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Austria

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Islam in Austria

Demographics

Islam is the largest religious minority in Austria with 4.22 % of the population in the 2001 census [1]; after the Catholics (73,6 %), irreligious (12 %), and Protestants (4,7 %). [2] There are approximately 338.988 Muslims in Austria, that has a resident population of 8.032.926 persons.

In 1971 only 0,3 % of the Austrian population were registered officially as Muslims. And even in 1991, only 158.776 Muslims were counted in the same survey (2 % of the population). The duplication of Muslims in Austria within 10 years has been explained by a growing willingness of Muslims to speak publicly about their religion, in particular of those from Turkey.

96.052 of Muslims in Austria possessed the Austrian citizenship. The number of naturalization has increased significantly, especially of Turks and Bosnians. In 1991, 11.137 naturalizations were counted (1.801 of them Turks). In 2000, 24.645 new Muslim Austrian citizens (6.732 had formerly possessed Turkish citizenship).

In terms of ethnicity, the biggest group is of Turkish descent (134.210 Turks), followed by Bosnians (96.210 persons). During the last decades, Arabs (10.123 persons) became a considerable part of the Muslim population in Austria too, especially from Egypt. Approximately 6460 mostly secular Muslims in Austria have Iranian origins. Recently furthermore, experts observed a rise in conversion to Islam in Austria too.

Islam in Austria has a long history, dating back to 1525 when the Ottoman sultans tried to invade the Austrian empire. Although these attempts failed, Islam influenced Austrian culture significantly, and numerous Austrians converted to Islam. In modern history, immigration to the Austria, especially from Turkey and Eastern European countries, increased after the 1878 Berlin conference, which assimilated Islamic populations into the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, and the new arrivals were welcomed by the authorities, which gave them a maximum of religious freedom. After the Second World War, new waves of Muslim immigrants arrived in Austria. First, laborers helped to reconstruct the country. After 1964, "guest workers" came in particular from Turkey, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, as well as, though less, from Arab countries and Pakistan. Also matriculations of students from Muslim countries increased at Austrian universities. During the 1970s then, immigration increased as a result of the economic boom. The last wave of Muslim immigrants arrived in the early 1990s from Yugoslavia.

In terms of regions, the western federal state Vorarlberg with its industrial towns has the highest share of Muslims in Austria (8.36 %), according to the 2001 survey. [3] Vorarlberg (8, 4%, 29.334 persons) is followed by Vienna with 7.82 % (121.149 persons). The central state Salzburg (4, 5%, 23.137 persons), Upper Austria (4, 0 %, 55.581 persons), Tyrol (4, 0%, 27.117 persons) and Lower Austria (3.2 %, 48.730 persons) follow with the share of Muslims around the average. Fewer Muslims, i.e. numbers are below the national average, live in Southern and Eastern states of Styria (1, 6%, 19.007 persons), Carinthia (2, 0%, 10.940 persons) and Burgenland (1.4 %; 3993 persons).

Federal State	Muslim Population	Share of the Population	District with the Highest Share	Population	General Population Share		
Vorarlberg	29,334	8.36	Dornbirn	8,969	11.82		
Wien	121,149	7.82	XV. Bezirk (Rudolfshaus-Fünfhaus)	9,534	14.69		

Salzburg	23 137	4.40	Salzburg (Stadt)	9 735	6,82		
Österreich	338 988	4.22	-	-	-		
Oberösterreich	55 581	4.04	Wels (Stadt)	5 785	10.20		
Tirol	27 117	4,03	Innsbruck (Stadt)	6 108	5.39		
Niederösterreich	48 730	3,15	St. Pölten (Stadt)	3 681	7.49		
Kärnten	10 940	1,96	Villach (Stadt)	1 973	3.43		
Steiermark	19,007	1.61	Graz (Stadt)	9,023	3.99		
Burgenland	3,994	1.44	Mattersberg	1,141	- [4]		

State and Church and Recent Legislation on Islam and Immigration

The legal status of Muslims in Austria is unique in Europe. [5] For many years, as the center of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Austria closely related with Islamic populations in the Balkans. With this history, Austria's relations with Islam as a religion have been relatively unproblematic compared to other European countries. A law of 1867 guaranteed respect for all religions throughout the empire, giving Muslims the right to establish mosques and practice their religion. Muslims also occupy good positions within the Austrian civil service, and the first mosque was already built in Vienna in 1887 with the government's assistance to service Muslims enlisted in the Austrian army.

