Chapter Six

Islam, Migration, and the Muslim Communities in Europe: History, Legal Framework, and Organizations

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This chapter provides an overview of the Muslim communities in Europe, their ethnic and religious background, their social, economic and legal status, and their organizations. Of course, such a huge topic deserves much more than such a short overview. However, as Islam and Muslim immigrants have become a main topic in the discourse on migration and integration, it is important to give an overview about this part of the European population and their religious affiliations.

Islam as Part of European History

The discourse about Islam in Europe often portrays Europe as a Christian or Christian-Jewish Occident, while Islam is seen as a foreign Oriental religion. This narrative does not only negate the fact that all three big, monotheistic religions actually were formed in the Middle East, but it also excludes historic influences of Islamic scientists and scholars on the intellectual development of Europe and the long history of Islam as part of European history.

Europe had its first encounter with Islam much earlier than many parts of the present day so-called 'Islamic world.' When the Berber noble Tāriq Ibn Ziyād (طارق بن زياد) crossed the Strait of Gibraltar with his troops in 711, conquered the Empire of the Visigoths and thereby established the Islamic al-Andalus (الأندلس), less than 80 years had passed since the death of Prophet Muhammad. As we know, Islamic presence in Spain lasted for more than 780 years. Sicily and parts of southern Italy were also under Islamic rule from the 9th to

the 11th centuries. However, these early European encounters with Islam were wiped out of European consciousness and the Islamic populations of Spain and Italy were eliminated due to forced conversions and deportations after the Christian conquests of southern Italy and Sicily in the 11th century and al-Andalus in the 15th century.

This differs from the development of Muslim minorities in Eastern and Southeastern Europe, where Islam came with Turkish-speaking peoples like the Tartars in Russia and different Turkish tribes in the Ottoman Empire. After the conquest of the Khanate of Kazan and the Khanate of Astrakhan in the 16th century, the abolishment of the Qasim Khanate in the 17th century and the conquest of the Crimea in the 18th century, Islam continued to be the second largest religion in Russia, widely tolerated by the Russian Empire. With the conquest of the North-Caucasus in the 19th century additional Muslim peoples like the Chechens, the Circassians, the Dargins and the Avars came under Russian control.

In Southeastern Europe the majority of the Bosnians and Albanians converted to Islam under Ottoman rule. Additionally, other Slavic-speaking groups like the Pomaks and some Hungarians became Muslims. Likewise, Muslims from Anatolia or the Caucasus settled in some cities of the European parts of the Ottoman Empire. While many of these Southeastern European Muslims withdrew along with the Ottoman rule in the earlier years of the Austrian expansion towards the southeast, most of them stayed when Austria occupied Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1878 and when they annexed it in 1908.

Indigenous Muslim Populations in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe

As a result of that historic development there are a number of indigenous Muslim populations in Europe today. All of them live in the territories of the former Ottoman or Russian Empires. Already these indigenous Muslim populations form a very heterogeneous group of European Muslims. They do not only speak different languages, but also follow different religious traditions. While the majority of them are Sunni Muslims, there is also a significant minority of Alevi or Bektashi-affiliated Muslims in the former Ottoman sphere.

Especially in Albania and Bulgaria, these heterodox groups have substantial adherents. Albania even became the location of the headquarters of the Bektashi (turk.: *Bektaşi*) after their ban in Turkey under Mustafa Kemal in 1925. Some Bektashi claim that they made up nearly half of the Muslim population of Albania. Although this number seems to be exaggerated, it is unquestioned that Albania became the second center of Bektashism and that Bektashism was even recognized as a specific religious community by the state. Persecuted like all religious communities under the rule of Enver Hoxha, they had a revival after the fall of the regime in 1990. They reopened their historic *tekke* in Tirana and established new *tekkes* in different parts of Albania.[1] In Kosovo and Macedonia, where Bektashism was of lesser importance than in the south of Albania, it always had some presence in the Albanian population.

Also within the Sunni Muslims, there are a variety of different forms of religious expression between more 'orthodox' forms and more secular forms of Islam, including syncretistic influences, especially within Muslim Roma communities in southeast Europe. In sum, we have to notice that Islam did not only have a constant presence in Europe since the 8th century, but also that the indigenous European Muslim population now? includes between nine and twelve million people in southeast Europe and Russia.

Migration and Islam

Like the presence of Islam, migration is also not a new phenomenon. However, it has to be mentioned that small numbers of Muslims also lived in western European countries in the 19th century already. Colonialism did not only result in the colonization of territories overseas, but also in contact between the colonizing and the colonized populations. Some of the colonized people found their ways to Britain, France or Italy, while Austria suddenly ruled over a largely Muslim population in Bosnia.

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[1] John Norton, "The Bektashis in the Balkans," in Celia Hawkesworth / Muriel Heppell / Harry Norris (eds.) *Religious Quest and National Identity in the Balkans* (Basingstoke (Hampshire): Palgrave Macmillan, 2001) pp. 168-200, p. 194.

Islam was not only brought to western European societies by immigration. In the early 20th century Europe got increasingly interested in the Orient. All over Europe, buildings in an Oriental style, like the world-famous 'Yenidze' in Dresden,[2] were erected. Despite the fact that this was mainly a very romanticized Oriental curiosity, some intellectuals became interested in the religion of Islam. Some of them, like the Jewish Austrian Leopold Weiss (Muhammad Asad) from Lemberg or the Austrian social anthropologist (Umar) Rolf Leopold von Ehrenfels, converted to Islam and played an important role in establishing Islamic organizations in Western Europe.

