civilization” and anti-Muslim logic. Importantly they were also strengthened by the statements of the country’s key politicians. The Minister of Foreign Affairs Witold Waszczykowski wrote a letter to his German counterpart demanding information whether there were Polish women among the victims of the attacks. Earlier in a TV interview commenting on the New Year’s Eve attacks he argued that the so-called “refugee crisis” has been used by the DAESH and other terrorist organisations “to fight with our civilisation on our land”.<sup>39</sup>



Figure 3: February 2016 cover of the magazine *W Sieci* - “The Islamic Rape of Europe”.

## Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Employment

Due to the small size of the Muslim community in Poland, its high dispersion across the country and the lack of well-developed channels of registering Islamophobic incidents in the labour market it is difficult to assess the level of discriminatory practices towards Muslims in this sphere of social life. Numerous research into the discrimination against foreigners in Poland shows, however, that exclusionary practices towards people considered as ‘Others’ do occur in the labour market as well and might be quite frequent depending on the social status/class of the persons concerned and the sector of the economy.<sup>40</sup>

38. *W Sieci*, no. 7, 15-21 Feb, 2016.

39. *Wyborcza.pl*, “*Waszczykowski pisze do szefa MSZ Niemiec w sprawie ataków na kobiety w Kolonii: Szanowny panie ministrze, drogi kolego...*,” *wyborcza.pl*, (January 7, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from <http://wyborcza.pl/1,75398,19440631,waszczykowski-pisze-do-szefa-msz-niemiec-w-sprawie-atakow-na.html>.

40. Witold Klaus (ed.), *Sąsiedzi czy intruzi? O dyskryminacji cudzoziemców w Polsce*, (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Interwencji Prawnej i Instytut Spraw Publicznych, n.d.); Jan Brzozowski/K. Pędziwiatr, “Analiza procesu integracji imigrantów w Małopolsce,” *Imigranci w Małopolsce: między integracją, asymilacją, separacją i marginalizacją* (Kraków: Akademia Ignatianum w Krakowie, 2014), p. 117-290.

## Education

According to Article 53, Section 4 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 1997, the religion of every officially recognised religious community may be taught in schools on the condition that the freedom of conscience and religion of other persons is not violated. Thus, Muslim religious instruction may be taught in Polish schools both by the Muslim Religious Union and by other Muslim religious organisations listed in the registry of churches and religious communities. Article 12 of the 1991 Act contains a regulation that public kindergartens, primary and junior high schools provide religious instruction upon the parents' or students' request. According to Article 13 of the Education System Act, schools and public institutions are obliged to enable students to cultivate their religious identity through studying their own history and culture. A public educational institution is obliged to provide religious education if it is requested by at least seven pupils or students in a class or unit. In the case of a smaller number of students, religious instruction is provided in joint-class or joint-unit groups. According to the study carried out by Nalborczyk and Pędziwiatr there are currently 350 children attending religious education classes organised usually outside of the school premises.<sup>41</sup> Some Muslim teachers complained about the difficulties they have experienced in communicating with the Local Educational Authorities. For example, the Muslim Centre in Poznań used to have problems with some schools from outside of Poznań that did not want to recognise the grades given by the Muslim League teachers.<sup>42</sup> In another publicised case, the authorities in Częstochowa not only did not want to organise Islam classes for Muslim teachers from the town but some local councillors, acting against the law, tried to prevent the transfer of funds from the city to Katowice for the provision of religious education for inhabitants of Częstochowa.<sup>43</sup> Many teachers of Islam have complained about the growing hostile atmosphere, and the xenophobia and Islamophobia fuelled inter alia by the so-called "refugee crisis" and the terrorist attacks carried out in the name of Allah.<sup>44</sup> In these new circumstances, they have had to devote extra time during their classes to explain current affairs.

The larger educational sphere is to a certain degree a reflection of wider society and as a result, the rise of xenophobic and racist sentiments in wider society is also clearly detectable in the educational sphere. The latest report by the Anti-discrimination Education Association points out to numerous cases of xenophobic and

41. Agata Nalborczyk/Konrad Pędziwiatr, "Between Old Traditions and New Diversities: Islamic Religious Education in Poland," Jenny Berglund (ed.) *European Perspectives on Islamic Education and Public Schooling* (London: Equinox Publication, 2017).

42. Interview with Youssef Chadid in Poznań (March 9, 2016).

43. Interview with Abdelwahab Bouali in Katowice (March 10, 2016).

44. Interviews with Ali Abi Issa in Wrocław (February 29, 2016), Youssef Chadid (March 9, 2016), and Paweł Dudek in Lublin (March 10, 2016)

Islamophobic incidents in primary and secondary education. In one case a teacher in a Warsaw school asked pupils who want to get the best mark (6) to write eight reasons why “Islam is bad”.<sup>45</sup> Press articles<sup>46</sup> and radio programmes<sup>47</sup> point to the growing need expressed by teachers to deal with the issue of hate speech in the school environment, an issue that has been generated inter alia by the discourse about the so-called “refugee crisis”.