Generally, the Austrian government provides religious freedom for all communities. Although Roman Catholicism is preponderant among the population, the state is generally secular. Religious organizations are established by the 1874 Law on Recognition of Churches. The law gave Muslims various rights and privileges, including the right to organize and manage their community affairs independently through municipal councils and to establish Islamic endowment funds. In 1919, these rights and privileges were enhanced by the signing of the Saint-Germain agreement, in which the Austrian government pledged its protection for minorities and affirmed the right of each citizen to assume important national posts regardless of religion or ethnic origin. This was lately enhanced by the 1998 Law on the Status of Religious Confessional Communities. Organizations are categorized as religious societies, religious confessional communities, and associations with distinct legal status. Classification as a religious society allows participation in the state-run contribution system, the provision of religious instruction in public schools and financing for private schools.

Islam in particular was recognized constitutionally as a religion, after the parliamentary treatment in the Upper Chamber and Lower House, since 1912. The Islam Law, issued by Emperor Franz Joseph I, concerned the acknowledgment of Islam's followers within the Austrian half of the empire. In 1979, this Islam Law of 1912 was the basis for the recognition of Islam as a corporation of public law, in which also the proclamation of a Constitution of the Islamic Religious Body and the establishment of the first Viennese Islamic Religion Community was, announced ("Anerkennungsgesetz"; "Act of Recognition"). According to Article 1 of the Constitution all Muslims in Austria belong to the Religious Body: In Austria the Islamic Religious Body is acknowledged as corporation under public law since 1979. About 200 teachers give Islamic religious education at public schools according to the nationally approved curricula. [6]

According to Article 3 of this Constitution the tasks of the Islamic Religious Body concern primarily "the keeping and care of religion among the followers of Islam". The President of the organization is elected according to its Constitution; as official interlocutor of national or church authorities he is subject to public control. By the formal acknowledgment of Islam, representatives of the Islamic Religious Body (president, deputy, religion teachers etc.) become the official persons to which authorities, politicians and journalists are able to turn. The acknowledgment as religious community

promoted religious education.

Finally, in 1989, the Austrian government amended the 'Law of Islam' to recognise all the Islamic theological schools in addition to the Hanafi School, which was covered by previous legislation. [7] This led to increased rights and privileges for Austria's Muslims. Women, for instance, are permitted to wear the veil at work and in public ceremonies, students in public institutions too were permitted to veil, and Muslims gained the right to study Islam in state schools and in the army. Austria's Muslim soldiers also gained the right to take paid vacations for the Islamic holidays of Eid Al-Fitr, which marks the end of the fasting month of Ramadan, and Eid Al-Adha.

Muslim Organizations

Muslims in Austria are officially represented by the Islamic Faith Community (Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft) of Austria (IGGIÖ), which was established in 1912. [8] The organization manages most relations with the state, including Islamic instruction, chaplaincy, etc. Regional committees select the organization's leadership. The IGGIÖ is also allowed to collect "church tax" but so it has not exercised this privilege yet. After originating the first European Imam Conference in June 2003, the IGGIÖ organized its first Austrian Imam Conference in April 2005, which contained Standpoints and resolutions concerning "Islam in Austria".

