



Norwegian Ministry  
of Culture and Equality

Action Plan

# Action plan to combat Anti-Muslim racism 2025–2030



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Anti-Muslim racism  
2025–2030



# Content

<b>Preface</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>List of measures</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>10</b>
Enhanced efforts to combat racism and discrimination: the government's priority areas .....	10
Muslims in Norway .....	12
Racism and discrimination against Muslims .....	12
<b>2 Challenges</b> .....	<b>14</b>
Public attitudes to Muslims .....	14
Discrimination and harassment .....	16
Hate crime .....	20
Extremism .....	21
Media coverage and hate speech online .....	24
The international situation .....	25
Consequences of racism, discrimination and harassment .....	27
<b>3 Focus area 1: Dialogue and a well-functioning democracy</b> .....	<b>29</b>
<b>4 Focus area 2: Knowledge and competence</b> .....	<b>34</b>
<b>5 Focus area 3: Safety and security</b> .....	<b>38</b>
<b>6 International efforts</b> .....	<b>41</b>
<b>References</b> .....	<b>45</b>

# Preface

The Norwegian government's aim is to create an inclusive and diverse society that is safe and welcoming for all. This action plan is aimed at strengthening and renewing the efforts to prevent and combat anti-Muslim racism. To this end, we are introducing 30 measures, both in Norway and beyond.

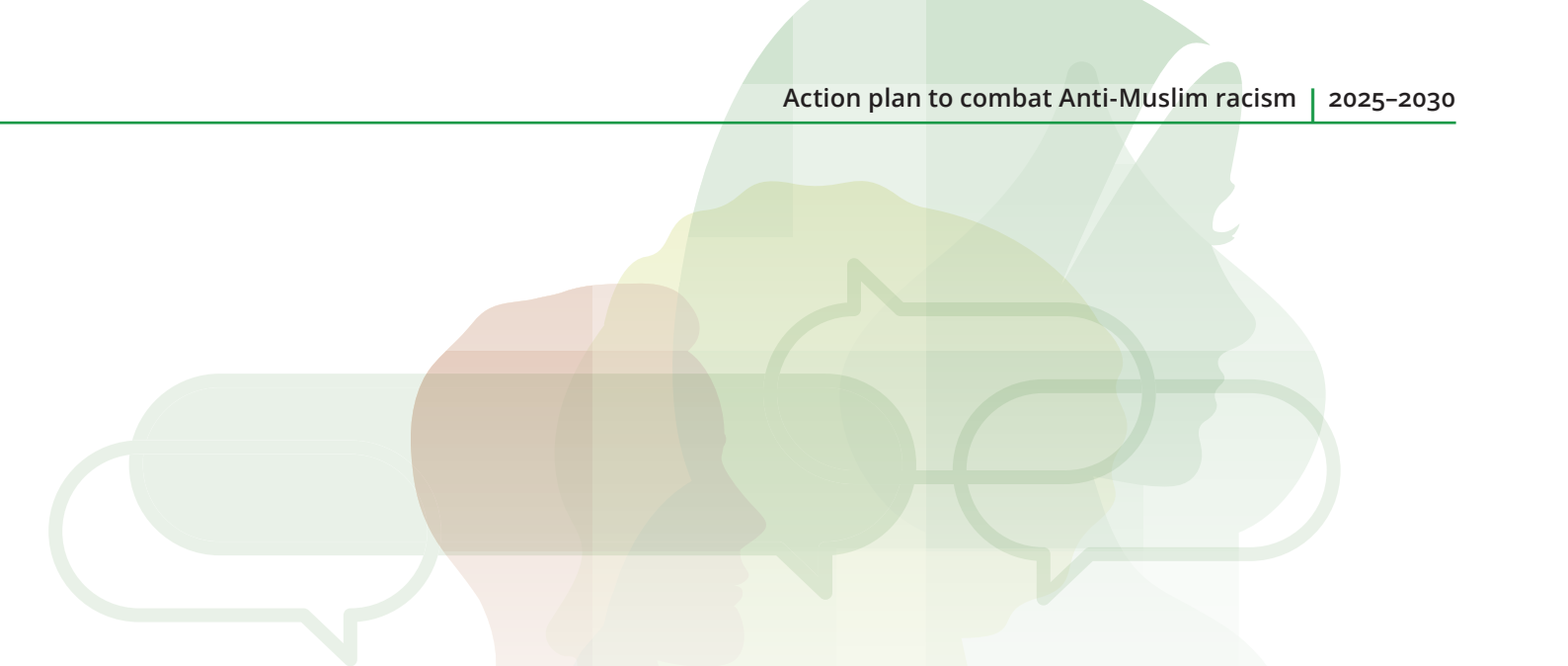
Many Muslims experience stereotyping, discrimination and racism. More than one in five people in the Norwegian population hold anti-Muslim attitudes, while about one in three have marked prejudices against Muslims. In a survey, more than half of all Muslims in Norway reported experiencing discrimination in the past year. It is also known that Muslims face discrimination in different spheres of life, such as in the labour market, in public spaces and in the interaction with public services.

Anti-Muslim racism primarily affect Muslims, but they also impact on society as a whole – and therefore all of us. A society that is free from discrimination and racism is safer and better for everyone.

The government would like to thank civil society for its valuable input to the action plan, which has formed the basis for several of the measures to counteract anti-Muslim racism in Norway.

The *Action plan to combat Anti-Muslim racism* is also part of the government's broader approach to strengthening and renewing the efforts to combat racism, discrimination and hate based on ethnicity and religion. The focus of the action plan is on three areas: (1) Dialogue and a well-functioning democracy, (2) Knowledge and competence, and (3) Safety and security. The action plan also covers the government's international efforts to combat racism and discrimination against Muslims.

Equality, non-discrimination and anti-racism are fundamental to a strong and well-functioning democratic society. This is exemplified by an open society built on mutual trust and universal equal opportunity, where individuals can express themselves without fear of harassment or persecution. We all share this responsibility, but political action is also needed. This action plan reflects the government's commitment to combatting anti-Muslim racism.



On behalf of the Norwegian government,



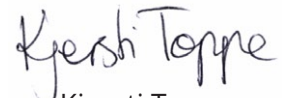
Jonas Gahr Støre  
*Prime Minister*



Lubna Jaffery  
*Minister of Culture and Equality*



Tonje Brenna  
*Minister of Labour and Social Inclusion*



Kjersti Toppe  
*Minister of Children and Families*



Bjørn Arild Gram  
*Minister of Defence*



Jan Christian Vestre  
*Minister of Health and Care Services*



Emilie Enger Mehl  
*Minister of Justice and Public Security*



Erling Sande  
*Minister of Local Government and Regional Development*



Kari Nessa Nordtun  
*Minister of Education*



Espen Barth Eide  
*Minister of Foreign Affairs*

Oslo, 13 December 2024



# List of measures

## Focus area 1: Dialogue and a well-functioning democracy

- 1 Establish a Muslim Pathfinder project
- 2 Strengthen the grant scheme to combat racism, discrimination and hate speech
- 3 Increase funding for the No hate speech movement Norway (Stopp hatprat)
- 4 Strengthen resilience against disinformation
- 5 Continue the grants allocated for dialogue, debate, cooperation and knowledge development pertaining to religion and life stance
- 6 Bolster peace and human rights centres
- 7 Strengthen democracy education, critical thinking and pupil participation
- 8 Update the guide on hate speech, harassment and threats against politicians

## Focus area 2: Knowledge and competence

- 9 Conduct a survey of the population's attitudes to ethnic and religious minorities every five years
- 10 Obtain information on Muslims' living conditions and quality of life
- 11 Obtain information on Muslims' interactions with the local authority
- 12 Obtain information on the impact of racism, discrimination and hate speech on social participation
- 13 Obtain information on racism in sport
- 14 Improve the information given to children and adolescents on racism, discrimination and group-focused enmity
- 15 Strengthen Dembra's efforts to combat anti-Muslim racism
- 16 Evaluate Dembra



- 17 Continue the financial support for the 10 August Foundation's memorial and learning centre
- 18 Prevent and combat racism and discrimination in the workplace
- 19 Develop methods to map experiences of racism and discrimination
- 20 Facilitate diversity training for managers in health and care services
- 21 Obtain knowledge about the link between health and experiences of racism and discrimination

### Focus area 3: Safety and security

- 22 Maintain a good dialogue between the police and Muslim faith communities
- 23 Strengthen the police's competence in hate crime
- 24 Further develop statistics on and analyses of reported hate crimes
- 25 Ensure a diversity perspective in police training, education and leadership development
- 26 Strengthen equality and diversity in the Norwegian Armed Forces

### International efforts

- 27 Address infringements of Muslims' right to freedom of religion or life-stance, as well as intolerance of Muslims internationally
- 28 Strengthen efforts to combat anti-Muslim racism through international cooperation
- 29 Strengthen democracy, human rights and the rule of law through the EEA and Norway Grants
- 30 Share Norway's experiences with combating anti-Muslim racism in international forums

# Introduction

Through the *Action plan to combat Anti-Muslim racism 2025–2030*, the Norwegian government aims to strengthen and renew the efforts to combat discrimination and racism against Muslims.