It is also worth noting how in 2016 self-styled “experts on Islam and Muslim population in Europe” have been invited to higher educational institutions to promote Islamophobic views to wider audiences. In one case, the Department of Political and Legal Doctrines of the University of Wrocław invited Dr. Piotr Ślusarczyk, who holds a PhD in Polish language studies, from the anti-Muslim web portal *Euroislam.pl* and the Europe of the Future Association, to lecture on “the socio-cultural consequences of political Islam in Europe”.<sup>48</sup> In another case, Miriam Shaded was invited by the Department of Civil and Economic Law of the Cracow University of Economics to a conference on “Islam in the International and National Legal Space” to speak about “Ritual Female Circumcision in Islam”. The two-day conference on Islam and Islamic law did not have a single Muslim or Arabic-speaking Shariah expert among the panellists who could challenge some of the Orientalistic and Islamophobic views expressed during the proceedings.<sup>49</sup>

## Politics

As mentioned above the sphere of politics provided an important arena for promoting anti-Muslim prejudice and fear in 2016. With five members of the far right in Parliament (entered as part of Kukiz15) and the ruling Law and Justice flirting with the far right and trying to seek their support locally<sup>50</sup> the xenophobic and Islamophobic narratives became very popular. The terrorist attack in Brussels in March, in Nice in July and in Berlin in December provided politicians with additional arguments in political battles in which they happily used if not openly anti-Muslim,

45. Magdalena Chustecka/Elżbiety Kielak/Marty Rawłuszko, *Edukacja antydyskryminacyjna - ostatni dzwonek!* (Warsaw: Towarzystwo Edukacji Antydyskryminacyjnej, 2016).

46. For example: Wojciech Karpieszuk, “Temat uchodźców w warszawskich szkołach. Narasta mowa nienawiści,” *wyborcza.pl*, (April 27, 2016), retrieved January 3, 2017, from <http://wyborcza.pl/1,75248,19982594,szkoly-w-warszawie-temat-lekcji-uchodzcy-czyli-ksenofobia.html>.

47. Anna Ryczkowska, “Ksenofobia w polskich szkołach. Uchodźca oczami dzieci: brudas, wróg, terrorysta [POŚLUCHAJ],” *rdc.pl*, (December 27, 2016), retrieved January 4, 2017, from <http://www.rdc.pl/informacje/ksenofobia-w-polskich-szkolach-uchodzca-oczami-dzieci-brudas-wrog-terrorysta-posluchaj/>.

48. More details about the programme within which the lecture of Dr. Ślusarczyk was organised are available here: <http://uni.wroc.pl/wiadomo%C5%9Bci/administracji-i-ekonomii-uwr/wyk%C5%82ady-w-pracownibada%C5%84-praw-orientalnych> (retrieved January 3, 2017).

49. The programme of the conference is available here: [http://janek.uek.krakow.pl/-mailing/Program\\_konferencji\\_17\\_11\\_2016.pdf](http://janek.uek.krakow.pl/-mailing/Program_konferencji_17_11_2016.pdf), (retrieved December 28, 2016).

50. Kampania Zero Tolerancji, “Zero Tolerancji - dla współpracy państwa ze skrajną prawicą,” *zero-tolerancji.pl*, (2016), retrieved January 3, 2017, from <http://zero-tolerancji.pl/>; Łukasz Woźnicki, “ONR - tajny współpracownik PiS,” *wyborcza.pl*, (November 7, 2016), retrieved January 3, 2017, from <http://wyborcza.pl/7,75248,20940251,onr-tajny-wspolpracownik-pis.html>.

then Orientalistic figures to further their point that Islam and Muslims are totally alien to “our way of life”. One of the major ways of hiding openly anti-Muslim sentiments was to talk critically about the so-called “refugee crisis” and refugees and link either of the two with terrorism. When, for example, over the summer an increasing number of Chechens emerged at the Polish-Byelorussian border and were trying to file applications for refugee status, they were denied entry. Polish Minister of Interior Affairs Mariusz Błaszczak commenting on this said that “We will not succumb to the pressure of those who want to start a migration crisis. Our politics is totally different (...) This is an attempt to create a new migration route, and an inflow of Muslims into Europe”.<sup>51</sup> As these examples show Polish politicians including ministers used all the opportunities to show their true desires and opinions, and all their powers “to protect” Poland from Muslims and “Islamization” even in the form of Chechens who for decades have been able to file applications for asylum.

## Media

In 2016, as in the year before, the mass media and the Internet played a crucial role in promoting essentialist images and narratives of Islam and Muslims. As discussed in the Introduction, Polish Islamophobia has a very strong media and cyberspace dimension, and hence the social fear of Islam and Muslims can be viewed as largely a media-made and cyberspace-amplified fear. This is linked to the fact that it is the media and the Internet where Poles mainly draw information about Islam and its followers. As mentioned earlier the state-owned media has undergone significant transformations after the election as a result of the fact that individuals who have expressed “politically incorrect” opinions on refugees, Muslims and Islam were given additional airtime to convey their message, which frequently bordered on hate speech. Thus, openly Islamophobic Miriam Shaded started to be invited to comment on ongoing events on TVP programmes and to take part in TV debates.<sup>52</sup> She has also been invited to other mainstream TV channels such as Polsat.<sup>53</sup> TV Republika, which has been functioning since 2012, is one of the TV channels where one may find the most essentialist description of Islam and Muslims. Miriam Shaded is frequently present on its programmes,<sup>54</sup> as well as far-right activists such as Justyna Helcyk from ONR.<sup>55</sup>

51. Mariusz Błaszczak quoted in: Elena Kachanovich-Shlyk, “Slightly open borders of Poland,” *politicalcritique.org*, (November 2, 2016), retrieved January 19, 2017, from <http://politicalcritique.org/cee/poland/2016/slightly-open-borders-of-poland/>.

52. For example, the discussion on TVP Debate on 23.02.2016. Programme available on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bi13rr4u9EE> (retrieved December 28, 2016).

53. For instance *Polsat* magazine “Yes or No” aired on 08.02.2016. Programme available on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RIWEoxF-cpA> (retrieved December 28, 2016).

54. For example, the programme *Clash of civilisations* aired on 14.09.2016. Available on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLICtAQE00g> (retrieved December 28, 2016).

55. For instance, the programme *Republika* aired live on 02.08.2016. Available on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=odnGad2bqOg> (retrieved December 29, 2016).

