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Published by the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) in Brussels, in May 2016, with the support of the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the European Union, the Open Society Foundations, the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and the ENAR Foundation.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report explores the situation of Islamophobia in Italy, focusing on how it affects Muslim women in the field of employment, as well as examining issues of racist violence and hate speech. The report provides an overview of the available data, taken from the existing literature, as well as insights of Muslim women from different backgrounds, public officials, activists and civil society organisations professionals, working to combat discrimination on different grounds.

The research encountered a major problem: the lack of disaggregated data on religion. Italian law forbids the processing of sensitive personal data such as religion, ethnicity and sexual orientation without authorisation of Italian Data Protection Authority. Available data on religion affiliation of the population living in Italy is an approximate estimation generally based on a very limited sample or on proxy indicators such as religious practices or nationality – assuming that the religious background of the individual corresponds with the prevalent religion in the country of their nationality. While there are clear limitations to this method, using nationality as a proxy indicator for religion was the only way to compile an overview of the labour inequalities faced by Muslim women. To compound this problem, many surveys do not present disaggregated data by nationality and gender, further restricting the possibility of providing a detailed overview. With some very partial exceptions, beyond academia, there are no surveys or studies specifically focusing on Muslim women, or Muslims in general. Most of the existing research on discrimination does not have a specific focus on Muslim women.

About 1.7 million non-Italian Muslim citizens are estimated to live in Italy. They account for 2.8% of the total Italian population and 33.1% of the total number of foreigners. This estimation has some limits, as it does not include Muslims with Italian citizenship (data not available), but most of the Muslims living in Italy are still first-generation immigrants, so when talking about the Muslim community in Italy, immigration cannot be left out of consideration. The largest Muslim group comes from Morocco (525,000, of which 44.1% are women), followed by Albania (503,000 – 47.8% women), Egypt (135,000 – 29.5% women), Bangladesh (128,000 – 28.4% women), Tunisia (120,000 – 36.5% women), Pakistan (106,000 – 32.3% women) and Senegal (98,000 – 26.5% women). As these numbers show, immigration from Muslim countries is predominantly male.

**Anti-Muslim prejudice** is rife in Italian society and Muslims continue to be stigmatised in political discourse and the policy proposals of mainstream right wing parties, especially the Northern League. Politicians and elected officials both at local and national levels target Muslims, among others, by making hostile, if not downright aggressive, remarks about them. The discourse around women always relates to their role in Muslim religion and communities. In this sense, the headscarf and the full-face veil play a central role, seen by the majority as a symbol of an oppressive and backward patriarchal culture. Women were at the centre of the political debate only when a bill to ban the full-face veil was proposed (but never transposed into law) to the parliament in 2011. Several councils in Northern Italy have unlawfully implemented ordinances to prohibit the wearing of the burqa and niqab, but these have always been invalidated as it is not within the powers of a local administration. Mainstream media are generally understood to be the main vehicle of prejudices against the Muslim community. Most large media outlets only refer to the Muslim population when reporting terrorist attacks and stories of abusive husbands or fathers. Muslims' religion and cultures are often described in editorials as incompatible with so-called 'Italian values'. With such a negative representation in the media, it is not surprising that 63% of Italians have an unfavourable view of Muslims who live in their country. The visibility of the Islamic faith often plays a pivotal role in generating

discriminatory behaviours. The headscarf provokes an immediate identification with Islam and therefore with the numerous prejudices associated with Muslim women.

National statistics on immigrant participation in the **labour market** show that the lowest employment rates are found among women whose countries of origin have a Muslim majority. Pakistani women fall behind everyone with a 2.2% employment rate, followed by 8.9% of Egyptians, 10% of Bangladeshis, 16.4% of Tunisians, and 21.4% of Moroccans. The rate of inactivity (i.e. those who do not work nor are looking for a job) follows the same pattern. Pakistani, Egyptian, Bangladeshi and Albanian women in Italy have the lowest participation rates in individual or entrepreneurial business. To explain these low percentages of labour participation for Muslim women, we have to take into consideration different factors and understand that the current situation is determined by a mix of **disadvantages and discrimination on different grounds** - the high level of gender inequality in Italy, patterns of migration, a stronger acceptance (for the first-generation immigrant women) of the traditional roles of men and women within the family, in addition to issues of language and isolation which are common to many immigrants. The Italian labour market is also particularly limiting towards immigrants, as foreign-born workers are mainly recruited for low-skilled jobs with low salaries and little possibility of long term careers (often in the underground market). On top of this, more straightforward discriminatory practices occur, such as the prohibition of the headscarf in the workplace. If first-generation migrant women were 'only' marginally affected by discrimination in employment (partially because of lower numbers of women who actively looked for a job, as interviews showed, partially because their qualifications were not recognised, etc.) the problem of discrimination in employment is becoming manifest now, with the children of immigrants (the so called 'second generations').

The headscarf constitutes a serious obstacle in the phase of access to employment, as employers too often refuse to hire women who wear it. In absence of the headscarf, the discrimination on the ground of religion usually fails to materialise, but other grounds, such as ethnicity, might remain. Discrimination is very rarely caused by one single reason. On the contrary, discrimination in employment takes the form of multiple discrimination on the grounds of gender, religion, ethnicity, class, nationality, and length of stay in the new country. Despite this, the concept of multiple discrimination remains mainly unexplored and unacknowledged in contemporary Italy. The current legal framework to prevent discrimination in employment is a disorganised overlap of different laws and legislative decrees. The key act is the legislative decree 216/2003, which implements the EU Employment Equality Directive 2000/78/EC forbidding discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief, age, disability and sexual orientation. Case law has played a very marginal role so far.

It is hardly possible to understand the real dimension of **racial and religious hatred** in Italy, let alone Islamophobia, because of a complete lack of available data on hate crimes. Italy only partially collects hate crime data, and makes it available to the public only upon request. This process has, however, strong limitations. Italian law forbids the processing of personal sensitive data, therefore crime reports by police do not register victims' ethnicity and religion, thus hindering the possibility of disaggregating statistics of the Ministry of Interior database and law enforcement authorities by specific vulnerable groups. This bias motive, when registered by the public prosecutor, is not classified as an indicator in the police database, making it very difficult to disaggregate data by anti-Muslim bias, and not even by the general categories of religion or ethnicity. Interviews revealed that episodes of intolerance against Muslim women happen with a high frequency (on average once or more times a week for the same person). In most cases, they entail derogatory remarks or nasty looks in public places such as public transport. More serious cases include attempts to take off the headscarf, ending up in fights, and acts of vandalism against buildings.

