Counter-Islamophobia Kit

Workstream 2: Dominant Counter-Narratives to Islamophobia - Greece

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Countering Islamophobia through the Development of Best Practice in the use of Counter-Narratives in EU Member States.

CIK Project (Counter Islamophobia Kit)

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About the CIK Project

The *Countering Islamophobia through the Development of Best Practice in the use of Counter-Narratives in EU Member States* (Counter Islamophobia Kit, CIK) project addresses the need for a deeper understanding and awareness of the range and operation of counter-narratives to anti-Muslim hatred across the EU, and the extent to which these counter-narratives impact and engage with those hostile narratives. It is led by Professor Ian Law and a research team based at the Centre for Ethnicity and Racism Studies, School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds, UK. This international project also includes research teams from the Islamic Human Rights Commission, based in London, and universities in Leeds, Athens, Liège, Budapest, Prague and Lisbon/Coimbra. This project runs from January 2017 - December 2018.

About the Paper

This paper is an output from the second workstream of the project which was concerned to describe and explain the discursive contents and forms that Muslim hatred takes in the eight states considered in the framework of this project: Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Portugal and United Kingdom. This output comprises eight papers on conditions in individual member states and a comparative overview paper containing Key Messages. In addition this phase also includes assessment of various legal and policy interventions through which the European human rights law apparatus has attempted to conceptually analyse and legally address the multi-faceted phenomenon of Islamophobia. The second workstream examines the operation of identified counter-narratives in a selected range of discursive environments and their impact and influence on public opinion and specific audiences including media and local decision-makers. The third workstream will be producing a transferable EU toolkit of best practice in the use of counter-narratives to anti-Muslim hatred. Finally, the key messages, findings and toolkits will be disseminated to policy makers, professionals and practitioners both across the EU and to member/regional audiences using a range of mediums and activities.

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1. *Introduction*

The aim of the study conducted in Workstream 2 is to identify, describe and explain effective counter-narratives to Islamophobia in Greece and their discursive content and forms, while assessing their relative prevalence within the specific context and presenting how they manifest interactions between internal and external counter-narratives.

The analysis showcases the interdependence between counter-narratives produced within Greece and elsewhere, while drawing on a variety of sources, including political and policy discourse, media and digital data from social media platforms, educational initiatives and best practices, guiding principles within corporate settings, international organizations' and NGO's policy and communication strategies. Through discourse analysis of documentary and textual evidence, the national report presents the nature, form and operation of counter-narratives and produces a categorical specification relevant to Greece. Qualitative research and expert interviews from 32 policy-makers and informants involved in the development and utilisation of counter-narratives informs and enhances the discourse analysis of the evidence, providing valuable insights and sheding light on the significance of central motifs in the counter-narratives, effective communication techniques and tactics, and audience-specific points of emphasis. It is the diversity of practices, perspectives and experiences that expert interviews contribute to this study, that make this method so valuable to the analysis and categorisation of counter-narratives.

The analysis begins with methodological remarks, an outline of data sources and the approach to qualitative fieldwork, as well as ethical guidelines followed in conducting and processing interview materials. Then, a brief background of the formation of counter-narratives to Muslim hatred in Greece sets the stage for the categorisation of the most dominant and effective counter-narratives at the national level.

The categorical list of the most dominant counter-narratives to Islamophobia in Greece is presented, ranked and thoroughly analyzed in the fourth part of the report. Premises to this categorical list are put forward in the form of general remarks regarding the identified patterns of narration and focus points, the significant impact of who the actors/"narrators" are on the effectiveness of counter-narratives, and the reasons why certain counter-narratives are not considered to be effective by interviewed experts. Counter-narratives are ranked on the basis of their importance, effectiveness/impact/potential impact, and size/scale/prevalence in the discourse.

It is the most dominant narratives of Islamophobia that give rise to counter-narratives and call for effective responses to the phenomenon of anti-Muslim hatred. These are clearly the association of Muslim identity with violence and terrorism, and the claim that Muslims are not able to integrate in the Greek/European/Western society. Both are cross-cutting themes in the categorical list of narratives of anti-Muslim hatred and, interestingly, bearing in mind the Domination Hate Model of Intercultural Relations, they mutually nurtures one another, operating as a vicious circle. The marginalization and exclusion of Muslims can lead to violence/terrorism; and violent practices, among other sterepotypes, are ascribed to Muslims as an inherent trait of their cultural and religious identity.

2. *Methodology*

The sources of counter-narratives are the 32 expert interviews conducted as part of Workstream 2, website content, online campaigns, program titles and descriptions, and social media initiatives; Greek

and international literature; and the press. The 32 experts interviewed represent a variety of professional fields and contribute highly diversified experiences and perceptions of Islamophobia, xenophobia and racism in Greece, and counter-narratives that are immediately relevant to their fields: policy-making, media, advocacy, education, research and academia, field-work, international organizations and NGOs, local authorities and municipalities, the corporate setting, social work. Most experts are involved in professions or projects that address xenophobia, stereotypes, racism more generally, rather than Islamophobia in specific. This is associated with findings in Workstream 1 supporting the observation that narratives of hate and fear of the "other" in Greece are mainly xenophobic, rather than specifically Islamophobic.

Invitations to interviews included communication of project details, a description of the four Workstreams, the common information sheet, and the consent form, as well as an indicative outline of interview questions. It was clarified that actual interview questions are adjusted to the respective fields of expertise. Interviewees were given the space to freely elaborate and provide additional comments at the end of the interview. The indicative outline of the interview included open-ended questions regarding the presence of Islam and Muslims in Greece, questions prompting reflection on central methodological premises, such as the Domination Hate Model of Intercultural Relations, narratives of Islamophobia and, of course, counter-narratives addressing the phenomenon. Interviewees were asked to comment on factors influencing the effectiveess of counter-narratives and sometimes to share their opinion on which counter-narratives are not effective, and why. Interviews were conducted orally, in person or over the phone, with parallel recording, or in writing, in response to questions included in the interview outline. The right to agree to full anonymity and confidentiality with the researcher conducting the interview was conveyed to all participants in the Information Sheet and in the official communication requesting the filling out and signing of the consent form on the basis of the interview summary shared with each interviewee.

For each interview conducted, a short Answers Report and a longer Interview Report were composed. The former is a summary of key points, while the latter summarizes the key questions and responses, giving a sense of the flow of the interview. Interviewees were invited to provide a short biographical note and to indicate, within the interview, their field of expertise and how it relates to this study.

While the interviews constitute the main source of counter-narratives, the relevant literature, the press and the media, in addition to a variety of other sources, such as website content, campaigns and spots of international organizations and NGOs, contribute valuable insights that inform the categorization of counter-narratives and address the question of effectiveness.

Certain remarks regarding the methodological approach adopted in this report are deemed necessary:

First, central to counter-narratives in Greece is the identification of the "other" with the recent migration waves, particularly with refugees. This observation calls for scrutiny and methodological clarification, firstly because, empirically, not all refugees are – or are self-determined as – Muslims, and secondly, because the association of fear or hate towards refugees with fear or hate towards Muslims, their identity and culture begs for substantiation. The question is, simply put: is it Muslims or refugees that these narratives/counter-narratives are about?

Papaioannou reaffirms the historical relation of Islam and Greece, noting that Islam is viewed as something entirely cut off from the Greek context and, nowadays, on occasion of the refugee crisis, as a core feature of the influx of refugees. (K Papaioannou, personal communication, 06.10.2017). In that sense, the main narrative to be addressed according to Papaioannou, is that of cultural threat, and therefore drawing the association between the refugee and Islam seems valid. Takou makes a bolder statement: Islamophobia has now replaced xenophobia in Greece. Once a migrant was just a migrant, but now the migrant is a Muslim migrant, the unassimilated migrant (E Takou 2017, personal communication, 05.10.2017). This means, as Huseyinoglou explains, that migrants are categorized in two main groups, Muslim and non-Muslim and, while the former suffer from xenophobia and racism, Muslim migrants suffer from xenophobia, racism and Islamophobia (A Huseyinoglou 2017, personal

communication, 25.08.2017). Burweila stated: "The problem of anti-Muslim sentiment in Greece is an apparent one. I believe that in Greece, like in much of Europe, the anti-refugee sentiment is actually an anti-Islam sentiment." (A Burweila 2017, personal communication, 27.09.2017). This is affirmed also by the Head of the International Organization for Migration in Greece, Daniel Esdras, who, during an interview conducted on 23.08.2017, attributed the fear for the Islamic religion in Greece to the radical example of ISIS. An interesting remark, also highlighting the intersectionality of identity and stereotyping, is made by Huseyinoglou, who observes that, although a person's race or skin color might not be dark, and Greek fluency might be evident, if one's name is not Greek, but rather Muslim, for instance "Ali", the name alone limits meritocratic and equal access to opportunities.

Second, the methodological employment of the Domination Hate Model of Intercultural Relations is material to scrutinizing and invalidating generalizations, balancing the interests and position of the "other" with those of the host community and locals, and better understanding the role and responsibility of international organizations, state authorities and NGOs in producing effective counter-narratives. Ultimately, it permits an assessment of effectiveness apropos context, environment and the dynamis between perpetrator, victim and "saviour" (V Lardi 2017, personal communication, 10.10.2017) in each given manifestation of fear or hatred.