## Justice System

In the eyes of the law, Muslims in Poland have the same religious freedoms and rights as citizens of other faiths. The Polish Constitution of 1997 in Article 53 guarantees freedom of conscience and religion to every citizen. Although a substantial part of the law that regulates the relations between the state and the Muslim community comes from before the Second World War and is not very well suited to the new social realities of the country's Muslim community, it is not discriminatory towards Muslims as such but rather privileges some groups of Muslims (in particular Tatars) over other groups such as immigrants or converts. It seems that the legal status of Islam as a state-recognised faith in Poland is unquestioned, in spite of the repeated calls for delegitimisation of Islam in the country. In 2015, this idea was particularly strongly promoted by Miriam Shaded, the chairwoman of the Polish Estera Foundation promoting the reception only of Christian refugees, who wanted to ban Islam in Poland.<sup>56</sup> In 2016, this idea was picked up again after the Berlin attack by a volleyball player and a former member of the national team, Marcin Prus who wants Poland to follow the Slovak example in the legal treatment of Islam and raise the threshold of recognition of a religious organisation to 50,000 followers so as Muslims would not be able to attain it.<sup>57</sup>

In 2016, the Prosecutor's Office decided to discontinue its investigation into the case of Miriam Shaded accused by the Mufti of Poland Tomasz Miśkiewicz and the Muslim Religious Union in 2015 of insulting the religious community and promoting hatred among faith communities. In 2015 and 2016, Miriam Shaded repeatedly talked about the "Quran as a source of evil", "Muhammad as a criminalist and paedophile" and "Tatars as a sect". She also called for making Islam illegal in the country and expelling all Muslims from Poland. The prosecutor found the opinions about Islam and Muslims expressed by Miriam Shaded as "fitting within the borders of acceptable critique" and expressions of freedom of speech. According to the Regional Prosecutor's Office in Białystok the social interest in this case did not require the continuation of the investigation *ex officio*.<sup>58</sup> Following the announcement of the legal authorities, not only the Tatars associated with the Muslim Religious Union but also many other Muslims in the country felt that they are not being treated equally by the judiciary.

## Internet

Polish Islamophobia has also an important cyberspace dimension. Individuals and groups promoting stereotypical visions of Islam and its followers have been greatly

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56. Konrad Pędziwiatr, *Islamophobia in Poland: National Report 2015*, Enes Bayrakli/Farid Hafez (eds.) *European Islamophobia Report 2015* (Istanbul: SETA, 2016).

57. eOstrołęka, "Delegalizacja islamu w Polsce? "Do roboty parlamentarzysty"," *eostroleka.pl*, (December 22, 2016), last retrieved December 25, 2016, from <http://www.eostroleka.pl/m/index.php?artykul=57397>.

58. Dorota Mariańska, "Sprawa obrazy uczuć religijnych muzułmanów. Prokuratura umorzyła dochodzenie," *bialystokonline.pl*, (December 15, 2016), retrieved December 17, 2016, from <http://www.bialystokonline.pl/sprawa-obrazy-uczuc-religijnych-muzulmanow-prokuratura-umorzyla-dochodzenie,artykul,95905,14,1.html>.

empowered by the Internet which in a society where over 70% of people have online access constitutes a powerful tool for the amplification of their voices, mobilisation and recruitment. Thanks to the Internet, anti-Muslim individuals and groups are able to amplify the dominant frameworks through which Islam and Muslims are being reported as extremists, terrorists, violent, radicals, oppressed, threatening, jihadists, criminals, fanatics, sexists - to mention only the most frequent characterizations. Some of the websites that concentrate on spreading this type of information on Islam and Muslims include *Euroislam.pl*, *Fronda.pl*, *PCh24.pl*, *Ndie.pl*, *Wpolityce.pl*, *Wsieci.pl*, *Polskaligaobrony.org.pl*, *Ruchnarodowy.net* and *Onr.com.pl*.<sup>59</sup> As one of the initiators of the *Euroislam.pl* portal pointed out, the so-called “refugee crisis” and its politisation in Poland in the second half of 2015 gave a huge boost to its popularity. At present, the portal has almost 100,000 entries per month with users with unique IP addresses. Before September, they had half this amount.<sup>60</sup>

Most of the aforementioned groups and web portals also have social media accounts and use them to promote their ideas. One of the Polish Pegida-like groups “No to the Islamization of Europe” linked to the website *Ndie.pl* gathered a particularly significant following on Facebook. Its Polish Facebook page had almost 320,000 followers by the end of 2016.<sup>61</sup> Other Facebook groups that have large followings include ‘Stop the Islamization of Europe’<sup>62</sup> (60,000 followers) and ‘Euroislam’<sup>63</sup> (which is linked to the website *Euroislam.pl* and has almost 17,000 followers). In comparison, the Polish anti-racist group ‘YES for refugees – No to racism and xenophobia’ has at present (February 2016) only 8,000 followers on Facebook.<sup>64</sup>

## Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

If in 2015 during the election year and the climax of the so-called “refugee crisis” some of the major institutions and groups that promoted anti-Muslim attitudes were mainstream political parties and organisations that could be qualified as secular, in 2016 it seems this role was played above all by the far-right organisations and those that have some religious references. Among the former, it is possible to find a wide variety of groups that oppose ‘Muslimness’ in all forms mainly with reference to ultra-nationalist terms. The Polish National Movement (*Ruchnarodowy.net*) and the National Radical Camp (*Onr.com.pl*) that managed to secure five seats in Parliament

59. More information on some of these groups is provided below.

60. Interview with Grzegorz Lindenberg, member of the Board of Management of Europe of the Future Association and the portal *Euroislam.pl* in Warsaw (September 20, 2016).

61. See <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Nie-dla-Islamizacji-Europy/182944451832138?fref=ts> (retrieved December 30, 2016).

62. <https://www.facebook.com/Stop-islamizacji-Europy-191777667634248/> (retrieved December 30, 2016).