Italian criminal law contains an important and positive provision that recognises aggravating circumstances for crimes with a racist bias. However, this legislative tool is not meeting its objectives. Its weak effectiveness is due, firstly, to the reluctance of victims to report racist offences and to press charges against offenders; secondly, to the police's inclination to record incidents as ordinary offences, even when there is a clear racist bias; thirdly, to the fact that law enforcement agents are sometimes themselves perpetrators of racist violence; and finally, to the reluctance of courts to acknowledge the aggravating circumstance. An alarming level of under-reporting, not only to police but also to anti-discrimination centres, emerged from the research. Reasons behind under-reporting include: disbelief in the possibility of real change; lack of information on rights and tools to act against discrimination; discouragement when faced with the perceived complexity of trials; small dimension of incidents; difficulty in providing proof of discrimination; lack of trust in police forces and unwillingness to expose themselves (particularly if the person does not have a residence permit).

Urgent action is needed from all stakeholders. Main recommendations, especially to government and policy makers, are:

### **To the Italian institutions**

- Sign the bilateral agreement (*intesa*)<sup>1</sup> with the representatives of Islam.
- Implementation, by public research institutes such as National Institute of Statistics (Istat), of nationwide research and analysis on the Muslim population in Italy.
- Implementation, by the Ministry of Equal Opportunities – and the Italian Office against Racial Discrimination (UNAR) currently operating under its responsibility – nationwide research and analysis on a quantitative and qualitative basis to identify the problems and specific needs of Muslim women.
- Recognise Islamophobia as a specific form of discrimination to be addressed.
- While safeguarding and ensuring privacy, allow the collection, under informed consent and self-identification, of personal data such as ethnicity and religion with the aim of improving the knowledge of the population composition; recognising the dimension of discrimination and hate crimes; and being able to address the issue accordingly.
- Publication, by the Ministry of Interior, of disaggregated hate crime data on a regular basis.
- Strengthen the efforts to fight under-reporting by promoting existing initiatives (such as UNAR's call centre and local contact point working in co-ordination with the central level) and by funding organisations to provide services for residents to report any form of anti-Muslim abuse.
- Tackle religious discrimination within society going beyond inter-faith round-tables between religious leaderships and involving a broader spectrum of civil society actors..
- Mainstream gender in religious-related policies and issues and vice versa.
- Better promote current initiatives, by local non-profit associations or councils to foster labour integration of vulnerable groups actively including Muslim women.
- Actively include Muslim women in initiatives for labour market integration.
- Apply disciplinary sanctions to public officials who express hate speech or incite violence and prosecute if they go beyond the criminal liability threshold.
- Foster cross-sectorial cooperation among institutions.
- Implement reforms to improve access to citizenship for immigrants and their children.

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<sup>1</sup> The relationships of different religious confessions (with the exception of the Catholic Church) with the Italian State are regulated by law on the basis of agreements with their representation.

- Improve the non-discrimination clauses entailed in the legislation implementing the EU Directives on the permit to stay for third country nationals legally residing in Italy (e.g. Directive 2003/109).
- Strengthen, unify and simplify the various provisions against racial and religious discrimination contained in various laws into a single act and enforce them fully.
- Extend the procedures provided by art. 28 of the legislative decree 150/2011 to all anti-discrimination cases, including those of art. 38 of the Code of Equal Opportunities.
- Foster cooperation between the national equality body UNAR, the *Consigliera di Parità* (Gender Equality Advisor) and the representative of GREVIO (Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence).
- Go beyond the minimum standards set by the EU anti-discrimination directives and address the lack of legislation on multiple discrimination.

#### **To civil society organisations**

- Foster cooperation among organisations targeting different groups.
- Extend their commitment to fight discrimination on specific grounds, especially religion.
- Foster initiatives to expose anti-Muslim stereotypes.

#### **Muslim associations**

- Support women's participation and the gender dimension in Muslim associations.
- Strengthen civic engagement, encouraging Muslims to engage more actively in public life.
- Systematically monitor Islamophobic incidents and discrimination in employment.
- Raise awareness within the Muslim community on rights, anti-discrimination laws and tools to report discrimination and hate crimes.
- Work with authorities, trade unions and private sector employers to raise the issue of discrimination in employment and meet the employment needs of Muslim women.

#### **Anti-racism and feminist associations**

- Ensure that religion-based discrimination is fully dealt with as a form of discrimination, as opposed to being minimised as a question pertaining to faith issues, and look at discrimination against Muslim women as a gender issue as well.
- Address specific types of discrimination with targeted initiatives that tackle specific groups, such as Muslim women, and specific discrimination, such as access to employment.

#### **To the media**

- Avoid derogatory labels and, when in doubt, refer to the Charter of Rome.
- Do not state the religion or the nationality of the people unless it is essential to understand the story.
- Separate facts from opinion.
- Provide background information and put facts in context.
- Use a broad range of sources.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**BIAS:** In the context of hate crimes, the bias is the prejudice and motivation behind an offence, when it is, for example, directed at an individual or a group because of their gender, ethnicity, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, age, national origin etc.

**BURQA:** Type of one-piece veil that covers the face and body, often leaving just a mesh screen to see through.

**DISCRIMINATION:** The treatment of one group of people less favourably than others on the basis of their 'race', nationality, ethnic or national origin or religion (grounds of discrimination). There are five types of discrimination (recognised by the EU non-discrimination directives and the Italian legislative decree): **direct discrimination** (one person is treated less favourably than another is, has been or would be treated in a comparable situation because of religion, personal beliefs, disability, age, and sexual orientation); **indirect discrimination** (an apparently neutral provision, criterion, practice, act, pact or behaviour may place some people of a determined religion, personal belief, disability, age, and sexual orientation in a situation of a particular disadvantage with regard to other people); **harassment** (unwanted conduct takes place with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity other person and of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment); **instructions to discriminate**; and **retaliation**.