Through conversion and immigration not only Sunni Islam reestablished roots in Europe, but Shia Islam and smaller Islamic sects like the Ahmadiyya were introduced in Europe. The missionaries of the Ahmadiyya, a sect from British-India, became especially active in Europe. They established the first permanent mosque in Germany. Between 1924 and 1928, the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ischat-i-Islam Lahore (AAIIL) erected a mosque in the Indian Mughal style in Berlin-Wilhelmsdorf. The survival of the mosque during World War II was interpreted by the Ahmadiyya Muslims as

> a clear sign of the hand of the Almighty God working behind the scene. It also shows the purity and sincerity of the purpose with which the handful of members of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement are working for the noble and sublime cause of the propagation of Islam in Europe.[3]

However, the number of Muslims in Western Europe was still very limited during the first half of the 20th century. The majority of the Muslim populations of Europe other than indigenous Muslim populations immigrated only after World War II. The immigration of Muslims from either the (former) colonies to France, Britain or Portugal or as part of the immigration of workers from Turkey and other Islamic-dominated countries to countries like Germany and Austria changed the map of Islam in Europe.

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[2] Reinhold Zemke, *Die Moschee als Aufgabe der Stadtplanung* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2008), p. 18.

[3] http://berlin.ahmadiyya.org/ber50.htm, accessed on April 25, 2011.

While Islam was the religion of an evanescent minority in Western Europe at the beginning of the 20th century, it became the second strongest religion in most of the countries of western Europe at the end of the 20th century. Today the majority of European Muslims are not living in the east and southeast of Europe anymore, but in countries like France, Germany, Belgium, Austria and Great Britain. Meanwhile, many of these Muslims are citizens of European states and the majority of them have been born in Europe.

There are no accurate comparable numbers of Muslims in the different countries of Europe. However, the German *Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge*, a department of the German government that is responsible for migrants and refugees, estimates that there are about 15 million Muslims living in Europe and between 11 and 12 million in Western Europe.[4] In my opinion, the statistic of 15 million Muslims in Europe is too small by far. The estimation of the *Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge* perhaps does not include the millions of Muslims in the European part of Russia.

Even if there is no accurate data about the exact numbers of Muslims in Europe, there are different censuses and estimations that allow us to give an overview of the present Muslim population in Europe. Figure 1 is based on the numbers published in the different chapters of the Yearbook of Muslims in Europe[5] and different national censuses and estimations.

The map illustrates that there are still high numbers of Muslims in the former Ottoman Southeast part of Europe, but also an increasing number in Central and Western Europe, while the former Eastern Bloc countries have very limited numbers of Muslims.

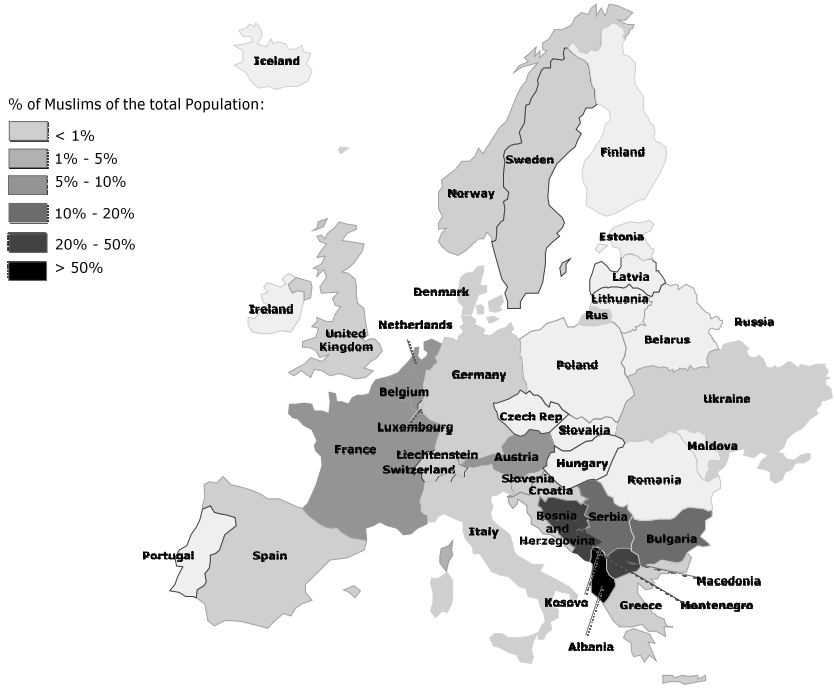
The Diversity of European Islam

Due to the different economic and political developments in Europe and the different migration histories, the number of Muslims

[4] http://www.integration-in deutschland.de/nn_284656/SubSites/Integration/DE/03_Akteure/ThemenUndPerspektiven/Islam/Europa/europa-node.html?_ nnn=true, accessed on April 26, 2011.

[5] Jørgen S. Nielsen / Samim Akgönül / Ahmet Alibašić / Brigitte Maréchal / Hugh Goddard eds., *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe 2010* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

Figure 1. Muslim Population of Europe



differs from state to state, as well as their ethnic and linguistic background. Figure 2 shows the origins of the majority of the Muslim population within different countries of Europe.