However, after the national acknowledgment of Islam as corporation under public law, various additional associations were created. These organizations range between local private clubs and supra-regional organizations. Sometimes a group operates several mosques, which can be accommodated in several flats, and registered as "associations". While in the 1990s more than 80 Mosque Communities or Islamic Associations existed in Austria, more than 200 Mosque Communities for the about 340.000 Muslims were counted after the turn of the century. Nevertheless, exact member numbers of these organizations are difficult to get since the group of sympathizers expresses its affiliation usually not by membership dues, but by the Islamic alms-tax (Zakat). The organizations generally have a prayer room, a leisure club, and a shop.

A key organization is the Islamic Centre in Vienna that was founded in 1977 and the Islamic Religious Authority, founded in 1979, which functions as the religious and spiritual representative of Muslims in the country, in the same way as Austria's key Christian and Jewish bodies do for their communities.

Apart from the official Islamic Religious Body, some groups or individuals act independently of the umbrella organization, such as *Muhammad Abu Bakr Müller*, an Austrian who converted to Islam, who represents a very radical interpretation of Islam. [9]

The "Muslim Youth Austria" for instance, that launched at the end of the nineties an Islamic youth organization throughout Austria, and is close to the IGGIÖ, defines itself as Islamic, independent, multi-ethnic, constitutional and German-speaking, places the work "from and for young people" into the centre of its activity. [10]

The first Islamic Center in Austria was built in 1968. Its Trustee Council was formed under the chairmanship of Hassan Al-Tuhamiy, Egypt's ambassador to Austria at the time, who later became secretary-general of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). The Center was inaugurated in November 1977 and has been playing an important role in religious teaching the Muslims in Austria. [11]

Other Islamic education institutions include the Islamic Academy in Vienna, founded in 1998, and the Al-Azhar Institution in Vienna, founded in 2000.

There are various Islamic associations sponsored by different Muslim countries. [12] However, the activities of non-state unions are confined to religious and educational activities, and their institutional structures do not include any mechanisms for political action. Among them several Turkish organizations, united in the "Federation of Turkish-Islamic Associations" that is controlled by the Directorate for Religious Affairs. Other Turkish-Muslim groups, such as the Süleymanç1s and Milli Görü_, can be considered as branches of the pan-European organization Milli Görü_ centered in Germany. The Alevis, a major group among the Turks, do not take part in the activities of the Islamische *Glaubensgemeinschaft* in general.

In terms of ethnicity, Turkish associations are numerous in particular in Vienna, Tirol, Upper Austria and Vorarlberg. The Turkish association of the AMGT ("European National View Organization"), i.e. Milli Görü_ ("National View") is also independent and important in Austria. In contrast to the Islamic Community Milli Görü_ (IGMG) in Germany, the Austrian group is not a registered association, but an alliance of mosques. The umbrella organization of this alliance is the 1988 created "Islamic Federation" that has a coordination function. The ideology of the Milli Görü_ mosques is relatively strict, promoting the Islamization of all areas of life. Apart from a "modernization and democratization of the Islamic Movement" and an "Islamizing of modernity and democracy" as ideological objectives, Milli Görü_ Associations of Austria concentrate in their practical work mainly on the social integration of Muslims.

Islamic Education

Since in Austria the religious education at public schools is a right of recognized churches and religious communities, also the Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich (IGGIÖ) makes use of this right, and established an Islamic instruction. The government provides funding for instruction in all state-recognized religions at public schools, and instruction in Islam has been offered at public schools since 1983. Recent counts had some 37,000 children participate in such classes at 2,700 schools across the country, taught by 350 teachers and the number continues to rise. [13] Muslim Pupils at public schools do not have to attend lessons on Muslim holidays.

The IGGIÖ is entitled to give lessons of religious education in state schools. It organizes teachers and is in charge of the content of the instruction, which is held in German. According to the organization, the purpose of the instruction is to improve students' knowledge of Islam and to encourage them to reflect upon and discuss issues related to religious identity and living as a Muslim in Austria.