Third, drawing analogies between counter-narratives to xenophobia, racism and discrimination against migrants and refugees in Greece on the one hand, and counter-narratives to Islamophobia on the other is a methodological necessity, in view of the fact that the term is not as dominant in the relevant discourses in Greece (see Workstream 1 Report) as in other European countries. The former counter-narratives are, therefore, by analogy, granting valuable insights into content and patterns of narration that are particularly effective in addressing the phenomena in question and Islamophobia more specifically.

The methodological delineation conducted and the tools employed presents the framework of the research and transparently puts forward the reasoning behind and reasons for methodological choices.

3. Background: the formation of counter-narratives to Muslim hatred

In Greece, the history of encounters with Islam is long and tumultuous, extending back to the early Byzantine period and the creation of the Caliphate. The demise of the Christian Byzantine Empire was succeeded by the long Ottoman occupation of contemporary Greece. Under Ottoman rule, the reigning Sultan's subjects were defined in religious terms and it is from this religious cleavage, that modern Greek nationalism emerged in the late 18th century. The 1821 War of Independence led to the formation of the Modern Greek state (1830), grounded in strong ethno-religious definitions of nationhood. Orthodoxy remains to present one of the pillars of national identity in the country (Pew, 2016, 21), also surfacing in the Constitution.

The formation of the Greek state at the expense of the collapsing Ottoman Empire was completed until 1947 with the 1923 treaty of Lausanne, delineating the borders with Turkey and establishing the presence of a significant number of Muslims in Thrace[1]. Nevertheless, the various attempts of the Greek state to suppress aspects of the minority's presence[2] are hard to classify as Islamophobic, since state policy aimed to reinforce their Muslim – at the expense of their Turkish ethnic – identity. Therefore, given that political representation of the minority in Greece reflects nationalist rhetoric (Tsitselikis, 2012, 225), the discourse about the minority revolved, mainly, around nationalism and its consequences rather than ethno-religious identity. Other voices in the discourse insist that, in Athens

[1] For a concise overview of the history of this formative period, see Clogg, 1992.
[2] For a history of the treatment of minorities, see Tsitselikis, T., 2012.

and in Thrace, it is the ethnic identity and religious beliefs of the minority that are targeted by narratives of anti-Muslim hatred, rather than just nationalistic rhetoric (Huseyinoglou, ibid).

Huseyinoglou distinguishes, in light of the historical Muslim minority and the recent migration wave, between two groups: historical and neo-Muslims. Each group comprises sub-groups. Historical Muslims are present in Northern Greece, particularly Western Thrace, and on the islands of Rhodes and Kos in the Southeastern Aegean Sea. Huseyinoglou observes that the collective rights of Muslim populations, particularly the Muslims of Western Thrace, are recognized only within the boundaries of Western Thrace.

Nevertheless, the relations with Turkey do influence the treatment of Muslims as such. As it has been reported in the first paper, the lingering hostility towards Turkey proved to be a fitting vehicle for the articulation of Islamophobic narratives through their intertwining with the omnipresent Turkish threat especially after 2015 (Workstream 1 Report, 4). However, counter-narratives are not addressing the nexus between Islamophobia and the role of Turkey; this highlights the impossibility of a complete identification of counter-narratives with the narratives of hatred that trigger them. Such identification would be, in any case, undesired as ineffective.[3]

In other crucial aspects, however, the historical formation of narratives countering Islamophobia shares important similarities with the formation of Islamophobic ideas. It was after 2015 that contemporary narratives started to develop in order to oppose the emerging Islamophobia associated with the development of terrorism linked to ISIS/Deash on the one hand and the refugee crisis on the other, both catalysts to the formation of narratives and counter-narratives. This paper, therefore, focuses on post-2015 counter-narratives, acknowledging, nevertheless, that the life of counter-narratives has not been exclusively linked to the formation of contemporary Islamophobia after 2015. In fact, it was the wide discussion on religious fundamentalism and the multi-faceted role of Western societies that took place in Greece and globally apropos the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks which led to the formulation of very interesting narratives against Islamophobia and the demonisation of Muslims. These narratives persisted throughout the early 21st century and kept the public discussion on Islamophobia alive after the public interest had, expectedly, waned.

In this light, selected writings which highlight the awareness of diverse ideological actors regarding the monolithic depiction of Islam and the danger that counter-terrorism could potentially pose against democracy and human rights will be employed in the analysis that follows. It should be stressed that, despite the firm grounding of Islamophobia in Greece in post-2015 developments, especially the refugee crisis, the employment of earlier counter-narratives does not amount to anachronism; it is the theoretical and ideological opposition to Islamophobia in those earlier counter-narratives that will be highlighted, rather than the historically contingent argumentation found in these texts, such as the reaction to the War in Iraq par excellence[4]. Moreover, it can be argued that these theoretical premises, established in the post 9/11 era, are the origins of recently developed counter-narratives. This observation signifies that the first decade of the 21st century is a formative period for the emergence of counter-narratives in Greece, despite the involvement of the country in the major events related to Islam being peripheral.

A second observation that begs attention in view of the methodological approach adopted in the present report, namely the drawing of analogies between counter-narratives to xenophobia, racism, stereotypes and discrimination more generally and Islamophobia, is that the formation of counter-narratives in Greece can inform our background for the categorical listing that follows. In recent times,

[3] Chazapi E. in an interview conducted on the 7.11.2017, notes that, in the context of implementing educational programs for local and refugee students in Athens, reactions by parents and community members that were ideologically driven could not be effectively tackled by program coordinators. Oftentimes, counter-narratives, such as human rights, constitute responses to a series of narratives of anti-Muslim hatred and do not focus on specific grounds for discrimination, such as religion (N Choleva 2017, personal communication, 5.9.2017).

[4] For a discussion focused on democracy, human rights and Christian ecumenicalism, see Mouzelis, N., 2004.

perceiving of and facing the "other" in Greece is associated with the different waves of migration. In the 1990s, the first wave of migrants arrived in the country after the collapse of the Soviet bloc. The second wave consisted of migrants from Asia and Africa arriving after 2001[5]. The most recent refugee crisis constitutes the third wave of mass migration (Papataxiarchis, 2016, 9).[6] Counter-narratives formed to address the phenomena of xenophobia and hatred, and associated with the first and second migration waves, are focused on opposition to racism and pathways to integration, while effectively raising awareness about how integrating the "other" within the Greek society presents a challenge. Reference to human rights, pluralism and inter-cultural communication surfaces in these earlier counter-narratives, which is why they are potentially useful sources of insight for this study[7].

The ideological cleavages extensively analyzed in the first paper apply equally to the characteristics of the counter-narratives, since the major divide between Right and Left informs the perception of Greeks towards Islam (Dianeosis, 2015, 40; Pew, 2016, 6; Dianeosis, 2017, 47 and 90-1). As a final remark, the prevalence of the ideology of human rights will be clearly demonstrated, particularly on occasion of the analysis of expert interviews. The dominance of human rights ideology across counter-narratives originating in different ideological spaces nuances the trichotomy of discourses into liberal, conservative and extreme right suggested in our study of narratives of Islamophobia. In addressing the degree of correspondence between narratives and counter-narratives in the analysis below, reference to relevant ideological discourses, where applicable, will be made.

The historical background to the formation of counter-narratives in Greece as described above, should not obscure the fact that the society is not experienced or socially prepared to deal with phenomena of fear and hatred (L Papagiannakis 2017, personal communication, 22.08.2017), and was not ready to handle the recent refugee crisis. Greece lacks infrastructure, political organization and experience in dealing with xenophobia and racism.[8]

4. Categorical list of most dominant counter-narratives to Muslim hatred

As a reflection of the observation that opinions on Islam in Greece are shaped across 'sharp ideological divides' (Pew, 2016; Dianeosis, 2015 and 2017) and that, conclusively, the narratives of Islamophobia are ultimately tied to their ideological milieu, the counter-narratives stemming from policy-makers and policies, the media and professionals/practitioners in organizations and institutions that produce counter-narratives must be viewed also through the lens of ideology. Given that the purpose of Workstream 2 is to identify effective counter-narratives, in ranking those below we also take into account the effectiveness of the communication strategy, the frequency of appearance of those narratives in our primary – especially the expert interviews – and secondary sources, and their correlation and response to dominant narratives of Islamophobia. What is more, since our focus is cast on effectiveness, counter-narratives that succeed in cross-cutting ideological boundaries are deemed to be exceptionally effective.

[5] Consisting of mostly Muslim refugees, the second wave of migration may not have sparked a debate on Islamophobia, but brought to the foreground the absence of an "official" mosque in Athens. Despite several past attempts in this direction, with the oldest dating back in 1880, the construction of the mosque was finally decided in 2016. For more on the history of this issue, see Tsitselikis, 2012, 259-72; On the Islamophobic narratives exploiting the issue, see Workstream 1 Report, 3, 5, 7-10, and the categorization of counter-narratives below.

