Counter-Islamophobia Kit

Key National Messages – Hungary (English)
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Countering Islamophobia through the Development of Best Practice in the use of Counter-Narratives in EU Member States.

CIK Project (Counter Islamophobia Kit)

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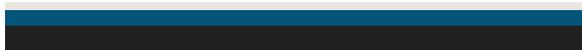Counter-Islamophobia Kit

CERS

Centre for Ethnicity & Racism Studies

About the CIK Project
The *Countering Islamophobia through the Development of Best Practice in the use of Counter-Narratives in EU Member States* (Counter Islamophobia Kit, CIK) project addresses the need for a deeper understanding and awareness of the range and operation of counter-narratives to anti-Muslim hatred across the EU, and the extent to which these counter-narratives impact and engage with those hostile narratives. It is led by Professor Ian Law and a research team based at the Centre for Ethnicity and Racism Studies, School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds, UK. This international project also includes research teams from the Islamic Human Rights Commission, based in London, and universities in Leeds, Athens, Liège, Budapest, Prague and Lisbon/Coimbra. This project runs from January 2017 - December 2018.

About the Paper
This paper is an output from the third workstream of the project which was centred on describe the key national messages pertaining to Islamophobia and countering-Islamophobia in each context considered in the framework of this project: Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Portugal and United Kingdom. The key national messages, findings and toolkit, the Counter-Islamophobia Kit (CIK) will be disseminated to policy makers, professionals and practitioners both across the EU and to member/regional audiences using a range of mediums and activities.

Executive summary

1. **Different roots of Islamophobia in Central Europe and Hungary than in Western Europe**

Islamophobia and immigration usually go hand in hand, increasing immigration and problems related to the integration of immigrants may and often does result in increasing Islamophobia. In Central European countries, such as Hungary, immigration has a very different history from that of Western Europe. Consequently, Islamophobia has also different characteristics concerning its social and political roles. First of all, the rate of immigration has been very low in Hungary; after the regime change the immigrant population has never been more than 2% of the population, of whom the majority has been ethnic Hungarians migrating from the neighbouring countries. Thus, there are very few Muslims of immigrant background living in the country. According to the census data and other sources, the majority of Muslims are Hungarians converted to Islam. On top of that, Muslim migrants have generally higher education level than the Hungarian population and has no labour market integration problems. They constitute small and – except for some ethnic businesses – invisible minority. However, the recent years have seen a rise of Islamophobia in political rhetoric.

So, the roots of Islamophobia in Hungary have to be found elsewhere than in most Western European societies. It is a rather new phenomenon that emerged as the 2015 migration and refugee crisis evolved. Hungary being a transit country where thousands of migrants passed through in the course of a few months, and having an illiberal and populist government, the "migrant issue" became the dominant political narrative of the times. The government generated, through various communication campaigns, a fervent anti-migrant political and social atmosphere. Along the anti-migrant narrative, the narrative of the "terrorist Muslim migrant" and the "Islamization of Europe" was also created. In brief, Islamophobia is new and government generated in Hungary, rather than having a long history and fuelled by non-government or non-establishment figures.

2. **Islamophobia related to physical and symbolic security**

When analysing the narratives – by applying frame analysis – it was found that security is the main theme in the anti-migrant and anti-Islam rhetoric. On the one hand, we could identify the frame of *physical security* that makes reference to "Islam terrorism" and, on the other hand, *symbolic security* that addresses identity issues, such as loss of European, Christian, and Hungarian identity as a consequence of Islamization of Europe.

3. **Reframing Islamophobic narratives**

With regard to the construction of counter-narratives, we could ask to what extent they reflected on the main concerns of the Islamophobic narratives and to what extent they reframed these main narratives.

Analysing media texts, interviews and political publications of opposition parties, it was revealed that some of the counter-narratives do reframe the Islamohobic narratives such as the *anti-terrorism* frame, the *migration and refugee policy* frame, the *Islam and Muslims in Hungary and Europe* frame and the *gender* and *Muslim refugee* frames. These all reflect on the physical and symbolic security issues and do the reframing by deconstructing the main Islamophobic messages. They use similar strategies in so far as they sort out what is confused or conflated deliberately in Islamophobic narratives. Thus, making the distinction between radical and non-radical Islam, legal and illegal migration and illegal migrants and refugees, as well as giving the background for understanding of what leads to radicalisation of (young) Muslims and how to understand certain cultural differences.

