WORKSHOP ON SYNERGIES AND GOOD PRACTICES ON TACKLING ANTI-MUSLIM RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

WORKING SESSIONS 1 AND 2

The objective of the working sessions is to identify key joint approaches and strategies, tools and supporting activities building on the experience of concrete cases. The discussion will take place in three break out groups composed by a mix of representatives of civil society organisations and public authorities. The open discussion will be triggered by participants who have accepted to share their experiences of cooperation. Moderators will prompt the discussion through a number of questions. In this document you will find a short abstract of the experiences that will be shared and the open questions we would invite you to reflect upon from your perspective in view of the group discussion.

EXPERIENCES AND INITIATIVES FOR THE GROUP DISCUSSION

Working session 1: **Responses to anti-Muslim hate crime and hate speech and promotion of positive narratives**

THE AWARENESS RAISING CAMPAIGN TO FOSTER VICTIMS' REPORTS IN THE NETHERLANDS

In recent years, there has been an increase of anti-Muslim hate crimes in the Netherlands. This has resulted in physical assaults or attacks to mosques and Islamic cultural centres as well as in episodes of discrimination and obstacles to access to the job market, affecting in particular younger generations. In the Netherlands, the complaint mechanisms to assist victims to report are not fitting the needs of the Muslim community.

In order to respond to this, several NGOs including SPIOR and EMCEMO have jointly launched an awareness raising campaign in 2015-2017 and 2018-2020. The campaign was addressing potential victims to foster reporting, and it involved information sessions in mosques and youth centres. The campaign also targeted complaints handling offices and law enforcement to improve the processing of complaints. The title of the campaign is “Islamophobia: don’t accept, report it!”

"Demokratie Leben!" (Live Democracy!) – A Federal funding programme by the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

The German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth has launched the federal programme "Live Democracy!" in 2015 in order to strengthen civic engagement and democratic behaviours. The funding programme aims to support civil society organisations at the municipal, state (Länder) and federal level as well as to further develop dedicated policies in the field of democracy promotion, antidiscrimination and prevention, by funding pilot projects in various areas, among which the fight against Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism. More than 600 programme partners and civil society organisations are supported, including several initiatives and organisations working against Islamophobia such as CLAIM and Minor.

The programme targets in particular younger generations and adopts a pedagogical approach. Another guiding principle is the close and trust-based cooperation between state bodies, civil society organisations and other relevant actors, including at community level. For the overall programme a total of 115,5 million EUR. has been made available in 2019 (increased from 30.5.million by 2015). In order to ensure planning reliability, all structural and pilot based projects have a funding period of up to 5 years

Working session 2: **Promoting diversity, non-discrimination and social inclusion**

The cooperation between the Belgian equality body (Unia) and the *collectif Contre l'Islamophobie en Belgique* (CCIB)

Unia and the Collective against Islamophobia in Belgium (CCIB) are working closely in flagging and handling complaints about hate crimes and episodes of discrimination and, in the area of education, received at the beginning of this academic year several complaints of Muslim students in Brussels and the Wallonia region. In Belgium religious symbols are authorised in universities but not necessarily in institutions of higher education. In one case Unia and the CCIB negotiated a withdrawal of this ban for the theoretical courses and the introduction of a specific headgear which is compatible with the uniform imposed by the institution and with rules of hygiene and security for the practical courses (gym). This case is still used as a reference and triggered several other higher education institutions to adopt the same policy.

Unfortunately, in other cases, negotiation did not lead to the desired result. For example, in August 2016 the CCIB received 68 complaints of young Muslim female students from migration and unprivileged background attending a university college of Liège. 71% of these lodged a complaint with Unia. These students were confronted with a new school regulation that prohibits religious symbols. Negotiation by Unia did not succeed, so the CCIB and Unia were obliged to think about further steps.

THE BARCELONA MUNICIPAL PLAN AGAINST ISLAMOPHOBIA

In 2016, the City Council of Barcelona conducted a study on "The religious practice of the Muslim communities of Barcelona. Expressions and Problems". The study clearly pointed to the severe discrimination suffered by Muslim women carrying hijab in fields such as education or the labour market, and the need to raise awareness about Islamophobia as a root cause of these forms of discrimination. After a broad consultative process, the "Municipal Plan against Islamophobia" was launched in January 2017, involving Muslim people and associations, human rights defenders, municipal civil servants, experts and scholars.

The plan contains 28 concrete measures based on an integrated, preventative and flexible method and inspired by an intercultural and human rights approach. It also has a diverse and participatory monitoring commission that adapts the plan to new needs detected. The plan, among other measures, has set on the local agenda the 12th December as the international day on the fight against Islamophobia. The plan reinforces the municipal safeguards mechanism through the Office for Non-Discrimination for victims of discrimination, and this has led to prosecution of several cases. After two years of implementation, up to a total of 1872 municipal employees have received training on human rights and diversity, the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMED) has created an observatory on the narratives about Muslims in the media, and the first report on discrimination in the city of Barcelona, drafted jointly between the City Council and human rights activists, was published.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION BY ALL THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE GROUP

- What are the key needs and problems these initiatives are addressing / what challenges would they face?
- What would you do to strengthen or develop a similar initiative? Would you seek for additional partners and which ones?
- From your experience, can you think of any different / complementary action?