This action plan replaces the *Action plan to combat discrimination and hatred of Muslims (2020–2023)*, which was Norway’s first national action plan on this topic.

## Enhanced efforts to combat racism and discrimination: the government’s priority areas

The government’s goal is to intensify and renew efforts to combat racism, harassment and discrimination based on ethnicity and religion, with a view to ensuring that everyone feels safe and has equal opportunities. We aim to ensure a well-functioning democracy built on mutual respect. We will continue our efforts to build knowledge and competence within racism and discrimination across various spheres of society. Everyone in Norway should feel safe and secure, regardless of their background.

Everyone has the right to express themselves, and no one should be subjected to harassment because of their ethnicity or religion. Our efforts will allow us to further strengthen our society and uphold the values we hold dear: trust, equality and democracy. Everyone has a responsibility to combat anti-Muslim racism, as well as all other forms of racism and discrimination.

In November 2023 and November 2024, respectively, the government also launched the *Action plan on racism and discrimination – New initiatives 2024–2027*<sup>1</sup> and the *Action plan against antisemitism 2025–2030*.<sup>2</sup> The *Action*

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, 2023

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, 2024



Photo: AdobeStock

### Box 1: The government's action plans and focus areas

There are four national action plans to combat racism and discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity and religion:

- Action plan on racism and discrimination – New initiatives 2024–2027
- Action plan against antisemitism 2025–2030
- Action plan to combat Anti-Muslim racism 2025–2030
- Action plan to combat harassment and discrimination of the Sámi 2025–2030 (to be released at the start of 2025)

The government has defined three common focus areas in the action plans to combat antisemitism, anti-Muslim racism, and harassment and discrimination of the Sámi:

1. Dialogue and a well-functioning democracy
2. Knowledge and competence
3. Safety and security

*plan to combat harassment and discrimination of the Sámi 2025–2030* will be released in early 2025. These action plans are to be viewed as interconnected. Together, they represent a powerful effort to combat racism, harassment and discrimination based on ethnicity and religion.

Building on these goals, the government has established three common focus areas for the action plans to address antisemitism, anti-Muslim racism, as well as harassment and discrimination of the Sámi: 'Dialogue and a well-functioning democracy', 'Knowledge and competence', and 'Safety and security'.

The Action plan to combat anti-Muslim racism is dynamic, meaning that existing measures may be amended and new ones may be added. The measures will be implemented within the budgetary frameworks of the responsible government ministries.

### Muslims in Norway

Norway is a diverse society, and Muslims are part of this diversity.<sup>3</sup> Islam consists of several different sects, interpretations, practices and forms of observance. Muslims in Norway, as in the rest of the world, have different backgrounds and approaches to their faith. In other words, there is a rich diversity in how Muslims in Norway live their lives, practise their faith and express their identity. Muslims as a group are more complex than the public debate suggests.

There are currently 190,452 members of Muslim faith communities in Norway,<sup>4</sup> and there are also assumed to be more people in Norway who identify as Muslims but are not members of a faith community.

A survey on integration in everyday life among immigrants in Norway shows that Muslims experience more barriers to integration in their daily life than other religious groups.<sup>5</sup> One of the findings is that Muslims view themselves as Norwegian to the same extent as other Norwegians, but they feel that others are less likely to *recognise* their Norwegian identity. In other words, the gap between how Muslims view their Norwegian identity and how they feel it is recognised by others is greater compared to other groups. Muslims also report facing more discrimination and negative experiences in daily life, and more often attribute this to their religious affiliation. They are also more frequently subjected to serious incidents, such as hate, threats and violence, than Christians and those with no religious faith.

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<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Culture and Equality, 2020, pp. 16-17

<sup>4</sup> Statistics Norway, 2024

<sup>5</sup> Dalen et al., 2024, p. 143

### Racism and discrimination against Muslims

Surveys conducted by the Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minorities Studies (the Norwegian Holocaust Center) show that public attitudes to Muslims have improved since the first survey in 2017.<sup>6</sup> However, in more recent surveys, Muslim respondents report an increase in negative experiences and discrimination, such as harassment and being made to feel that they do not belong in Norway.<sup>7</sup> Other studies also show that Muslims in Norway and internationally are subjected to racism and discrimination and anti-Muslim attitudes and acts.<sup>8</sup>

The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act defines “**discrimination**” as treating a person less favourably than others based on one or more personal characteristics, e.g. religion, life stance or ethnicity, where such differential treatment is unjust, unnecessary, or results in a disproportionate negative impact.<sup>9</sup> Ostensibly neutral acts that result in someone being treated less favourably than others on the basis of, for example, their religious affiliation are also considered discrimination.<sup>10</sup> Treating all situations the same without considering their unique characteristics can result in unequal outcomes.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Moe, 2022, p. 14

<sup>7</sup> Moe, 2022, p. 10

<sup>8</sup> See for example Dalen et al., 2024; Ishaq et al., 2024; Banafsheh et al., 2021

<sup>9</sup> Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act, 2017, section 7, cf. section 6

<sup>10</sup> Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act, 2017, section 8, cf. section 6

<sup>11</sup> Proposition to the Storting 88 L (2012–2013), section 2.1.2

Many people experience discrimination based on multiple factors combined, and this is known as **“intersectional discrimination”**. For instance, a person may face discrimination during an employment recruitment process due to both their religion *and* gender. Or someone might experience discrimination because of a unique combination of intersectional factors, e.g. a woman wearing a hijab from an ethnic minority may be subjected to differential treatment due to prejudices linked to the combination of her gender, religion and ethnicity.<sup>12</sup>

There is no universally accepted definition of the term **“racism”**. The Penal Code’s provisions on hate speech and hate crimes cover racially aggravated speech and acts, but beyond this, racism is not defined in Norwegian law. In various understandings of racism, the assumption is that individuals can be reduced to a group identity that is linked to, for example, ethnicity, skin colour, culture or religion, and that such characteristics are unequivocal and immutable.<sup>13</sup> Since the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001, the focus of racism and discrimination has shifted from ethnicity to religion.<sup>14</sup>

There is also no consensus on the definition of **“anti-Muslim racism”**. Bangstad and Døving (2023) define it as ‘widespread negative prejudices, false or heavily exaggerated negative claims about Muslims, and acts and practices that attack, exclude or discriminate against people because they are, or are assumed to be Muslim’.<sup>15</sup> This definition implies an active hostility towards Muslims. Anti-Muslim racism fosters a fear of and hostility towards Muslims, resulting in individual and systemic discrimination, social exclusion and violence against Muslims and those assumed to be Muslim.<sup>16</sup>

Which term should be used to describe hostility and racism aimed at Muslims is the subject of debate.<sup>17</sup> In international research, the term ‘Islamophobia’ is often used.<sup>18</sup> In the Norwegian context, use of this term (which is interchangeable with ‘anti-Muslim racism’) has been considered problematic. A ‘phobia’ is a compulsive, neurotic fear or disgust of something specific, and the term ‘Islamophobia’ can thus be interpreted as a pathological condition in someone who is a passive victim of fear of Islam and Muslims.<sup>19</sup> Because of the controversy surrounding the use of ‘Islamophobia’, the term used in this action plan is ‘anti-Muslim racism’.

<sup>12</sup> Proposition to the Storting 81L (2016-2017), p. 113

<sup>13</sup> Bangstad & Døving, 2015, p. 16; Døving, 2022, p. 161

<sup>14</sup> Official Norwegian Report NOU 2024: 3

<sup>15</sup> Bangstad & Døving, 2023, p. 95

<sup>16</sup> Green, 2015, p. 355; Nevøy, 2022, p. 14

<sup>17</sup> Banafsheh et al., 2021, p. 319

<sup>18</sup> Hoffmann & Moe, 2017, p. 24

<sup>19</sup> Jupskås, 2013, p. 97; Nevøy, 2022, p. 13

# Challenges

Anti-Muslim racism is a problem in Norway and internationally. Widespread anti-Muslim attitudes in society result in many Muslims, as well as those perceived to be Muslim, facing prejudice, discrimination and racism. Some Muslims live in fear of being subjected to hate speech and hate crimes.