63. <https://www.facebook.com/euroislampl> (retrieved December 30, 2016).

64. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/tak.dla.uchodzcow?fref=ts> (retrieved December 30, 2016).

played a key role among them with the largest capacities to mobilise people. The flirting with the victorious Law and Justice Party mentioned earlier has given the groups extra leverage and allowed them to move from street mobilisation to a certain degree of impact, so far minimal, on political decisions. If in the past the major element of their mobilisation was anti-Semitism and the figure of the Jew, in the last years it started to be the Muslim, the Arab, the refugee and Islam. One of the organisers of campaigns against refugees in Krakow from the local division of the Polish National Movement Szymon Kasinski, argued, for example, in a recent interview that „Where there is no ethnic homogeneity there is terrorism (...) Look at France and Belgium, in those countries the initial welcome has turned into terrorism. We will not allow this to happen in Poland.”<sup>65</sup> Similar views are spread by other members of the movement in towns across Poland.<sup>66</sup> Some of their ideas and strategies are also shared with the Polish Defence League (*Polskaligaobrony.org.pl*), and the Facebook group “No to the Islamization of Europe”.

In 2016, the ultra-nationalist ONR (National Radical Camp) received significant support from certain sections of the Polish Catholic Church within the aforementioned wider process of sacralisation of the nation and the intertwining of Catholicism and nationalism. They were not only allowed to celebrate the anniversary of the foundation of the ONR in a Polish cathedral but were also received by some of the most important bishops in the country.<sup>67</sup> However, the most damaging episode for the image of the Catholic Church in Poland - in general the Polish Church tried to balance between the Pope’s calls to show more openness to the refugees and rejection of this idea by the file and rank of the Church, the ruling party and the majority of the society - was the activism of the young charismatic priest Jacek Międlar. The latter took active part in ultra-nationalist demonstrations and on numerous occasions expressed openly anti-Semitic and Islamophobic views.<sup>68</sup> More moderate anti-Muslim views were loosely or more directly linked with the conservative wing of the Church institutions like the web portal *Fronda.pl* (which was linked until the end of 2014 with the journal *Fronda Lux*) and the web portal *PCh24.pl* which is linked to the bimonthly glossy magazine *Polonia Christiana* (published since 2008 by Father Piotr Skarga of the Association of Christian Culture founded in 1999 under the guidance of the traditionalist Catholic international movement “Tradition, Family and Property”).

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65. Joshua Evangelista, “Krakow: A portrait of Islamophobia in Poland,” *cafebabel.co.uk*, (January 19, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from <http://www.cafebabel.co.uk/society/article/krakow-a-portrait-of-islamophobia-in-poland.html>.

66. For example by Justyna Helcyk from ONR speaking at a large demonstration in Wrocław, available on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fi1vlcvEuKg> (retrieved December 30, 2016).

67. Woźnicki, 2016.

68. Many of these opinions are available on the private YouTube channel of priest Międlar at [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxOqelhdKXRpxEA8\\_q2F5mg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxOqelhdKXRpxEA8_q2F5mg) (retrieved December 30, 2016)



The last group is that of secularists that are made up of various individuals and associations that legitimise their essentialist visions of Islam and Muslims with particularly frequent references to notions of enlightenment, secularism, pluralism, human rights and democracy. In this category, among a wide range of organisations, the most important one seems to be the Europe of the Future Association, which aims “to thwart the development of Islamism in Poland and Europe” and associates all forms of Muslim public religiosity to a “totalitarian movement hostile to democracy”.<sup>69</sup> As mentioned before, the organisation has been growing significantly over the last year and its members are nowadays invited not only to comment on ongoing events on mainstream TV channels but also to lecture at universities.

### Physical and Verbal Attacks

The year 2016 saw the continuation (with slightly lower intensity) of “anti-Islamization” marches and demonstrations that sprung up a year earlier across the country from East (e.g. Białystok) to West (e.g. Wrocław) and North (e.g. Gdańsk) to South (e.g. Kraków); the rise of indiscriminate, negative attitudes and feelings directed at Muslims; and an increase in the number of various types of attacks (usually categorised as “hate crimes”) on Muslims or people believed to be followers of Islam. According to one of the coordinators of the Never Again Association (Stanisław Czerczak) “in the past the association was registering up to 20 homophobic, racist or xenophobic incidents per month, whereas now we register the same amount per week.”<sup>70</sup> The Polish Ombudsman Adam Bodnar pointed out in June 2016 that “Almost every few days we have some brutal assaults with racist or xenophobic background.”<sup>71</sup> Hate speech on the Internet is omnipresent”.<sup>72</sup>

The aforementioned observations are confirmed by the statistics of the National Persecutor’s Office. One of the latest reports states that in the first half of 2016 there has been 13% increase in the number of offenses motivated by racial or xenophobic hate in comparison with last year. This increase is particularly troubling taking into account that 2015 had been a record year in terms of the number of cases of racial crimes registered by the Prosecutor’s Office. In 2015, the Office dealt with over 1,500 such cases and in the first half of the 2016 it was occupied with 863 such cases. Moreover, the report of the Persecutor’s Office clearly points out that in 2016 there has been a significant change in the profile of the most frequent

69. More information about the association that started its anti-Muslim activities at an anti-Turkish demonstration in 2004 can be found on its website: <http://www.euroislam.pl/index.php/stowarzyszenie/o-nas/> (retrieved December 15, 2015).

70. Stanisław Czerczak quoted in: Szymon Bujalski, “Polska walczy z obcymi. Rośnie liczba ataków rasistowskich i ksenofobicznych,” *wyborcza.pl*, (September 16, 2016), retrieved December 20, 2016 from <http://wyborcza.pl/1,75398,20699634,polska-walczy-z-obcymi-rosnie-liczba-atakow-rasistowskich-i.html>.