[6] According to Esdras, Chief of the IOM in Greece, during the 50s and 60s Greece was a country of outbound migrants, whose stories are interestingly used in the recent antiracist campaign of the IOM as counter-narratives to xenophobia in Greece today. The second period of migration in the 70s and 80s concerns transit migrants, many of them with a refugee profile, from the Middle East, Africa, and Former Soviet countries, seeking documentation and work permit in Greece. We are currently in the third period, starting in the 90s. In this period, Greece has become de facto a host country. The main difference is that undocumented migrants keep a low profile and cannot raise claims for support, while asylum seekers have the right to ask for support (Esdras, ibid).

[7] Some of the most important works in this direction are Afouxenidis, A., Sarris, N., and Tsakiridi, O., (Eds). 2012; and Mousourou, L., 1991.

[8] According to Keridis, however, this lack of infrastructure and strong migrant policy sometimes works in our favor, because the state is not rigid and strict in all its sectors. This allows for certain flexibility. (D Keridis 2017, personal communication, 20.10.2017).

i. Sweeping associations of Islam with violence and terrorism are unjustified.

The most prevalent Islamophobic narrative, both domestically and internationally, associates Muslims with terrorism in light of the rise of ISIS extremism. The underlying premise is that Muslim extremism is not an exception within the Islamic landscape but, rather, the norm. In Greece, the intertwining of the refugee crisis with this narrative results in depictions of Muslim refugees entering the country as potential terrorists, thus necessitating the dissemination of a relevant counter-narrative.

Representatives from every ideological family have subscribed and articulated such an argument since at least 9/11 with the further rise of islamophobic ideas after 2015 fuelling the re-formulation of the counter-narrative. Now, the crux of this counter-narrative is the fact that the great majority of Muslims reject extremist violence and live by moderate versions of Islam that are compatible with European values.

In this spirit, Demertzis notes that jihad has attracted since 2001 only one in 100.000 Muslims and that, consequently, "over a billion Muslims around the world reject hate speech" (Demertzis, N., 2016), while the Greek Deputy Minister for Migration Policy, Yiannis Balafas, stated, in the aftermath of the Barcelona attacks, that "The identification of 1.5 billion Muslims with 100.000 ISIS criminals is ungrounded and historically illiterate" (Newsbeast, 2017)[9]. Moreover, publicity has been given to Muslim voices preaching that Islam is a religion of peace (Fotopoulos, N., 2015) and Muslim public demonstrations against terrorism have been highlighted as proof that the identification of Muslim communities with terrorism constitutes a glaring distortion of social reality (Kathimerini, 2017; Nafteboriki, 2017; Koutipandoras, 2017). Moreover, the depiction of Muslims as terrorists serves, according to commentators, extremist propaganda, since what the extremists pursue is that "the West responds to their violence with violence, that the phenomena of Islamophobia and racism in European countries are reinforced, so that the marginalized youth in the ghettos become radicals and moderate Muslims are freed from the 'illusion' that religions and cultures can coexist harmoniously". (Pappas, T., 2015).

Interactions between internal and external counter-narratives are evidenced in the reproduction of international studies demonstrating the rejection of terrorism by Muslims worldwide in Greece as well (The Press Project, 2017). The effort to internationalise the fight against Islamophobia is premised on the acknowledgment that the scale of developments that affect attitudes and ideas regarding Muslims is global. Focusing our attention on Europe, if terrorism presents the greatest challenge to European security, the rise of the Islamophobic association of Muslims with violence constitutes an even greater challenge to the European fight against discrimination. This is what this counter-narrative effectively challenges.

ii. Terrorism is socially constructed, rather than religiously ordained.

There are various ways to tackle the narratives linking Muslims with terrorism and/or inability to integrate. One of them is encouraging citizens to look beyond religion and the essence of, moderate or not, Islam and focus, instead, on structural causes that beget radicalisation. The structural counter-narrative touches on marginalization, poverty, institutional racism as well as law enforcement, and cross-cuts ideological families.

Georgios Stergiou, Secretary [Manager] of the political program of the major liberal opposition party in the Greek Parliament, Nea Dimokratia, argues that the invocation of religion from extremists is distracting us from the actually crucial issues, namely the breakdown of law enforcement that renders

[9] Papagiannakis (Papagiannakis, ibid) also points to statistics that demonstrate the lack of Muslim violence in Greece, a fact that can be used and disseminated in order to strengthen empirically the disassociation of Muslims and violence.

violence feasible and the absence of economic growth. Specifically, "if the country does not create an economically prosperous environment, issues such as racist/Islamophobic violence and discrimination will always be present and will find supporters in those that face difficulties (mostly economic) and fanaticize. (G Stergiou 2017, personal communication, 7.11.2017).

Discrimination and social exclusion are designated as the crucial factor leading to radicaliation of young people. In response to these phenomena, we must "tackle social discrimination and marginalization with regards to employment opportunities in order to integrate [the refugees] in the social structures: family, education and employment." (Κυριακάτικο Σχολείο Μεταναστών [Sunday School for Migrants], 2015). Regarding refugees, and overall socially vulnerable individuals and groups, what can be done is to consistently equip them with the necessary skills to increase their employment and promotion possibilities (Anonymous 2017, personal communication, 24.10.2017).

Furthermore, there are left-wing counter-narratives that attribute both Islamophobia and Islamic extremism to the social instability provoked by "contemporary, predatory capitalism" (Tsakiroglou, T., 2016). Muslim extremism is associated with radicalization and imperialistic powers that divide and obstruct the people from looking after common interests.

Given the above, the practical issue emerging regarding Muslim newcomers is the prevention of marginalization. Dr. Lialiouti observed, during an interview conducted on 10.10.2017, that "at an institutional level, an effective policy of […] integration must be applied regarding the migrants and the refugees in order to prevent their marginalization and the stigma of exclusion". Along those lines, according to the interview with Eirini Chazapi conducted on 07.11.2017, we need to take into consideration the experiences and the background of each refugee, and to attribute behaviors, particularly aggression, to context and circumstances, rather than religious identity.

In conclusion, this "structural" counter-narrative shifts the discussion away from the essence or history of Islam and towards underlying social causes connecting, thus, the anti-Islamophobic discourse with wider social and ideological sensitivities. The Domination Hate Model of Intercultural Relations, namely that hate crimes do not occur in a vacuum and that perpetrators are themselves victim citizens mobilised by structural forces, such as [policy makers,] the government, the media, […] and a broader context of hate policy, hate representation and hate environment, serves as an important premise for this category of counter-narratives. As Maragou affirms, "What history has shown us is that many migrants and refugees coming from Muslim countries become ghettoized in the host countries, which in turn produces a number of serious problem (including radicalisation)." (Maragou, ibid).

iii. Muslims can be integrated.

Counter-narratives in this category aim at striking the very root of Islamophobic narratives grounded in the perception of Muslims as an unassimilable community. Result- and data-driven, such counter-narratives project the implementation of best practices, innovative programming, and successful housing programs for refugees in municipalities across Greece. They provide examples, of good neighboring (Papagiannakis, ibid), community contribution and integration[10]. Success stories of interaction between non-Muslims and Muslims, of peaceful coexistence with Muslims and of inclusion

[10] Huseyinoglou (,ibid) alerts us to the importance of naming and how it can spur Islamophobic actions. Muslim names become obstacles to the integration process and Muslims in Western Thrace resort sometimes to changing their names or adopting Greek nickames to ensure access to employment and blend with the local community. This remark illustrates how crucial the terms of integration are. Integration should not come at any cost, particularly at the cost of self-determination. Huseyinoglou notes that in terms of terminology he would not use the word assimilation because it has a negative connotation, namely that the community would lose its identity and its historical existence would come to an end. Integration is a more appropriate, better, term in that sense.

in the social matrix are/need to be (Papaioannou, ibid) documented and communicated, and the creation of conditions for access to education, employment in the private and public sector, and integration into the core of urban networks by local stakeholders is/needs to be applauded.

These counter-narratives address the social and spatial marginalization of Muslims and stress the advantages of fostering and pursuing diversity in education, the workplace, and society at large. The actors and the target audiences of those counter-narratives, again, vary: policy makers across levels of governance, both state and regional/municipal, hiring managers, field and social workers, educators and educational institutions, society at large. This category presents the greatest diversity in terms of sources and the nature of narration. It also comprises narratives countering racist victimization[11] by highlighting, through story-telling, visually and verbally, the presence of Muslims within Greek society and how they respond to their civic rights and duties (K Macdonell 2017, personal communication, 13.11.2017).

Variations of the counter-narrative that Muslims can be integrated are manifested in the description of housing programs for refugees, the majority of whom are Muslims, educational initiatives and programs, and the implementation of best practices for integration. This counter-narrative can only unfold through concrete and illustrative examples of impactful integration initiatives and programs, as it is predominantly result-driven.