4. Creating opposite counter-narratives

The *humanitarian* and the *tolerance* frames can be interpreted as doing reframing from a more indirect aspect. The humanitarian frame individualises the (Muslim) migrant/refugee while the tolerance frame speaks of a culturally and religiously more diverse society as a value. Thus, these represent values which are far or opposite to the ones represented by the Islamophobic narratives.

5. Security and humanitarian concerns joined

The *critical* frame is the one that most directly tries to bridge the security and the humanitarian aspect of the migration crisis, thus trying to close the gap between these two main and opposing narratives.

Discussion of key messages

1. **Different roots of Islamophobia in Central Europe and Hungary than in Western Europe**

Hungary has long historic contacts with Islam and Muslims. The country was under Turkish occupation between 1541 and 1699. It has impacts on the national identity and culture (e.g. in child rhymes there are anti-Turkish verses), as well as on the built environment (minarets, mosques, Turkish baths). However, the '150-year occupation' is not remembered as a Christian-Muslim conflict but as a foreign occupation (similar to the Habsburg, or the Soviet occupation). Specifically, there was no forced conversion of the population.

Despite the historic ties, there is no sizeable immigrant and Muslim population in Hungary. Immigration and immigrant integration has very different trends in Hungary than in Western European countries. The proportion of immigrants is one of the lowest in Europe, less than 2%, with the majority being ethnic Hungarians from the neighbouring countries. Given these characteristics of immigration in Hungary, there are no big immigrant communities, while there is a high degree of assimilation. At the same time, the ethnically, culturally and religiously different migrants having small numbers only, are not visible and do not make much impact on the everyday interactions of people. On top of that, they generally have higher level of education, and higher rate of activity, and are less dependent on social welfare than the total population.

According to the 2011 census, there were 5,579 Muslims, that is 0.056% of the total population, and almost all of them belong to the Sunni Islam. Out of this number, 4,097 declared themselves as Hungarian (73.4%) and 2,368 (42.5%) as Arab by ethnicity.[1] Besides the census data, there are estimations concerning the size of the Muslim population. According to the Pew Research Centre there are 25,000 and according to the Church of Muslims of Hungary 50,000 Muslims in the country (that is between 0.1-0.3% of the population).

Concerning the presence of Islam in Hungary, there are two officially recognized Islamic religious organizations, both Sunni: the Hungarian Islamic Community whose members are mainly converted Hungarians, and the Church of Muslims of Hungary having predominantly foreign born Muslims. There had been a third organization, the Islamic Church, which had been the biggest one, however its official status was revoked in 2012. The Muslim community is represented on the government level by the Islamic Council of Hungary. In Budapest, there is only one mosque and a handful of prayer rooms, and the last minaret was built 500 years ago.

2. **Islamophobia related to physical and symbolic security**

Islamophobia or the presence of Islamophobic narratives in the Hungarian context is a very recent phenomenon.[2] Not until the 2015 migration/refugee crisis, whereby hundreds of

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[1] The Hungarian census allows for the self-declaration of more than one ethnicity.
[2] Till the 2015 migration crisis when Islamophobic narratives emerged, the only significant anti-Islam narrative was promoted by the American-style 'Born Again Christians' (60,000 members) claiming that Islam was the Antichrist.

thousands of people tried to cross through Hungary to go to Western Europe, had Islam and Muslims been put in the focus of political and media discourses. In the 1990s Islam and Muslims received practically no media attention. The low number of Muslims and the small size of the Muslim community rendered the theme of Islam as a non-issue in the Hungarian public discourse.

9/11 and 7/7 resulted in some increase in Islamophobic attitudes as Western narratives slowly appeared. This situation radically changed in early 2015 when suddenly the number of asylum seekers started to increase at an unprecedented speed.[3] The Hungarian government took the opportunity to make political profit by creating a situation of moral panic leading to the securitization of migration.

After the Charlie Hebdo attacks in January 2015, the Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán, declared that migration is a threat to Europe and migrants bring no economic benefit to our countries and therefore Hungary opposes migration. The emergence of anti-immigrant political rhetoric paving the path for the securitization of migration preceded the huge wave of migrants and refugees that peaked in the summer of 2015. In May 2015, the government launched the National Consultation on Immigration and Terrorism campaign sending every Hungarian citizen a questionnaire including "heavily biased questions". The same month, the government also initiated a large-scale billboard campaign against immigration as part of its communication strategy to get support for the national consultation. The aim and result of the campaigns were an increased situation of moral panic.