71. Some of these assaults that can be qualified as Islamophobic will be elaborated in a subsequent part of the report.

72. Adam Bodnar quoted in: Magdalena Chrzczonowicz, “Gowin zachwycony polską tolerancją”, *oko.press*, (June 19, 2016), retrieved December 20, 2016, from <https://oko.press/gowin-zachwycony-polska-tolerancja-racje/>.

victim of such hate crimes: the most common victims now are followers of Islam and only then persons of Jewish and Roma ancestry,<sup>73</sup> and blacks. Around one third of victims of hate crimes are Muslims (250 cases), whereas 12% (102 cases) are Jews, 7.5% (65 cases) are Roma, and 6% are black people. The report also points out that in comparison to 2015 there has been a significant decline in the number of offences against the Roma (three times fewer offenses) and Jewish persons. Some of the worrying developments are the increasing number of cases of hate crimes that end with acquittal and cases which are either not being processed or being dropped because the Persecutor's Office considers them of "low societal harmfulness". On the positive side, the data of the judicial authorities show that the detection rate has increased and, at present, only one fourth of the cases are abandoned because the perpetrators are not identified.<sup>74</sup>

The cases of verbal and physical attacks on Muslims or individuals perceived as followers of Islam, as well as, the instances of export of Polish anti-Muslim sentiments abroad started to emerge in the beginning of the 2016. In January, the media informed the public of a Palestinian student at the Łódź Film School who filmed himself being verbally attacked in the grocery shop in Łódź by an individual who later turned out to be a firefighter who called him "F... dirty Arab" and "f... Allah".<sup>75</sup> In February, Chilean pianist Christian Rapos was severely beaten in the train from Sochaczew to Warsaw by an individual who had asked him earlier whether he was an Arab (Muslim).<sup>76</sup> In the same month the Persecutor's Office in the city of Krakow charged three persons for inciting racially motivated hatred for posting comments on Facebook under the film on migrants in Hungary calling, among others, for "igniting the Auschwitz furnaces" and placing immigrants there or "putting them in gas chambers".<sup>77</sup> In March, an Egyptian lecturer at the University of Łódź was attacked in the tram by three racist individuals who kicked him in the stomach and threw him out of the tram while saying that he should "go to Great Britain where they love Muslims and hate Christians".<sup>78</sup> The following month, the Pakistani citizen Umer Hayat was severely beaten in a park in Warsaw by racist attackers while his Polish colleague was left unharmed.<sup>79</sup> In May, two men

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73. With regards to Jews and the Roma the reports actually point out that in the last period there has been a decrease in the number of cases against them.

74. Prokuratura Krajowa, "Wyciąg ze sprawozdania dotyczącego spraw o przestępstwa popełnione z pobudek rasistowskich, antysemitycznych lub ksenofobicznych prowadzonych w I półroczu 2016 r. w jednostkach organizacyjnych prokuratury," *pk.gov.pl*, (2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from [http://pk.gov.pl/plik/2016\\_10/24acf46588c-7847967633b4cceade99.pdf](http://pk.gov.pl/plik/2016_10/24acf46588c-7847967633b4cceade99.pdf).

75. Marcin Kornak/Anna Tatar/Rafał Pankowski, "Katalog Wypadków – Brunatna Księga 2014-2016," *Nigdy Więcej*, nr. 22, (2016).

76. S. Bujalski, 2016.

77. Kornak/Tatar/Pankowski, 2016.

78. Ibid.

79. Bujalski, 2016.

attacked a Chechen woman in the centre of Łomża trying to pull off her headscarf and shouted at her “f... off terrorists” and “Muslim prostitute”.<sup>80</sup> A similar type of attack took place the following month when a 25-year-old female student from Algeria wearing hijab was attacked by an Islamophobe shouting at her “Islam preacher go home”, kicked her and tried to push her out of the tram.<sup>81</sup>

Almost every month in 2016 one could read about several verbal or physical attacks on Muslims or persons viewed as Muslims in different parts of Poland (for more details see Chronology). Some of the groups that were particularly vulnerable to such attacks were “visible Muslims”, either women wearing headscarves or full veils,<sup>82</sup> or men working in kebab bistro/bars. The last group of Muslims is in a particularly difficult position since these types of fast food stands are most popular among football fans and members or supporters of far-right organisations. In 2016, these encounters increased and owners or workers of kebab shops were frequently verbally or physically attacked. In August, for example, newspapers described the case of Gani Shahriar, who runs a kebab shop in Ziolona Góra, who was attacked and brutally beaten by a group of racists – they also caused severe damages to his shop. The Bangladeshi businessman found himself in hospital and was not able to walk for two weeks after the attack. The perpetrators of the attack were not found. In November, the trial of four Polish men began who had brutally attacked an Egyptian worker of a bistro bar in Warsaw a year earlier.<sup>83</sup> At the end of the year - on New Year’s Eve – this type of encounter ended with the tragic death of a 21-year-old Polish man who tried to steal some products from a kebab bistro/bar in Elk (in North-East Poland) and was mortally stabbed during the argument with a Tunisian employee.<sup>84</sup> The incident resulted in small scale racial riots in the town during which several people were injured and immigrant-owned kebab shops were vandalized.

As argued elsewhere Islamophobia in Poland can be conceived as partially a homemade phenomenon and partially as an import of anti-Muslim sentiments from

80. Kornak/Tatar/Pankowski, 2016.

81. Radio Łódź, *Pobicie młodej muzułmanki. Kolejny rasistowski atak w Łodzi*, [radiolodz.pl](http://radiolodz.pl), (June 3, 2016), retrieved December 21, 2016, from <https://www.radiolodz.pl/posts/25606-pobicie-mlodej-muzulmanki-kolejny-rasistowski-atak-w-lodzi>.