In this category, the interaction of internal and external counter-narratives is evident in the exchange of best practices for integration (Papagiannakis, ibid; A Androussou 2017, personal communication, 06. 11. 2017). At the same time, Papagiannakis notes, the intra-Greece interaction and exchange among municipalities promises progress in integrating refugees into Greek society (Papagiannakis, ibid).

Housing Programs

Interviews with experts involved in the housing programs for refugees in Athens, the capital of Greece, Trikala in the region of Thessaly, and Levadia in the region of Boeotia provide an account of how these programs operate and how they constitute fertile ground for the development of counter-narratives.

As Odysseas Raptis, CEO of E-Trikala, the entity that undertook the implementation of the housing program in Trikala, during an interview conducted on 08.08.2017, notes, the refugee population of 420 individuals, all Muslims at the time, that lived in the hot-spot outside Trikala gradually moved to housing within the city. The program is supported by a network of social workers, translators, escorts to public services, and technical services. According to Raptis, the key message on the part of E-trikala is coexistence in dignity and mutual respect[12] between locals and refugees. An interesting remark in the interview is the attribution of citizens' familiarity with Islam to the presence of an Ottoman monument, the biggest mosque in the Balkan area, the Osman Shah Mosque, near an Orthodox Church in the city centre.

In the operation of housing programs, local authorities and political leadership play a critical role in mediating and resolving disputes. Counter-narratives about coexistence need to also engage with the concerns and worries of the locals and address them effectively. When municipality (local authority) representatives take on this task, the effectiveness of those counter-narratives increases (Burweila,

[11] Stavrinaki advocates for avoiding the narrative about the refugee who is hurt and vulnerable, and acknowledging that the image of refugees has changed because of the implementation of housing programs and integration best practices. (T Stavrinaki 2017, personal communication, 30.08.2017).

[12] Indicatively, Raptis (Raptis, ibid) explains, that houses provided should be respected and not destroyed; that equal treatment is and should be guaranteed; and that the dignified living conditions made possible through the housing program should be appreciated by the beneficiaries who, on their part, have a civic duty to contribute to the community.

ibid). This showcases the significance of focusing our attention on actors of narratives or, in other words, who narrates, and target audiences.
The success of the housing program in Trikala, according to Vasilena Mitsiadi, currently Municipal Councillor of Trikala and former Vice Mayor for Youth, Education, Culture and Sports lies in the cooperation of the municipality with private actors towards ensuring a balanced approach to the support provided to locals and refugees and reassuring citizens that, first, the response to the refugee/humanitarian crisis and, at a second stage, the implementation of the housing program were under control and there was, thus, no reason to fear the "other". The municipality managed to prevent tensions and the creation of hostile environment.[13] (V Mitsiadi 2017, personal communication, 11.07.2017).

In Levadeia, Kalampokas explains, the aim of the program is to house 420 individuals, mainly families, in 70 fully equipped apartments in the city. The majority of beneficiaries are Syrian and Iraqi. The Support Network for Refugees is a public-sector municipality service supported by volunteers from Levadeia. The volunteers facilitate the integration of refugees into the urban and social matrix through awareness raising programs and initiatives that aim at bridging cultural gaps that affect everyday life. (G Kalampokas 2017, personal communication, 24.08.2017).

Education

The value of intercultural education constitutes as such the content of counter-narratives in the present category. Safeguarding access to schools for refugee children (Choleva, ibid) is another recurring issue.

The "Education Unites: From Camp to Campus" program is an academic higher education scholarship program for young refugees in Greece funded by the U.S. Embassy in Athens and developed in collaboration with Deree - The American College of Greece, the American College of Thessaloniki - Anatolia College, and Perrotis College - American Farm School. Through this program, displaced students can continue their education and develop skills that can be transferred in future studies and professional paths in Greece and Europe. "Education Unites" allowed the refugees to get out of the camps and integrate in local higher education institutions. Kathleen Macdonell, Consultant and coordinator of the "Education Unites" at Deree-ACG explains that the purpose of the program is to facilitate the search for the path they want to take, by allowing them to take the first step in an environment where helps them be in control of their future. The mission of this initiative is that the program itself will constitute a compelling counter-narrative to extremism, as participants cultivate a perception that opposes extremist views formed when people feel excluded. Macdonell appreciates this aspect of the program's mission as being very significant and interesting. "The Program from Camp to Campus", Macdonell comments, "can be a counter-narrative as such". (Macdonell, ibid).

Academic programs that incorporate experiential learning into the curriculum are effective in equipping the youth with knowledge and critical thinking skills that will, eventually, enhance the integration of Muslims/refugees into society. Dr. Elena Maragou notes: "Education should play an important role in helping students to understand that stereotypes should not shape our sense of reality, because stereotypes are constructed and misleading. Education should cultivate in young people tolerance for the different." (E Maragou 2017, personal communication, 27.11.2017).[14]

[13] The comment that, in Athens, behaviors towards the "other" and Muslims in particular vary depending on the climate in the neighborhood hosting them by Chazapi (Chazapi, ibid) affirms the appropriateness of the Domination Hate Model of Intercultural Relations for identifying the structural causes of narratives of Islamophobia, xenophobia and racism.
[14] The philosophical foundation of the ACG (American College of Greece) Honors Program established by Dr. Maragou had to do with exposing students to courses that challenge prefabricated notions on gender, religious affiliation, class, nationality, and sexual orientation.

Interaction and Dialogue

One-on-one interaction and dialogue with the "other" (M Nakasian 2017, personal communication, 15.11.2017) or simulations of this immediate encounter and exchange are recognised by experts as the most impactful means for overcoming stereotypes, emphathizing and coexisting peacefully with refugees and Muslims. It is grassroots efforts engaging small groups of Muslims and non-Muslims interacting at the local level that create the environment within which effective counter-narratives of integration originate (Burweila, ibid; S Gkournelou and S Kyriakopoulou 2017, personal communication, 27.07.2017). Also, dialogue cultivates peaceful co-habiting, according to Kalampokas (ibid). The importance of one-on-one communication with refugees is also highlighted by Macdonell, who observes the immediate change experienced when one speaks to refugee, rather than seeing refugees on TV. (Macdonell, ibid).

As Burweila informs us (Burweila, ibid), "Our qualitative research with focus groups […] showed us that the fear Muslims will not culturally assimilate is the dominant concern. To combat this narrative, we have successfully launched what we call our Tilos Project, where we show that Muslim refugees and local Greek communities can not only live together, but [actually] thrive together."[15] The Tilos project by Solidarity Now is an example of how the counter-xenophobic narrative can be supported by an active and successful demonstration of how Muslim refugees can and do in fact integrate, given the opportunity. Publicity of this sucess, Burweila notes, contributes to countering prevalent xenophobic attitudes and misconceptions.[16]

Two interesting variations of this counter-narrative are, first, the remark by Kalafati (D Kalafati 2017, personal communication, 11.11.2017) that the life stories of Muslim migrants who arrived earlier than the recent migration/refugee wave and have integrated into Greek society constitute compelling counter-narratives about the ability of Muslims to integrate. These counter-narratives have the power to alleviate fear and to serve as vehicles of cultural mediation.[17]

The second remark enriches this counter-narrative by emphasizing the importance of countering environments of hate by designing and creating positive environments that allow for interaction and dialogue in openness, tolerance and critical reflection. Kalafati brings up the example of a recent relief project for young Syrian refugees, where art, video and photography, was used as a tool to help overcome and prevent trauma. By sharing their journey with the rest of the grpoup, project's participants built trust and used their creativity to plan their future (Kalafati, ibid). The refugee crisis rendered the creation of safe spaces of interaction through such projects a necessity. Lardi (Lardi, ibid) shares an outcome of such a project: "We live in the same city: permanently, temporarily, ever since, together. Let's meet, share moments of our daily lives and co-create our reality." Therefore, Muslims can be integrated in Greek society because we live together and we can co-create our reality.

Culture contributes to countering environements of hate by co-creating safe and positive spaces of interaction and dialogue. The mindset of neighborhoods can change through open-to-all cultural events, such as cinema, theatre and language learning (M Kontomichali 2017, personal communication, 24.07.2017; Chazapi, ibid).

Media

[15] For a description of the project, see https://www.solidaritynow.org/en/home-for-hope/ and https://www.solidaritynow.org/en/bbc-channel/.

[16] See also the program "Together" in the city of Trikala, Thessaly, aiming at bringing refugee populations in contact with the locals through joint activities such as theatrical plays and visits to museum (C Krithari 2017, personal communication, 08.08.2017).

[17] This remark sprung from the obsveration of the role that Muslim translators on Greek islands receiving refugees played within the context of trainings for social and field workers. Muslim translators acted as cultural mediators. They were able to understand both sides, in view of the fact that they were already integrated in the Greek society and culture. They could address ignorance and fear about Islam, Muslim identity and traditions. (Kalafati, ibid). See also, Vasilaki (R Vasilaki 2017, personal communication, 06.10.2017), about the importance of cultural orientation, understanding everyday culture, such as food, clothing, language etc.