**FEMINISM:** Diverse social movements advocating and strongly supporting women's rights in terms of emancipation, liberation or equality.

**FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD GENERATION:** Immigrant generations. These unfortunate terms, which to a certain extent do not acknowledge that the children of immigrant parents are Italian and not immigrant, are commonly used in Italy. First generation refers to foreign-born citizens or residents who have immigrated independently to a new country of residence after 15 years old. Second generation refers to the children of immigrant parents, born in the new country (1.5 generation if they moved in their first years of life). Third generation refers to the children of the children of immigrants.

**GENDER BASED VIOLENCE:** Violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately.<sup>2</sup>

**HATE CRIME or BIAS CRIME:** According to OSCE, hate crimes are "criminal acts where the victim is targeted because of her or his group identity (such as race, national origin, religion or another group characteristic). Hate crimes may target one or more persons or their property."

**HATE SPEECH:** There is no universally accepted definition of hate speech, but the description by the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers' Recommendation (97)/20<sup>3</sup> is generally accepted. It says that "the term 'hate speech' shall be understood as "covering all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin."

**HEADSCARF:** A general term that indicates those types of veils that cover the hair and head but leave the face uncovered.

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<sup>2</sup> Art. 3 d, Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

<sup>3</sup> Council of Europe. Recommendation n. R (97) 20 of the committee of ministers to member states on "hate speech "(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 30 October 1997 at the 607th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies).

**HIJAB:** Veil that covers the head and chest. This is the most common type of veil worn by Muslim women in the West.

**INTERSECTIONALITY:** The complex and interconnected nature of discrimination as racism, sexism, Islamophobia, homophobia, xenophobia, etc. that does not allow them to be examined separately from one another.

**INTESA:** Bilateral agreement that regulates the relationships of different religious confessions (with the exception of the Catholic Church) with the Italian State. The agreements are made and signed between the State and the confession's representation. Though these agreements vary depending on the confession, they generally regard regulation on assistance in police centres, hospitals, nursing homes and prisons, on religion teaching in schools, marriage, acknowledgement of associations with purpose of worship and places of worship, donations, religious holidays, and the financial repartition of the eight per thousand (taxpayers' compulsory donation to a religion or to the Italian State).

**ISLAMOPHOBIA or ANTI-MUSLIM PREJUDICE:** According to ENAR's definition, Islamophobia is a specific form of racism that refers to acts of violence and discrimination, as well as racist speech, fuelled by historical abuses and negative stereotyping and leading to exclusion and dehumanisation of Muslims, and all those perceived as such. Islamophobia can also be the result of structural discrimination. Islamophobia is a form of racism in the sense that it is the result of the social construction of a group as a race and to which specificities and stereotypes are attributed.<sup>4</sup>

**MIGRANTS DESCENT:** (or descendant of migrant) It mainly refers to persons or groups of persons who descend from immigrants and could be identified by certain characteristics (such as ethnicity or colour).

**MULTIPLE DISCRIMINATION:** Type of discrimination where two or more grounds of discrimination such as gender, religion, ethnicity, class, nationality, length of stay in the new country, etc. might be the basis of prejudice.

**NIQAB:** type of veil that covers the whole face leaving the area around the eyes clear.

**SOCIAL EXCLUSION:** Situation of exclusion from the society and its accepted norms and rights, which is usually interconnected with poverty and discrimination.

**STEREOTYPE:** A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of members of a group.

**VEIL:** Piece of clothing intended to cover some part of the head or face. There are various types of veils that differently cover hair, ears, neck and face.

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<sup>4</sup> ENAR.2015. Muslims in Europe, Questions and answers. <http://www.enar-eu.org/Muslims-in-Europe-Questions-and>

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# INTRODUCTION

## THE “FORGOTTEN WOMEN” PROJECT

ENAR’s project “Forgotten Women: the impact of Islamophobia on Muslim women” aims to document the disproportionate impact of Islamophobia on women and to strengthen alliances between the anti-racism and feminist movements in order to better address the intersectional discrimination affecting Muslim women or those perceived as such. Through a unique and innovative joint effort between the anti-racist (ENAR) and feminist movements, this project is a key step in a broader advocacy strategy that aims to encourage the Member States of the European Union to adopt specific national strategies to combat Islamophobia and to demonstrate the need to improve and strengthen the implementation of EU equality laws.

It has taken place between 2015 and 2016 in eight countries, chosen to get a representative picture of the situation of Muslim women in the European Union: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The aims of the project are:

- documenting the disproportionate impact of Islamophobia on Muslim women;
- providing analysis to improve the implementation of equality law in cases of discrimination against Muslim women and women perceived as such;
- countering stereotypes about Muslim women and promoting more positive messages;
- fostering partnerships and strengthening alliances between the anti-racist and feminist movements in order to better address the intersectional discrimination affecting Muslim women (gender, race, class, nationality, migration status and religion)
- disseminating the findings of the research in advocacy settings (European and national) communication activities and lawyers’ workshops.

### ***The background***

Islamophobia, as a form of racism, refers to acts of discrimination and violence which target individuals or a group on the basis of their real or perceived belonging to the Muslim population. As recent studies show, Muslim women are disproportionately affected by this phenomenon. As a result, they suffer from discrimination, stigmatisation and exclusion in many areas of life such as education, vocational training, employment, health, housing, services and political participation.

There is no pan-European comprehensive research analysing the impact of Islamophobia on women though some national reports have attempted to look at Islamophobia from a gender perspective. Muslim women and their experience of discrimination are primarily understood as based on religion. This focus on the religious aspect can be misleading as it does not quite grasp the complexity of Islamophobia affecting women. In addition, religion is often considered as intrinsically contrary to gender equality. Religion also tends to be a ground which is less protected by the European anti-discrimination legislative framework. Moreover, there has been no case of religion-based discrimination before the European Court of Human Right that regards specifically Islam, and equality bodies receive far fewer complaints on this ground. As a consequence, Muslim women end up being less protected.