In the 1980s, about fifty teachers gave Islamic religious education (about half of them taught in Vienna). Today, there are about 200 lady teachers. In the first years the lacking knowledge of the German language as well as the educational approach of the assigned teachers gave often cause for criticism on the part of parents, of the teaching staff and of the supervisory school authorities - a situation which was quite unsatisfactory for the IGGIÖ. [14]

Eventually, the IGGIÖ decided to install after the model of the religion-educational academies already existing an own teachers' training college: the private Islamic Religion-Educational Academy. Since 1999, a private Islamic Religious Academy has been training religious teachers of Islam in Vienna. The task of the academy is clearly defined: it serves "a scientifically founded and practice-oriented vocational training on high school level in educational and social relations fields." The academy offers

a three-year program in cooperation with a public pedagogical college. In a newspaper article published in September 2004, the president of an umbrella organization for Turkish associations in Austria claimed that his organization has received numerous complaints from parents about the instruction in Islam at public schools. According to him, these complaints suggest that some teachers of Islam are seeking to spread inflammatory ideas and that this problem is compounded by the fact that the teachers generally are poorly trained. The president of IGGIÖ rejected the allegations as unfounded and defamatory, although he admitted that he, in his role as educational inspector, is not able to personally oversee all Islamic classes organized in the country. In a separate statement, IGGIÖ emphasized that it greatly appreciates the way instruction in Islam is organized in Austria and that it takes its responsibility in this respect seriously. The organization said that it is engaged in continuing efforts to ensure and improve the quality of instruction. Among recent measures taken are the establishment of the Islamic Religious Academy and the appointment of a commission to develop a new curriculum for instruction in Islam, which will offer teachers "practical and detailed guidance."

The Islamic religion lady teachers act according to a uniform curriculum, and teach in German language. The religious education at public schools, which is based on a uniform nationally approved curriculum, is the guarantee for the state that Islamic religious education is not given outside the school in a way which dodges the national educational system. In Austria there are - due to the national religious education - at least no such problems as with the so-called Koran schools in Germany and Switzerland. [15] Only two of the 1,552 private schools, recognized in 2005-06 by the government as running in compliance with the Private School Law, are Islamic schools. [16]

Education

The number of well-educated Muslims in Austria rises. This is also due to the fact that the self-confidence of the Austrian Muslims has quite changed in the past years. In the younger generation the proportional part of persons with qualified graduations rose, and academic elite came into being. But still, this group remains a minority yet among the Muslims living in Austria. [17]

In terms of numbers, no relevant data exists. The OECD collects data on education from various statistical agencies within the country, the majority of which comes from census data from the year 2000. The OECD classifies educational achievement using the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED): ISCED 0/1/2: Less than upper secondary; ISCED 3/4: Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary; ISCED 5A: "Academic" tertiary; ISCED 5B: "Vocational" tertiary; ISCED 6: Advanced research programs. 0-2 is considered low, 3-4 as medium and 5 and above are considered high. This data is not reported by religion, but does have country of origin as reported by the respondent. It is thus possible to construct an approximate picture of the educational achievement of the population in the country with ancestry from predominately Muslim countries. One significant problem is that some countries, such as India and Nigeria have large Muslim populations but the immigrant population cannot be readily classified as predominately Muslim or non-Muslim. As such, the educational data is split by predominately Muslim origin, predominately non-Muslim origin, and a separate category for those whom classification would not seem justified. Proportions are for all reported data, individuals with no reported ancestry or education are excluded.

	High	Medium	Low
Muslim	6%	30 %	64%
Non-Muslim	11%	55 %	34%
Indeterminate	8%	32 %	60%

Labor Market

Although, there are no readily available statistics for Muslim unemployment in Austria, the unemployment rate is more than 1.5 times as high for the foreign-born, of which a substantial proportion are Muslim.

In particular women, dressed according to Islamic dress code, have problems in participating in the labor market in Austria. [18] Regularly, employers announce that they are unable to employ women in Islamic dresses, regarding a lack of tolerance on the side of their customers and business partners.