82. Niqabs are almost completely absent in Poland.

83. See for example: Paulina Nodzyńska, “Pobili mnie, mówią wypieprzaj, a tu jest moje miejsce,” *zielonagora.wyborcza.pl*, (August 28, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from <http://zielonagora.wyborcza.pl/zielonagora/1,90220,20599624,pobili-mnie-mowia-wypieprzaj-a-tu-jest-moje-miejsce-rasizm.html>; G.W. Polska, *Pobili Egipcjanina, bo nie chciał im sprzedać kanapki. Ruszył proces*, 2016, <http://swawalove.pl/Pobili-Egipcjanina-bo-nie-chcial-im-sprzedac-kanapki-Ruszył-proces-a24723>, 21.12.2016.

84. Newsweek, “Nowa wersja wydarzeń w Elku. 21-letni Daniel karany za groźby i rozboj,” *newsweek.pl*, (January 2, 2017), retrieved January 2, 2017, from <http://www.newsweek.pl/polska/nowa-wersja-wydarzen-w-elku-21-letni-daniel-karany-za-grozby-i-rozboj,artykuly,402937,1.html>.

abroad.<sup>85</sup> The interconnectedness of the way anti-Muslim discourses circulate in European contexts has been explored by Gawlewicz and Narkowicz.<sup>86</sup> In part as a result of Polish migrations and the fact that in the last two decades more than two million Poles have left the country and now reside temporarily or permanently abroad,<sup>87</sup> one can observe not only cases of the import of foreign fears and anxieties (as part of social remittances) but also cases of export of Polish Islamophobia abroad. In January, the German Police in Adelsheim arrested four Polish citizens who were trying to enter the local refugee facility armed with knives.<sup>88</sup> In November, two Polish immigrants were convicted by a British court to 8 months imprisonment for entering a London mosque and throwing bacon at the praying worshippers.<sup>89</sup> The openly Islamophobic Swedish Defence League was founded and has been led by the Polish immigrant Kamil Ryba who wants to call not only on Swedish but also on Polish society to more actively oppose “the Islamization of their countries”.<sup>90</sup> As one of the young leaders of the Polish Muslim community aptly pointed out the Islamophobia of Polish immigrants is not only dangerous for the host societies where Poles set up, join or support openly anti-Muslim organisations but also for the home society since the views of immigrants on Islam and Muslims are rarely questioned as “they are in the West and they know best”.<sup>91</sup>

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives Undertaken to Counter Islamophobia

As far as the initiatives to counter Islamophobic narratives are concerned there are numerous efforts undertaken by different actors. On the state level, the only institution that seems truly concerned with the issues of growing levels of xenophobia in Polish society is the Polish Ombudsman Adam Bodnar. Either he personally or members of his office

85. Konrad Pędziwiatr, “Islamophobia as a New Manifestation of Polish Fears and Anxieties,” R. Kusek/J. Purchla/J., Santera-Szeliga (eds.), *Nations and Stereotypes Twenty Five Years After: New Borders, New Horizons* (Kraków: International Cultural Centre, 2015), p. 132-150.

86. Anna Gawlewicz, /Kasia Narkowicz, “Islamophobia on the Move: Circulation of Anti-Muslim Prejudice between Poland and the UK,” Yasir Suleiman (ed.), *Muslims in the UK and Europe I* (Cambridge: Centre of Islamic Studies, University of Cambridge, 2015), p. 90-100.

87. Główny Urząd Statystyczny (GUS), “Informacja o rozmiarach i kierunkach czasowej emigracji z Polski w latach 2004–2015,” *stat.gov.pl*, (September 5, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from <http://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/ludnosci/migracje-zagraniczne-ludnosci/informacja-o-rozmiarach-i-kierunkach-emigracji-z-polski-w-latach-20042015,2,9.html>.

88. Kornak/Tatar/Pankowski, 2016.

89. Onet.pl, “Wielka Brytania: dwóch polskich imigrantów skazanych,” *wbi.onet.pl*, (November 1, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from <http://wbi.onet.pl/wielka-brytania-dwoch-polskich-imigrantow-skazanych/6mkr62>.

90. Michał Gašior, “Polak robi w Szwecji “karierę” na nienawiści do muzułmanów. W redakcji gazety rzucił jajkami i groził użyciem noża,” *naTemat*, (December 31, 2013), retrieved December 19, 2016, from <http://natemat.pl/86967,polak-robi-w-szwecji-kariere-na-nienawisci-do-muzulmanow-w-redakcji-gazety-rzucal-jajkami-i-grozil-uzyciem-noza>.

91. Interview with Arkadiusz Miernik in Birmingham (April 16, 2016).

have numerous times spoken critically about the situation in the country and taken initiatives to help individuals and groups who were victims of hate crimes.<sup>92</sup>

Within civil society, the initiatives come from numerous institutions that took ad hoc or more systematic initiatives to counter, at least minimally, the anti-Muslim/anti-refugee/anti-Arab narratives in the public sphere. One of the institutions that has been monitoring and reacting to instances of hate crime for many years now is the Never Again Association (Stanisław Czerczak), which was first registered in 1996. Its latest edition of the *Brown Book* (2014–2016) enlists numerous cases of Islamophobic incidents.<sup>93</sup> Other important initiatives that, among others, have tried to challenge Islamophobic voices in 2016 were carried out by the Centre for Monitoring Racist and Xenophobic Behaviours (*Ośrodek Monitorowania Zachowań Rasistowskich i Ksenofobicznych*);<sup>94</sup> the Coalition Against Hate Speech (*Koalicja Bez Nienawiści*);<sup>95</sup> and Hate Stop (*Hejtstop*).<sup>96</sup> The political party Party Together (*Partia Razem*) in September started the campaign “Zero Tolerance” that monitors the cases of cooperation between state institutions and the far right.<sup>97</sup> Many 2016 issues of the Catholic weekly *Tygodnik Powszechny* and monthly *Znak* have dealt critically with the phenomenon of hate speech and the demonization of refugees and Muslims.