### ***The report***

The aim of this report is to document the disproportionate effect of Islamophobia on Muslim women in the fields of employment and racist violence and speech. The report presents an overview of the national legislative provisions, practices, academic literature, debates, case laws, surveys and opinion polls, press

reviews, and consultations with stakeholders. The desk research, aimed at collecting and putting together the current material, was followed and enriched by a qualitative research approach. Muslim women of different backgrounds, staff members of anti-racism and feminist associations, MPs, public anti-discrimination centre employees, public officials, lawyers and experts in anti-discrimination law - a total of about 45 people - have been interviewed and consulted in an attempt to fill the critical gaps identified in the existing literature.

The most serious difficulty encountered during the research is the lack of disaggregated data on religion and ethnicity. Some personal data such as religion and ethnicity are considered sensitive by Italian law, and their collection and usage are subject to the written approval of the person concerned and to the authorisation of the Data Protection Authority. As a consequence, the very limited available data on religion is an approximate estimation based on a very limited sample<sup>5</sup> or on proxy indicators such as religious practices for Catholicism (i.e. baptism) or, more common for a religion such as Islam, nationality – accepting that the religious background of the individual corresponds to the prevalent religion in the country of their nationality. The most reliable up to date statistics on religious affiliation are those compiled by the national equality body UNAR (National Office of Racial Anti-discrimination), which are based on the countries of origin of people living in Italy, as do all the existing reports on employment, inequalities, health, education, social participation, etc. Aware of the limitation that this method entails, the Forgotten Women report had to rely on proxy indicators too, and nationalities such as Moroccan, Egyptian and Pakistani are often used to indicate the labour market presence of Muslim women in Italy. The partial lack of disaggregated data on gender and nationality further restricted a clear overview. The law on the collection and usage of sensitive data also hinders the monitoring of hate crimes. This research could not rely on any official data on anti-Muslim hate. Police forces do not record the religion and the ethnicity of the victims; and the type of bias, if recognised and notified by the Criminal Investigation Division, is included inside the report file but not as disaggregated data. Understanding the dimension of anti-Muslim crime in Italy is not possible, and media monitoring results and interviews only partially managed to make up for the absence of data.

The first chapter, “Snapshot of inequalities” is intended to offer an outline of the inequalities that affect women on the one hand, and non-Italian Muslim citizens (especially women) on the other, on the consideration that Muslim women suffer multiple layers of discrimination that cannot be reduced to just religion or gender.

The second chapter, “Temperature test”, aims at presenting an overview of the attitudes towards Muslims women from different points of view, the media, the political sphere and public opinion, showing how they influence each other in a vicious circle of dangerous prejudices.

The third chapter, “Discrimination in employment”, provides an overview of Muslim women’s participation in the labour market highlighting the reasons behind the low numbers. Although straightforward discrimination by employers exists and strongly affects access to employment of thousands of Muslim women, the situation is the result of common disadvantages that affect any immigrant combined with inequalities created (or not addressed) by institutions.

The fourth chapter, “Racist violence and speech”, presents the different types of racial abuse Muslim

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<sup>5</sup> Istat. 2015. ‘Appartenenza e pratica religiosa tra i cittadini stranieri. Anno 2011-2012’. *Istat statistiche report*, 2 October.

women experience with an eye towards those who enjoy a relatively secure social and economic status and to those who belong to particularly vulnerable groups.

## OVERVIEW OF THE MUSLIM POPULATION IN ITALY

About 1.7 million Muslim people live in Italy, making up 2.8% of the Italian population and 33.1% of the total number of foreigners (5,364,000).<sup>6</sup> This estimation does not include undocumented migrants, naturalised immigrants and descendants of immigrant parents (commonly called 'second generation' in Italy) with Italian citizenship, nor Italians converted to Islam (a small but visible and well-organised group of about 60-70,000 people).<sup>7</sup>

When we talk about Islam in Italy, we have to talk about immigration, because despite the increasing numbers and growing significance of migrant descendants (the so-called "second and third generations"), there is a "predominance of first-generation Muslims who prefer to speak a non-Italian mother tongue and have 'their feet here but their head and heart in another country'",<sup>8</sup> according to Islamic Studies professor James Toronto. However, as the sociologist Stefano Allievi puts it, "Islam is no longer just-arrived, it is a house-mate".<sup>9</sup> With the exception of the Islamic ruling of Sicily between the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>st</sup> centuries, Italy never had a noteworthy Muslim presence within its territories until the 1960s, when young students from Palestine, Syria and Jordan started coming to Italy to complete their studies.<sup>10</sup> Though it lagged behind other Western European countries, due to a late economic boom, in the 1970s Italy manifestly became an immigration country, thus ending a century of emigration that saw 27 million Italians expatriate. Migration from North Africa began in the 1970s, with the arrival in the country of a large male workforce, especially from Morocco. In contrast with governmental expectations, this phenomenon grew in the 1980s and 1990s with the arrival of immigrants from Africa, Eastern Europe and Asia. The largest Muslim community comes from Morocco (525,000) – which is also the second biggest immigration group, after Romanians, if we count EU countries as well – followed by Albania<sup>11</sup>(503,000), Egypt (135,000), Bangladesh (128,000), Tunisia (122,000), Pakistan (106,000), Senegal (98,000).<sup>12</sup>

The diversity of the Muslim population, not only in terms of culture and countries of origin, but also of Islamic branches (Sunni and Shia) and movements (Sufism and Salafism), explains the distribution of the Muslim presence all across the country (in cities, towns and rural areas, with a higher concentration in Lombardy and Northern Italy in general).<sup>13</sup> This fragmentation of the Muslim population is also reflected in the division and diversity of associations and their resulting lack of joint activities and goals. This heterogeneity and division of the Muslim population, which also includes a tight bond with the countries of

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<sup>6</sup> Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS. 2014. *Immigrazione: dossier statistico 2014 - Rapporto UNAR "Dalle discriminazioni ai diritti"*. Roma: UNAR.

<sup>7</sup> In absence of accurate statistics, the most reliable source is Izzeddin Elzir, president of UCOII (Union of Islamic Communities of Italy), in *La Repubblica*. 2013. 'Convertiti d'Italia'. *Repubblica.it*, 25 June.