## Public attitudes to Muslims

Studies show that Muslims in Norway experience discrimination, prejudice and negative attitudes.<sup>20</sup> Negative attitudes can manifest in various ways and occur in, for example, workplaces, schools, leisure spaces, online and interactions with public services. Although the prevalence of anti-Muslim attitudes in the population has decreased in recent years, they remain widespread in Norwegian society, along with prejudices and stereotypical perceptions of Muslims.<sup>21</sup>

The Norwegian Holocaust Center examined public attitudes toward Jews and Muslims in 2012, 2017 and 2022.<sup>22</sup> It also conducted a scaled-down version of the survey in 2024 to measure whether there has been any shift in such attitudes following the terrorist attack in Israel on 7 October 2023 and the subsequent war between Israel and Hamas/Hezbollah.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Moe, 2022; Moe & Døving, 2022; Barstad, 2024; Banafsheh et al., 2021

<sup>21</sup> Moe, 2022, p. 14

<sup>22</sup> Moe, 2022; Hoffmann & Moe, 2017; Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minorities Studies, 2012

<sup>23</sup> Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minorities Studies, 2024. See the section 'International situation' for detailed information on the Center's survey from 2024.

In 2024, 22.1 per cent of the Norwegian population held what are considered anti-Muslim attitudes.<sup>24</sup> In 2022, the proportion was 22.6 per cent, compared to 27 per cent in both 2017 and 2012.<sup>25</sup> In other words, the prevalence of anti-Muslim attitudes in Norway has decreased since 2012.<sup>26</sup> However, they are still relatively widespread, particularly among men, older age groups and those with lower levels of education.

The report from 2022 shows that 31 per cent of the population are strongly prejudiced against Muslims, which is a decrease from 34.1 per cent in 2017.<sup>27</sup> In 2024, the proportion was approximately the same as in 2022 (31.3 per cent).<sup>28</sup> More than 30 per cent agreed with the statement that Muslims constitute a threat to Norwegian culture, and 26 per cent agreed that Muslims are more violent than others. 25 per cent supported the statement that Muslims want to take over Europe.<sup>29</sup>

Another statement that is well supported (44 per cent of respondents) is that Muslims themselves are largely to blame for the increasing harassment of Muslims. Respondents most often attributed negative views of Muslims in society to Islamist terror and prejudice. Many also pointed to the public's lack of knowledge about Islam and the one-dimensional portrayal of Muslims and Islam in the media as key reasons for this.

The report also presents the experiences of Muslims themselves. 43 per cent of the Muslims in the sample reported that they 'often' or 'sometimes' are made to feel that they do not belong in Norway. 36 per cent reported encountering dismissive behaviour upon revealing their religious affiliation, while 21 per cent experienced direct harassment. A third also confirmed that they sometimes avoid revealing their religious affiliation due to a fear of negative attitudes. Muslims themselves highlight how public prejudice against them has become more widespread in the last five years.<sup>30</sup>

However, according to a survey by the Pew Research Center, Norway is one of only two countries in Europe where the population is most likely to express a positive view of having a Muslim family member.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minorities Studies, 2024, p. 17

<sup>25</sup> Moe, 2022, p. 61; Hoffmann & Moe, 2017, p. 65; Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minorities Studies, 2012

<sup>26</sup> Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minorities Studies, 2024

<sup>27</sup> Moe, 2022, p. 56

<sup>28</sup> Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minorities Studies, 2024, p. 7

<sup>29</sup> Moe, 2022, p. 56

<sup>30</sup> Moe, 2022, p. 110

<sup>31</sup> Pew Research Center, 2018

### Discrimination and harassment

More than half of all Muslims in Norway report having experienced discrimination in the past year, according to Statistics Norway's *Quality of Life Survey* from 2022.<sup>32</sup> This is consistent with several other studies, which show that discrimination is widespread and that Muslims face discrimination in various spheres of life.<sup>33</sup> A report from 2024 indicates that Muslims experience more discrimination than individuals from other faiths.<sup>34</sup>

The labour market in particular is highlighted as a setting where Muslims face discrimination in terms of the employment recruitment process, internal promotion opportunities and interactions with prejudiced clients and colleagues. Wearing a hijab, or having dark skin or a Muslim name can make individuals more susceptible to discrimination in the workplace.<sup>35</sup> Being an immigrant or a woman, and wearing a hijab, for example, can further increase the likelihood of intersectional discrimination.<sup>36</sup> Research indicates that workplaces often lack effective procedures for addressing discrimination internally.<sup>37</sup>

#### Box 2: The government's efforts to combat discrimination in the labour market

Discrimination is a major barrier to accessing the labour market. In order to prevent and combat racism and discrimination in the labour market, the primary focus of the *Action plan on racism and discrimination – New initiatives 2024–2027* is access to and progress within the labour market.

One of the measures planned for implementation between 2024 and 2027 is a campaign to raise awareness and educate employers about unconscious negative attitudes that can contribute to discrimination in the labour market. The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) has also drawn up its own guidelines to ensure multicultural competence and attitude awareness in interactions with personal users and employers.

<sup>32</sup> Barstad, 2024. The respondents were asked whether, during the past 12 months, they had been treated less favourably than others for various reasons.

<sup>33</sup> Moe & Døving, 2022; Østerud et al., 2023; Barstad, 2024; Dalen et al., 2024, p. 95

<sup>34</sup> Dalen et al., 2024, p. 102

<sup>35</sup> Moe & Døving, 2022; Østerud et al., 2023

<sup>36</sup> For a definition of 'intersectional discrimination', see the chapter on racism and discrimination against Muslims.

<sup>37</sup> Moe & Døving, 2022, p. 35



The 2023 report *Diskriminerings erfaringer blant muslimer i Norge* (Muslims' experiences of discrimination in Norway) highlights schools and education as an area where Muslims encounter a wide range of negative experiences, from peer harassment to ignorance and hostility towards Islam among teaching staff.<sup>38</sup> A survey on racism and discrimination in interactions with the City of Oslo local government also reveals that pupils with a Muslim background find the teaching about Islam inherently stigmatising, as it is often portrayed as problematic, and pupils with a Muslim background are viewed as vulnerable.<sup>39</sup>

Muslims report dropping out of their studies due to significant negative attention from both fellow students and teaching staff in relation to their religious affiliation.<sup>40</sup> However, many also report positive experiences from universities and educational institutions and feel they are viewed as a resource.<sup>41</sup>

### Box 3: Preventing racism and discrimination in kindergartens and schools

The efforts to combat hate, racism and discrimination and to build good and safe kindergarten and school environments are closely connected. The Kindergarten Act sets a standard of zero tolerance for practices such as social exclusion, bullying, violence, discrimination and harassment. Kindergartens must work continuously to prevent situations where children are not in a safe and good environment.

The Education Act states that all pupils have the right to a safe and good school environment that promotes health, inclusion, well-being and learning. It also establishes that schools must counteract all forms of discrimination and practise a zero-tolerance policy for harmful behaviour, such as bullying, violence, discrimination, harassment and racism. Schools must work systematically

to counteract racism and prejudice as part of their preventive efforts.

In the white paper on improving learning, motivation and well-being for pupils in Years 5 to 10 (*Meld. St. 34 (2023–2024) En mer praktisk skole – Bedre læring, motivasjon og trivsel på 5.–10. trinn*), the government proposes several important and comprehensive measures to support the development of safe and good kindergarten and school environments and prevent discriminatory practices. The measures outlined in the white paper include further developing digital support and guidance resources, continuing the 'Learning environment project', establishing school environment teams, and devising a new strategy for safe and good kindergarten and school environments.

<sup>38</sup> Moe & Døving, 2022, pp. 35-37

<sup>39</sup> Bangstad et al., 2022, pp. 24 and 43

<sup>40</sup> Moe & Døving, 2022, p. 37

<sup>41</sup> Bangstad et al., 2022, p. 37

The report *Kartlegging av rasisme og diskriminering i møte med Oslo kommune* (Mapping racism and discrimination in interactions with the City of Oslo local government) from 2022 shows that Muslims as a group report the most instances of discrimination in interactions with public services such as the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV), schools and the health service.<sup>42</sup> Muslims report more instances of discrimination and barriers in the health service than those with other religious affiliations.

The housing market is also an area where Muslims experience discrimination, mistrust and other obstacles.<sup>43</sup> The 2023 report *Diskrimineringserfaringer blant muslimer i Norge*

(Muslims' experiences of discrimination in Norway) indicates that this includes mistrust and scepticism towards Muslims as tenants and neighbours, as well as scepticism towards the visible presence of Muslims in local communities. Several Muslims have faced negative experiences, such as being denied rental opportunities when landlords learn of their family's Muslim background.