Housing

Spatial segregation of Austrian Muslims is first and foremost not a religious but a social (class) problem. In addition, Austria's Muslims are often segregated according to specific theological and ethnic differences. The Turks, for instance often live in a closed community with their own mosques and social life. [19]

Nevertheless, ghettosation is not a major problem for the Austrian Muslim community. For years, the Austrian government has acted to prevent spatial segregation. Urban planners are well-aware of the negative consequences which are caused by isolation into a kind of parallel society, are seen by the Muslims in Austria, and therefore segregation models are rejected. Today, members of a growing Muslim middle class live in non-Muslims neighborhoods.

Islamic Practice

There has not been significant controversy at the legal level over the Islamic headscarf in Austria. Halal slaughter was restricted by state governments until 1998, at which point a federal court mandated that the practice was protected by the guarantee of freedom of religion in Austria. (IHF)

Muslims in Austria differ however not only by their country of origin and denomination, but pretty substantially also by kind and strength of their religiosity. Altogether, 150 prayer rooms exist in Austria today; 60 Mosques in Vienna. These spaces of religious practice have a significant social role as well. Often, prayer rooms are based in "backyards" and old houses and are therefore not visible in public. In recent years however, Muslims have begun to move out of these hidden places. A prominent example is the construction of a Mosque cultural centre in Vienna's Pelzgasse, powered by the Turkish Union.

Recently, a 34,000 sq km Islamic cemetery has also been built in Vienna. [20]

Political Participation and Muslims in Legislatures

For a long time it did not appear that any Muslims had been elected to the national or European legislatures. There were only very few numbers of Muslims active in regional parliaments throughout the main three parties (Social Democrats, Conservatives, Green Party). Ten years ago, it was not unusual that imams reflected in their Friday prayers about the question whether or not Muslims should participate in Austrian elections. This has changed. Recently, imams called their communities to use their right to vote as Austrian citizens.

The Islamic community thus made efforts to play a role in the country's political life, and several Islamic figures qualified themselves to assume distinguished positions inside parties and governmental bodies. A major turning point was the election of the Vienna municipal parliament in 2001. [21] One of the most famous Muslims politicians in Austria is Amr Al-Rawi, a Muslim parliament member for the Social Democrat Party of Austria (SPÖ). Al-Rawi was born in Iraq and searched his voters consciously in Mosques and Islamic community centers. [22] A major problem, Al-Rawi faced when running for parliament was that he had to explain many of his potential voters, who were to elect for the first time in their lives, why and how they could support him directly. Al-Rawi gained 2558 votes in Vienna (3rd position on the list), and entered the municipal parliament in 2002. In the following national parliamentary elections, he received 3151 votes. This time, however, also other parties had recognized the potential of Muslim voters and tried to campaign in Mosques and Muslim centers as well. This time however, the conservatives (Österreichische Volkspartei (ÖVP)) had a Muslim candidate, Sirvan Ekici, too. She fought for the right of Muslims not to work on Islamic holidays, such as Eid Al-Fitr or Eid Al-Adha. [23] And also the right-wing FPÖ listed a candidate, who was born in Egypt, on one of the backmost positions of its list. The Green party had already had Muslim candidates, although they didn't emphasize very much their religious beliefs.

Although Austria's Muslims reached most of their political aims, such as Islamic holidays, one issue that has yet to be resolved with the government is related to a law that allows hospitals and medical centers to take human organs from the recently deceased without the permission of their families, provided the deceased is not carrying documentation expressly forbidding this. This is a problem for the majority of the Muslims. To counter such campaigns, they, in collaboration with various political parties and authorities, organized a campaign to underscore the tolerance of Islam and its openness to other religions and cultures. During the campaign, various political leaders hailed the honorable role of Muslims in Austrian life.

In other efforts to promote integration and understanding, the Communist Party held an iftar feast in Ramadan 2002 in which the party leader highlighted the importance of Muslims' participation in elections and noted their tangible role in Austrian life in general. Altogether, the Austrian People's Party held three iftar banquets in Ramadan 2003 for the Turkish Muslim community.