There are always smaller and larger minorities within the Muslim communities as well. Figure 2 shows the descendent of the majority of the Muslims in each country.

However, the map does not only show the plurality of Muslims in Europe, but also the connection between colonialism and immigration. The majority of the Muslim population in all big former colonial powers originates from their former colonies, while in Germany and Austria they come from the old ally Turkey. The immigration of cheap labor that could be interpreted as a continuation or a relocation of a colonial relation created the major part of the present Muslim communities in Western Europe. This is in comparison to the east and southeast of Europe where most the Muslim communities are pre-

Figure 2. Origins of the Muslim Population of Europe

dominantly leftovers from the former Ottoman Empire or the various Tatar Khanates in present day Russia and Ukraine.

The result of this is a very diverse population of Muslims in Europe. Muslim communities in Europe differ between each country and within each country. They differ in their national, ethnical and linguistic background, but also in their political affiliations, their social and economic status and their religious affiliation within Islam.

While in countries with Muslim communities with predominantly Arab origin, such as France, Spain or Italy, the vast majority of the Muslims are Sunni Muslims of different madhāhib (schools of law, مذاهب, singular: *madhab*, مذهب); in countries with Muslims of predominantly Turkish origin, such as Germany and Austria, the Sunni majority is affiliated with the *madhab* of the Hanafiya (الحنفية), and there is also a strong minority of Alevis, a heterodox current of Shiites.

All over Europe, there are smaller minorities of Twelver Shiites of Iranian and Arab origin. In Britain there are minorities of different

sects of the Ismaili Shia and some Zaydis. In France and Britain there are also small minorities of Ibadis from Algeria and Oman.

In addition to these traditional sects, the two rival sects of the Ahmadiyya known as the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ischat-i-Islam Lahore (AAIIL) and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat (AMJ) are present in Europe. Due to the repression against Ahmadiyya Muslims in Pakistan, the 4th Khalifa of the AMJ fled to London in 1984. With the Khalifa most parts of the worldwide headquarter of the AMJ moved to Europe.[6] The AMJ has a strong presence in the Pakistani community in Britain, but also has groups in nearly all countries of Europe and is especially active in proselytizing other Muslims and non-Muslims.

Besides these ethnic and sectarian differences, Muslim identities intersect with class, gender, sexual orientation and other sources of identity.

In the more liberal political climate of Europe many Muslim migrants also rediscovered particular ethnic identities that were oppressed, marginalized, or at least ignored in their countries of origin. Many of the Muslims from Turkey in Germany and Austria can express their Kurdishness more freely than in Turkey. For many of them their Kurdish national identity is much more important than their religious identity as Muslims. In Britain many Pakistani Muslims developed their own identities and see themselves primarily as Kashmiris, Pashtuns, Balutshis and so on.

This makes the social reality of European Muslims highly pluralistic, as opposed to the image of a unified block of Muslims which is imagined in the public discourse of many European states. There is no single European Islam, but a diversity of European Muslims with different attitudes towards their religious identity.

[6] Andrea Lathan, "Reform, Glauben und Entwicklung: die Herausforderungen für die Ahmadiyya Gemeinde" in Dietrich Reetz, ed.: *Islam in Europa. Religiöses Leben heute. Ein Porträt ausgewählter islamischer Gruppen und Institutionen* (Münster / New York / München / Berlin: Waxmann, 2010), pp. 79-107, p. 100.

Social and Economic Situation of Muslims in Europe

This diversity is also mirrored in social and economic situations of Muslims in Europe. In countries with traditional Muslim majorities, like Turkey, Albania and Bosnia, Muslims are present in every segment of the society. However, some of the indigenous Muslim peoples of Europe live in rural areas with a poor economy and little access to higher education. These peoples include the Pomaks of Bulgaria and the Goranci in the border region of Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia.

The data about the social and economic situation of Muslim immigrants in Western Europe is not really accurate. Censuses of the various European states are often not directly comparable. Most of the censuses of European states do not connect poverty or economic success with religion. We do not have enough data to present a definitive picture of the poverty of Muslims in comparison to non-Muslims in Europe. However, it can be stated that in general, Muslim immigrants in Europe come from a different background than in the United States. While Muslim immigrants into the U.S. are generally highly educated, many of the Muslim immigrants in Europe come from a rural or a working class background. Most of them did not come as international students or professionals like in the U.S., but as workers or refugees. Such as status results in different starting conditions for the integration and the social advancement in the new society. While American Muslims can state that they are a "highly educated" community "with 58% holding college degrees; extremely successful, with 50% earning more than $50,000 annually,"[7] European Muslims are less successful than their American fellow Muslims.

In 2006 a study of the EUMC, the predecessor of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), stated that not only Muslims, but

> migrants throughout Europe experience discriminatory practices to a significant extent, particularly with regard to employment and in the sphere of commercial transactions. Nearly one third of respondents stated that they experi-

[7] Abdus Sattar Ghazali, *Muslim Immigration to the USA*, January 1, 2004. http://www.ghazali.net/amp/html/four_waves.html, accessed on April 26, 2011.