Systematic knowledge about anti-Muslim racism within the sports and voluntary sectors is limited. The available information mainly addresses discrimination in general and points out that racism and discrimination occur in all areas of society, including in voluntary work and leisure activities.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Bangstad et al., 2022, p. 69

<sup>43</sup> Moe & Døving, 2022, p. 8

<sup>44</sup> Kristiansen & Sonne, 2021; Proba Research, 2023



#### Box 4: Guide for addressing racism and discrimination in sport

Many people, particularly children and adolescents, participate in sports activities organised by the Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports (NIF). The Norwegian sports community has a vision of 'joy of sport for all', and NIF's aim is to work towards ensuring universal equal opportunities in sport based on individual preferences and needs, without unfair or disproportionate differential treatment. Racism and discrimination are completely contrary to NIF's vision and aims.

The strategy document relating to the policy on sports facilities (*Idretten skal!*) states that 'sport at all levels shall practise a zero-tolerance policy for any form of discrimination and harassment'. This applies to all areas of sport.

NIF has developed a guide for addressing racism and discrimination in sport. The guide aims to make it easier to report, deal with

and respond to racism and discrimination in sport, and sets out overarching principles for how such issues should be managed in a sports context. The following are examples of these principles:

- *The sports sector must always respond to racism and discrimination.*
- *Everyone in sport has a responsibility to react when they see, hear or become aware of racism and discrimination.*
- *All reports of racism and discrimination must be taken seriously.*
- *Racism and discrimination must always trigger a response.*
- *The sports sector has a particular responsibility to ensure that anyone subjected to racism or discrimination feels safe enough to continue participating in sports.<sup>45</sup>*

Scan the QR code to read NIF's guide.



<sup>45</sup> Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports, 2020

Many Muslims also experience discrimination in public spaces. Experiences range from disapproving looks and negative comments to discriminatory behaviour, hate speech and threats that constitute a criminal act. Muslims report harassment by strangers, such as being verbally abused on the bus for wearing a hijab. Many also mention experiences that are difficult to articulate, such as everyday remarks and actions from strangers that are demeaning and stem from stereotypical perceptions of Muslims. These subtle forms of racism and discrimination are referred to as microaggressions.<sup>46</sup>

Negative prejudices and harassment particularly affect young Muslims, as highlighted in the University of Oslo's research project 'Radicalisation and Resistance'. The study shows that young Muslims are subjected to a wide range of harassment, both through direct comments and in more subtle ways. The most impactful harassment is the kind that occurs face-to-face and personally targets young people. Threatening body language and pushing are other examples of harassment. Young people working in the service industries often report being subjected to negative comments about their Muslim identity. The study also shows that women who wear religious headwear and men with beards are particularly vulnerable because these markers make them stand out more.<sup>47</sup>

Several studies do not distinguish between discrimination based on ethnicity, religion or, for example, immigration background. It can therefore be difficult to conclude with certainty

whether the discrimination is based solely on religion or is a combination of several factors. Either way, the negative effect for those who are subjected to discrimination or harassment is the same.<sup>48</sup>

### Hate crime

A hate crime is a criminal act that is wholly or partly motivated by a person's skin colour, national or ethnic origin, religion, life stance, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and/or disability.<sup>49</sup> As a result of an initiative in the *Action plan to combat discrimination and hatred towards Muslims (2020–2023)*, a new hate motive was introduced in the police's criminal record system for reported hate crimes targeting Muslims in 2021.<sup>50</sup>

The National Competence Centre on Hate Crime publishes an annual report that gives an overview of reported hate crimes. From 2022 to 2023, the number of criminal acts with religion as the hate motive increased by more than 28 per cent. Approximately 60 per cent of the incidents with a religious or belief-based motive were directed at Muslims.<sup>51</sup>

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has documented an increase in hate crimes against Muslims following terrorist attacks and commemorations of such attacks. These incidents include attacks on mosques, Muslim cultural centres and Muslims' homes, particularly on Fridays and other holy

<sup>46</sup> Moe & Døving, 2022, pp. 42-44

<sup>47</sup> Banafsheh, et al., 2021

<sup>48</sup> Socioeconomic Analysis, 2024; Bufdir, 2024

<sup>49</sup> National Police Directorate and Oslo police district, 2024, p. 5

<sup>50</sup> Ministry of Culture and Equality, 2020, p. 40

<sup>51</sup> National Police Directorate and Oslo police district, 2024, p. 17

days. This reflects the perception among many Muslims that various forms of discrimination, harassment, hate speech and attacks targeting them are increasing.<sup>52</sup>

## Extremism

Individuals with far-right, anti-immigration and anti-Muslim attitudes have carried out terrorist attacks in Norway. On 10 August 2019, the Al-Noor Mosque in Bærum was attacked, and in a racially motivated act, the terrorist killed his adopted stepsister, who was of foreign origin. The terrorist attacks on the Government Quarter in Oslo and at Utøya on 22 July 2011 were also motivated by far-right extremism.

In 1985, a far-right extremist detonated a bomb near the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mosque in Frogner, Oslo. Terrorist attacks planned and carried out by Islamist extremists have fuelled hatred toward Muslims.<sup>53</sup> In the wake of the terrorist attack in Oslo on 25 June 2022, the night before the planned Pride parade, several Muslims spoke out in the media, reporting that they had experienced heightened levels of hate.<sup>54</sup>

During the court trial following the attack on the mosque, it emerged that the terrorist act had left many Muslims feeling unsafe and hesitant to attend prayers at mosques, and some even stopped attending altogether.

The Norwegian Police Security Service (PST) considers far-right and Islamist extremists to be the most significant terrorist threats to and within Norway in 2024.<sup>55</sup> All of these extremist groups have a transnational dimension, drawing inspiration across national borders. According to PST, young adults and minors are being radicalised through far-right digital platforms.

### Box 5: Terrorist attack on 10 August 2019

On 10 August 2019, Johanne Zhangjia Ihle-Hansen was murdered, and the Al-Noor Mosque in Bærum was attacked. These acts were motivated by far-right ideology and anti-Muslim racism.

In the wake of this murder and terrorist attack, the Al-Noor Mosque took the lead in establishing the 10 August Foundation. The Foundation has preserved evidence of the terrorist attack and now serves as a memorial and learning centre where young people can discuss and explore topics such as anti-Muslim racism, radicalisation and extremism.

The memorial and learning centre was established as an initiative under the *Action plan to combat discrimination and hatred towards Muslims (2020–2023)* and receives earmarked operational grants from the Ministry of Education and Research.

<sup>52</sup> Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), 2024

<sup>53</sup> Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), 2024

<sup>54</sup> Samadian, 2023

<sup>55</sup> Norwegian Police Security Service, 2024



Flower bouquets laid down outside the Al-Noor Mosque following the terrorist attack on the Mosque in Bærum on 10 August, 2019. Photo: Fredrik Hagen / NTB

The conspiracy narratives shared in far-right digital networks often promote hatred towards Jews or Muslims, and some direct their hatred toward both groups.<sup>56</sup> These narratives tend to cite imaginary, ongoing culture wars that are said to be a threat to ‘Western culture’. They claim that mass migration is causing a demographic shift and that the ‘white Christian population’ in Europe is being replaced by non-Europeans.<sup>57</sup> A terrorist attack on mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2019 left 51 people dead. The terrorist referenced a widely held conviction that a ‘white’ genocide is taking place.<sup>58</sup>

Elements from the major conspiracy narratives can also be found in everyday conversations and political debates. This is characterised as ‘conspiracy talk’. The Commission on Extremism describes the normalisation of extremist

discourse as ‘a process in which language or elements from conspiracy narratives or dehumanising and nativist rhetoric are integrated into public discourse’.<sup>59</sup> Several researchers find prominent politicians’ use of the term ‘creeping Islamisation’ concerning, as it may help normalise false beliefs that political opponents are deliberately facilitating a ‘Muslim invasion’ of Europe.<sup>60</sup>

Far-right groups are also visible in public spaces. The confrontational demonstrations and dehumanising rhetoric of the Stop Islamisation of Norway organisation aimed at Norwegian Muslims resulted in the conviction of its leader, Lars Thorsen. This case highlights how far-right extremism is not only attributable to young people in digital spaces.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Official Norwegian Report NOU 2024: 3, p. 137

<sup>57</sup> Official Norwegian Report NOU 2024: 3, p. 137

<sup>58</sup> Ording et al., 2019

<sup>59</sup> Official Norwegian Report NOU 2024: 3, p. 129

<sup>60</sup> Døving, 2012; Bjørge & Gjelsvik, 2018, p. 36

<sup>61</sup> Official Norwegian Report NOU 2024: 3, p. 137

### Box 6: Terrorist attacks of 22 July 2011

On 22 July 2011, 77 lives were lost in the terrorist attacks on Oslo's Government Quarter and the island of Utøya. The attack targeted the Labour Party, democracy and Norway's diverse population. Muslims were part of the terrorist's enemy image, and citing the so-called Eurabia conspiracy theory, he claimed to be defending his culture against an ongoing Muslim invasion.

