Counter-Islamophobia Kit

Key National Messages – Belgium (English)

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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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Key National Messages – Belgium

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Counter-Islamophobia Kit

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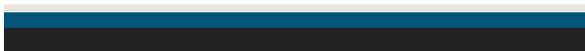
About the CIK Project

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 third workstream of the project which was centred on describe the key national messages pertaining to Islamophobia and countering-Islamophobia in each context considered in the framework of this project: Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Portugal and United Kingdom. The key national messages, findings and toolkit, the Counter-Islamophobia Kit (CIK) 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.

Executive summary

The study of the narratives of Muslim hatred and of the counter-narratives developed against them in Belgium leads to the formulation of five key national messages meant as crucial arguments to consider in the fight against Islamophobia in the country. Key national messages stem from couples of narratives of hatred and related counter-narratives that converge in terms of the specific themes concerned.

Key national message 1:

Against the socio-cultural and political discrediting of Muslims, there is a need of making commonplace of religious belonging and of valuing individuals' professional expertise.

Narrative	Counter-narrative
Islamic practices need to be secularised to be accepted in Western societies – on the social pressure exerted by non-Muslim environment on Muslims	Muslims are professional experts
Islamic belonging (claimed or assigned) is a prior identity marker: on the intellectual and political discrediting of Muslim representatives	Being Muslim is something normal

Key national message 2:

Islamic feminism and Muslim women's diverse stories need acknowledgement to reverse the gender-based narratives of hatred targeting religious dress.

Narrative	Counter-narrative
Veiling/Headscarf is incompatible with Western values and local rules	Feminism can be Islamic
Islamic religion legitimates extreme forms of women oppression: on the anti-burqa law	Muslim women's stories are diverse

Key national message 3:

Islam is compatible with European values and it is part of local history and cultures, as well as Muslims are members of Belgian population and resources for the society.

Narrative	Counter-narrative
Islam threatens Belgian traditions	Islam is compatible with European values
Brussels is turning into a Muslim city	Muslims are resources

Key national message 4:

Muslims are not dangerous for Belgian society; instead, they are partners for solutions against radicalisation and terrorism.

Narrative	Counter-narrative

A process of radicalisation of Muslims is underway in Belgium	Muslims are not dangerous for the society
Islam is (and Muslims are) a problem for Western societies: anti-terrorism and anti-radicalisation policies	Muslims are partners for solutions

Key national message 5:

Muslims are full Belgian citizens and autonomous subjects claiming the respect of major rights.

Narrative	Counter-narrative
Islam is an easy target of derision – on the dehumanisation of Muslims through mocking narratives	Muslims are autonomous subjects
Mosques do not belong in the local context: on the imperfect form of Muslims' citizenship	Muslims' claims are major rights

Key national message 1:

Against the socio-cultural and political discrediting of Muslims, there is a need of making commonplace of religious belonging and of valuing individuals' professional expertise.

Differently from direct discrimination, indirect discrimination or discriminating harassment[1], some acts or discourses addressed to Muslims and affecting their everyday life and the ways in which they may live their faith, are not identified by anti-discrimination state agencies nor often overtly denounced by Muslims themselves as being racist. Indeed, these acts or discourses shape a social pressure exerted on Muslims through different forms and functioning as narrative of hatred in which it implicitly questions – and eventually manage to reorient – a variety of Muslim practices, norms and values. Social pressure is exerted by a non-Muslim majority environment in which Islam and related habits are still perceived as deviating from the local norm. This perspective shapes on Goffman theorisation of social stigma[2], i.e. a process of blaming based on assigned social identity and on "a special kind of relationship between attribute and stereotype"[3]. Stereotypes determine normative expectations on conduct and character and leave little space for the concerned individuals to express themselves. The statements of Muslim scholars and politicians (including women) often go through a discrediting process depicting them as individual or collective claims only based on supposed religious interests, and not as complex and legitimate reasoning. Besides this, on the political scene some parties or movements and the representatives of these groups, recurrently make use of discriminatory remarks towards Muslim during their electoral campaigns or regular political activities; Muslim politicians and other public figures are

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[1]   See   https://www.belgium.be/fr/justice/victime/plaintes_et_declarations/discrimination   and http://unia.be/fr/criteres-de-discrimination/discrimination-quelques-precision for a definition of these three forms of discrimination by state bodies, accessed 20 March 2017.
[2] Goffman, E. 1963. *Stigma*. London: Penguin. Within possible forms of social stigma, Goffman defines that linked to race, nation and religion as "tribal stigma" (1975: 13).
[3] Goffman, E. 1963: 2.

intercepted – if not overtly addressed – by these remarks[4]. This discrimination consists of a form of micro-aggression[5] on Muslim political and intellectual representatives in public debates. A "process of ethnicification of the Muslim identity"[6] emerges, meaning that otherness is defined "according to an assigned Muslim identity"[7].