> enced discrimination through being refused access to jobs, missing promotions, or being harassed at work. More than one in four respondents claimed to have experienced discrimination in commercial transactions, either through denial of access to housing, or credit or loans.[8]

Although many of these migrants are Muslims that does not necessarily mean a discrimination of Muslims as such. The study suggests that the question of discrimination of Muslims differs enormously throughout Europe:

> While the suggestion that Muslims are particularly vulnerable to experiencing discrimination seems to be true for some countries, according to the studies conducted in Spain, Italy, the Netherlands and Portugal, the majority of country studies on migrants' experiences of racism and xenophobia do not support such an assumption.[9]

With the increasing debate about the integration of Muslims in Europe, the requirement of data about the living conditions of Muslims in Europe grew. However, the database is still very weak because in nearly all researches on social and economic conditions indicators do not target Muslims as a specific group.

Despite that weak database, the study of the EUMC stated the following concerning the question of unemployment:

> Although differences in wages, type of employment and unemployment rates of migrants, of which a significant proportion belongs to Muslim faith groups, indicate persistent exclusion, disadvantage and discrimination, it would be misleading to attribute this only to religious or cultural differences. A variety of interrelated factors, such as human capital (educational and professional qualifications, language skills, etc.), structural changes in the economy, and

[8] European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, *Muslims in the European Union. Discrimination and Islamophobia* (EUMC: Vienna, 2006) p. 32.

[9] Ibid, p. 33.

> the increasing importance of informal social networks, serves to impact on the employment opportunities and performances of migrant groups. Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest that religion does play a role in employment discrimination.[10]

Despite the fact that there is some evidence that Muslims in Europe also have lesser access to higher education and limited possibilities for social advancement due to their class background, there is no reliable data existing about many of the social and economic realities of Muslims in Europe. Recently, the Austrian political scientist Arno Tausch tried to distill some data about social integration and poverty and its connection with a political radicalization of Muslims in Europe from the World Values Survey and the European Survey. In his evaluation of the data he demonstrates that in all Western European countries the subjective risk of poverty of Muslims was much superior to that of the average population. In 2004 only 12% of the non-Muslims in Austria saw themselves in danger of becoming poor, compared to 46.5% of the Muslim population who saw themselves in danger of becoming poor. In Denmark only 3.9% of the non-Muslims saw themselves in danger of poverty, compared to 25.1% of the Muslim population.[11] From this data Tausch created a 'Muslim Development Index' according to the 'Human Development Index' of the UNDP. According to this index, Muslims in Switzerland, Spain and Slovenia are the most content Muslims in the European Union, while Muslims in Britain, Germany, Austria and France are the most discontent, with France being by far the worst.[12]

However, even if there are lots of differences concerning economic success and education between the Muslim communities in the different European states and also within the different communities, it can be stated, that there is a tendency that Muslims in Europe are generally poorer and less educated than non-Muslims.

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[10]Ibid, p. 44.

[11]Arno Tausch, *Armut und Radikalität? Soziologische Perspektiven zur Integration der Muslime in Europa basierend auf dem "World Values Survey" und dem "European Social Survey"* (Bremen: Europäischer Hochschulverlag, 2010), p. 122f.

[12]Ibid., p. 151.

Islam and Identity

The reasons for these social differences are of course not religious, but sourced from the differing social backgrounds and limited chances of advancement for underprivileged immigrants in the existing European class societies. However, many debates about the integration of Muslims in Europe still connect religion and culture with poverty and lack of education. Hate-mongers like extreme right-wing parties or the German Social Democrat Thilo Sarrazin wrongly suggest that Islam is the root of these problems.[13] Therefore, the discussion in many European states twists to a discussion about culture and religion and does not focus on the social realities that are widely unresearched.

There are indications that show that for some of the Muslim population, as well as the non-Muslim population, Islam does play an important role in identity construction. It is used to demarcate their 'European Identity' against an imagined 'foreign' and 'Oriental' religion. However, on the Muslim side that does not necessarily mean that such an Islamic identity construction would also mean a stronger or more conservative religiousness. The British social scientist Yunas Samad, who researched the ethnicization of Islam under young British Muslims with Pakistani descent, concludes:

> Young men and women are using Islam to lever open space for gender and generation negotiation. Islam has become an indicator that they are, or have become, more British/European and have reformulated differences in identification in relation to their parents. Islam is also used as a tool, in particular by women, to negotiate important live decisions such as marriage, continuing with education and working. It should not necessarily be seen as an indicator for increased devotion to faith or of religiosity.[14]

[13]Thilo Sarrazin, *Deutschland schafft sich ab. Wie wir unser Land aufs Spiel setzen* (Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2010).

[14]Yunas Samad, "Ethnicization of Religion" in Yunas Samad / Kasturi Sen (eds.), *Islam in the European Union. Transnationalism, Youth and the War on Terror* (Karachi: Ameena Saiyid, Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 160-169, p. 168.

Thus Islam for many Muslims and non-Muslims does not only play a religious role, but a role of collective and personal identity creation. Although it would go far beyond the scope of this article to analyze these identity constructions, these multiple dimensions of an Islamic identity should be kept in mind while discussing the questions of the relations of non-Muslims and Muslims in Europe as well as the legal status of Islam within secular European states.

Islam and the State: The legal Framework of Islam

The legal status of Islam as a religion differs a lot in Europe. The official status of Islam is closely connected with the general relation between state and religion. Aside from the theocratic Vatican City State, European states have different forms of secular regimes with different traditions of state-church relations. While the French *laïcité* promotes the complete absence of religious involvement in any governmental affairs and the complete separation between state and religion, other European states like Austria, Germany or Italy have a model of cooperation of churches and religious communities with the state. A third group of states, like Great Britain, Denmark or Liechtenstein, still have a state church. All of these are monarchies. In some of them the head of the state is also the head of the state church. For example, the British queen is also the head of the Church of England. Still, all these states guarantee the freedom of religion and recognize other churches and faiths.