<sup>8</sup> Toronto J. A. 2008. 'Islam Italiano: Prospects for Integration of Muslims in Italy's Religious Landscape'. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 28(1), 61-82: 63.

<sup>9</sup> Allievi S. (ed). 2009. *I musulmani e la società italiana. Percezioni reciproche, conflitti culturali, trasformazioni sociali*. Milano: Franco Angeli: 13.

<sup>10</sup> Allievi, S. 2014. 'Immigration, religious diversity and recognition of differences: the Italian way to multiculturalism', in *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 21(6): 724-737.

<sup>11</sup> Islam is the main religion in Albania (about 60% according to 2011 census), but there is a consistent Orthodox Christian and Catholic minority. Decades of state atheism also resulted in a decrease of religious practices.

<sup>12</sup> Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS: 2014.

<sup>13</sup> Mancuso A. S. 2012. 'La presenza islamica in Italia: forme di organizzazione, profili problematici e rapporti con le Istituzioni', in *Stato, Chiese e pluralismo confessionale*, 32/2012, 1-26.

origin,<sup>14</sup> is understood to be one of the main characteristics of Islam in Italy, as well as one of the main reasons why the Muslim community and the Italian state have not been able to sign a bilateral agreement (*intesa*) yet.<sup>15</sup> The Italian Constitution (Art.8) states that religious confessions have the right to organise themselves according to their statutes and that their relationships with the State are regulated by law on the basis on agreements with their representatives. At the moment, in Italy, there is no umbrella organisation or one organisation which is representative of Muslims in Italy.<sup>16</sup>

The interest and the commitment of Muslim associations seem to be mainly focused on religious worship and practices rather than on the public dimension. Organisations mainly promote Islam and its culture. Some also try to build a dialogue with Italian institutions, especially to put an end to the very limited permit to build mosques. While Islamic leadership in Italy is often very politicised and holds a strong ideology (notably those who have kept a bond with organisations in foreign countries),<sup>17</sup> the majority of first-generation low-skilled immigrants, are generally not civically engaged, let alone politically involved.<sup>18</sup>

All this considered, it is not surprising to observe that there are not associations in Italy dealing exclusively with Islamophobia and none of the Muslim umbrella organisations, or associations on a national level, seem to have promoted any research on Islamophobia or any programme to counter it systematically. On a national level, the only exception is the “Mai+ anti-Islamophobia monitoring”, a project that supports victims of anti-Muslim hate, as well as measures and monitors anti-Muslim incidents. Mai+ is the evolution of the IMAN project (Islamophobia Monitoring and Action Network) launched in eight European countries including Italy, where it was implemented by CAIM (Coordination of Islamic Associations of Milan) and GMI (Young Muslims of Italy). On a local level, there seems to be a tentative interest in investigating the issues of discrimination and xenophobia, but these investigations are generally faced with a lack of resources and reliance on volunteers. . As a result, a number of anti-racism civil society organisations are involved in fighting xenophobia against Muslim people alongside other forms of racism and xenophobia, offering help and support to victims or promoting integration through initiatives. The majority of associations and research institutes, however, focus on immigration in general.

Social science scholars have conducted extensive research on Muslim communities in Italy, their composition, the social transformations and their relationship with the state. With some exceptions,<sup>19</sup> Islamophobia, however, seems to be overlooked and there is no specific focus on its impact on Muslim women.

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<sup>14</sup> The Islamic Cultural Centre of Italy in Rome is founded with the support of some ambassadors of Muslim countries, the mosque of Palermo is managed by the Tunisian government; the Islamic Cultural Institute in Milan was founded by the Kuwait consulate.

<sup>15</sup> The agreements contribute in giving a more independent regime to religious confessions compared to those which have not signed one. Though these agreements vary depending on the confession, they generally regard regulation on assistance in police centres, hospitals, nursing homes and, prisons, on religion teaching in schools, marriage, acknowledgement of associations with purpose of worship and places of worship, donations, religious holidays, and the financial repartition of the eight per thousand (taxpayers' compulsory donation to a religion or to the Italian State).

<sup>16</sup> UCOII (Union of Islamic Communities and Organisations of Italy) is the biggest is a network of Muslim associations (about 120 Muslim organisations and about 80 places of worship) with the aim of unite, represent and support Muslims of Italy, but itUCOII cannot ì be considered the sole representative of all Muslims of Italy. UCOII, COREIS, and the Associations of Muslims of Italy separately submitted draft proposals to the state in the 1990s. Over the past ten years, governments have established different boards and committees for the Italian Islam.

<sup>17</sup> UCOII, or at least many of its member associations and places of worship, is considered as tied with the Muslim Brotherhood; AMI (Muslim Assembly of Italy) is seen with pro-Western positions; the former leader of UMI (Union of Muslims of Italy) was in the frontline in the legal (and political) actions against the exhibition of the crucifix in his children's schools, with the support of left-wing parties. See Mancuso: 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Toronto, 2008.

<sup>19</sup> See work by academics such as Renata Pepicelli, Anna Vanzan, Monica Massari, Stefano Allievi, Alfredo Alietti, and Dario Padovan.

### ***Muslim women in Italy***

In contrast to predominantly female immigration from Eastern Europe, immigration from Muslim countries has been largely composed of men, especially during its first phase in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>20</sup> However, family reunification policies in the 1990s and 2000s led to an increase in arrivals of women and children. With gender imbalances most evident in immigration from Mali (10% of women) and Senegal (26%), the most gender-balanced community is the Moroccan one with 231.000 women (44.1% of all Moroccan immigrants), followed by Tunisia (45,000 women, 36.5% of Tunisians), and Egypt (40,000 women, 29.5% of Egyptians).<sup>21</sup>

With regard to organisations focusing explicitly on Muslim women, there are only two associations that have a good visibility in the country, each with very different goals.<sup>22</sup> The secular ACMID-Donna Onlus (Association of the Moroccan Communities of Women in Italy) encourages dialogue between Moroccan and Italian women, and offers support to women who suffer abuse from their husbands and are not integrated in the society. The president, the Northern League politician Souad Sbai, is not highly regarded by a segment of Muslim women who see the way she publicly engages against some Islamic practices as damaging. The second, ADMI (Association of Muslim Women in Italy), gathers observant Muslim women of Middle-Eastern origins and pursues the goal of promoting social integration which respects their religious identity. Led by Souheir Katkhouda, ADMI is an affiliate of UCOII (Union of Islamic Communities and Organisations), the largest Muslim umbrella group in Italy. On a local level, alongside small associations in the Emilia-Romagna region, Lazio and Liguria, LIFE Onlus in Ravenna stands out for its feminist engagement in promoting inclusive attitudes and defending women's rights. LIFE Onlus, which proudly calls itself a feminist organisation, actively participates in discussions around Islamic feminism, gender roles and rights, other than promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue, diversity education and actions against racism and discrimination.