In response to the social pressure exerted by the non-Muslim environment on Muslims in Belgium, several actions demonstrate Muslims' role as active actors in the socio-economic sphere of Belgian society and highligh their contribution to this sphere without neglecting their religious belonging – and, on the contrary, through valuing it. The focus on the professional expertise of Muslims responds to the fact that such social pressure is primarily impacting their work experiences, even if these are not the only ones affected. The tool of the "Success stories" permits to give visibility to Muslims' expertise. It consists of organizing public events where Muslims that succeeded in Belgian society – mainly at the professional level, but also at the social one (in terms of activities positively affecting social wellness) – have the possibility to tell their story. The mediatisation of these activities makes it possible to shed light on diversity and to promote a model of society where (religious) difference is valued as resource.

The message that identity is multiple and religion only constitutes one among the factors shaping it emerges against the disqualification of Muslim actors and to counter a stereotyping discourse on Muslims which see their Islamic belonging (claimed or assigned) as inevitably impacting their position in intellectual and political debates. Shifting the focus on other facets of Muslims' identity – thus making commonplace of the religious one – enables to prioritise the fact that Muslim representatives are democratic actors and as such, they have the right of accessing media. The fulfilment of this right is a means of "normalising Muslims", of making them part of the norm, even when they position themselves in a critical way toward certain facts of local society. This counter-narrative becomes operational on the one hand through tools to counter discrimination. Monitoring and denouncing discriminating or stereotyping discourse on Muslims spread in politics and media is among these tools. On the other hand, this counter-narrative functions through the promotion of Muslim individuals in the political scene and in responsibility posts. Systematically including Muslims into debates concerning society issues would contribute to "normalise" Muslims' presence in the concerned fields and not considering it as an "exception". Making their presence recurrent and visible, would finally lead to focus no more on their religious belonging but rather on their actions and discourse

[4] Manço U. 2004. *Reconnaissance et discrimination: présence de l'islam en Europe occidentale et en Amérique du Nord*. Paris: Editions L'Harmattan; Zemni, S. 2011. The shaping of Islam and Islamophobia in Belgium. *Race & Class*. [Online]. **53**(1), pp. 28-44. [Accessed 17 April 2017]. Available from: http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0306396811406781.

[5] Solorzano D.G. 1998. Critical race theory, race and gender microaggressions, and the experience of Chicana and Chicano scholars. *International journal of qualitative studies in education*. **11**(1): pp. 121-136.

[6] Fassin, É. and Fassin, D. eds. 2006. *De la question sociale à la question raciale. Représenter la société française*. Paris: La Découverte.

[7] Zibouh, F. 2013. Muslim political participation in Belgium: an exceptional political representation in Europe. In: Nielsen, J. *Muslim Political participation in Europe*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 17-33, p. 19.

that do not necessarily relate to it. The political participation of Muslims is a means to put their expertise on different subjects at disposal of the general community, and it becomes an opportunity to make diversity further respected.

<u>Key national message 2:</u>

Islamic feminism and Muslim women's diverse stories need acknowledgement to reverse the gender-based narratives of hatred targeting religious dress.

The debate on headscarf spread in Belgium at least from 1989[8]. Besides resulting in the adoption of the anti-burqa law, this debate, still present today at different levels of the public and political discourse, concretely impacts Muslim women's everyday experiences. Amnesty International[9] and the recent ENAR report[10] highlight the great range of discrimination experienced by Muslim women wearing headscarf in Belgium. Generally, we see "a sense of discomfort over the headscarf" which is "[…] perceived […] as a sign of a return to tradition or a rejection of Western norms and values" [11]. The processes of racialisation at the heart of Islamophobia are characterised by a profoundly gendered dimension[12] and anti-veiling sentiments appear as constituting a relevant and diffuse form of the anti-immigrant prejudice[13]. More precisely, "the question of women's oppression, neutrality, or the need for an 'enlightened' or 'modern' Islam" can act in defence of the opposition to the wearing of the veil[14].