However, it is important to mention that all of these models were created for the organization of Christian churches. But not all religions are organized in the structure of a church. Islam never established a 'church' and Sunni Islam, which is comprised of the large majority of all Muslims, never even established a definite religious hierarchy. This lack of a 'church' makes it difficult for Muslims to fit into the existing structures of state-church relations in most European states. Ayhan Kaya, professor for Political Science and Director of the European Institute at Istanbul Bilgi University correctly argues that

> secular Western countries have followed the same pattern to accommodate Islam, which they generated before when

> accommodating other faiths such as Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant Church, or the Jews. [15]

However, that model did not fit for a less institutionalized religion like Islam. While the traditional leading Christian churches in Europe, especially the Catholic and orthodox churches, saw themselves and their hierarchy as mediators between their god and the believers, Islam does not know priesthood as such and has a concept of a much more direct interaction between their god and the believers. Therefore, very conservative and strictly orthodox or orthopractic Muslims do not need a religious institution to practice their belief.

The demand on institutionalization of Islam by European states on one hand and the traditional Islamic concept of personal subjection under the almightiness of God on the other leads to a contradictory development in European Islam. Ayhan Kaya mentions additional reasons for that paradoxical development of individualization and institutionalization of Islam in Europe:

> It was claimed that while the processes of globalization compel younger Muslims to emancipate themselves from the pressure of their patriarchal parental and community culture, Western states and ethno-cultural and religious brokers are in a position to reify or reinforce, ethnic and religious boundaries. Hence, it turns out that the descendants of migrants are squeezed between individualization and institutionalization of Islam.[16]

European states went different paths to institutionalize Islam. Apart from countries traditionally shaped by Islam, such as Bosnia, Albania and Kosovo and countries with traditional Islamic minorities like Russia, Poland or Greece, who mainly have traditional Islamic representatives, only two European states have an Islamic institution that is formally equated to Christian churches and other officially recognized religions. While Austria and Belgium established officially recognized religious communities that—at least in theory—should represent

[15] Ayhan Kaya, *Islam, Migration and Integration. The Age of Secularization* (Basingstoke (Hampshire): Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 199.

[16] Ibid., p. 199f.

Islam on equal footage of Christian churches or the Jewish communities, many other states formed different bodies of representation.

Additionally, Hungary officially recognizes Islamic religious communities. However, the Hungarian law of religion was modeled after the law in the US. This made it extremely easy to establish officially registered religious communities, but they did not have a lot of privileges. Meanwhile, there are three different Muslim communities officially recognized, although they have only a few hundred members each.[17] Though the new right wing government adopted a new "Law on the Right to Freedom of Conscience and Religion, and on Churches, Religions and Religious Community" on July 12. Only 14 of the 358 religious groups in Hungary will be granted formal recognition under the law and hundreds of groups will automatically lose their "registered" status and as of January 1, 2012 will no longer receive financial allocation in support of their work.[18] None of the 14 is a Muslim community.

In most of the other European countries there has been intent to establish some sort of a representation of Muslims, each with different types of success.

In 1992 Spain established the *Comisión Islámica de España* by a unification of the *Federación Española de Entidades Religiosas Islámicas* (FEERI) and the *Unión de Comunidades Islámicas en España* (UCIDE). The *Comisión Islámica de España* was created as the sole representative of Islam vis-à-vis the state. It is neither an official religious community comparable to the Catholic church, nor does it really include all major currents present in the Muslim communities of Spain. Political and Islamic scientist Brigitte Maréchal questions its efficiancy "because it does not represent the diversity of Muslims, nor the immigrants who are the poorest and the most recently arrived, often illegally."[19]

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[17]Gyorgy Lederer, "Hungary," in: Jørgen S. Nielsen / Samim Akgönül / Ahmet Alibašić / Brigitte Maréchal / Hugh Goddard eds., *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe 2010* (Leiden: Brill, 2010) pp. 245–249, p. 246.

[18]http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=70&release=1480, accessed on November 10, 2011.

[19]Brigitte Maréchal, "Institutionalisation of Islam and Representative Organisations for Dealind with European States" in: Brigitte Maréchal / Stefano Allievi / Felice Dassetto / Jørgen Nielsen (eds) *Muslims in the Enlarged Europe. Religion and Society* (Leiden: Brill, 2003) pp. 151–182, p.163.