Both campaigns had propaganda objectives, as some analysts stated, to divert attention away from state corruption, gain more popular support and ensure that the radical right wing party, Jobbik, (second in popularity after the governing coalition thus an important rival of the governing coalition) won't be able to make use of the crises by creating its own xenophobic narrative. The anti-immigration narratives, while xenophobic in nature, did not use any direct reference to or named openly Islam or Muslims, neither on the billboards nor in the questionnaire. In July 2015, the government started to erect a razor wire fence along the Serbian border to stop migrants and asylum seekers to enter the country and send a message to European policymakers what Hungary thinks about the crisis. The fence has also became the symbol of the Hungarian position against the resettlement quotas proposed by the EU. The government to gain legitimation from the people, organized a referendum against the resettlement quotas in October 2016. The referendum was preceded by an 'information campaign' featuring anti-immigration billboards with posting questions like: "Did you know? More than 300 people were killed in terrorist attacks in Europe since the start of the migrant crisis"; "Did you know? The Paris terrorist attacks were carried out by immigrants"; "Did you know? 1.5 million illegal immigrants arrived to Europe in 2015"; "Did you know? Almost one million immigrants want to come to Europe from Libya alone?"; or "Did you know? Since the start of the immigration crisis, sexual harassment of women has increased in Europe?". While the turnout was lower than 50% making the referendum invalid, the majority of those who voted

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[3] Over 100,000 migrants registered in the third quarter of 2015, mainly Muslims. Hungary faced an increase of 13 times compared to previous year.

refused the quotas (98%). Thus, the results were interpreted by the government as 'politically valid'.

Hungarian Islamophobia linked to the migration crisis starting in 2015 has to be interpreted in the political context of the country. The national-conservative government (Fidesz-KDNP) – coming into power in 2010 and gaining the popular majority vote again in 2014 – established a political system that declared itself illiberal.[4] In fact, from early on, the intentions of the governing coalition has been to build a new political system that intended to shift away from liberal democracy. Gradually, democratic institutions have been weakened: dismantling of checks and balances, reducing the rights of minorities, appointing loyal party members into institutions, drafting a new constitution reflecting the political visions and interests of the governing coalition, rewriting the election system to favour those currently in power as well as by using various techniques, taking control over the majority of media and thus limiting freedom of speech, etc. In the meanwhile, part of their political strategy has been also to strengthen the relationship with Middle East and Asian countries ('Eastern Opening'), thus, turning more away from Europe and the EU (and its norms, rules and political system).

Based on the assumptions on the background of Muslim hatred explored above, we conducted a frame analysis of political and media narratives. The study had the aim of revealing the main narratives on Islamophobia in Hungary.

In the analysis, we distinguished two major frames, both concerned with security from different aspects: (1) security/securitization (physical security) linked to illegal migration, economic migration, terrorism, and (2) symbolic security linked to securing/defending/protecting national, European, and Christian identity.

The main components of the physical security frame (1) make fewer and less direct references to Islam. In certain political communications (such as the government anti-immigrant campaigns) there is no direct mention of Islam or Muslims neither is there in most political speeches. In the media, however, the link between Islamic terrorism and physical security is made explicit. It could be argued that the (partially) coded political language is supported by a non-coded media narrative making sure that the decoding of the message will not be too complicated for the target audience, the population at large.

The symbolic security frame (2) has explicit anti-Muslim components both in the media and the political narratives. The main arguments concern the essentialization of Islam: radically different, refusing our cultural norms, aggressive, and incapable of integration. Given these cultural interpretations of Islam, migration is seen as Islamisation of Europe which constitutes a threat to European civilization and Christianity and eventually to our identity.

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[4] The PM delivered a speech in 2014 in which he explicitly said that the government is building an illiberal democracy.

While our analysis is limited to one medium, a state-controlled daily functioning as a close ally and voice of the government ideologies and policies, it is still worth pointing out some of the differences in the two narratives. While the general trends are the same, using the same or similar themes within the two frames, we can argue that the media narrative is more directly anti-Muslim. The newspaper amplifies the narratives of the government, particularly how Islam as a culture/religion is described, how the process of Islamisation is presented and what details of the enemy liberalism and of conspiracy theory are mentioned. While describing the radical cultural and religious differences and Islamisation, the media makes reference to a whole range of social and cultural phenomena in more detail than in the political narrative. Similarly, the newspaper serves as a platform for ideologues, public figures, and opinion leaders supporting the government's anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim stance to elaborate on why and how liberalism and liberal values are leading to the destruction of Europe. The conspiracy theories, favoured also by the political narrative, are more detailed and long articles explain how the entire migration crisis and the invasion of Europe by Muslims is manipulated by certain actors.