Against these discourses, Muslim women promote Islamic feminism and the diversity their stories. Islamic Feminism – also based on a re-reading of sacred texts – is a means to claim shared women values and the specificities they assume in relation to Islamic religious belonging. The right of being active actors within society and of having professional ambitions intersects the statement of femininity as multi-faceted life experience that can include religiosity. Guaranteeing freedom of religion is necessary to give Muslim women the opportunity to enforce this right. Applied to the Belgian context, this discourse means that laicity needs to be inclusive, thus not limiting the practice of religion in name of a misuse of the notion of neutrality. Possible tools to develop such counter-narrative and to make it effective are actions of promotion and "coaching" initiatives of Muslim women professionals to foster their presence in the political life and to develop successful professional strategies. The coalition building with other feminist associations is essential in this process. Are equally

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[8] Fadil, N., El Asri, F. and Bracke, S. 2014. Chapter 5 Belgium. In: Cesari, J. ed. *The Oxford Handbook of European Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 222-262, p. 226.

[9] Amnesty International (Amnesty). 2012. *Choix et préjugés. La discrimination à l'égard des musulmans en Europe*. London: Amnesty International.

[10] Mescoli, E. 2016. *Forgotten Women: The impact of Islamophobia on Muslim women in Belgium*. Brussels: ENAR.

[11] Fadil et al. 2014, p. 226.

[12] Fadil et al., 2014: 226; Bracke, S. 2007. Feminisme en islam : intersecties. In: Arteel, I., Müller, H.M., De Metsenaere, M. and Bossaert, S. eds. Vrouw(on)vriendelijk? Islam feministisch bejejen. Brussels: VUB-Press, pp. 13-38.

[13] Saroglou, V., Lamkaddem, B., Van Pachterbeke, M. and Buxant, C. 2009. Host society's dislike of the Islamic veil: The role of subtle prejudice, values, and religion. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*. **33**(5), pp. 419-428.

[14] Fadil et al. 2014, p. 242.

crucial: the reaction to Muslim women's discrimination through detection and collection of records of discrimination by specific forms of reporting; legal fights against discrimination and the creation of a "legal arsenal" of successful case laws and strategic court litigations; general mediations and recommendations to prevent discrimination from occurring again.

<u>Key national message 3:</u>
Islam is compatible with European values and it is part of local history and cultures, as well as Muslims are members of Belgian population and resources for the society.

The description of a possible "Islamisation" of western societies – including Europe, Belgium and Brussels more specifically – is based on alerting about the supposed exponential demographic increase of Muslims and about the feared changes of political, economic and social rules, which would be adapted to Muslims' needs and claims. Denouncing the incompatibility of Muslim traditions with the Belgian national – and original – ones and the threat that they could be eradicated reinforce this narrative. Rising non-Muslim secularism in these discourses is crucial to achieve the expected results[15], i.e. discriminating Muslims as constituting a separate segment of local population and not an integral part of it, and a segment to fear. Working on dismantling this should entail a different posture to face the narrative described here, which would sound like – in particular concerning Brussels: "Brussels is turning into a Muslim city, and so what?". Without intending to neglect the difficulties that are engendered by the dynamic redefinition of cities cultural priorities and interplay of forces toward social cohesion, the focus should be on the legitimacy that this change may happen.

The counter-narratives opposing the description of Islam as threat to Belgian traditions have a double focus. On the one hand, they highlight the historically rooted compatibility of Islam with European democracy and citizenship. On the other hand, the proximity between Islam and Catholicism that is seen as predominant in European countries is equally underlined, thus moving the counter-discourse within the religious sphere. This double focus develops mainly through informative initiatives aimed at transmitting knowledge about Islam and through intercultural events meant to promote dialogue among cultural parties that are supposedly different but convergent at some points[16]. This is a need emerging from the multicultural composition of Belgian (and European) society, represented through the image of a mosaic. In this context, journalists have the role of getting to know the diversity of the stories within Islam and to make Muslims' voice heard against stereotyping images concerning them.