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<sup>20</sup> Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS. 2013. *La comunità marocchina in Italia, un ponte sul Mediterraneo*, Roma: IDOS.

<sup>21</sup> Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS. 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Angelucci A., Bombardieri M., Tacchini D. (ed). 2014. *Islam e integrazione in Italia*. Venezia: Marsilio Editore.

# SNAPSHOT OF INEQUALITIES

## GENDER

Despite some recent positive developments, Italy still has a long way to go before achieving gender equality. Among the countries with the lowest level of parity in the EU, Italy scores very poorly on a global scale, too. In 2015, the Global Gender Gap Index<sup>23</sup> ranked Italy 41st (it was 69<sup>th</sup> in 2014) out of 145 countries for gender equality. It performs very poorly in political participation and economic participation (labour force participation, wage equality, income and type of work), while in educational attainment and health, one can say that women have reached equality with men. Still, Italians do not seem to be aware of the degree of gender imbalance in their country. Discrimination on a gender basis is perceived by more Italians as being rare (43%) or non-existent (8%) than widespread (44%).<sup>24</sup>

### ***Labour market inequalities***

In a country with a generally low level of employment, female employment remains unsatisfactory, especially in Southern Italy and among women with low education. With a proportionate male/female achievement in school, and a higher percentage of female graduates (60%), it is evident that disadvantage in women's life begins at a very specific time: the job search. It is then exacerbated by the formation of a family and the decision to have children and continues throughout their career and retirement.<sup>25</sup> The country's female employment rate (46.5%) is not only 12 points below the EU28 average (58.7%) and 20 points below men's (64.8%), but it is also one of the lowest in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).<sup>26</sup>

The decision to have a family is crucial in influencing the labour participation of women: the rate decreases from 77.8% for those who live alone, to 68.8% for those with a partner without children, and to 54.3% of mothers. These figures, however, are not uniform across the whole country: in Northern Italy two thirds of mothers are in employment, while in Southern Italy this drops to one in three.

The reason behind these critical disparities between men and women lies partially in the traditional division of roles within the family, and mainly in the role of public policies.<sup>27</sup> With only 1.36% of its GDP<sup>28</sup> invested in childcare service provision, Italy's childcare system is inefficient, unaffordable for many, and often inaccessible due to lack of availability. Besides this, parental leave is more advantageous for women. As a consequence, less than 30% of children under three years old go to nursery school, and childcare is often seen as the responsibility of mothers.

In the framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy for growth, the 2013 European Semester addressed country-specific recommendations to Italy, urging the country to promote the participation of women in the labour market.<sup>29</sup> Italy was strongly encouraged to improve its elderly care and childcare services (availability, qual-

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<sup>23</sup> World Economic Forum. 2015. *The Global Gender Gap Index 2014*.

<sup>24</sup> European Commission. 2012. *Special Eurobarometer 393. Discrimination in the EU in 2012*.

<sup>25</sup> Checchi D. 2012. *Disuguaglianze diverse*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

<sup>26</sup> OECD. 2012. *Closing the Gender Gap: Act Now*. OECD Publishing.

<sup>27</sup> Casarico A., Profeta C. 2010. *Donne in attesa. L'Italia delle disparità di genere*. Milano: Egea.

<sup>28</sup> OECD, 2012

<sup>29</sup> European Commission. 2014. *Progress on equality between women and men in 2013*. Commission staff working document.

ity, inclusiveness and/or affordability), as well as to tackle financial disincentives to work. Because of the structure of the tax and benefit system, women in a one-earner family, for example, might not have incentives to return to work after a period of inactivity due to maternity leave as a little additional income would not equate the cost of childcare. The gender values of the country must be taken into consideration as well. In Italy, there is an unfavourable culture towards working women, especially mothers: women are regarded as the main person responsible for the house and family.<sup>30</sup> The time spent doing housework and care deducts time for paid work.

As the OECD Gender Data reports, “occupational segregation, pay gaps and glass ceilings are less prominent issues in Italy than in many other OECD countries because, much more so than in other OECD countries, women with lower earnings are more likely to leave the labour market”.<sup>31</sup> Despite being below the EU average (16.4%), there is an income between men and women exists of about 6.7%.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, inequality in working hours and position is still well rooted in the country. Women who work part-time (12.2%) are more than twice the number of their male counterparts (5.7%). This percentage surges among mothers, reaching 33.2%, compared with 22% of women with a partner and without children, and 17.1% of single women. Only half of mothers working part-time, however, voluntarily opted for this contract as a way to balance the time between family and work. The overall amount of working hours, inconvenient shifts and lack of flexibility are the main obstacles when looking after children and taking care of the household. Women with children are also more likely to have a non-qualified job than single or childless women.

Despite the introduction of a female quota of 30% in the participation in boards of directors,<sup>33</sup> the female presence in high-level positions remains extremely low. In 2014 the percentage of women in executive roles was just 6%, and no women could be found in chair roles.<sup>34</sup> Women entrepreneurs are considerably fewer than men, and are more likely to be the manager of a middle or small business, as opposed to a large company.<sup>35</sup>

### **Poverty and exclusion**

The high rate of unemployment or inactivity, coupled with lower salaries and the high incidence of part-time jobs, puts women at risk of poverty and social exclusion. This economic vulnerability does not improve with age: women’s pensions are smaller than men’s because they generally receive a lower salary during their working life, and have to interrupt their job due to maternity leaves. Women are more likely than men to have an income under the poverty threshold (19.8% of women, and 17% of men).<sup>36</sup>

The economic crisis has also heavily contributed to raising the level of poverty of Italians: women, young and old people, and immigrants are paying the higher price. In 2011-12, 140,000 families in the whole country lived in absolute poverty.<sup>37</sup> Half of these families were of single or divorced mothers with dependent

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<sup>30</sup> See Casarico, Profeta, 2010, and OECD, 2012.