Radicalism, Security and Anti Terrorism Issues

In May 2004, a new law substantially restricted asylum rights by limiting appeals and nations of origin. The law was immediately challenged in court and is currently under review. [24]

Austrians have fears of Islamic terrorists or Islamic fundamentalists, among other things because there is a material basis for them in attempts and acts of terrorism. This is not ignored by the Muslims who live in Austria. Following the events of 11 September 2001, Austrian officials expressed their rejection of all forms of terrorism like their counterparts around the world but they refused to link the phenomenon with Islam. The Austrian foreign minister Benita Ferrero-Waldner underscored that Islam is a religion of tolerance and peace and that it has nothing to do with terrorism. This stance runs in accordance with the broad lines of the Austrian policy of consolidating dialogue between religions with the aim of increasing comprehension and rapprochement.

As in other European countries, there have been concerns that foreign imams are not well-integrated, speak little German, and may be spreading ideas that are hateful and violent. The IGGIÖ monitors mosques and professes the willingness to intervene, which they say has happened "once or twice" in the past decade. The Ministry of Interior also plays a similar role in monitoring potentially violent

speech. [25]

In October 2007, Austrian authorities arrested two Bosnian suspects who attempted bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Vienna. [26] They were arrested Monday after trying to enter the embassy with a backpack containing explosives and nails. The Bosnian was arrested after his bag set off a metal detector and the man fled on foot, authorities said. The suspect was described only as a 42-year-old native of Bosnia-Herzegovina who now lives in the province of Lower Austria, which encircles most of the capital. Police said they made the arrest a short distance from the embassy in a neighborhood where security is tight. The motive for the attack was not immediately clear. Vienna police spokeswoman Michaela Raz said explosives experts were examining the contents of the backpack. Guenther Ahmed Rusznak, a spokesman for Vienna's Islamic community, issued a statement late Monday condemning the attempted bombing and rejecting radical Islam.

In 2008 an Austrian court has sentenced a young Muslim couple to prison for posting a video on the Internet calling for terrorist attacks in Austria and Germany. [27] The defendants' lawyer disputed their alleged ties to al Qaeda. A 21-year-old Austrian woman on Wednesday, March 12, was sentenced to 22 months in prison and her 22-year-old husband to four years for belonging to a terrorist organization, trying to blackmail the Austrian government and inciting a crime. It was Austria's first case of "home-grown" terrorist activity. The sentences were below the maximum of 10 years. The Egyptian-born man, Mohamed M., was found guilty on charges of being involved in a March 2007 video that threatened to target Austria and Germany with terrorist attacks if they did not immediately withdraw their troops from Afghanistan. "In standing by the United States ... you have provoked those whom you call terrorists to target you," said the voice on the film as German and Austrian flag appeared against a burning background.

Bias and Discrimination

In Austria, threatening and offensive comments against Muslims have become more common. [28] In recent years, the number of anti-Muslim campaigns organized by right-wing extremists and neo-Nazis increased.

Experts see the 1999 national elections as a turning point when the right-wing FPÖ started a populist "foreigner campaign" („Ausländerwahlkampf"). [29] The party instrumentalized subtle popular fears of Islam and promoted slogans like "Stop Foreign Infiltration" ("Stop der Überfremdung"). Critics accused the FPÖ of introducing Islamophobia into the accepted political discourse and to scare foreigners in Austria. [30] The campaign caused a huge debate, ranging from issues of anti-Semitism to racism, but not considering explicitly Islamophobia. Since 1999 several campaigns have been organized through mass media and intellectual and cultural forums to distort the image of Islam, and there have also been attacks against Islamic figures and institutions. The last election campaign for the National Assembly was again lead at the expense of the image of Austrian Muslims. "Home not Islam" (Daham statt Islam) and other Anti-Muslim slogans predominated the campaign of the FPÖ.