This process contributes to diffuse a message about Muslims as resources for the socio-economic and cultural development of the local environment, and this particularly operates in reaction to the discourse on the islamisation of Brussels. Initiatives underlining the diversity of Brussels as richness imply the narration of experiences that value Muslims' effective

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[15] Zemni, S. 2011. The shaping of Islam and Islamophobia in Belgium. *Race & Class*. [Online]. **53**(1), pp. 28-44. [Accessed 17 April 2017]. Available from: http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0306396811406781.
[16] In the events or training on diversity and intercultural dialogue, Islamophobia can emerge among the specific subjects or examples addressed. These kinds of training also aim at making participants deconstruct their gaze on Muslims.

contribution to the local society – also involving the mobilisation of Muslim funds to the profit of the general local collectivity. Establishing and renewing networks with non-Muslim stakeholders that are active at the cultural, political and economic level of urban contexts such as Brussels make it possible to take part of a process of enhancement of urban diversity and to stress the role of Muslims within it.

<u>Key national message 4:</u>

Muslims are not dangerous for Belgian society; instead, they are partners for solutions against radicalisation and terrorism.

The narrative on the suspected radicalisation of Muslims in Belgium often presupposes a latent association between Islam and terrorism diffused in public opinion, and the belief that Muslims could easily be brought, through religious discourse[17], to infringe local laws. Manipulated research results support such message conveyed by media. Some Belgian cities are particularly in the spotlight and described as "radicalisation hubs" (*foyers de radicalisation*), shaping an imaginary around them as dens where Muslims would gradually stiffen their faith and practice and couple them with violent political discourse and action. Raid and arrests regularly carried out by Belgian police in these areas "contribute to the climate of fear of Belgian Muslims"[18]. The imaginary and fears about violent militant Muslim groups in Belgium is not a matter exclusively linked to recent events, it is in fact anchored in the past and contribute to nourish a local moral panic[19] through the creation of a "Muslim question/problem"[20]. In this context, anti-terrorism and anti-radicalisation policies contribute to shape an environment of hate toward Muslims and this determines concrete effects on their everyday life. Through a recent report[21] UNIA analysed the impact of terrorist attacks and of the policies adopted to fight terrorism on the number and type of complaints concerning Muslims collected by this organism and associated either to a general climate of fear or to precise measures. Equally, the practice of "ethnic profiling" has been object of recent inquiry by the Human Rights League in Belgium (LDH), pointing out that identity

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[17] This discourse would shape through fundamentalist trends which would develop in Belgium and have relative success because of organisational capabilities (Maréchal, 2008a: 66). They would have gradually taken form starting from pietistic revival of Islam spread from the 1970s which would have progressively acquired a socio-political scope through the activities of Muslim Brotherhood local networks (Maréchal 2008a: 67-68). Salafism and neo-Salafism would have entered this process more recently, during the 1990s (Maréchal and Al-Asri, 2012: 201) and at the beginning of the 2000, when some young Muslims came back to Belgium after studying at Medina University (or in Jordany, Maréchal, 2008a: 73). The CIC (*Centre Islamique et culturel de Bruxelles – Mosquée du Cinquantenaire*) would have a crucial role in promoting radical discourse under the influence of Saudi Arabia (see http://www.levif.be/actualite/belgique/menaces-sur-l-islam-institutionnel-de-belgique/article-normal-450069.html, accessed 23 March 2017).

[18] Easat-Daas, A. 2015. Belgium. In: Bayrakli, E. and Hafez, F. eds. European Islamophobia Report. Istanbul: SETA, pp. 49-69, p. 55.

[19] Fadil et al., 2014: 226.

[20] Norton, A. 2013. *On the Muslim question*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; Fernando, M. L. 2014. *The republic unsettled: Muslim French and the contradictions of secularism*. Durham: Duke University Press; Hajjat, A. and Mohammed, M. 2013. *Islamophobie. Comment les élites françaises construisent le «problème musulman».* Paris: La Découverte.

[21] See http://unia.be/files/TERAD_Fr.pdf, published in June 2017.

controls are much more numerous within ethnic minorities than the overall population and that they more often include body search[22].