<sup>31</sup> World Economic Forum, 2015.

<sup>32</sup> Eurostat 2012 data in European Commission, Gender pay gap archives, [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-pay-gap/situation-europe/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-pay-gap/situation-europe/index_en.htm)[http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-pay-gap/situation-europe/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-pay-gap/situation-europe/index_en.htm), accessed on 20 May 2015.

<sup>33</sup> Only in statutory auditors, public-service corporations, and companies listed in the stock exchange.

<sup>34</sup> Egon Zehnder 2014 European Board Diversity Analysis, <http://www.egonzehnder.com/EBDA-2014-map><http://www.egonzehnder.com/EBDA-2014-map>, accessed on 25 June 2015.

<sup>35</sup> OECD, 2012.

<sup>36</sup> Italia Lavoro. 2012. *Donne in Italia, una grande risorsa non pienamente utilizzata*. Roma

<sup>37</sup> Commissione di Indagine sull’Esclusione Sociale (CIES). *Rapporto sulle politiche contro la povertà e l’esclusione sociale Anni 2011 – 2012*. Roma.

children. The other half were elderly single parents, either in retirement or about to retire. In this case too, the majority were mothers, as they are also more likely to live with their unmarried children struggling to be economically independent.

Unemployment and inactivity are the main causes of the exclusion of women. This goes beyond the labour participation and includes exclusion from cultural activities, from the possibility of renting a house, or applying for a mortgage or a loan, and from the general assistance of many services.

### ***Discrimination and sexism***

Gender-based stereotypes in Italy remain widespread and accepted. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) notes that women are often portrayed as sex objects, or in their traditional role within the family: “such stereotyping, including in public statements made by politicians, undermines women’s social status, as reflected in women’s disadvantaged position in a number of areas, including in the labour market and in access to political life and decision-making positions, and affect women’s choices in their studies and professions and generates unequal result and impact of policies and strategies on women and men”.<sup>38</sup> The UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women has strongly recommended further improvements to the legislation, and the creation of an independent national human rights institution with a section dedicated to women’s rights.<sup>39</sup>

## **MUSLIMS**

The census on population is compiled on the basis of nationality or, in case of informal data, even more generically, on the grounds of geographic regions rather than ethnicity or religion. When extrapolating data on employment, it was therefore necessary to consider proxies. Nationality in this report has been used as a proxy indicator for religion.

### ***Labour market inequalities***

The labour market inequalities affecting Muslim men and women are the same as for foreign-born workers, even when they are Italian citizens, with the important difference that the headscarf is understood to be the trigger of discrimination. On top of intentional discrimination – which exists in the form of a general intolerance towards immigrants and is a fundamental obstacle to the full integration of immigrants in the Italian labour market – there can be many factors that can explain the disadvantages: imperfect command of Italian language, lack of networks and poor knowledge of institutions.<sup>40</sup> The low-skilled labour demand of the Italian economy,<sup>41</sup> a pressing gender inequality in employment, lack of recognition of foreign education qualifications complete the picture and indicate the difficulties foreign-born workers have to face in Italy. These disadvantages are reflected in low salaries, few possibilities for career development, black market jobs, and little correspondence between employment and competency.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> UN-CEDAW. 2011. *Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Republic of Italy*. United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, forty-ninth session 11-29 July 2011.

<sup>39</sup> Enforced in 2014.

<sup>40</sup> OECD. 2014. *Lavoro per gli immigrati: L'integrazione nel mercato del lavoro in Italia*, OECD Publishing: 109.

<sup>41</sup> Fullin G., Reyneri E. 2011. *Low Unemployment and Bad Jobs for New Immigrants in Italy*, IOM International Migration Organisation, vol. 49 (1).

<sup>42</sup> IRES (Institute of Economic and Social Research). April 2007. *Discriminazioni e luoghi di lavoro: una survey sulle valutazioni e le percezioni degli immigrati*.

The profile of the immigrant worker who experiences the strongest contrast between their skills and their job would be a woman, coming from Northern Africa, looking for her first job, who has lived in Italy for less than five years and is undocumented or with a short-stay permit.

Recent data on entrepreneurship by the national Chamber of Commerce shows that business owned by immigrants has been very successful: in the top ranking of the most represented non-EU nationalities in the sector, in 2014 seven out of ten countries were of Muslim majority.<sup>43</sup> The data, however, are inverted when it comes to women of the same nationalities. Pakistani, Egyptian, Bangladeshi and Albanian women have the lowest participation rates in individual business.

Being a woman is particularly disadvantageous for foreign-born workers. The low employment rates of foreign-born women, especially coming from countries with a Muslim majority, can be partially explained by the need to care for their children full-time due to unavailable or unaffordable childcare. Furthermore, unlike Italian mothers, grandparents and relatives often reside in the country of origin, and are therefore unable to provide assistance. Cultural reasons, such as the traditional division of roles between husband and wife also play an important role, as well as migratory patterns (the pull factor is often family reunification rather than job opportunities).<sup>44</sup>

The labour participation of Muslim women is very low. Immigrant women from Muslim countries register the lowest percentage of employment and the highest level for unemployment and inactivity rates (i.e. those who do not work, nor are looking for a job). Pakistani women fall behind everyone with a 2.2% employment rate, followed by 8.9% of Egyptians, 10% of Bangladeshis, 16.4% of Tunisians, and 21.4% of Moroccans. Italian women, in the same year, registered an employment rate of 46.5%.<sup>45</sup> The rate of inactivity follows the same pattern. Pakistani, Egyptian, Bangladeshi and Albanian women in Italy have the lowest participation rates in individual or entrepreneurial business. Another study (although the low number of analysed cases does not make it statistically relevant) shows that percentages curb significantly when considering only women living with their partner and children.<sup>46</sup>