The role of media as the source of narratives and counter-narratives surfaces, particularly in the expert interviews[18]. The moral responsibility of the media is heightened when they are portraying the "other". The projection of testimonials in the media are the closest we can get to experiencing a on-one-one interaction with the other and learning first hand about different lived experiences (see Burweila, ibid). Introducing best practices into this source of narration is exceptionally impactful. E-trikala, Raptis informed us, published a newspaper in Arabic in order to welcome the refugees, inform them about the city and express their support.

Setting standards and putting forward guiding principles for the media is, therefore, vital to the quality of counter-narratives produced. The media are in need of a code of ethics that prevents stereotyping (G Kouvaras 2017, personal communication, 16. 08. 2017; I Niaoti 2017, personal communication, 21.11.2017). Maintaining such a code will prevent the reproduction of stereotypes and narratives of Islamophobia, xenophobia and racism.

Ioanna Niaoti, journalist at ERT, the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation, and participant in the program 'Ethical Journalism against Hate Speech', the RESPECT WORDS project, which "raises the need to rethink how media and its professionals deal issues related to migratory processes, ethnic and religious minorities" takes a firm stance towards the adoption of a deontological code and recognizes the moral responsibility the media bear in these cases. She explains however, that all religions should be criticized on the basis of their beliefs, and that we should be careful not to violate freedom of speech. The role of journalists in this effort is to report and present both sides in a way that does not produce stereotypes, challenges stereotypes, and gives the audience a balanced presentation of both sides that will allow them to decide for themselves. She also calls for acknowledging that issues with a natinal component are complex and that journalists should focus on the news and the core of the reportage, rather than the emotional appeal it might have. Finally, mass media should be/become a chanel for the voices of migrants and refugees, without endorsing either ideology. They should be invited to talk about their own matters. "What could be done is to recognize that we lack the best practices and that we need to turn to experts", Niaoti notes. (Naioti, ibid).

iv. Human rights and the value of shared humanity.

"Shared humanity is a great counter-narrative", notes Dr. Rosa Vasilaki, in an interview conducted on 06.10.2017. Due to its universal scope, the counter-narrative of human rights and the value of shared humanity corresponds and could be used as a response to any narrative of Islamophobia identified in Workstream 1. Effective counter-narratives in this category employ emphathy-evoking stories that prompt the identification of the target audience with Muslims experiencing discrimination, exclusion, and hatred, and sometimes even inspire active intervention and advocacy on the part of citizens[19]. The aim of this counter-narrative is, in the words of Mitsiadi, for "People […] to understand that they [the refugees, Muslims] are human as well. Human like us." (Mitsiadi, ibid).

Kouvaras supports experiential events and activities as methods for responding to xenophobia, precisely because they advance cooperation and trigger empathy. The title of the forum theater interactive educational program "What if it were you?" (Mitsiadi[20], ibid; C Krithari 2017, personal communication, 08.08.2017; N Choleva 2017, personal communication, 05.09.2017) is in itself an impactful phrasing of this counter-narrative. Question activate participants' imagination, while prompting critical reflection, argumentation, and dialogue through verbal and non-verbal

[18] See for instance, Mitsiadi: "When I visited Lesvos that is what they said 'we know what you hear about the riots and the fighting but we haven't lived it that way here'. […]. Especially with facebook, we need to be careful and insist on critically assessing the validity of information." (Mitsiadi, ibid)

[19] See Action Aid's social experiement: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sGONjaHUHFw

[20] Mitsiadi elaborates on that point: "This is where we should wonder: if we were in their position wouldn't we want to have our churches? We need to adopt a balanced approach to the situation; they have rights and needs and we need to provide for them in order for the situation to be normalised." (Mitsiadi, ibid).

communication. A critical element of the methodology of this program is that participants are encouraged to speak their mind, and invited to spell out stereotypes and racist perceptions of the "other" prior to/as a basis for challenging own and others' positions.

As compelling as the emphasis on shared humanity may be, precisely because it emphasizes the overarching similarity that can nullify the significance of any differences (Nakasian, ibid) that provide grounds for narratives of Islamophobia, in assessing the effectiveness of humanity and human rights language in counter-narratives we need to take into account that they are not necessarily reaching and impacting the audience that is either ignorant or negatively predisposed against Muslims and the "other" more generally. Vasilaki observes that human rights advocacy operates at an intellectual level, not at the level of popular culture. Also, what is taken for granted, the language of human rights, is not as effective anymore. (Vasilaki, ibid).

Tactics that seem to work in the phrasing and character of counter-narratives in this category include self-critical reminders, activating the collective memory of our own history of migration and diaspora (Esdras, ibid). In recent anti-racist #StopMindBorders campaign video spots of IOM, we see everyday people who, at first, seem like they are expressing racist and stereotypical statements about a third person in a salon, restaurant etc. The third person is identified as the "other" and the language used by the main character is crudely insulting. At the end of the video we realize that the main character is reproducing statements made about them, when they first arrived to their destination as migrants, in the context of narrating the challenges they faced in the process of integration.[21] In another campaign video by Action Aid on Youtube, titled "A story that will surprise you", refugees on Lesvos are given a story and asked to read it out loud in the context of one-on-one interaction. The story describes the challenges along the journey crossing borders and the war they fled from. They were asked to guess to whom the story belongs. They all identified with the story, regardless of their origin. It was revealed that the story belonged to a Greek woman who had to flee from Smyrna in 1922 on a boat and seek refuge on Lesvos.[22] The realization surprised the narrators, effectively evoking feelings of empathy and shared humanity. (Gkournelou and Kyriakopoulou, ibid).[23] Target audiences for this counter-narrative respond positively to individual "human" stories, rather than numbers and statistics, to which they have become desensitized. (Burweila, ibid).[24]

v. Muslims are not monolithic, but rather incorporate intersecting multiple identities.

Islamophobia encompases the belief that the very presence of Muslim communities constitutes a serious danger for the West. The underlying premise of every islamophobic narrative is the monolithic depiction of Islam and Muslims, a depiction that comes in many shapes depending on the political/ideological beliefs of the islamophobes. In response to this underlying premise, every counter-narrative is aiming at fighting monolithic perceptions of Islam.

In this light, the counter-narrative stressing intersectionality is of paramount importance albeit marginal in its presence in the public sphere. Kontomichali highlights that Greeks need to realize the intersecting multiple identities of Muslim refugees who arrived in Greece after 2015, primarily the religious, gender and refugee identity, stressing that some of the refugees were cast out because of their sexual orientation. (Kontomichali, ibid). The realisation and designation of multiple identities can address and remedy Islamophobia, while pointing at a pathway for intergration in the wider civil society through targeted affiliation with its diverse branches. Representing SolidarityNow, Dr.

[21] See the relevant playlist: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL6RSt7qwtlyfaY45jVUnPdXN51VAfj1Im
22 An interesting interplay of this counter-narrative with that of the patriotism of solidarity infra is found in a remark by Macdonell: "Greeks have an inherent understanding of what being a refugee means. It is empathy. The history of Asia Minor, Greek literature dealing with war and humanitarian crises." (Macdonell, ibid).
[23] See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JN_TygoVXic
[24] See: https://www.solidaritynow.org/en/souda/; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eZlkwK7ntaI; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fSQKgeQkhwQ

Kontomichali is running the Safe Refugee program, a specialized assistance program of SolidarityNow for LGBTI refugees and asylum seekers. As part of this program, LGBTI refugees are linked with humanitarian organizations as well as local LBGTI communities.[25]

A liberal/democratic argument calls for historicization of both Muslim and European reality and contemporary ideas (see below, counter-narrative 6). The historicization of Islam serves the obvious purpose of exposing the myth of a monolithic Islam. (Papageorgiou, F., and Samouris, A., 2012, 322).

One-to- one-interactions, notes Chazapi, are particularly effective, as the Open Schools program of the Municipality of Athens funded by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, has proven. Bearing in mind that we are all bearers of multiple identities, one-on-one interactions usually focus on specific aspects of one's identity and roles that are universal, such as motherhood (shared humanity). (Chazapi, ibid).

Central to this category of counter-narratives is the opposition to "concealment" of the Muslim identity. On the contrary, its intersection with other identities must be stressed to demonstrate the myriad ways one can connect to civil society.

vi. The liberal/democratic counter-narratives and European patriotism.

As Workstream 1 Report demonstrated, one of the most coherent versions of Islamophobia is built on liberal arguments that perceive of Muslims as unassimilable within European societies, and the subsequent threat to social cohesion and/or security.

What is distinctive in these narratives and demonstrates their liberal character is that the Muslim threat is not directed against the nation or Christianity as with extreme-right or conservative narratives. Instead, liberal Islamophobes maintain that Muslims cannot integrate because they reject liberal, secular values central to the European culture. This thesis was articulated for years, albeit marginally, in the public sphere but the rise of ISIS tied this argument with security issues as well. Emphasis on European heritage, rather than particularly Greece, is a defining characteristic of liberal Islamophobia. Liberal islamophobic narratives are not representative of the wider liberal political family. They are rather articulated by relatively isolated individuals. Given the popular appeal of liberal ideas in the country, their further diffusion could constitute a grave threat to Muslim welfare in crisis-ridden Greece. In this light, the designation of liberal/democratic counter-narratives is of great importance.