In 2008, the Graz-based FPÖ activist, Susanne Winter, denounced Islam's prophet and Muslim men in general as "child molesters". [31] Winter had accepted police protection following her remarks at the weekend, said a spokesman for the interior ministry, Rudolph Gollia. After her speech, a video threat of Islamists appeared on YouTube. The video showed pictures of the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001, and warned: "Look, Susanne, something like this could happen to your country and you are responsible." "It was a mistake for you to take on ... Allah's warriors," the video said in German. "We, the Muslims, are those warriors with whom you now have a

problem."

In April 2000, Vienna's Muslims, in collaboration with various political parties and authorities, organized a campaign to counter the hostile attacks launched by the FPÖ against them. In general, as Austria's Muslims gradually increased their role in political life they became more important for the leaders of the big political parties, who made greater efforts to win their political support and votes. [32]

Muslims face different sorts of concrete discrimination in everyday life too. Thus, women with headscarves have had difficulties finding jobs, [33] and social acceptance of the headscarf has decreased in recent years. [34] This has occurred to the degree that employment offices have sometimes considered the headscarf as a disability in a job search.

Three reports about racism in Austria, conducted in 1999, 2001 and 2002, by the ZARA organization, contain much information about Muslim Austrians. [35] When Paul Zulehner and Hermann Denz asked Austrians „Whom do you not want to have as a neighbor?" For a study in 2001 study, 24,7 % of the Austrian population answered „Muslims"; only "Gypsies" were less popular (38, 5 %). The numbers increased significantly since the previous report of 1999. In 1999, three years earlier (before 9/11 though), 9,3 % less of the asked Austrians had had any problems with having Muslim neighbors.

Also regarding FPÖ campaigns, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance has criticized the tone of Austrian politics as anti-immigrant sentiment has become more powerful over the last few years. [36] An EU report about changes in the Austrian's attitude towards foreigners after 9/11, draws a positive conclusion, however. Altogether, the report says, very few violent attacks against foreigners occurred in recent years and there is a positive attitude for dialogue. [37]

Finally, the equal opportunities directive of the EU that had to be adopted by 19 July 2003 became the basis of an anti-discrimination law (Anti-Diskriminierungsgesetz) that will certainly influence anti-Muslim behavior on the labor market. [38] In the future, employers have to prove that they are not discriminating Muslims - until today, it was the employee who had to prove that he/she was discriminated by the employer.

Media Coverage and Public Perception of Islam

After 9/11, reports about "radical Islam" (among other things: 11 September 2001; Terrorist attacks in Madrid in the year 2004 and in London in the year 2005; Murder of the film producer van Gogh; Controversy on the "Mohammed caricatures", Fitna-Film Controversy) increased significantly.

Routinely in the Austrian public and media critical questions about "Austrian Islam" is asked whenever issues of "radical Islam" are debated. Thus each report on Islamic extremism and on questions about the Islam in the West has the undertone: How does it actually look with "our" Muslims in Austria? And are "they perhaps also as ready for violence as the Muslims in the media"? Thus, if acts of terrorism happen, also representatives of the Islamic Religious Body are asked for an "official" statement. Beate Winkler, director of the in Vienna "European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia" (EUMC), even observed that the events of the last years created "an atmosphere in which Muslims must constantly defend themselves and explain that they were not terrorists". [39]

Apart from (though often linked to) media reports and public debates on Islamism, are Mosque controversies. The question of mosque building or of the height of minarets led in the past years