In 2003 France formed the *Conseil Français du Cult Musulman* (CFCM) as a representative body of French Muslims. The CFCM is registered as a nonprofit association[20] and not as a religious community. It constitutes an elected body that serves as contact for the state authorities and consists of 25 *Conseil Regional du Culte Musulman*. Since its establishment, the CFCM was partly paralyzed by conflicts between rival Islamic organizations, especially between the Muslim Brotherhood affiliated *Union des organisations islamiques de France* (UOIF) and more secular groups like the *Grande Mosquée de Paris*. Political scientist Malika Zeghal argues that the creation of the CFCM was a result of a strategy by the French political elites and not by the French Muslims.[21]

This is also the case in the efforts of Germany to establish a representative body for German Muslims. The *Deutsche Islamkonferenz* (DIK, German Islam Conference) was established in 2006 by the Ministry of Interior for a limited time to encourage a structured dialogue between the German state and Muslim representatives who were appointed by the Ministry. The Law Professor Mathias Rohe, who was himself a member of the DIK argues that:

> These appointments have (naturally) been disputed from the beginning: the organized Sunni Muslims complain of their 'minority' position compared with the 'secular' majority, while others would reject the participation of conservative Muslims, especially those under observation by the security services. Of course, everybody who was not invited has challenged the authority of the council to speak for Muslims. This is equally true with regard to the state representatives: none of them are members of parliament and this has led to criticism of the DIK for 'lack of trans-

[20] http://www.journal-officiel.gouv.fr/association/index.php?ACTION=Rechercher&HI_PAGE=1&HI_COMPTEUR=0&original_method=get&WHAT=culte+musulman&JTH_ID=&JAN_BD_CP=75013&JRE_ID=&JAN_LIEU_DECL=&JTY_ID=&JPA_D_D=07%2F06%2F2003&JPA_D_F=07%2F06%2F2003, accessed on April 26, 2011.

[21] Malika Zeghal, La constitution du Conseil Français du Culte Musulman: Reconnaissance politique d'un Islam français? Archives des Sciences sociales des religions 129 (janvier–mars 2005) pp. 97–113.

> parency'. The Ministry has clearly decided to begin in an informal manner rather than to enter into a broad political process from the beginning.[22]

However, despite the criticism all important Islamic umbrella-organizations, including the Federation of the Alevi communities, participated in the first round of the DIK. In the second round, which began in 2010, the Islamic umbrella organization with the largest membership was missing. The DIK justifies the absence of the *Islamrat* (Islamic Council, IRD):

> Because of the well-known on-going preliminary proceedings against leading members of the Islamic Community Milli Görüş (IGMG), the largest member organisation of the IRD, its membership of the German Islamic Conference has been suspended for the time being. The Islamic Council has relinquished the option of maintaining a sleeping membership.[23]

Although the DIK continues to work, it did not lead to the establishment of a state recognized religious community. Only a number of predominantly Sunni Islamic umbrella organizations formed a new umbrella organization called *Koordinierungsrat der Muslime* (KRM, Coordination Council of the Muslims) in 2007. It claimed to represent all Sunni and Shiite Muslims in Germany, but its representativeness is highly disputed and it turned out to be a very weak organization. Until now, there is no officially recognized Islamic religious community on a federal level with the same rights that Christian churches or the Jewish communities have.

Some other European countries like the United Kingdom and Italy did not try to establish a legal umbrella organization or representation

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[22]Mathias Rohe, "Germany," in Jørgen S. Nielsen / Samim Akgönül / Ahmet Alibašić / Brigitte Maréchal / Hugh Goddard eds., *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe 2010* (Leiden: Brill, 2010) pp. 217–232, p. 218f.

[23]http://www.deutsche-islam-konferenz.de/cln_110/nn_1917156/SubSites/DIK/EN/TeilnehmerStruktur/Teilnehmer/teilnehmer-node.html?_nnn=true, accessed on April 27, 2011.

of all Muslims in their states. Nevertheless, these countries have different rival Muslim organizations existing within each of them.

Some Muslim organizations also tried to establish European umbrella organizations like the Muslim Council for Cooperation in Europe (MCCE). These attempts to construct a united European Islamic structure were disappointing due to the lack of representatives.

The Case of Austria: Recognition of an Islamic 'Church'

It is not a surprise that the first non-Muslim western European state that officially recognized Islam as a religion did so in the framework of the experiment of establishing a church-like Islamic institution. This church-like structure represents Islam as the Catholic church represents Catholicism. The recognition of Islam by Austria is a result of a specific historic development. It was not Islam that came to Austria, but it was Austria that came to Islam, or more precisely to Bosnia. Austria occupied Bosnia in 1878. Consequently the occupying forces created all those structures surrounding Islam, which still today represent characteristics of Bosnian Islam, like that of the *Reis ul-ulema*, for example.

The establishment of these autonomous Islamic structures not only demonstrated tolerance, but also a religious decoupling from Istanbul. The recognition of Islam as a religious community was based on a Hanafiya school and was confirmed through the law of 15th July 1912 RGBL Nr. 159 and later on elaborated.[24] Hence, to be more precise, it can be concluded that the Sunni Islam of the Hanafiya school of law has been recognized as a religious community in Austria since the annexation of Bosnia, which led to privileges such as the introduction of Islamic clergymen for the military. The same privileges were given to Protestant churches and Jewish religious communities.