Liberal argumentation against Islamophobia is, expectedly, directed against conservatives and the extreme right but, more interestingly, against liberal Islamophobia. The focal point of liberal counter-narratives is the negation of the the thesis that Muslims cannot integrate, which rests on stereotypical, monolithic assumptions regarding the nature of Islam and Muslims. Therefore, commentators are calling attention to the fact that "the great majority (of Muslims) … maintain progressive ideas" (Papageorgiou, F., and Samouris, A., 2012, 21), and reject extremism and terrorist acts. The massive protests against terrorism staged by Muslim citizens of Europe demonstrate the validity of this position (Karatrantos, 2016, 102-3).

The emphasis on Europe, perceived as democratic and pluralist, shifts the analysis to European identity, which in its essense counters directly Islamophobic narratives. Sokou notes that what is at

[25] See: https://www.solidaritynow.org/en/safe-refugee/ ["*LGBTI refugees frequently face multiple risks in all phases of the displacement cycle and need additional protection. They are often at heightened risk for discrimination and exclusion from access to basic services, and they are also subjected to different forms of abuse, marginalization, and exclusion. For the above reasons, we could not leave this vulnerable group without support and assistance*", says Margarita Kontomichali, the coordinator of the Safe Refugee program; and she continues: "*In* SolidarityNow, *we believe in the respect of human dignity, freedom, equality, and in the respect of human rights for vulnerable people*."]

stake amid the rise of Islamophobia and counter-terrorist reflexes is no less than "the European Principles and the…multicultural and tolerant character of Europe" (Sokou, 2015). Following the Charlie Hebdo attack, a liberal commentator dissected "amid sorrow and recollection" the liberal dilemma in concrete terms: Europe should rise against terrorism, yet in a way that would prevent the further diffusion of Islamophobia, finding a way to "fight the extremists…without defeating its own fundamental values." (Kounalaki, 2015).

Now the fundamental European values are democracy, liberty, toleration and justice. The counter-narrative, thus, would be the guarantee of protection against "the nightmarish world of excessive security measures, Islamophobia, malevolence and trenches" (Karaiskaki, 2017) that the collapse of inter-cultural trust is building. This constitutes the paramount priority of Europeans that presupposes the fight against Islamophobia. In this argument, the Islamophobic narrative is turned on its head: it is not Muslims that threaten European values but the irrational phobia against them which could cause the weakening of European, pluralistic values. Europe can be defeated only by fear, that is, by itself. The solution is the perseverance of humanist values and democratic ethos (Demertzis, 2016). The existence of a liberal version of Islamophobia is criticized by liberal commentators. The proponents of Islamophobia are accused of not staying faithful to their values of pluralism and tolerance, an attitude that betrays adherence to liberal ideas (Karatrantos, 2016, 130).

Furthermore, arguing against monolithic conceptions of Islam (see relevant counter-narrative supra), Papageorgiou and Samouris call for re-evaluation of European historical legacy towards recognizing the Islamic contribution and paving the ground for the formation of a more inclusive European identity that would not apply exclusively ethnocentric criteria, but would incorporate citizens of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds (Papageorgiou, F., and Samouris, A., 2012, 322 -335). Kouvaras has articulated this message in universal terms stating that the ideal that can unite Muslims and Christians is the one of an active citizen of the world. (Kouvaras, ibid).

The historical specifity of Muslim extreme conservatism is highlighted by Dr. Georgios Bithymitris who, during an interview conducted on 10.10.2017, points to the recent past of Islamic countries which "…in previous historical periods [1970's, 1980's] took steps towards modernity regarding the attitude toward women, the child, politics, […], education, the arts […]. Photos taken in Kabul in the 1970's could convince even the most skeptical [audience] that the distance is not as great as she thinks". However, in order to fully comprehend Muslim extremism and/or authoritarianism as a specific byproduct of History and, therefore, as a contemporary enemy of liberal/democratic values, instead of an absolute and eternal enemy, one has to historicize liberal/democratic ideas and institutions in Europe as well.

Keridis (D Keridis 2017, personal communication, 20.10.2017) reminds us what, as he notes, we tend to forget, namely that what we nowadays praise as Western democratic principles surfaced only in the last […] years. There were few purely Western democracies in earlier years. The right of women to vote was established in Greece in 1952". In the same spirit, Choleva, commenting on the treatment of women, observes, that those who condemn headscarves, do not seem to remember that our grandmas covered their heads. From the icons of the Virgin Mary to women in Ancient Greece, the covering of women's heads was widely practiced and observed (Keridis, ibid).

Papaioannou, commenting on women in Islam, challenges us to recognize how our reactions to inequality and discrimination against women in the West and in Muslim countries vary. In the latter incidents, the international community lashes out. It is almost like the western type of discrimination is condemned less than the Middle Eastern. None of them is beneficial and none of them should be tolerated (See Papaioannou, ibid).

vii. The patriotism of solidarity.

The arrival of thousands of Muslim refugees in a crisis-ridden country proved to be fertile ground for Islamophobia. It is no wonder, therefore, that since 2015 and the outbreak of the crisis, Islamophobic narratives have persistently exploited the arrival of the refugees by depicting them as foreign invaders who would de-Christianize Greece and/or serve alleged Turkish expansionism against the enfeebled country.

Given the above, the necessity to tackle the refugee-related narratives becomes evident. Moreover, given the media focus on the Aegean islands which serve as the gateways and hosting places for the incoming refugees, a counter-narrative with a similar geographical focus can potentially prove valuable in fighting Islamophobia.

This is the focus of a Greek scholar, Dr. Efthymios Papataxiarhis, professor in the department of Social Anthropology and History at the Aegean University, who conducted field research in a village of Northern Lesvos, an island that has been severely affected by the refugee crisis. Papataxiarhis makes a brief historical overview of the reception of immigrants in Greek society and concludes that, contrary to the first wave of immigrants, who were eventually integrated, the treatment of the second wave of immigrants, arriving in the beginning of the century, was very disappointing. This development, given the parallel outbreak of the economic crisis, foreshadowed a similar fate for the incoming refugees. The size of the crisis exhausted the capacity of the host islands to accommodate the refugee flows, constituting another bad omen for the treatment of Muslim refugees by the locals. Nevertheless, reality disproved the fears since the locals, in general, engaged in the rescue and accommodation of the newcomers.

Papataxiarhis contends that the newcomers were not perceived as "irregular immigrants", unlike their predecessors from 2000 and onwards, but rather as "refugees", namely as "transitory traveller[s] in need". Subsequently, this perception blunted the religious, ethnic or class characteristics of the refugees and allowed the "metaphorical identification of the refugee with the human being" (Papataxiarhis, 2016, 13). Thus, the designation of multiple identities that counter-narratives to Islamophobia aim at establishing, became a reality and, it should be added, on the most contested ground. The identification of refugees as humans in dire need allowed the intertwining of the notion of refugees with a recurring concept of the Greek economic crisis, the concept of solidarity (Papataxiarhis, 2016, 16). This intertwining led to "a great…conscientious rift" that contributed to mobilization of locals and the positive reception of refugees.

Moreover, the valuable concept of solidarity was further reinforced through its connection with what is arguably the strongest idea in the Western world, the nation-state. Papataxiarhis argues that the positive publicity that Greece received regarding the reception of the refugees allowed the formation of a narrative that designated the solidarity towards the refugees as "a national characteristic", the "moral strength" of Greece, a country that despite the severe economic crisis, provides the model of humanistic behavior – and, narrators add, unlike other European countries that fail to do the same (Papataxiarhis, 2016, 20)[26].

This is a new patriotism, qualitatively different from the romantic nationalism, since the latter can potentially turn against the "enemies", whereas the patriotism of solidarity is grounded on universal values and a cosmopolitan flair. Papataxiarhis warns that the patriotism of solidarity is a fragile ideal, whose survival depends on the overall handling of the refugee crisis. Nevertheless, his insights and concepts are valuable in the battle against Islamophobia. Given that the nation represents the highest ideal for Greeks (97% feel nationally proud according to Pew, 2016), the designation of narratives that

[26] Both Papataxiarhis and Macdonell stressed the historical experience of Greeks with migration and the refugee drama. Greeks have a built-in understanding of what being a refugee means. It is empathy, says Macdonell, who links the refugee crisis with the one of 1922 when 1.5 million refugees arrived and settled in Greece. (Macdonell, ibid).

link solidarity of Muslims and the nation while, at the same time, revealing their multiple identities, is of paramount importance and can prove particularly effective.

In the same spirit, Takou argues that the patriorism of solidarity is a strong counter-narrative since it highlights the positive aspects of Greek identity that support an open, non-phobic attitude towards the "other", Muslim or not. What Greeks need is an emphasis on the positive aspects of their identity, such as hospitality, and the confidence that the can pull through the economic and humanitarian crisis (Takou, ibid). The narrative focusing on hospitality as a national trait was also highlighted by Kalampokas as one of the most effective counter-narratives contributing to the smooth execution of the housing program in Levadeia (Kalampokas, ibid).