repeatedly to discussions. For example in the year 2001 a mosque in the Traun city centre was pulled down on grounds of an official decision. [40] The negative answer read among other things: "The established washing facility (three taps for cold water, which were duly attached to the public water mains and to the public sewage channel) can change the sanitary and hygienic conditions in the place". [41] Local politicians used the controversies to spread hatred against Islam and Muslims in general. In Telfs in Tirol the tempers ran high by the building of a planned minaret in November 2005. The building of the tower was approved meanwhile in first instance. Building projects of mosques with dome and minaret in the classical style could not be carried out for instance in Graz and Salzburg due to citizens' initiatives or to high plot prices so far. Several mosque controversies are still going on. In 2008, the provincial government of Carinthia passed a law effectively banning the construction of mosques or minarets. [42] The controversial legislation, passed with the votes of the Conservative People's party and the right-wing Alliance for Austria's Future was a sign against the "advancement of Islam", provincial governor Jörg Haider said. The legislation links the construction of mosques with rules concerning the overall look and harmony of towns and villages, thereby aiming at preventing their construction. While Haider, a former leader of the right-wing Freedom Party that in its heyday enjoyed the support of up to 27 percent of Austria's voters with its anti-immigration rhetoric, praised the new rules as a "guidepost" for Europe, the province's Social Democrats slammed the measure as a populist farce.

Other common themes in the media include issue of ritual slaughter of animals, Islamic cemeteries, and problems in school and gym instruction. Here, conflicts arise with cook instruction, if the Muslim children may not eat the food, which they should prepare after the Austrian curriculum, or with swimming instruction, because girls may not be in the same bath as boys. Problems occur also during outdoors projects and school meetings, because a girl may not pass the night without his parents outside. Another central media debate concerns the carrying of religiously motivated clothes. Since then head cloth debates, and associated therewith discussions about the integration of Muslims flared up time and again, either in consequence of similar debates in other European countries or because of a terrorist attack or news about Islamic extremism. Eventually, general debates on migration policy often reflect issues related to the integration of Muslims.

Political Discourse and Intercultural Dialogue

Media debates on Islamic slaughtering, mosques, and headscarves reflect the political and intercultural dialogue. On the right-wing of the political spectrum, the FPÖ and the populist politician Jörg Haider tried repeatedly to introduce a number of anti-Muslim comments, often couched as attempts to protect traditional Christian society, such as: "The increasing fundamentalism of radical Islam which is penetrating [Europe], is threatening the consensus of values which is in danger of getting lost." [43]

Liberal and left-wing parties as well as Muslim organizations tried to enhance better understanding and to fight discrimination against Muslims, confronting a negative image in the political discourse, by organizing a number of intercultural dialogues. Recently the president initiated a inter-religious dialogue in the Vienna Hofburg where representatives of Jews, Muslims and the Christian confessions met. Another important event was the City-Experts-Talk ("StadtexpertInnenengespräch") in the Vienna city hall that was initiated by the Greens. [44] On this occasion, the director of the Vienna public transport organization assured Muslim women to wear a headscarf together with their uniform and the appropriate hat when working in public transport in Vienna.

On 24 April 2005 160 in Austria living directors of public prayer, among them also about 25 women,

met in Vienna. As Locating Islam in Austria a detailed statement passed, in which is said among other things: 1) the participants of the conference emphasize their sticking to constitutional principles in the Republic of Austria, enclosed in it and particularly stressed the equality of all citizens before the law, pluralism, democratic parliaments and rule of law. 2) The acknowledgment status of Islam in Austria and the practical advantage associated with it: the right to free and public worship, the internal autonomy of the Islamic Religious Body, the religious education in schools, and the consideration of religion e.g. in the federal army.

Austria's contribution to the dialogue of religions also goes beyond national borders. In June 2003 in Graz a meeting of the "Directors of Islamic Centers and Imams in Europe" took place. The development of an authentic Islam in Europe, which is but independent of the Arab world, was topic of the three-day-long conference. At the end the "Declaration of Graz" was adopted. Therein is said among other things: "The Islamic message is built on moderation. From this the clear refusal results to any form of fanaticism, extremism, fatalism. Muslims must tell of their loyalty toward constitution and law also in its secular structure."

Finally, Muslim communities started organizing "Open Mosque Days". On 8 April 2000, an Open day was launched at the Islam Centre (Islamisches Zentrum) in Vienna and attracted more than 1000 visitors. Meanwhile, smaller communities have started organizing similar events.

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