3. Reframing Islamophobic narratives

To identify the main counter-narratives of Islamophobia in Hungary we applied similar frame analysis in three different corpuses: publications of opposition political parties, media texts, stakeholder interviews. We identified eight counter-frames: *humanitarian, anti-terrorism, migration and refugee policy, critical, tolerance, Islam and Muslims in Hungary and Europe, gender and Muslim refugees*.

It was revealed that some of the counter-narratives do reframe the Islamophobic narratives such as the *anti-terrorism* frame, the *migration and refugee policy* frame, the *Islam and Muslims in Hungary and Europe* frame and the *gender* and *Muslim refugee* frames.

The *anti-terrorism frame*'s most important issue is to differentiate between radical and non-radical Islam and emphasise that the majority of Muslims are not terrorists but many of them are rather victims of that terrorism. It equally points out that it is the second or third generation socially excluded Muslim youth who easily fall prey of radicalised groups while the stigmatising anti-Islamist rhetoric and the conflation of radical and non-radical Muslims may contribute to their radicalisation. The anti-terrorism frame's government critique concerns the state's incapacity of implementing substantive anti-terrorism measures and its controversial deed of accusing asylum seekers of terrorist acts. The anti-terrorism frame is the most dominant frame in the rhetoric of the opposition political parties, which is constructed very much the same way as the media frame, containing a few additional components such as the assertion that hate campaigns that conflate (Muslim) migrants with terrorists is a security risk for the country. Hungary should instead work together for a real solution with its European allies. In the interviews, the anti-terrorism frame was mentioned in relation to how Muslim individuals are associated with terrorism in their everyday interpersonal interactions as a result of the hate campaigns and the hostile environment.

As for the *migration and refugee policy frame*, its main message in the media and political texts

is that refugee and migration policies are two different things that are deliberately confused by the government allowing for blaming refugees for illegally entering the country as economic migrants. This terminology blurring is one of the main strategies of the anti-migrant, anti-Islam government rhetoric that is being reinforced by the Russian information war launched at the outset of the refugee crisis in Eastern Europe. The disentanglement of the two policies highlight how Hungary by the way of its handling of refugees and migrants breaks international laws while it also points to the need of a real migration policy. The migration and refugee policy frame in the interviews has similar content to how it is constructed in the media and political texts. However, here we get insight into how the hate campaigns impact negatively the life of Muslim individuals.

The *Islam and Muslims in Hungary and Europe frame* is the deconstruction of one of the most often used Islamophobic claims about the Islamization of Europe. It puts the emphasis on social integration and asserts that failures of social integration of immigrants are the causes behind the phenomena that is labelled as Islamization. Comparing the content of the Islam and Muslims in Hungary and Europe frame in the media and political publications to that one in the interviews, we found important differences. While the previous is a deconstruction of the Islamization of Europe narrative pointing to social exclusion and discrimination as being the major factor in the failures of the integration of Muslims, the (Muslim) interviewees talked about how Muslims should behave to achieve successful integration. While in the media/political narrative it is the society's responsibility, in the interviews it is seen as the responsibility of Muslims (a view expressed by Muslims). Needless to say, that it is a case of avoiding stigma and discrimination by minority members through becoming invisible, hiding identity and well-behaving.

The *gender frame* deconstructs the stereotypes and prejudices of Islamophobic narratives about sexual violence being an essential attribute of Islam. The difference in gender roles is explained in terms of culture shock and cultural accommodation rather than in essentialising these differences. It is used in the media but not in the political sources. Regarding the lack of mention of this frame in the analysed political texts could be that political narratives focus mainly on politics and policies (anti-terrorism, migration and refugee policies) and much less on any other dimension of the question. Regarding our interviews, one the one hand cultural encounters are mentioned where gender role differences are not problematised but seen as natural. On the other hand, the negative experiences of Muslim women are mentioned as being exposed to abuse due to the visibility of their religious belonging and often choosing to take off their headscarves.

The *Muslim refugee frame* is a reflection and response to the Islamophobic narrative that attributes negative cultural traits to Muslim refugees, most often identifying them as potential terrorists. In the interviews, the Muslim refugee frame is a reflection on cultural encounters, a recognition of cultural and/or religious differences. The reactions are the result of the tension between the neutrality of the humanitarian approach and the reality of these encounters.

4. **Creating opposite counter narratives**

The *humanitarian* and the *tolerance* frames can be interpreted as doing reframing from a more indirect aspect.