In western Europe Islam is only officially recognized in Belgium and Austria. In Austria the unique status of Islam in Austria is not the result of the immigration of Muslim workers in the 1960s and 1970s,

[24]Smail Balić, "Zur Geschichte der Muslime in Österreich I: Lebensräume und Konfliktfelder," in Susanne Heine (ed.), *Islam zwischen Selbstbild und Klischee. Eine Religion im Österreichischen Schulbuch*, Wien: Böhlau, 1995, p. 25.

but is in fact the result of a historic relationship between Austria and the Balkan states, in particular with Bosnia and Herzegovina.[25]

The end of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy in 1918 did not bring any changes to this specific judicial situation, except for the loss of the subjects of the Islamic Religious Community through the detachment of Bosnia. From then on this law was more or less dormant until May 2, 1979, when the creation of an Islamic Religious Community in Austria (*Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft* in Österreich, IGGiÖ) was permitted. The demand of the first president Ahmad Abdelrahimsai of the IGGiÖ of representing all "members of Islam [...] who are residing in Austria" was accepted by the head of law and by the public. Since then the Islamic Religious Community in Austria demands full rights to speak for all Muslims in Austria, regardless of if they pay their member fees or not. This created a bizarre constellation in which the IGGiÖ claims to represent all Muslims in Austria, yet in fact counts only a small minority of paying members—the exact number of which has never been disclosed to the Austrian public. This small group paying the fees is the only group which has the full active and passive right to vote for the various committees of the IGGiÖ. Abdelrahimsai stated more precisely in one of his texts about the IGGiÖ:

> Hereby all the members of Islam, who are not members of the Hanafiya rite, like other Sunnites (Shafites, Malakites, Hanbalites) and Shiites (Twelver Shiites, Zaidites, Ibadis), are equal to members of the Hanafitic school of law.[26]

Firstly, he wrongly enumerates the Ibadites as part of the Shia, as they arise from the Kharjaites and have no link whatsoever with the Shia[27]—a mistake which was repeated by many other writers. Sec-

[25]Sabine Kroissenbrunner, "Islam, Migration und Integration: soziopolitische Netzwerke und ‚Muslim leadership'," in: Heinz Fassmann and Irene Stacher eds., *Österreichischer Migrations- und Integrationsbericht. Demographische Entwicklungen—sozioökonomische Strukturen—rechtliche Rahmenbedingungen* (Wien, Klagenfurt/Celovec: Drava, 2003) pp. 375–394.

[26]Ahmed Abdelrahimsai, "Zur Geschichte der Muslime in Österreich II: Die Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft," in Susanne Heine (ed.), *Islam zwischen Selbstbild und Klischee. Eine Religion im Österreichischen Schulbuch* (Köln: Böhlau, 1995) pp. 37–44, p. 42.

[27]Amal Ghazal, "Kharijism and Ibadism: The Quest for an integrative approach to

ondly, it is obvious that only orthopractical movements of Islam find their place in his enumeration.

Heterodox groups like the Alevis have been trying to get recognised as an official religious community for years. The president of the IGGiÖ has always refused to accept them as Muslims.[28] After a long legal dispute, where two different groups of Alevis tried to get the official recognition to establish an independent state-recognized religious community, one of these two groups succeeded in December 2010 and is now recognized as *Religiöse Bekenntnisgemeinschaft*.[29] It is in a preliminary stage before becoming a fully recognized religious community like the IGGiÖ. This was made possible by a decision of the Austrian Constitutional Court which saw the decision of the Bureau of Cult ('Kultusamt') of the Austrian Ministry of Culture and Education to accept only one Islamic community in Austria (the IGGiÖ) as a violation of religious freedom on December 1, 2010.[30] This decision could have a strong impact on the status of the IGGiÖ as well, because the constitutional court recognized the denial of the recognition of the *islamisch-alevitische Glaubensgemeinschaft* as a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). It concluded that article I and § 1 of the Islamgesetz can not be interpreted as the Austrian law only accepting one officially recognized Islamic religious community. The future will demonstrate what this means for the claim to sole representation of all Muslims by the IGGiÖ and other Islamic communities who could try to get official recognition. Already in December 2010, more Islamic groups including a Shiite group requested official recognition. The Bureau of Cult has to decide about these requests within six months after their application.

Islamic History," *Bulletin of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Sudies*, vol. 7, no. 1 (Spring-Summer 2005), pp. 1-6.

[28]See many statements of IGGiÖ-president Anas Schakfeh to the press or this report about a discussion with the author or this paper: http://www.dasbiber.at/content/minarett-diskussion%3A-shakfeh-distanziert-sich-erneut-von-aleviten, accessed on September 20, 2010).

[29]http://www.wienerzeitung.at/default.aspx?TabID=5127&Alias=wzo&cob=532648, accessed on December 24, 2010).

[30]Entscheidung des Verfassungsgerichtshofs B 1214/09-35 on the 1st of December 2010.

However, even though the IGGiÖ does not recognize Alevis as Muslims, it still claims to be the sole representative of all Muslims in Austria. In 2010, the IGGiÖ tried to recruit new members before their new elections. In November 2010, IGGiÖ President Schakfeh announced that the IGGiÖ managed to get 45,822 members, but only 15,803 would be entitled to vote.[31] After a publicity campaign in schools and the registration of thousands of school children by their teachers, Schakfeh announced in March 2011 that the IGGiÖ managed to register 100,000 Muslims of whom 27,000 would be entitled to vote.[32] The rest are either younger than 14, did not pay the membership fee or had not been living in Austria for at least one year. 20,500 of these 27,000 Muslims really went to vote[33], which is less than 4% of the Austrian Muslim population of more than 550,000 Muslims. The elections brought a stronger influence of the Turkish Islamic associations. Fuat Sanaç, an affiliate of *Milli Görüş*, was elected as the new president of the IGGiÖ in June 2011.[34]

Despite the fact that many Austrian politicians tried to present the 'Austrian solution' as a model for other states, as well as some scholars claiming that the Austrian model of official representation "causes fewer problems than elsewhere,"[35] the lack of participation of Muslims in this elections clearly demonstrates that the artificial creation of an all-embracing Islamic 'church' did not solve any of the problems of the representations of Islam. Rather, it helped to cover them under the glint of a pseudo-representative organization. The fact is that in Austria, a plurality of different Islamic organizations always played a much more important role than any official Islamic community.