A counter-discourse on Muslims as not dangerous for the local society – even when they are deep believers – emerges to counteract the discourse on the radicalisation of Muslims. It sheds light on Muslims' ways of living their faith that are contextually situated *in* Belgium and shape an Islam *of* Belgium. The participation of Muslims into the de-radicalisation (or the prevention of the radicalisation) of Muslim youth also consists of contributing to social inclusion in more general terms against the stigmatisation of Muslim youth and exclusion from the local society, that is seen as a lever of violent action. Against a discourse on Islam and Muslims as problems for Western societies, Muslims also position themselves as partners for solutions, as "positive opportunities" to fight against terrorism. Therefore, it is crucial to diversify the configuration of teams working on it through including Muslim or generally diversity-sensitive members. This work needs to be accompanied by a monitoring process targeting media propaganda and by lobbying actions to make sure that anti-terrorist and anti-radicalisation measures are not stigmatizing.

<div align="center">
Key national message 5:

Muslims are full Belgian citizens and autonomous subjects claiming the respect of major rights.
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Messages diffused on the Internet and in other media that contain elements inciting discrimination, hatred or violence are predominant[23]. Moreover, narratives of hatred are spread using mockery in different forms. Often law does not prosecute authors in the name of the freedom of thought and of its implementation within media domain (press in particular). Well-known cases such as the publication of cartoons representing the prophet Mohammed in the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten in 2005 and in the French journal Charlie Hebdo (several issues from 2006 to 2015) marks crucial points in this process giving legitimacy to further similar actions occurring also in Belgium. Mocking narratives targeting Muslims spread in particular in Flanders, where for example some cartoons published in 2015 at school re-entry showed racist depictions of Muslim children. These images contribute to feed a broader process of criminalisation of Muslim people: "Muslim youth are locked into a cycle of discrimination and criminalisation which is not only a major injustice in itself, but […] heightens already widespread perceptions of insecurity among the population at large"[24].

Hate speech and crime against Muslims diffused through the internet also instigate attacks to mosques. Conflicts around mosques also arise as individual and collective protests against the

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[22] Human Rights League in Belgium (LDH). 2016. *Contrôler et punir? Etude exploratoire sur le profilage ethnique dans les contrôles de police : paroles de cibles*. Brussels: LDH, p. 23.

[23] Centre Interfédéral pour l'égalité des chances (UNIA). 2015. *Le travail du centre exprimé en chiffres pour l'année 2014*. Brussels: UNIA, p. 31.

[24] Fekete, L. 2004. Anti-Muslim racism and the European security state. *Race & Class*. **46**(1), pp. 3-29, p. 12. Also see Zemni, S. 2011.

construction of new mosques or against the use of these worship sites[25]. These events demonstrate that in spite of formal integration among the officially recognised worships in Belgium and in spite of "forms of 'citizenisation' of Muslims", Islam itself is not yet "citizenise[d]"[26]. Still imperfect forms of citizenship allowed to Muslims – in particular if they have a migration background – seem to legitimate the insurgence of narrative of hatred against them and their worship sites.

In response to the dehumanisation of Muslims through mocking narratives, a discourse on Muslims as autonomous subjects is developed. This discourse shapes as set of practices to empower Muslims and to give them the opportunity of having voice in the concerned debates. For example, during processes of mediation of controverted issues and experiences it is fundamental to gather "around the table" all the parties involved to try to explain each one's intentions and emotions and to get awareness about them. Another way of giving voice to Muslims in one of the social spheres where this dehumanisation mostly occurs (media) consists of developing faith-based journalism or other forms of community media, also including some private initiatives set through social media to exchange experiences, initiatives and ideas to empower Muslim women, for instance. Countering the dehumanisation of Muslims also means targeting cyber-hate, reporting systematically any message of hatred encountered in the net.

The discriminating consideration of Muslims' citizenship as incomplete is addressed through recalling the civic rights that lay behind Muslims' claims, thus prioritizing right over culture instead of the reverse. Such perspective, while starting from religiously based demands as pretexts for further reflexion, makes it possible to free these demands from their religious character and to focus on them as general (and major) claims. The tool of the "greatest common denominator"[27] , inspired by the recommendations of the Council of Europe[28] and applied by Unia, among others[29], goes in this precise direction. Generally speaking, valuing difference and developing a diversity strategy is fundamental.