There has been much debate about the discourse following 22 July. On the tenth commemoration of the attack, the Labour Youth League (AUF) initiated discussions on the terrorist's chosen targets and ideology. Attention was drawn to the hatred of the Labour Party, which is shared by many more than just the 22 July terrorist. Greater emphasis was also placed on the experiences of Norwegian Muslims who endured harassment and abuse in the hours before it became known that the terrorist was a far-right extremist from the ethnic majority. Muslims also shared their fears about their future in Norway, if the terrorist had turned out to be an Islamist extremist.<sup>62</sup>

### Box 7: White paper on preventing extremism

In 2022, the government appointed the Commission on Extremism to gain more insight into how Norway's ability to prevent radicalisation and extremism can be strengthened and improved. The commission adopted a broad approach, encompassing all forms of extremism, and released its report in 2024, *NOU 2024: 3 Joint efforts against extremism: Better conditions for preventive work*. In the spring of 2025, the government will present a white paper to the Storting (Norwegian parliament) on how extremism and radicalisation can be prevented and combated.

<sup>62</sup> Retriever, 2022

### Media coverage and hate speech online

OsloMet's report *Mapping hateful utterances about Muslims on Norwegian Social Media* reveals that in Norwegian online forums, the proportion of hateful comments aimed at Muslims is low and they are predominantly made by a small number of contributors. Nevertheless, the findings indicate an increase in such comments in 2021 compared to previous years.<sup>63</sup> The analysis shows that a small group is responsible for most of the comments and that it is the alternative media that are primarily responsible for the increase. A recurring theme in the hateful remarks is the portrayal of Muslims and Islam as threats to Norway, Europe and Western values. Muslims are depicted as inherently violent and dangerous, and they are generally associated with terrorism.

Although hateful or discriminatory remarks aimed at Muslims constitute only a small fraction of all comments on Norwegian social media, they can still undermine freedom of expression and harm those targeted by the hate. Hate speech can be frightening and foster distrust and alienation. It can also act as a barrier to universal equal opportunities and prevent individuals from fully utilising their abilities and resources.

Findings from a survey conducted by Amnesty International Norway in collaboration with Analysis & Numbers show that both Jews and Muslims in Norway have been more exposed to online harassment since 7 October 2023. The survey also indicates that verbal attacks, anti-Muslim racism and antisemitism have become more common on Facebook and

TikTok. The tone of public discourse is creating an environment where more people fear being harassed for expressing their views on social media. As a result, many may choose to stay silent rather than engage in public debate.<sup>64</sup>

#### Box 8: NRK's diversity work

The Norwegian Media Authority evaluates whether the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) fulfils its social mission in line with NRK's Articles of Association and Statement of Commitments. According to the Articles of Association, 'NRK's services should reflect Norway's religious heritage and the diversity of belief systems and religions in Norway'. Moreover, 'NRK should disseminate knowledge about different groups and diversity in Norwegian society' and 'create arenas for debate and information about Norway as a multi-cultural society'.<sup>65</sup>

In the 2023 report *Allmennkringkastingsrapporten 2023* (Public broadcasting report), the Norwegian Media Authority concluded that the NRK met the requirements in the provisions of the Articles of Association.<sup>66</sup> The Authority refers to the NRK's diversity work in its organisation and programme content, and finds that the NRK effectively contributes to highlighting the diversity of identities in Norwegian society. The Authority draws attention to the programme *Festen etter fasten* (The feast after the fast) as an example of NRK's efforts to fulfil its social mission of diversity in public broadcasting.

<sup>63</sup> Kasahara et al., 2022

<sup>64</sup> Analysis & Numbers and Amnesty International Norway, 2024

<sup>65</sup> NRK, 2023

<sup>66</sup> Norwegian Media Authority, 2023, p. 101



Retriever's media analysis from 2017 showed that Islam and Muslims were among the most frequently mentioned topics in editorial media that year and that eleven per cent of the coverage created a predominantly negative impression of Islam and Muslims. Almost half of the articles about Islam and Muslims in national and regional newspapers related to situations in other countries, and over 60 per cent of these articles on foreign affairs related to Islamist terror, IS, foreign fighters and radical Islamism. One of the main findings was that the press was consistent in its use of terminology, and rarely equated Muslims with terrorism. Nevertheless, the analysis showed that the most prominent topic in 16 per cent of the articles about Islam and Muslims in a Norwegian context was what Retriever describes as 'criticism of Islam', especially in the form of reader contributions. Seven out of ten reader contributions criticising Islam were written by men.<sup>67</sup> Criticism of religions and ideologies is protected by freedom of expression,<sup>68</sup> while hate speech targeting individuals based on their religion is prohibited.<sup>69</sup>

A number of faith communities and advocacy groups that have provided input to this action plan think that Islam and Muslims are portrayed in a one-dimensional and negative manner in the media, and that this significantly contributes to the development of negative and hostile attitudes in the population.

## The international situation

Anti-Muslim racism is a global phenomenon, with hostile portrayals and rhetoric circulating across borders. Muslims are the group that currently dominates the enemy image of the extreme right.<sup>70</sup> Previously, the extreme right justified their opposition to immigration on the grounds of ethnicity and nationality, but over time the primary enemy has become Islam and Muslims. This view gained a strong foothold after al-Qaida, the international terrorist organisation, attacked the United States on 11 September 2001. Meanwhile, ethnic-based racism and discrimination has evolved into religious and cultural racism.<sup>71</sup>

The situation in Norway mirrors several international trends. According to the UN, Hamas' terrorist attack on 7 October 2023 and Israel's military action in Gaza and Lebanon have led to an increase in hate speech, anti-Muslim racism and antisemitism.<sup>72</sup> At the start of 2024, the Norwegian Holocaust Center investigated whether public attitudes towards Jews and Muslims had changed after Hamas' attack on Israel on 7 October 2023, and the ensuing war between Israel and Hamas. The results show no pronounced changes in anti-Muslim attitudes compared with the 2022 Attitude Survey. However, the 2024 survey shows that 31.3 per cent of the public had marked prejudices against Muslims (compared to 30.7 per cent in 2022), indicating that negative attitudes to Muslims remain at a stable, high level.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Retriever, 2017

<sup>68</sup> The Norwegian Constitution, 1814, Article 100

<sup>69</sup> Lindh, 2022; The Penal Code, 2005, section 185

<sup>70</sup> Official Norwegian Report NOU 2024: 3, p. 136

<sup>71</sup> Official Norwegian Report NOU 2024: 3, p. 137

<sup>72</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2023

<sup>73</sup> Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies, 2024, p. 7

However, the war in Gaza and Lebanon does seem to be fairly significant. When respondents in the survey were asked directly to assess whether their attitudes to Muslims were affected, 34.7 per cent replied that they fully or partly agreed with the statement: 'The Hamas' terrorist attack on 7 October has made me more negative to Muslims in general'.<sup>74</sup>

In the feedback from civil society to this action plan, several contributors pointed to the war between Israel and Hamas/Hezbollah as a factor that had negatively impacted on Norwegians' attitudes to Muslims. Additionally, Muslims in Norway have observed a distinct difference in the reactions – both in the media and in the population at large – to Russia's invasion of Ukraine versus the war in Gaza and Lebanon. According to civil society feedback, this difference creates a sense of alienation among Muslims in Norway.

In many countries, the trend is towards more discrimination against and harassment of various ethnic and religious minorities and groups. This applies to both Muslim minorities and other religious minorities. People belonging to religious minorities are subjected to censorship, discrimination or persecution on the basis of their religion or life stance. This can manifest as hate speech, harassment, violent attacks, laws and/or government actions that constitute discriminatory practice. This deprives them of the opportunity to live their lives in accordance with their conscience, faith or life stance.

Many countries have legislation forbidding or limiting the individual's right to change faith or forbidding the criticism of religion, which is counter to both freedom of speech and other human rights. A weakening of the rule of law more generally will also diminish the protection of minorities.

According to the Pew Research Center, most countries have registered cases of attacks on both Christians and Muslims. This is partly explained by the fact that these religions have the largest followings in the world and that they are practised in a large number of countries.<sup>75</sup> There are also several examples of people belonging to different Muslim minority groups being subjected to discrimination or attacks in countries with a Muslim majority.

