



## European network of legal experts in gender equality and non-discrimination

### NEWS REPORT

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| <b>Country:</b>                  | Austria  |
| <b>Title:</b>                    | Council of Ministers adopts bill on banning face-covering clothes from public spaces and buildings |
| <b>Date:</b>                     | 2 May 2017   |
| <b>Expert:</b>                   | Schindlauer, Dieter  |
| <b><u>Context</u></b>            |  |
| <b>Issue at stake:</b>           | Ban on face-covering clothes in public   |
| <b>Ground of discrimination:</b> | Religion/belief  |
| <b>Source:</b>                   | Decision of Council of Ministers – official bill by the government to be adopted by parliament     |
| <b>Field:</b>                    | All fields   |
| <b>Applicable law:</b>           | Not yet in force   |

### **Content**

Anti-face-covering Bill adopted by Council of Ministers.<sup>1</sup>

On 28 March 2017, the government adopted a decision to submit to the parliament a bill prohibiting face-covering in public. The bill was originally proposed by the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs and Integration and is called "Anti-face-covering Act" (Anti-Gesichtsverhüllungsgesetz; long title: Federal Act on the prohibition of covering the face) which aims to make it a punishable act (administrative fine of up to 150 Euros) "to cover one's facial features by means of clothing or other means in such a way that they are no longer recognisable in public space or public buildings."

With this decision, the bill is an official legal initiative of the government and is likely to be adopted by parliament soon.

**Key points of analysis:** The bill received an impressive amount of expressly negative statements and expert opinions; nevertheless, the Council of Ministers adopted the draft on 28 April 2017. Note that the law is not in force, yet. In its preparatory explanatory notes and in its § 1, the bill says about its purpose: "The aim of this federal law is the facilitation of integration via the strengthening of participation in the societal living together. Integration is a process involving society at large while its success depends on the cooperation of all persons living in Austria. It is based on personal interaction." The bill, therefore, is clearly targeting only Muslim headgear for women, like burqa or niqab. Although the provision does not explicitly refer to religious clothing, the public debate was entirely on a "ban on burqas".

### **Internet link source: (German)**

[https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXV/I/I\\_01586/fname\\_624800.pdf](https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXV/I/I_01586/fname_624800.pdf).

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<sup>1</sup> See: Austria, Parliamentary materials, Nr. 1586 of the appendices XXV GP, 28 March 2017; [https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXV/I/I\\_01586/fname\\_624800.pdf](https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXV/I/I_01586/fname_624800.pdf).