



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

FLASH REPORT

Country:	Norway
Title:	New action plan against hate and discrimination against Muslims
Date:	19 October 2020
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<u>Context</u>	
Issue at stake:	Discrimination and hate against Muslims
Grounds of discrimination:	Religion or belief
Field of application:	All fields
Source:	Policy development
Applicable law:	The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act (the GEADA)

Content

Policy development: The Norwegian government launched a new action plan against discrimination and hate against Muslims on 23 September 2020. The action plan focuses on four main areas: 1) Dialogue and meeting places, 2) Safety and security, 3) Knowledge and research on discrimination and hate against Muslims, and 4) Hate and discrimination against Muslims outside Norway.

The action plan contains 18 measures, among which are: a new funding programme for measures against racism, discrimination and hate speech to promote initiatives locally, regionally and nationally; promoting diversity in the culture sector, including arts and sports; developing a programme for communicating the diversity among Muslim identities, targeting adolescents; promoting religious dialogue; improving the dialogue between Muslim communities and the police; registering hate crime against Muslims separately (compared to today's registration of 'religion' or 'ethnicity' only); funding security measures for religious communities; and more research on discrimination against Muslims in the labour market, as well as the relationship between negative attitudes towards Muslims and the Muslims' participation in society and perceived belonging to the larger society.

Internationally the planned measures are to use Norway's position in the UN Council for Human Rights by giving attention to challenges regarding freedom of religion or life stance and related human rights issues, as well as strengthening the Norwegian government's cooperation with the OSSE/ODIHR regarding discrimination and intolerance against Jews, Christians, Muslims and other religious minorities.

Key points of analysis: While limited in the number of measures, the measures are well targeted, and seem to include a significant amount of funding. The action plan also includes mention of equality issues relating to gender and sexual orientation and does not fall into the essentialist trap¹ regarding Muslims. With an openly LGBTIQ friendly Muslim Minister

¹ I.e. seeing all Muslims as essentially alike, or Islam as the same for all Muslims.

for Culture, Abid Raja, as the responsible minister for the anti-discrimination field this is not surprising.

However, the government does have some trouble regarding its credibility among the general population regarding prejudice against Muslims due to its former coalition partner the Progress Party, which it still depends on for Parliament majority. For example, Human Rights Service, a foundation promoting anti-Muslim views, still receives funding from the government. Several previous ministers from the Progress Party continue to promote anti-Muslim views from their positions as Members of Parliament, and the Prime Minister Erna Solberg does not take a clear stance against such statements, at most commenting that 'she would not have expressed herself in that manner'. This does make the possible effect of such an action plan somewhat limited.

That said, the action plan has been generally welcomed among anti-racist and Muslim CSOs as a much-needed addition to the policies against racism and discrimination based on ethnicity and/or religion.

Internet link source:

<https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/b2a6fd21c6a94bae83d5a3425593da30/handlingsplan-mot-diskriminering-av-og-hat-mot-muslimer-2020-2023.pdf>;
<https://www.nettavisen.no/okonomi/frp-ut-mot-bollestads-hijab-velsignelse--skremmende/3423987922.html>.