One example of this is the treatment of the Ahmadiyya minority in South East Asia and parts of the Middle East. Norwegian members of this minority group say that while Norway is a safe place to live, Norwegian authorities are largely unaware of how vulnerable the Ahmadiyya are to persecution and discrimination by the majority population as well as other Muslims in Norway. They further believe there is a lack of understanding that when harassment of the Ahmadiyya escalates in other countries, this leads to increased harassment of the minority in Norway as well.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies, 2024, pp. 7-8

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<sup>75</sup> Pew Research Center, 2019

<sup>76</sup> Official Norwegian Report NOU 2024: 3, p. 141

A report from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights shows that approximately half of all Muslims in Europe had been subjected to racism or discrimination in their everyday lives in the past five years.<sup>77</sup> In a survey of the situation in the EU from 2017, about four out of ten Muslims reported experiencing discrimination in connection with work, education, housing, health care or other public and private services.<sup>78</sup> On the positive side, 75 per cent of the respondents felt a strong connection to the country they lived in, and their trust in public institutions, including the police and the judiciary, was somewhat higher than for the general population.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has also registered an increase in intolerance for and discrimination against Muslims in Europe in recent years.<sup>79</sup> Even though stereotypes and prejudices about Muslims have existed for hundreds of years, the OSCE points out that these have evolved and gained support in step with the ‘war on terror’, the global economic crisis and the challenges in many societies of managing increased diversity. This can explain the increase in intolerance for and discrimination against Muslims in Europe in recent years.

## Consequences of racism, discrimination and harassment

Anti-Muslim racism affect many people, both those who are directly impacted and society as a whole. Racism and discrimination impede equality and human rights, which are fundamental values in Norwegian society.

For individuals, racism, discrimination and harassment can lead to exclusion from the community, lower social mobility and mental health problems.<sup>80</sup> Racism, discrimination and harassment obstruct proper integration, good living conditions, labour market participation and the ability of individuals to benefit from their education and resources. Trust between different population groups and in society at large is also affected.

The 2022 report *Diskriminerings erfaringer blant muslimer i Norge* (Experiences of discrimination among Muslims in Norway), shows that Muslims’ experiences of discrimination create a fundamental sense of marginalisation and alienation.<sup>81</sup> This may be further reinforced in those who experience discrimination in different spheres of life in parallel.

International research examining the association between racism, discrimination and health concluded that discrimination has a negative impact on individual health.<sup>82</sup> Nordic studies also demonstrated an association between reduced physical and

<sup>77</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2024

<sup>78</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2017

<sup>79</sup> Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, 2024

<sup>80</sup> Moe & Døving, 2022

<sup>81</sup> Moe & Døving, 2022

<sup>82</sup> Devakumar et al., 2022

mental health and being subjected to racism and discrimination.<sup>83</sup> The Nordic Institute for Innovation Research and Education (NIFU) points to long-term illness, an increase in symptoms of anxiety and depression, and poorer access to and uptake of health services as some of the consequences of racism and discrimination. A study on discrimination and health among Muslims and other religious groups in Norway shows that discrimination is a key factor contributing to poor health, including mental health problems, a low level of satisfaction with one's own health, overweight and mortality. The association between perceived discrimination and poor health appears to be stronger among Muslims, particularly those born in Norway, compared to individuals with other religious backgrounds.<sup>84</sup>

A report from Proba Research shows that children and adolescents exposed to racism and discrimination experience depression, stress, frustration and anxiety to a greater degree than other children. Some of the informants described a sense of hopelessness and how they actively distanced themselves from their minority status in order to avoid negative reactions from those around them.<sup>85</sup>

Experiences of harassment and discrimination can erode a person's belief in their potential. A study from the University of Oslo on young Muslims' experiences of harassment demonstrates that being faced with prejudices, harassment and hatred is very distressing, and having to endure such situations over a long period of time is challenging.<sup>86</sup> Young Muslims react differently to this; some choose to speak out while others engage in dialogue. A third strategy involves being a good example, i.e. living in accordance with religious ideals and demonstrating that Islam is a peaceful religion. Some stop wearing conspicuous religious garments or symbols. Harassment from family, friends or acquaintances is perceived as especially difficult.<sup>87</sup>

Experiences of racism and discrimination in the labour market can also entail consequences other than physical and mental problems, e.g. lower salaries, poorer working conditions and a deteriorating working environment.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Wollscheid et al., 2021

<sup>84</sup> Ishaq et al., 2024

<sup>85</sup> Proba Research, 2023

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<sup>86</sup> Banafsheh et al., 2021

<sup>87</sup> Banafsheh et al., 2021

<sup>88</sup> Wollscheid et al., 2021

## Focus area 1:

# Dialogue and a well-functioning democracy

A well-functioning democracy is the cornerstone of our society. It depends partly on maintaining public trust, and ensuring that everyone, regardless of factors such as ethnicity or religion is included. The government will protect our democracy, where the core values are mutual trust, equality and non-discrimination.

The government is implementing a number of measures to facilitate dialogue between different social groups and ensure a well-functioning democracy, thus counteracting anti-Muslim attitudes and other forms of racism.



Photo: Javad Parsa / NTB

### Box 9: Forum on anti-Muslim racism

The Forum on anti-Muslim racism was established as the result of an initiative in the *Action Plan against Racism and Discrimination on the Grounds of Ethnicity and Religion (2020–2023)*. The forum consists of civil society organisations and government representatives. Its establishment was a clear signal from the then government that anti-Muslim racism were regarded as a serious societal challenge.

The purpose of the forum is to establish good dialogue and trust, and promote the exchange of experiences between the authorities and the Muslim population in Norway. It shall serve as a regular, permanent point of contact between the government and representatives of the Muslim population and organisations engaged in the work to counteract anti-Muslim racism. The forum allows the government to gain insight into how the Muslim population and anti-

racist and political minority organisations perceive the developments in racism and discrimination against Muslims. The dialogue is intended as an aid to developing government policy on anti-Muslim racism.

As of 2024, three meetings have been held since the establishment of the forum in 2021. The forum has no permanent members but so far the following have been invited to attend:

- Ahmadiyya Muslim Community
- The Norwegian Center against Racism
- Hikmah-House Norway
- Islamic Council of Norway
- Minotenk
- MiRA Resource Centre for Black, Immigrant and Refugee Women
- Muslim Dialogue Network
- Salam
- 10 August Foundation

**MEASURE 1:****Establish a Muslim Pathfinder project**

The government will establish a formalised, Muslim Pathfinder project linked to a training or research institution. The target group is school pupils and young people in general. The scheme will reflect the diversity in the Muslim population in Norway and will be developed in dialogue with a range of Muslim faith communities and other relevant actors. The aim of the scheme is to disseminate knowledge about Muslims to help counteract stereotyping, prejudices and discrimination.

*Ministry responsible: Ministry of Culture and Equality*

**MEASURE 2:****Strengthen the grant scheme to combat racism, discrimination and hate speech**

The government proposes to increase allocations to the grant scheme to combat racism, discrimination and hate speech. The grant scheme will facilitate initiatives and activities aimed at counteracting racism, discrimination and hate speech on the grounds of ethnicity, religion and life stance.

The grant scheme will be evaluated during the planning period.

*Ministry responsible: Ministry of Culture and Equality*

**Box 10: Grant scheme for diversity and inclusion**

The grant scheme for diversity and inclusion, which the Norwegian Children and Youth Council (LNU) administers on behalf of the Ministry of Children and Families, is aimed at children and adolescents who want to develop projects related to diversity, attitudes and participation. The goal of the grant scheme is to enable children and adolescents to challenge discrimination and prejudice in their own way, while providing them with the opportunity to show that diversity is a positive element in society. Projects that receive financial support must be developed and carried out by the children and adolescents themselves and should focus on respect and understanding for diversity through, for example, courses, events or activities.

Scan the QR code to read more about the grant scheme and how to apply on LNU's webpages.

**MEASURE 3:****Increase funding for the No hate speech movement Norway (Stopp hatprat)**

The government proposes to increase the operating funding to the No hate speech movement Norway. This movement provides young people with the tools and knowledge to stand up to hate speech and human rights violations online, and offers human rights training to teachers, youth workers and others who are in contact with young people. Prejudices, xenophobia and racism engender hate speech, and the No hate speech movement plays a crucial role in preventing this.

*Ministry responsible: Ministry of Culture and Equality*

### Box 11: Safe digital childhood

A large part of children's and adolescents' daily lives takes place online. Social media and other digital platforms enable them to participate and communicate in new ways. Although this provides many opportunities, children and adolescents risk being exposed to racism, discrimination and hate speech online. Children and adolescents with minority backgrounds, including Muslim children, are particularly vulnerable. Harassment and hate speech targeting children and adolescents represent a violation of their rights and oppress the individuals affected. They also result in a loss for democracy, as they can prevent children from participating in various online forums and public debates, and from engaging in civil society.

In the winter of 2025, the government will present a white paper on a safe digital childhood to the Storting (Norwegian parliament). The goal is for all children and adolescents to enjoy an active, participatory and safe digital childhood. The white paper will promote more comprehensive policies and a coordinated effort to safeguard children's rights online.

### MEASURE 4:

#### Strengthen resilience against disinformation

The government will launch a strategy to strengthen resilience against disinformation. Misinformation and disinformation disseminated on the internet and social media can pose a threat to democracy. Minorities in particular can be exposed to prejudice created and spread as disinformation online. The strategy is part of the follow-up of the Freedom of Expression Commission's report, *Official Norwegian Report NOU 2022: 9*. The government aims to present the strategy in the spring of 2025.