While counter-narratives stressing ecumenical and/or civil values are more appealing theoretically, the nation with all its limits constitutes a stubborn reality that counter-Islamophobia projects should selectively re-interpret in order to gain a mass audience. In this light, the concept of patriotism of solidarity strikes at the heart of established sensitivities, whilst paving the ground for their re-orientation.

viii. Conservative anti-nationalist narratives and Christian ecumenical ideals such as peace, hospitality and care towards the vulnerable – especially towards the refugees.

Our report on contemporary Islamophobia in Greece demonstrated that, apart from the far-right narratives, there are also significant conservative voices propagating hate speech against Muslims (Workstream 1 Report, 8-10). Given that Islamophobic arguments were formulated by prominent archbishops of the Orthodox Church, arguably the most important conservative voices in Greece today, there are reasons for tracing the dominant counter-narratives coming from the Church, since they appeal to a distinct and important part of Greek society.

The debate on the relationship between Islam and fundamentalism predates the twin crisis of 2015. In fact, the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent War on Terror declared by the United States fuelled discussion on the emerging role of religious movements, while Western Islamophobic responses were countered with Christian narratives denying the uni-linear association of Islam with fundamentalism. These counter-narratives maintained that fundamentalism is not uniquely a trait of Islam; it is rather present in every religion, including Christianity, rendering any sweeping condemnation of Muslims groundless (Betzou, 2004; Ignatios, 2004). In the context of discussions on 9/11, the narrators argued that an enlightened, humanistic aspect of Islamic religion exists (Betzou, 2004, 62) and there is a need to reinforce the respective strands of thought (Kalaitzidis, 2004, 23).

More importantly, these narratives systematically condemn the ethno-centric foundations of nationalist Christian thought. Nationalism as the common denominator in both Orthodox and Muslim fundamentalism (Ignatios, 2004, 38) is rejected as an approach that negates the ecumenical character of Orthodoxy (Kalaitzidis, 2004; Bekridakis, 2004; Mouzelis, 2004), that is, that one should not differentiate people along national lines. Sources of argumentation for the ecumenical message of Christianity are in the Old and New Testament, for instance, the Good Samaritan parable (Ignatios, 2004) and the ecclesiastical tradition (Ignatios, 2004, 36). These narratives counter the ethnocentric view of the Church that lies at the heart of contemporary Islamophobia in Greece, provide a thoroughly Christian argument that is suitable, and thus effective, for the respective audience[27].

Contemporary counter-narratives in this category draw the crucial distinction between Islamic tradition and its erroneous interpretation that breeds fanaticism (Archbischop of Athens and All

[27] Certainly, non-conservative critiques of Christian superiority against Islam are also applicable. Angeli reminds us that horrendous acts have been practiced in the name of Christianity. We need to get to know Islam better and contextualize other religions. We need to critically compare religions. (D Angeli 2017, personal communication, 24.08.2017).

Greece, Ieronymos II, 2016). Ignatius, Archbishop of Dimitrias stresses that fanaticism concerns every religion and that Islamic extremism is a marginal strand of Islamic thought that should not be equated with Islam in general. "The Gospel did not prevent the Crusades", notes Ignatios (2016).

In the same spirit, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew [Vartholomaios] I stated that "Islam can not be equated with terrorism, since the latter is foreign to every religion" (Vartholomaios, 2017). Orthodoxy is described as having the power to peacefully bridge the differences between nations. Accordingly, the exclusivist proclamation of Christian institutions as the guardian of a strictly defined Greek nation found in Islamophobic, anti-refugee narratives, is absolutely absent from those counter-narratives.

The "patriotism of solidarity" is traced in a statement by Archbishop Ieronymos, head of the Greek Church, expressing his pride for the solidarity that Greeks have shown towards refugees and contrasting this stance to the "humanistic bankruptcy of Europe" (Ieronymos, 2016). The Archbishop commented: "Greece won the bet. [Greece]… is poor, but not inhuman" (Ieronymos, 2016).

In sum, Christian counter-narratives are of great importance, if Islamophobia is to be opposed to in the public sphere in Greece. The pervading influence of the Orthodox Church, exemplified by its high status and its designation as the dominant religion in Greece, necessitate that anti-racist voices stressing the ecumenical character of Christian religion are brought to the forefront.

ix. Muslim migrants could contribute to economic development.

Islamophobia in Greece is, mainly, the offspring of the twin crisis of the international rise of Islamist extremism and the refugee crisis. However, analysis should not ignore that the major development in the country after 2010 is the extremely severe economic crisis that persists to this day. The interplay between the development of Islamophobia and the economic crisis is not prevalent in the relevant discourse to date, but since the integration of refugees demands state resources and expenditure, there is a danger that the minoritarian voices comparing the plight of the refugees with the plight of Greek people might intensify and gain in popularity.

The devastating unemployment rate in the country is another source of concern as the anti-migrant narrative about foreigners "stealing our jobs", is/might as well be applied to Muslims. (Also mentioned in the interview with Macdonell, ibid). Burweila notes that research conducted on five focus groups of young potential Golden Dawn supporters as subjects of qualitative research showed that the majority had xenophobic attitudes towards refugees and migrants, raising concerns abdout their cultural assimilation and objecting to the allocation of state financial resources to refugees rather than Greeks themselves (Burweila, ibid). Economic arguments need to be included in the categorical list of counter-narratives to islamophobia in order to alleviate fears that the arrival and integration of Muslim migrants will further deteriorate the depressed Greek economy and the already excessive unemployment rate.

The crux of the economic counter-narrative is that the arrival of Muslims will, in fact, help the economy, both at a local level, primarily the communities hosting refugees, and at the national level. This counter-narrative is propagated by politicians and also manifests in the pro-refugee international discourse as well. For example, Maria Theleriti, Parliament Member (SYRIZA) highlights the contribution of refugees to local economies (Protothema, 2016). The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dimitris Mardas, projected that certain refugees from Syria, who are in good financial standing, could potentially invest in Greece (Matsi, 2016). At the same time, in the international discourse it is argued that the arrival of refugees boosts economic growth in certain countries, exposes and makes known local communities, for instance, through coverage from the Greek Press (Kingsley, 2016; tvxs, 2016), and invigorates local economies, particularly through the international aid for the refugees, as suggested by the European Commission and UNCHR (UNCHR, 2017).

Refugees help the local economy; the benefit they receive is transferred to the local community and contributes to a healthy, vibrant market. Refugees' positive impact on the economy also has to do with the creation of jobs in Greece to support the growing and evolving needs of these populations and individuals. This is another variation of this counter-narrative (Macdonell, ibid)[28]. In other manifestations of this counter-narrative, narrators draw on America's past, noting how the country benefited from migrants, and transpose this lesson-learned to Greece's current need for workforce. This remark is linked to the historical formation of the counter-narratives analysed supra. The elaboration of this counter-narrative can borrow elements from the respective pro-migrant narrative articulated in Greece on occasion of earlier migration waves. In fact, the integration of the first wave of migrants was catalyzed by their employment in underworked sectors where the national economy was in need of working hands.

x. "The Mosque in Athens": religious spaces for Muslims in the capital of Greece.

One of the persistent issues pertaining to the presence and integration of Muslims in Greece is the construction of an officially registered Mosque in Athens. Muslims in Athens are practicing their religious duties freely, however, they are using "unofficial" praying rooms, despite the first official demand for the erection of a Mosque having been made to the Greek government in the 1970's. The arrival of the second migration wave after 2001, consisting mainly of Muslim immigrants, as well as the organization of the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, kept the issue on the public agenda without, however, the undertaking of any decisive action by the polity; such inaction was attributed to to the reaction of local municipalities, conservatives, and the Church of Greece (Tsitselikis, 2012, 259-72).

Eventually, the construction of a Mosque in Athens was decided by the Parliament in 2016, a decision that expectedly sparked indignant reactions from the islamophobic Extreme Right and Conservatives (Workstream 1 Report, Narratives 3, 5, 7-10). The counter-narratives supporting the construction of the mosque were articulated by commentators of varying ideological origins, mostly, of liberal and left-wing persuasion. The commentators hailed the construction of the Mosque as an important and, mainly, symbolic gesture that was many years overdue (Papagiannakis, ibid). They also focused on the wider issue of Muslim integration into the Greek society and discussed the major underlying issue summarized by the former Minister of Education, Nikos Filis as "the real elephant in the room [which] is lying elsewhere […] Europe has not accepted the fact that Muslims constitute a reality" (newsbeast, 2016).

The narratives countering the respective Islamophobic discourses revolve around three axes of analysis. The first is the appeal to humanistic values, namely that we must acknowledge the sensibilities of fellow human beings living away from their homeland (Papagiannakis, ibid), and to human as well as democratic rights. Regarding rights, "the construction of a Mosque…is, above all, a question of Democracy and human rights", affirms Baskakis, 2016). The second is the appeal to social cohesion and national interest that demands addressing the co-existence of 200.000 Muslims in Athens (Lakasas, 2016). The third is the appeal to national security and the fight against terrorism. In direct response to the Islamophobic argument that the presence of a Mosque will encourage the radicalization of Muslims, the counter-narrative maintains that an officially registered Mosque will prevent minoritarian, extremist voices inside the Muslim community to exert influence on moderate Muslims. Nikos Filis voted for the mosque's construction, and explicitly argued that the establishment of an official Mosque is (also) tied to the fight against terrorism (newsbeast, 2016).