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[31]http://www.wienerzeitung.at/DesktopDefault.aspx?TabID=3941&Alias=WZO&cob=526141, accessed on April 28, 2010.

[32]http://diepresse.com/home/panorama/religion/643567/Nur-jeder-fuenfte-Muslim-bekennt-sich-zur-IGGiOe, accessed on May 10, 2010.

[33]http://derstandard.at/1304552252914/Islam-Muslime-Wahl-Beteiligung-von-765-Prozent, accessed on May 19, 2011.

[34]http://news.orf.at/stories/2065615/, accessed on July 1, 2011.

[35]Silvio Ferrari, "The Secularity of the State and the Shaping of Muslim Representative Organizations in Western Europe", in: Jocelyne Cesari / Seán McLoughlin (eds), *European Muslims and the Secular State* (Aldershot (Hampshire): Ashgate, 2005) pp. 11-23, p. 14.

Islamic Organizations

Such Islamic organizations did establish themselves in all European countries. Many of them are connected with each other, but also with Islamic organizations in Muslim immigrants' countries of origin. In general it can be stated that the large majority of Muslims in Europe are not categorized in any organization. This resulted in an uneven surplus of conservative voices in the organized groups of Islam in many European states. As Islam can be perfectly exercised without any organization, most of the more secular and moderate Muslims did not organize in Islamic organizations. That does not mean that all Islamic organizations are organizations of Political Islam, but rather it means that the positions of Islamic organizations do not necessarily mirror the positions of Muslims in Europe. Rather, they only represent their more conservative and sometimes their more fundamentalist currents.

However, the development of these Islamic organizations in Europe is often still closely linked to the development of society and politics in the land of the origin of Muslim immigrants. Jørgen S. Nielsen points out that that

> the Muslim organizational tendencies, which have formed the roots of those we see [...] in Europe today, are the product not only of traditional Islamic processes but also—and very significantly—of the organized Muslim reaction to the expansion of European influence during the last several centuries.[36]

It would go far beyond the scope of this article to give an overview of even the most important of these organizations in Europe. However, it still should be mentioned that most Islamic organizations from the Muslim immigrants' countries of origin could also establish organizations in Europe. In the case of the Turkish *Milli Görüş*, its European wing by far exceeds its counterpart in Turkey in membership and political influence. The Muslim Brotherhood or different Sufi-tariqat also have their organizations in Europe. The followers of *Fethullah Gülen* established their organizations and schools, and some

[36]Jørgen S. Nielsen, *Muslims in Western Europe* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 1995) [2nd edition], p. 119.

Salafi organizations are particularly successful in recruiting younger Muslims, including converts.

Some of the Islamic organizations in Europe are also state-sponsored. Turkey maintains an extensive network of organizations in Western Europe that is directly linked to its *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (Presidency for religious affairs), which includes the two biggest Islamic umbrella organizations in Germany and Austria, the *Diyanet İşleri Türk İslam Birliği*, (DİTİB)[37] and the *Avusturya Türk İslam Birliği* (ATİB). Iran and Saudi-Arabia are also sponsoring Shiite or Wahabi Islamic organizations. This strengthens forms of Political Islam in Europe.

Problems and Discussions

Although Islam became a widely debated topic all over Europe, Muslims are often portrayed in a very stereotypical way. However, most of these anti-Muslim resentments are culturalized or religiously loaded forms of racism. This is one of the reasons why the increasing usage of the term 'Islamophobia' in social science hides more than it describes.[38] But not only racist and other anti-Muslim groups draw a picture of a unified and homogenous Islam, many Muslim officials and so-called friends of the Muslims also try to focus on the unity of Muslims. Therefore, the diversity and the conflicts within European Muslim communities are often hidden and under-researched.

However, a fair and scientific discussion about Islam and Muslim communities in Europe would have to focus much more on this plurality of Islam. Although it would make the pictures of Islam more conflicting, this would help to demonstrate that Muslims are not

[37]Günter Seufert, "Die ‚Türkisch-Islamische Union' (DİTİB) der türkischen Religionsbehörde: zwischen Integration und Isolation," in Günter Seufert / Jacques Waardenburg (eds.), *Turkish Islam and Europe—Türkischer Islam und Europa* (Istanbul: Franz-Steiner-Verlag, 1999), pp. 261–293.

[38]For a detailed critique of the terminology, see Thomas Schmidinger, "Antisemitismus und Islamophobie. Einige Neuerscheinungen zum Vergleich von Antisemitismus und antimuslimischen Ressentiments," *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften* (ÖZG), 2011/3, pp. 154–166.

something completely 'other' but rather as pluralistic and conflicting as any other religion.

Such an attempt would also help to overcome experiments in vain to establish all-embracing representative Muslim organizations vis-á-vis European states and would help to recognize an existing religious pluralism. This would help to not overestimate the influence of religion in the debate on the integration of immigrants and to debate more about education, social justice and equality. Religion is important, but it neither explains all aspects of a personal or collective identity, nor does it explain all the conflicts and problems of social justice, education and our living together in a pluralistic society.