Last but not least, in spite of limited human and financial resources, Polish Muslims have tried to counter Islamophobia and the wider xenophobia in Polish society. In the last year, they have moved from institutional initiatives (e.g. the website ‘Observatory of Islamophobia’ run from 2013 to March 2015 by the Muslim League in Poland)<sup>98</sup> to less formal efforts linked with social media to register cases of Islamophobia and to provide constructive counter-narratives to the dominant frames through which Islam and Muslims are being portrayed. An important example of institutional initiatives is the social media site Stop Islamophobia in Poland;<sup>99</sup> a successful example of the less formal efforts was short YouTube films on different aspects of Islam by the young Polish Muslim religious leader Arkadiusz Miernik.<sup>100</sup>

92. Adam Bodnar/Anna Goc, “Uchodźcza opozycja”, *tygodnikpowszechny.pl*, (December 23, 2016), retrieved December 23, 2016, from <https://www.tygodnikpowszechny.pl/uchodzyczna-opozycja-146235>.

93. Kornak/Tatar/Pankowski, 2016.

94. More information about the centre is available at <https://www.facebook.com/osrodek.monitorowania/> (retrieved December 30, 2016).

95. More information about the coalition is available at <http://beznieawisci.pl/koalicja/> (retrieved December 30, 2016).

96. More information is available at <http://hejtstop.pl/> (retrieved December 30, 2016).

97. More information about the campaign is available at <http://zero-tolerancji.pl/o-kampanii/> (retrieved December 30, 2016).

98. More information on the initiative can be found at <http://islamofobia.info/pl/> (retrieved December 30, 2016).

99. For more information see <https://www.facebook.com/StopIslamofobia/> (retrieved December 30, 2016).

100. See *Islam TVpl* on [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGANBEhY-NC2FdLRtCg\\_AHQ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGANBEhY-NC2FdLRtCg_AHQ) (retrieved December 30, 2016).

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

As argued above the levels of Polish fear of Islam and Muslims often exceed those in other European countries with much more significant Muslim populations. The lack of contact of Polish people with Muslims evidenced in various research initiatives<sup>101</sup> is clearly not conducive to diminishing the levels of fear of the Muslim Others in society but rather contributes to their rise. As the Ipsos study on the perception of the actual and future size of the Muslim population in Poland showed the size - and hence the fear of the Muslim community - is hugely exaggerated.<sup>102</sup> In 2016, this situation was made worse not only by the mass media and the Internet, where sensational information about Muslims and Islam were provided without balance and then amplified, but also by key Polish politicians who too often spoke their mind and expressed views that linked whole groups of people and cultures with terrorism, violence and bloodshed. Clearly, the persistence of DAESH and the acts of terror perpetrated in different parts of Europe and elsewhere helped them to convey their Islamophobic messages. The most troubling part, though, was the refusal of the political establishment to institutionally tackle the growing number of hate crimes and to systematically fight xenophobia and all forms of racism. This political stand has only encouraged groups “defending” Poland from supposed Islamization to be bolder in their actions and to fight more openly with the “Muslim Other” and with many other forms of difference, such as ethnic, cultural and religious Otherness, in Polish society.

- In order to challenge Islamophobia and other forms of xenophobia in Poland, at least minimally, the recognition at the highest level of the state that such issues exist is first and foremost necessary.
- It is also necessary to significantly strengthen widely understood anti-discrimination policies in the whole country.
- The resolved governmental Council for Fight Against Racism and Xenophobia should be reinstated or a new body should be created to address the issues of racism and xenophobia at the highest level and to overlook the policies undertaken to tackle these phenomena.
- There cannot be any tolerance of hate speech and all forms of hate crimes should be punished with utmost severity.
- A new mechanism of collecting data on hate crimes should be put in place and the employees of relevant state institutions (in particular the police) should be trained in how to register cases of such crimes.
- State institutions in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders (in particular from academia and the non-governmental sector) should identify some of the key issues of xenophobia and racism in the country and in cooperation with these stakeholders fight to build a more tolerant and inclusive society.

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101. CBOS, 2016.

102. Ipsos Mori, “Perceptions are not reality: what the world gets wrong,” *ipsos-mori.com*, (December 14, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016), from <https://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/3817/Perceptions-are-not-reality-what-the-world-gets-wrong.aspx>.

## Chronology

### January

- In the aftermath of the New Year's Eve attacks on women in German cities, there was an outpour of anti-refugee, anti-immigrant and often racist and Islamophobic narratives in the media and in public debates.
- On 9 January, the German Police in Adelsheim arrested four Polish citizens who were trying to enter the local refugee facility armed with knives. This case of the export of Polish Islamophobia was analysed in the report.
- In a University dormitory in Szczecin, two men (one was later identified as a student of the University of Szczecin) placed stickers on the doors of foreign students from Muslim countries with the slogan "No to the Islamization of Europe".
- A Palestinian student at the Łódź Film School filmed himself being verbally attacked in a grocery shop in Łódź by an individual who called him "F... dirty Arab" and "f... Allah". The individual insulting the student was indentified by the police and accused of racial discrimination.