In the same spirit, Nikos Toskas, former Deputy Minister of Public Order and Citizen Protection stated that "we should not fear regulated spaces. The problem lies with extra-legal spaces." (ekathimerini,

28 Nevertheless, Takou warns us to be cautious when communicating that immigration creates more jobs and different positions in the workforce and that immigrants could offer to the state with economic development of underworked sectors. (Takou, ibid).

2017). Huseyinoglou urges the drawing of comparisons to enrich this counter-narrative: We don't have a problem with the mosques of Komotini, Xanthi and Thrace. Why should we have a problem with a mosque in Athens? We have 300 mosques in Greece, let alone the other countries in the EU; why not in Athens? Why are we so afraid? (Huseyinoglou, ibid).

The triple emphasis on national security, humanistic values and social stability underlines the strength of the counter-argument, its appeal to diverse ideological affiliations and constitutes an ambitious but necessary attempt to face the aforementioned elephant in the room.

General Remarks on Effectiveness

Lessons learned" from studying the dominant counter-narratives to Muslim hatred in Greece set the stage for the categorical list that follows.

First, fact-based approaches are effective in fighting ignorance, generalizations and stereotyping. Statements that are grounded in facts, transparently convey the source of their validity and are verifiable are key ingredients of effective counter-narratives that can inform, raise awareness about and cultivate an understanding of Muslim identity. In response to narratives that present Muslims as a threat, evidence (A Sakellariou 2017, personal communication, 04.09.2017), facts, and data are valuable tools for provoking reflection and scrutinizing generalizations.

At the same time, statistics and data need to be complemented by and contribute to a message that is more humane (Gkournelou, ibid Kyriakopoulou, ibid). Keridis notes that effective narratives are based on facts, yet there is a need to historicize and politicize, avoiding ahistorical thinking (Keridis, ibid). Therefore, it is the combination of fact-based approaches and a historical and political positioning on the facts and empathy-evoking content that can render counter-narratives effective. What is not effective is engaging in dialogue with actors of hate speech producing fictional Islamophobic narratives, Nakasian comments; in response to racist statements, you let data and facts speak instead (Nakasian, ibid).

Second, defining who the target audiences of counter-narratives are/should be is central to the discussion of effectiveness. Counter-narratives sometimes address the society at large, while on other occasions are directed to distinct ideological groups. Expert interviews have also shown that particular narratives, though aspiring to address a broad audience, de facto reach only a limited, already sensitized and aware audience. Human rights messages in social advertisements, for instance, as Takou (Takou, ibid) notes, are not marking an outreach that, in terms of scope, significantly affects society at large, and, qualitatively, changes the perception of the "other" in the minds and hearts of those not already aware of and embracing human rights ideology. Takou provides valuable insight into the target audience that counter-narratives need to address: "There were those supporting open borders and no centers and others that were supporting the opposite. There also the people that were not polarized, they were in the middle. This is the target audience." The people in the middle are rarely addressed. Addressing the people in middle, consisting a critical mass that, if informed and open, will mark a significant change in society at large, is urgent and necessary. It also explains why and affirms that counter-narratives will not and should not be exhaustively coordinated with the narratives of Islamophobia. Vasilaki adds that a campaign is effective when it touches the marginal groups, those that are not convinced by reasons why we should help refugees, those that are extremely conservative or belong to the far-right. At the same time, she stresses, we need to find the middle ground, speak to the mainstream groups and produce effective messagese that will advocate cultural diversity (Vasilaki, ibid).

Third, result-driven responses to Islamophobia are particularly effective in defending that Muslims have and can be integrated into the Greek society. Counter-narratives emphasizing positive outcomes of the adaptation and application of best practices for integration (see Androussou, ibid) and utilizing

success stories of mutual respect and good neighboring within local communities can be drawn from assessment and evaluation reports on housing programs implemented by municipalities and international organisations, educational programs facilitating the integration of refugee families into the urban network and targeting school-aged minors, and scholarship opportunities for young adult refugees to continue their studies while in Greece. These are examples of documented successful outcomes of best practices of integration, human rights education, and cross-cultural dialogue.

Fourth, counter-narratives that aim at triggering or cultivating empathy, for instance, by prompting the collective memories of the challenges that Greeks who emigrated faced abroad (Esdras, ibid IOM campaign), or by exposing target audiences to fictional scenarios, social experiments and reflection exercises.

Fifth, the actor generating counter-narratives to Islamophobia, xenophobia and racism significantly determines their effectiveness. Huseyinoglou (Huseyinoglou, ibid) underlines the need to categorize counter-narratives depending on the institution that created them. There is strong evidence that counter-narratives produced or embraced by the political leadership at the national and local, municipal levels were impactful catalysts of integration into the urban network of municipalities and overall of peaceful coexistence and elimination of friction. Policy-makers need to discuss the fears of the public and become spokespersons for the elimination of tensions ((D Angeli 2017, personal communication, 24.08.2017).[29] Last but not least, Maragou notes, "Muslim communities should make an effort to counter negative representations of themselves, not only by denouncing terrorist violence but also by developing mechanisms to prevent it."

Finally, we need more practical counter narratives, addressing pragmatic concerns and deconstructing generalizations, Takou notes. "What seems to work is to approach people with something that will make their living easier." Innovation in communicating the counter-narratives is also key. Mainstream channels of communication need to be used innovatively to effectuate change. Social media and branding of social messages can create social movements and mobilize people. (Takou, ibid). Takou characteristically mentions thatstickers with social messages they used in a campaign were a success because they did not carry a specific organisation's name; it seemed as if there were no specific organisations behind the message.

[29] For instance, the municipality of Trikala and e-trikala undertook the role of the mediator and guarantor of peace and safety for both locals and refugees, welcoming them as people in need of help, addressing their need for information by issuing a newspaper in their language, and organizing, in collaboration with the US Embassy, a seminar for the teachers who would be called to deal with their integration into local schools (Raptis, ibid). Through educational and cultural initiatives supported or initiated by the municipality and the UNHCR, primary and high-school local students were prompted to reflect on personal beliefs and stereotypical worldviews in an effort to prepare the ground for smooth coexistence with refugee students within the school setting (Krithari, ibid; Mitsiadi, ibid). The involvement of the municipality, offering reassurance, normalizing and responding to protests orchestrated by Golden Dawn supporters, played a critical role in the positive climate in the city of Trikala (Mitsiadi, ibid). Papagiannakis also stresses that it is important to include official state bodies in efforts to address the refugee influx, commenting however on the limited power of municipalities in Greece to oppose, where necessary, to state-level policy-making and decisions, in comparison to municipalities in other European countries (Papagiannakis, ibid). Kalampokas, coordinator of the housing program in the city of Leivadia, notes that support to communities [undertaking housing programs] should take the form of official, state structures and endorsement of clear-cut principles of tolerance and mutual respect; these need to be conveyed by political leaders for the social matrix to adopt them (Kalampokas, ibid). Huseyinoglou underlines that, in relation particularly to the case of the Muslim minority in Western Thrace, the Greek state has to ensure that counter-narratives reach the media, political processes and education and create counter-narratives, and that political leaders should disprove islamophobic discourse (Huseyinoglou, ibid).

5. Conclusion

In the conclusion that follows, major findings are summarized in the categorical list of the ten most dominant, prevalent and effective counter-narratives to Muslim hatred in Greece.

1. Sweeping associations of Islam with violence and terrorism are unjustified.
2. Terrorism is socially constructed, rather than religiously ordained.
3. Muslims can be integrated.
4. Human rights and the value of shared humanity.
5. Muslims are not monolithic, but rather incorporate intersecting multiple identities.
6. The liberal/democratic counter-narratives and European patriotism.
7. The patriotism of solidarity.
8. Conservative anti-nationalist narratives and Christian ecumenical ideals such as peace, hospitality and care towards the vulnerable – especially towards the refugees.
9. Muslim migrants could contribute to economic development.
10. "The Mosque in Athens": religious spaces for Muslims in the capital of Greece.

The counter-narratives effectively challenge stereotypes and sweeping associations of Islam with violence and terrorism; they prompt target audiences to critically reflect on the causes of phenomena, rather than appearances; they enrich open dialogue and integration efforts with concrete successful results of adopted best practices and innovative programming; they grant target audiences methodological tools for engaging in critical thinking, for instance, about the intersecting multiple identities that are manifested in every human being; they engage with ideologically loaded messages of Islamophobia, providing solid responses; they infuse the identity of Greeks with positive meaning, the patriotism of solidarity and Christian ecumenical ideals, thus inspiring, motivating and mobilizing a community of care; they give pragmatic, economic and social reasons as to why the integration of Muslims/refugees will benefit the country; and they address particularly context-specific, yet prevalent, discussions, such as that of the Mosque in Athens.

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