*Ministry responsible: Ministry of Culture and Equality*

### MEASURE 5:

#### Continue the grants allocated for dialogue, debate, cooperation and knowledge development pertaining to religion and life stance

The government will consider increasing the grants allocated for dialogue, debate, cooperation and knowledge development in the field of religion or life-stance. Knowledge of and dialogue between different faith and life stance traditions can help prevent discrimination and hostile attitudes and actions based on faith and life stance.

*Ministry responsible: Ministry of Children and Families*



**MEASURE 6:****Bolster peace and human rights centres**

The government proposes to increase funding for peace and human rights centres in 2025. The seven national centres are the ARKIVET Peace and Human Rights Center, the European Wergeland Centre, the Falstad Centre, the Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue, the Narvik War and Peace Centre, the Rafto Foundation for Human Rights and the Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies (the Norwegian Holocaust Center).

More knowledge is needed on human rights, racism and group-focused enmity in society. The seven independent foundations promote democratic values and attitudes particularly vis-à-vis children and adolescents, and work to varying degrees regionally, nationally and internationally. The centres provide documentation, research and education, and convey knowledge about democracy, peace, human rights, minorities and genocide.

*Ministry responsible: Ministry of Knowledge and Research*

**MEASURE 7:****Strengthen democracy education, critical thinking and pupil participation**

The government will strengthen democracy education by supporting the work of schools on curriculums and interdisciplinary topics.

The National Curriculum for Knowledge Promotion in Primary and Secondary Education and Training as well as the interdisciplinary topic 'democracy and citizenship' provide a solid foundation for pupils to learn about democracy and become active citizens.

*Ministry responsible: Ministry of Education and Research*

**MEASURE 8:****Update the guide on hate speech, harassment and threats against politicians**

Politicians with an ethnic and religious minority background are at particular risk of hate speech and threats. The government will update the guide on the prevention and management of hate speech, harassment and threats against politicians and candidates, with additional information on the reasons for discrimination, such as ethnicity and religion, as well as how politicians from minority backgrounds may be at particular risk of hate speech and threats.

*Ministry responsible: Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development*

# 4

## Focus area 2:

# Knowledge and competence

The government is implementing a number of measures to strengthen knowledge and competence with regard to racism and discrimination in society. A solid and reliable knowledge base is essential for targeted efforts to reduce discrimination and anti-Muslim racism.

### **MEASURE 9:**

#### **Conduct a survey of the population's attitudes to ethnic and religious minorities every five years**

The government will commission a survey of the population's attitudes to ethnic and religious minorities, particularly Muslims and Jews. Similar population surveys were published in 2012, 2017 and 2022. Time series surveys provide a sound knowledge base of how the population's attitudes evolve over time. The government will therefore commission a new survey in 2025, to be launched in 2027.

*Ministries responsible: Ministry of Culture and Equality, Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, Ministry of Children and Families, Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development and Ministry of Education and Research.*

**MEASURE 10:****Obtain information on Muslims' living conditions and quality of life**

The government will obtain information on Muslims' living conditions and quality of life. Discrimination and racism reduce quality of life, and updated information in this respect will promote the development of effective, evidence-based measures.

*Ministry responsible: Ministry of Culture and Equality*

**MEASURE 11:****Obtain information on Muslims' interactions with the local authority**

The government will obtain information on the discrimination of Muslims in their interactions with the local authority and its services. Public administration is one of the areas of society that the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud receives the most enquiries about. The survey will examine how and to what extent racism and discrimination against Muslims manifest in interactions with local authorities and their services.

*Ministry responsible: Ministry of Culture and Equality*

**MEASURE 12:****Obtain information on the impact of racism, discrimination and hate speech on social participation**

The government will obtain information on how and to what extent racism and discrimination are expressed and influence perceptions and participation in different social arenas. This will consist of three sub-projects that will:

1. explore racism and discrimination with a focus on the significance of external characteristics such as skin colour, clothing and religious symbols,
2. survey the extent of and the characteristics of racism and discrimination in the voluntary and cultural sectors in Norway,
3. use artificial intelligence (AI) to map hate speech in social media, and explore opportunities and limitations linked to how AI can be used to limit threats to democracy online.

*Ministry responsible: Ministry of Culture and Equality*

**MEASURE 13:****Obtain information on racism in sport**

The government will commission a report elucidating ethnic and religious minorities' participation in sport, and their experiences of racism, discrimination and hate speech in the sports sector.

*Ministry responsible: Ministry of Culture and Equality*

**MEASURE 14:**

**Improve the information given to children and adolescents on racism, discrimination and group-focused enmity**

The government will improve information and guidance on racism and discrimination on the ung.no website and make it more targeted. The website will also include information about group-focused enmity, such as anti-Muslim racism, antiziganism and antisemitism. The expert panel for ung.no will be expanded to include members with specific expertise in racism and discrimination. The website provides information and guidance for children and adolescents on a number of topics, including racism and discrimination.

*Ministry responsible: Ministry of Children and Families*

**MEASURE 15:**

**Strengthen Dembra's efforts to combat anti-Muslim racism**

The government will strengthen work to counteract anti-Muslim racism through the programme Democratic Preparedness Against Antisemitism and Racism (Dembra). Dembra's goal is to prevent extremism, discrimination and racism, including against Muslims, antisemitism and other types of group-focused enmity. Dembra offers programmes for primary and secondary schools as well as teacher education institutions. It provides teachers, school administrators and teacher educators with tools and guidance to create an inclusive learning environment and prevent prejudice and racism in schools, including anti-Muslim racism. Dembra's pedagogical tools for combatting anti-Muslim racism, including online resources, will be expanded and improved.

*Ministry responsible: Ministry of Education and Research*

**MEASURE 16:**

**Evaluate Dembra**

The government has proposed allocating funds for an external evaluation of Dembra. The evaluation will start in 2025 and is expected to be completed in 2027.

*Ministry responsible: Ministry of Education and Research*

**MEASURE 17:**

**Continue the financial support for the 10 August Foundation's memorial and learning centre**

The 10 August Foundation was established in the wake of the racially motivated murder and terrorist attack on 10 August 2019. Today the foundation is a memorial and learning centre where young people can discuss and explore topics such as anti-Muslim racism, radicalisation and extremism. The government proposes to continue supporting the operation of the centre.

*Ministry responsible: Ministry of Education and Research*

**MEASURE 18:****Prevent and combat racism and discrimination in the workplace**

The government will pave the way for employers to prevent and combat racism and discrimination in the workplace, for example via the website <https://www.mika.no/>. The website gives employers access to specialist knowledge based on research, practical project work and good examples of measures that promote workplace diversity. The website will be upgraded with more information on tools for combatting racism and discrimination in the workplace.

*Ministry responsible: Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion*

**MEASURE 19:****Develop methods to map experiences of racism and discrimination**

The government will develop methods to map experiences of racism and discrimination in collaboration with a selection of local authorities. This will support the work of the local authorities and strengthen the efforts to combat racism and discrimination. In order to combat and prevent racism and discrimination, knowledge is needed on prevalence and experiences. Several local authorities have action plans or strategies for preventing racism and discrimination, and it is hoped that more authorities will work with prevention locally.

*Ministry responsible: Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion*

**MEASURE 20:****Facilitate diversity training for managers in health and care services**

The government will commission the Directorate of Health to assess measures aimed at increasing the competence of managers in the health and care services in respect of diversity, discrimination and harassment. This will also include discrimination on the grounds of religion. Managers must have knowledge and competence in diversity, racism and discrimination due to, for example, religion, in order to be able to offer equitable health and care services to all, regardless of religious background. It is also vital to support employees who experience racism, discrimination or harassment in their work.

*Ministry responsible: Ministry of Health and Care Services*

**MEASURE 21:****Obtain knowledge about the link between health and experiences of racism and discrimination**

The government will obtain an overview of how existing surveys address the association between racism, discrimination and health, and will assess if there is a need for further research. Discrimination on the grounds of religion will be covered by this measure.

*Ministry responsible: Ministry of Health and Care Services*

# 5

## Focus area 3:

# Safety and security

Everyone should feel safe and secure, regardless of their background. Hate crime is particularly serious for those who are directly affected. It also creates fear and insecurity in entire groups of the population, and can include all kinds of infringements of the law, such as hate speech, criminal damage, threats and violence.

The majority of hate crimes reported to the police where the motive is religion or life stance involve Muslims.<sup>89</sup> The government is concerned that some individuals are subjected to hate crime because of their (assumed) religious background.