### February

- Chilean pianist Christian Rapos was severely beaten in the train from Sochaczew to Warsaw by the individual who had asked him earlier whether he was an Arab (Muslim).
- A few dozen Internet users wrote racist and Islamophobic comments on the Facebook profile of the Water Park in Koszalin regarding a Muslim woman who was using the facilities of the park dressed in a burkini. Among others, they called her "dirty", suggested that she was "spreading diseases" and that the pools should be disinfected.
- A Tunisian citizen was attacked and beaten in Poznan by an individual who called him an "Arab". The attacker was caught by the police and charged with racially motivated attack.
- The Persecutor's Office in Krakow charged three people for inciting racially motivated hatred. The accused published comments on Facebook under the film on migrants in Hungary calling, among others, for "setting on the Auschwitz furnaces" and placing migrants there or "putting them in gas chambers".

### March

- In the aftermath of the terrorist attack in Brussels (22 March), the portrayal of Islam and Muslims was increasingly linked with terrorism and the atrocities of DAESH.
- After the terrorist attack in Brussels, the Polish Prime Minister Beata Szydło announced that Poland would not accept any refugees under the European plan of resettlement hence directly linking the so-called "refugee crisis" and issues of management of immigration to Europe with terrorism.

- An Egyptian lecturer at the University of Łódź was attacked in the tram by three racist individuals who kicked him in the stomach and threw him out of the tram while saying that he should “go to Great Britain where they love Muslims and hate Christians”.

### **April**

- The Pakistani citizen Umer Hayat was severely beaten in a park in Warsaw by racist attackers. His Polish colleague was not touched.
- Catholic priest Jacek Międlar led a Holy Mass and delivered a sermon in support of the far-right organisation ONR in the Białystok Cathedral during which he called for “zero tolerance for Jewish cowardice”. After the mass, the members of ONR marched through the city centre shouting “We do not want Islam, terrorists or Muslims here”.
- A British citizen of Egyptian origin was brutally beaten in Gdańsk by a racist attacker who was stopped by police and charged for the attack.

### **May**

- A Palestinian man was insulted racially in the grocery store in Warsaw. He was defended by the Polish playwright Paweł Demirski who was severely beaten by the racists.
- Two men attacked a Chechen lady in the centre of Łomża trying to pull off the hijab covering her hair and neck. They shouted “F... off terrorists” and “Muslim prostitute”. Other people who saw the attack did not react.
- International students – some from Turkey – were attacked in Bydgoszcz by young men who claimed to “defend Poland”. The local police were unwilling to report the incidents claiming that they were not serious enough. Only after the intervention of the spokesperson of the University of Kazimierz Wielki, did the police change its attitude towards the attacked students.

### **June**

- A 25-year-old female student of one of the universities in Łódź, who is from Algeria and wears the hijab, was attacked by an Islamophobe. He called at her “Islam preacher go home”, kicked her and tried to push her out of the tram. Colleagues of the Algerian student who also wear hijabs complained that verbal insults were a daily occurrence for them but that physical attacks were a new phenomenon.

### **July**

- In the aftermath of the truck terrorist attack in Nice, there was an outpour of anti-immigrant and Islamophobic narratives in the public sphere and especially on social media.

### **August**

- The media informed the public of the case of Gani Shahriar in Ziolona Góra who was attacked and brutally beaten by a group of racists who also caused



damages to his Kebab shop. The Bangladeshi businessman found himself in the hospital and was not able to walk for two weeks after the attack. The perpetrators were not found.

- Over the summer, an increasing number of Chechens emerged at the Polish-Byelorussian border and tried to file applications for refugee status, but were denied entry. Polish Minister of Interior Affairs Mariusz Błaszczak suggested that this was an attempt to start another migration crisis and that Poland would not allow this inflow of Muslims to Europe.

## September

- During official celebrations in Kraków of the 333th anniversary of the Vienna victory of 1683 it was proclaimed that it supposedly prevented the “Islamization of Europe”.
- The Minister of Interior Affairs and Administration in an interview for *Nasz Dziennik* claimed that the reason why Britons are attacking Poles in the post-Brexit referendum context is because “due to political correctness they cannot show their frustration towards Muslims”.
- Newspapers wrote about a self-styled Polish “patriot” who has opened a kebab stand in Lublin for “real Poles” wanting to buy the famous Middle Eastern dish from somebody other than a foreigner.

## October

- A football fan of the club *Pogonia Szczecin* who was shouting during a match “F... the Arabs” and “Islamic pigs, we don’t want you in Szczecin” was convicted by a court to 2 months imprisonment and given a 2-year stadium entry ban for inciting hatred.
- After 10 months of collecting signatures for a petition to organise a referendum on whether Poland should receive refugees, *Kukiz15* collected only 300,000 – 500,000 were required.

## November

- Two Polish immigrants were convicted by a British court to 8 months imprisonment for entering a London mosque and throwing bacon at praying worshippers. (The export of Polish Islamophobia is analysed in the report).
- An Egyptian student at Cracow University of Economics and a cross-fit athlete was insulted and physically attacked by racists in the centre of Krakow. As a result of the attack, Amr Eljamil was badly injured and, at least temporarily, had to suspend his sports career.
- Newspapers informed the public of the beginning of the trial of four Polish men who had brutally attacked the Egyptian worker of a bistro bar in Warsaw a year earlier.

## December

- The mass media wrote about the racist verbal and physical attack of Turkish and Bulgarian students in public transportation in Bydgoszcz. All three perpetrators were arrested by the police and will stand trial.
- In the aftermath of the terrorist attack in Berlin perpetrated by Anis Amri in which a Polish driver was murdered and his truck was used in the attack, some national media (particularly right-wing ones) described the truck driver Łukasz Urban as a “martyr”. There was also a significant outpour of anti-refugee, anti-immigrant and Islamophobic narratives in the media and in public debates.
- On New Year’s Eve, a 21-year-old Polish man who tried to steal some products from the kebab shop in the northeastern city of Elk was mortally stabbed during the argument with a Tunisian employee. The incident caused small-scale racial riots in the town during which several people were injured and immigrant-owned kebab shops were vandalized.

**T**his 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.