Besides this route, the prioritisation of right over culture may also go through reinforcing the application of existing rights against discrimination and establishing standard legal procedures

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[25] See Dassetto, F. and Ralet, O. 2010. Mosques and minarets: tension, assertion and negotiation. Some Belgian cases. In: Allievi, S. ed. *Mosques in Europe. Why a solution has become a problem*. London: Alliance Publishing Trust, pp. 53-88. UNIA also published a recent report directed by Corinne Torrekens on the establishment of the mosque of Fléron-Retinne (see https://www.unia.be/files/Documenten/Publicaties_docs/FR_-_Intro-rapport-ccl_Compil%C3%A9_DEF_(2).pdf, accessed 26 February 2018.

[26] Allievi, S. 2009. *Conflicts over Mosques in Europe: Policy Issues and Trends*. London: Alliance Publishing Trust, p. 89.

[27] Bouzar D. and Bouzar L. 2009. *Allah a-t-il sa place dans l'entreprise ?* Paris: Albin Michel; Bouzar D. and Bouzar L. 2010. *La République ou la burqa, les services publics face à l'islam manipulé*. Paris: Albin Michel.

[28] *Institutional accommodation and the citizen: legal and political interaction in a pluralist society*, Trends in social cohesion, No. 21, Council of Europe Publishing, 2009, available online from http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/socialpolicies/socialcohesiondev/source/Trends/Trends-21_en.pdf, accessed 5 October 2017.

[29] The Brussels Centre for Intercultural Action (CBAI) had an active role in the formulation and adoption of this methodology in Belgium (see Bouzar, D. and Denies, N. 2014. *Diversité convictionnelle: comment l'appréhender? Comment la gérer?* Louvain La Neuve: Academia L'Harmattan).

based on the recognition of individuals' rights and on the example of concrete cases. This also presupposes to enable local police to record Islamophobic acts. The support agreed by different associations to a same case law contributes to further possibilities of success when different fights converge against a victim competition.

About the Research

The Counter Islamophobia Kit Project included two main research phases: the first one focused on the narratives of Muslim hatred diffused in the concerned country and the second one on the counter-narratives developed against them. Each phase culminated in the issuance of country reports.

The aim of the first report for Belgium – available at https://cik.leeds.ac.uk/publications/workstream-1-dominant-islamophobic-narratives-belgium/[30] – is to describe and explain the discursive contents of Islamophobia and the forms that it takes in the country. This research takes into account the body of literature spread locally by institutions, scholars and associations. It also presents some overall information about Muslims in Belgium at the socio-demographic level, pointing out the main forms of participation. Starting from the assumption that Islamophobia develops and performs in environments which are not neutral and which may affect the ways in which anti-Muslims attacks deploy, the report describes the formation of anti-Muslim hatred in Belgium through a diachronic perspective, taking into account recently past and contemporary times. After that, the report introduces a detailed description of the most dominant narratives of Muslim hatred in Belgium that are finally summed up within a categorical listing ranking them in order of dominance, significance, impact and / or coverage. The main sources of data upon which this report is built include: state agencies statistics, records and data bases (mainly from the Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunity – UNIA), local associations and international NGOs reports (by Collective against Islamophobia in Belgium – CCIB, Muslim Rights Belgium – MRB, Amnesty International among others) and European bodies accounts (the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance – ECRI and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights – FRA). A previous recent research report by this author also served to provide with some data[31].

The second report on Belgium – available at www.cik.leeds.ac.uk/publications – introduces the analysis of the fieldwork material collected through ethnographic research conducted in Belgium on the counter-narratives to Muslim hatred. The aim is to provide with a description of best practices implemented to fight Islamophobia in the country thanks to the mobilisation of tools and messages aimed at reversing the racist discourse and practice affecting Muslims. This report stems from fieldwork activity conducted between April and November 2017 among social actors dealing with Islamophobia in Belgium. Semi-structured interviews and participant observations of relevant network activities or seminars focused on the role of the actor involved and/or on that of the organisation to which he or she was affiliated in countering Islamophobia directly, when this was among the exerted activities, or indirectly,

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[30] Author of this report and the second one on Belgium: Elsa Mescoli, postdoctoral researcher and Lecturer Assistant at CEDEM – Centre for Ethnic and Migration studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Liege (Belgium), E.Mescoli@uliege.be.
[31] See Mescoli, E. 2016. This report stemmed from a short-term fieldwork (October-December 2015) conducted in several Belgian cities among which Brussels and Liège.

i.e. in the cases of associations working on related subjects. The study and ranking of the identified counter-narratives is based on the consideration of the connection between each of them and the narrative of hatred to which it responds among those described during the previous phase of this research.