The *humanitarian frame* in the media sees the individual human being behind the politicised refugee and migrant, who actually tries to save his life and flee from civil wars and ISIS and who only finds himself abused by authorities when arriving in a safe country. They might come from countries labelled as 'safe' by government politicians, the frame shows how unsafe these countries are in reality. While doing so, the humanitarian frame always highlights the negative aspects of government policies and its xenophobic features concerning the refugee crisis. In the meanwhile, the humanitarian frame also speaks about the human weaknesses of refugees thus avoid picturing them only as a homogenous vulnerable group. While the humanitarian frame is the most dominant frame in the analysed news portal, this is the least frequently used one in the democratic opposition political parties' rhetoric. Concerning interviews, what constitutes a major difference between the humanitarian frame in the media and in the narrative of our respondents is that the media frame highlights that refugees are escaping civil wars and ISIS while aid organisations and workers did not ask or enquire about who came from where and for what reason, whether they really had to flee from dangerous and life-threatening situations or not. They limited their focus on one dimension of the people coming here, their need for help for subsistence, health and other physical needs. They did see the individual but deliberately without their other more complex aspects (of country of origin, religion, culture, status or situation, etc.). Their neutrality was based on focusing on that one dimension of human need.

In the media and in political sources the *tolerance frame* is a vision of an ideal society that is currently under attack by the political regime which is with its hate campaigns and anti-refugee policies building a society that is closed, non-tolerant and exclusive of any kind of difference. In the interviews we could see that the tolerance frame is mainly about respondents expressing their frustration and negative views about the political hate campaigns and xenophobic rhetoric having negative impacts on Muslims living in the country. Talking about promoting alternative rhetoric and strategies to combat this tendency is seen mostly either as a futile effort or only as a goal to be achieved in the far future.

5. Security and humanitarian concerns joined

The *critical* frame is the one that most directly tries to bridge the security and the humanitarian aspect of the migration crisis, thus trying to close the gap between these two main and opposing narratives.

The *critical frame* in the media and political texts is an in-between stance that not only criticises the exclusivity of the humanitarian and the security stances, but emphasises that no real solution is possible without taking both into account. This frame was used only in a very few cases in our interviews.

About the research

The aim of the research was to give an overview of the major Islamophobic narratives as well as counter-narratives identified in political and media discourses in Hungary. Both Islamophobic and their counter narratives were analysed using framework analysis method.

As we know from the literature, the presence of Islamophobia is new, connected to the migration and refugee crisis staring in 2015 and it is generated by the government rhetoric. Taking this into account, we limited our timeframe to the migration crisis (2015-2016), looking at government narratives in political speeches and selected the newspaper directly linked to the government (Magyar Idők[5]). We applied a keyword search for the on-line database of the newspaper using the following terms: 'Iszlám', 'Muszlim' and 'Muzulmán'. We focused on two sections, 'internal affairs' and 'opinion' to be able to identify articles related to the migration crisis and exclude the ones that dealt with international politics related to the Middle East and/or Muslim countries. The search resulted in around 1000 articles. We used systematic random sampling to reduce the number of articles as our aim was to conduct primarily a qualitative research. We selected the first week of every month from the two sections. Thus we got a corpus of 114 articles.

The newspaper publishes the speeches of government politicians, therefore we used this corpus for analysing political narratives as well as media ones. We separated 'politicians' from 'non-politicians' in the articles and analysed them as belonging to either the political or the media narrative. The majority of political actors were representing the government, while the non-politicians were from very different backgrounds: security experts, church representatives, certain types of civil organizations, researchers, publicists.

The research had certain limitations. Given the time constraint of the research, and that there are no media analysis on Islamophobia in Hungary, we could only look at one newspaper instead of a wider range of the media landscape. Therefore, we cannot make general conclusions about the media representation of Islam and Islamophobia in Hungary.

To identify the main counter-narratives of Islamophobia in Hungary we applied similar frame analysis in three different corpuses. First, we have collected articles from the most popular left-wing opposition news portal, Index (www.index.hu). The next corpus we analysed was the on-line publications of democratic opposition parties concerning the topic of Islam. Finally, we conducted 17 in-depth semi-structured interviews with stakeholders whom we identified as important in generating counter-narratives. Interviews were conducted with representatives of organisations working on intercultural and/or interreligious dialogue (4 organisations from Budapest), Muslim civil and religious organisations and individuals (2 religious organisations from Budapest, 1 from the countryside, 2 Muslim individuals from the countryside), representatives of migrant and refugee aid organisations (6 respondents from 2 organisations in the countryside and 1 in Budapest) and local political actors active in helping refugees (2 politicians from the countryside).

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[5] The newspaper was launched in September 2015.

The reports are available from the project website https://cik.leeds.ac.uk/ or from the author: vidrazsuzsa@gmail.com.