<sup>89</sup> National Police Directorate and the Oslo Police District, 2024, p. 17

**MEASURE 22:****Maintain a good dialogue between the police and Muslim faith communities**

Dialogue has been specifically prioritised in the police's agenda through the action plan *Diversity, dialogue and trust: Action plan for the work of the police (2022-2025)*, which includes specific initiatives aimed at fostering dialogue between the police and various population groups. The National Police Directorate holds regular meetings with the Muslim community and has instructed the police districts to conduct similar meetings at local level. The aim is to ensure the mutual exchange of information between the police and faith communities. The police must also ensure that Muslim communities have established points of contact with the police to ensure prompt communication and information exchange.

*Department responsible: Ministry of Justice and Public Security*

**MEASURE 23:****Strengthen the police's competence in hate crime**

The police shall have knowledge and competence in relation to hate crime and how this is expressed both physically and digitally. The police must be able to detect, prevent and combat hate crime regardless of where it occurs in Norway. The National Competence Centre on Hate Crime is tasked with enhancing police districts' expertise in this respect and can provide guidance in specific cases. The centre carries out training for police districts to strengthen the police's national efforts to prevent and combat hate crime, including hate crimes against Muslims.

*Ministry responsible: Ministry of Justice and Public Security*

**MEASURE 24:****Further develop statistics on and analyses of reported hate crimes**

The government will develop the national statistics on hate crime in order to learn more about how it affects different population groups. Over a period of time, the National Police Directorate has prepared an annual analysis of hate crime in order to monitor developments in the reporting of such crimes and cases brought before the courts. The National Competence centre on Hate Crime prepares an annual hate crime report. The centre received NOK 5 million from the 2024 national budget, and this is expected to result in further analyses of hate crime targeting persons with minority backgrounds, including Muslims.

*Ministry responsible: Ministry of Justice and Public Security*

**MEASURE 25:**

**Ensure a diversity perspective in police training, education and leadership development**

The government aims to foster a high level of awareness of the importance of positive attitudes, cultural understanding and diversity, both within the police force and in their interactions with the public. This includes awareness of religious diversity and discrimination on the basis of religion. Topics linked to diversity, dialogue and trust must be addressed in the police basic education, continuing/supplementary and further education and in other courses and training for police employees. Diversity competence is necessary for interacting with the public and for delivering equitable services to all, regardless of their religious affiliation.

*Ministry responsible: Ministry of Justice and Public Security*

**MEASURE 26:**

**Strengthen equality and diversity in the Norwegian Armed Forces**

*Handlingsplan for økt likestilling og mangfold i Forsvaret (2023–2026) (The action plan for greater equality and diversity in the Norwegian Armed Forces)* systematises the work of the Armed Forces to promote equality and prevent discrimination in accordance with the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act. The Armed Forces aims to recruit personnel groups who represent the diversity of the population. The Armed Forces will engage in dialogue with minority organisations and faith organisations, and gather information on the status of minority representation.

*Ministry responsible: Ministry of Defence*





## International efforts

The Norwegian authorities also work to counteract anti-Muslim racism and discrimination on the grounds of religion and life stance in other countries. This entails promoting freedom of religion or life-stance as a human right. This work takes place under the auspices of the United Nations (UN) and other multilateral institutions, as well as in collaboration with regional organisations and at the country level.

The prevalence of racism, discrimination and attacks against Muslims varies from country to country and constitutes an international challenge that Norwegian authorities also have a responsibility to counteract. Measures to protect and respect the right to freedom of religion or life-stance, including Muslims' freedom of belief, are given priority in Norwegian foreign and development policy.

Article 18 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights forms the basis for the Norwegian foreign services' support for initiatives to promote freedom of religion or life-stance and protect religious minorities:

*Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public*

*or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.<sup>90</sup>*

This applies to the right to convert, but also the right to have no belief or religion. The Norwegian authorities will address infringements of Muslims' right to freedom of religion or belief as well as intolerance of Muslims from all countries and regions, both in discussions with other countries' authorities and within the framework of the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance (IRFBA).

The UN is an important arena for measures combatting discrimination and racism against Muslims. Norm-setting bodies such as the UN Human Rights Council and the General

<sup>90</sup> United Nations Association of Norway, 1948

Assembly develop norms and standards that UN member states pledge to uphold. Through operational mechanisms such as the Universal Periodic Reviews of countries in the Human Rights Council and support for the various parts of the UN system, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Norway helps to combat discrimination, exclusion and persecution on the grounds of religion. Efforts aimed at the rights of religious minorities at the country level, including in countries where Muslims are particularly vulnerable, are an important part of these efforts.

There has been disagreement among UN member states regarding whether freedom of speech should be restricted out of respect for religions. The cartoon controversy constituted an important backdrop to the debates in the UN Human Rights Council in 2011, which resulted in a resolution on intolerance and discrimination. The resolution calls on member states to address religious intolerance by simultaneously promoting freedom of expression, freedom of religion or life-stance and discrimination, since these rights are mutually dependent. The follow-up of this resolution is called the Istanbul Process, and the importance of protecting all human rights in the balance between freedom of expression and freedom of religion or life-stance is a central theme.

In recent years, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has made the fight against Islamophobia its main priority, and has appointed a special representative in this area. The OIC has criticised European countries that do not ban the burning of the Quran, arguing that this represents unwarranted religious criticism. The Norwegian authorities will work to combat religious discrimination and group-based racism within the framework of the UN

Human Rights Council, the Universal Periodic Reviews of countries and the Istanbul Process.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) agrees that hate speech and other expressions of racism, xenophobia and intolerance based on religion or ethnicity must be condemned. The Astana Declaration underscores that international trends and political issues cannot justify any form of intolerance or discrimination against Muslims. The declaration calls for the member states to challenge anti-Muslim prejudices and stereotyping. The OSCE's representative for countering intolerance of and discrimination against Muslims makes an annual speech in the OSCE's Permanent Council on the situation in the 57 member states. Norway helps combat intolerance of Muslims through participation in the OSCE, especially via the OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR),

Norway also participates actively in the Council of Europe, which established the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). One of the core tasks of the ECRI is to monitor and report on the situation in the 46 members of the Council of Europe. The ECRI's country and annual reports constitute an important basis for the efforts to reduce racism and intolerance in Europe. The Council of Europe's multi-year action plans are designed to assist member states in complying with the human rights standards set by the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). These include measures for vulnerable groups and religious minorities. Norway provides support for the implementation of several action plans in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, the Western Balkans and North Africa.

Through the EEA and Norway Grants, Norway helps to reduce socioeconomic inequalities in the European Economic Area (EEA). As part of this cooperation, Norway will continue to promote democracy, the rule of law and human rights in the countries that qualify for support. Measures combatting discrimination and hate speech, including discrimination and hate speech against Muslims, will be supported through ordinary programmes, funding for civil society and funding for cooperation with international organisations, such as the Council of Europe and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.

Sharing Norwegian experiences in the work to counter anti-Muslim racism is of key importance. In addition to cooperation via various global and regional institutions, a number of Norwegian embassies have concrete measures in place that promote freedom of religion or life-stance and other human rights, and that counteract discrimination including on religious grounds.

**MEASURE 27:**  
**Address infringements of Muslims’ right to freedom of religion or life-stance, as well as intolerance of Muslims internationally**

Norwegian authorities will raise the subject of infringements of Muslims’ right to freedom of religion or life-stance and intolerance of Muslims in bilateral talks with other countries’ authorities and within the framework of the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance (IRFBA).

*Ministry responsible: Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

**MEASURE 28:**  
**Strengthen efforts to combat anti-Muslim racism through international cooperation**

Through international cooperation, the Norwegian authorities will help to increase efforts to combat religious discrimination and group-based racism, including anti-Muslim racism. Work within the framework of Resolution 16/18 from the UN Council of Human Rights will be given priority. The follow-up of this resolution, referred to as the Istanbul Process, entails taking a comprehensive approach to combatting religious intolerance by promoting freedom of speech, freedom of religion or life-stance, and non-discrimination.

*Ministry responsible: Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

**MEASURE 29:**  
**Strengthen democracy, human rights and the rule of law through the EEA and Norway Grants**

Norwegian authorities will work to strengthen democracy, human rights and the rule of law through regional cooperation with European countries, including by supporting the fight against hate speech and religious discrimination against Muslims by means of the EEA and Norway Grants. During the period from 2021 to 2028, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein will contribute more than € 3.2 billion in grants for projects in 15 different EU recipient countries.

*Ministry responsible: Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

**MEASURE 30:**

**Share Norway's experiences with  
combatting anti-Muslim racism in  
international forums**

Norwegian authorities will share their experiences of combatting anti-Muslim racism in international forums, including the experiences from the work on Norway's action plan in this area (*Norges handlingsplan mot muslimfiendtlighet*).

*Ministries responsible; Ministry of Foreign Affairs,  
Ministry of Culture and Equality*

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