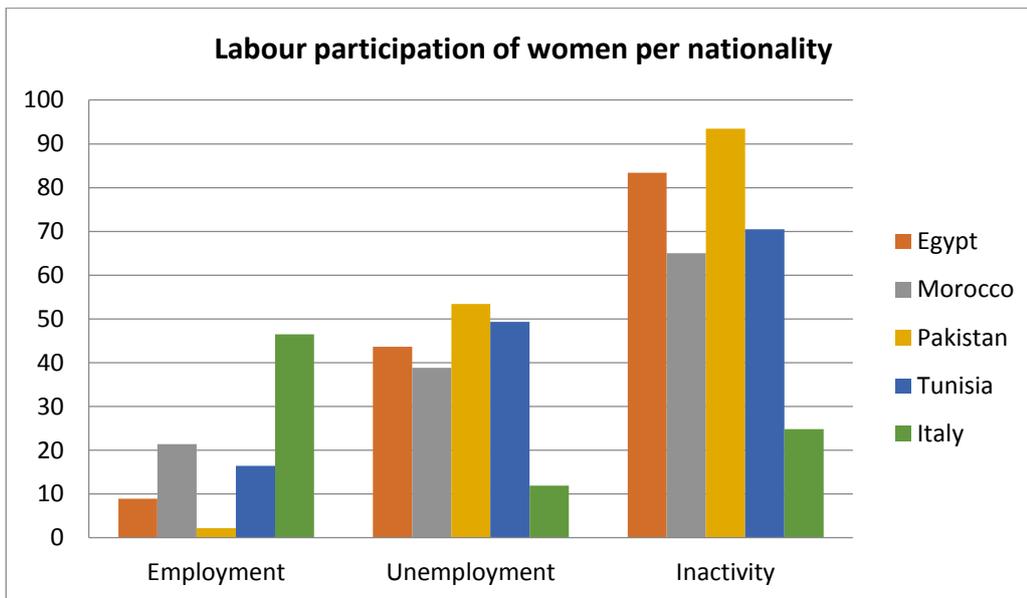
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<sup>43</sup> Unioncamere. 2015. Press release. 'Immigrati: 335mila imprese nel 2014', 7 April.

<sup>44</sup> Istat. 2014 A. *Rapporto annuale 2014. La situazione nel paese*. Roma: Istat.

<sup>45</sup> Istat, Rilevazione sulle forze di lavoro, Eurostat, Labour Force Survey, in Istat. 2014 A.

<sup>46</sup> Istat. 22 December 2011. *I redditi delle famiglie con stranieri, anni 2008-2009*.



Istat microdata on Labour Force Survey in 2013, extrapolated by SSRMDL of Italia Lavoro in Direzione Generale dell'Immigrazione e delle Politiche di Integrazione. 2014. IV Rapporto annuale: Gli immigrati nel mondo del lavoro in Italia. Roma: Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali.

### **Discrimination and hate crime**

Fuelled by unethical media and populist politicians, the dominant image of Muslims in Italy is generally negative. A survey by the Pew Research Center in 2014 shows that 63% of Italians have an unfavourable view of Muslims who live in their country.<sup>47</sup> Due to the visibility of their religious or ethnic identity, Muslims in Italy are, together with the Roma community, the most vulnerable group, as they receive unequal treatment in sectors such as in education, employment, and services, as well as being victims of racially-motivated violence.<sup>48</sup> From a Europe-wide perspective, Muslim people with North African origins in Italy are those who experience the highest level of discrimination in almost all sectors.<sup>49</sup> More than half of them are said to have been discriminated because of their ethnic and religious origin, with more men perceiving discrimination than women, according with a survey by the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA).<sup>50</sup> Italy is also one of the countries where North African Muslims perceive the highest level of discrimination by police officers.

Situation testing has shown how having an Arabic name drops by 50% the possibilities to receive a reply for a housing viewing,<sup>51</sup> compared with candidates having an Italian name, as well as of being short-listed for a job interview while submitting the same CV.<sup>52</sup> The group with the highest recurrence of discrimination in access to employment and in the workplace in Europe is, once again, the Muslims of North African origin in Italy (39%).<sup>53</sup> The only official data available are those offered by the national equality body UNAR (National Office Against Racial Discrimination), but the very low level of religious discrimination against Muslim women is most representative of the limits and flaws within the monitoring service.

<sup>47</sup> Pew Research Center. May 2014. *A fragile rebound for EU image on eve of European parliament elections*.

<sup>48</sup> ENAR. 2012. *Shadow Report 2011-2013, Racism and related discriminatory practices in Italy*. Brussels: ENAR.

<sup>49</sup> Access to work, workplace, house hunt for rent or buy, health workers, social workers, school workers, in bars or restaurants, in shops, to open a bank account or request a loan.

<sup>50</sup> FRA EU-Midis. 2012. *Data in focus report: Minorities as victims of crime*. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.

<sup>51</sup> OECD, 2014.

<sup>52</sup> Allasino E. et al. 2004. "Labour market discrimination against migrant workers in Italy" *ILO International Migration Papers*, No. 67, Geneva.

<sup>53</sup> FRA EU-Midis, 2012.

As it will be explained in the chapter “Racist violence and speech”, Italian authorities monitor hate crimes only to a degree, making it very difficult to gain a complete picture of hate crimes against Muslims women in Italy. Data collected by the national police and the Minister of Interior are generally not revealed to the public and, in any case, the victims’ ethnicity and religion are not recorded. Although the law contains provisions on aggravating circumstances, police authorities, the public prosecutor and judges not always take into consideration racial bias. A very high level of under-reporting also hinders the limited existing efforts to tackle hate crimes. A report by Istat (National Institute of Statistics) on immigrant perceptions of discrimination reveals men are more often verbally abused than women, while the nationality that experience the highest level of offences and threats is Moroccan.<sup>54</sup> This includes discrimination on grounds of nationality and ethnicity as well as religion. Data collected by NGO Lunaria through media monitoring has revealed a significant rise, in terms of visibility in the media, of hate crimes and discrimination against Muslims: from nine cases recorded in 2011 to 78 in 2014 (undifferentiated by gender).<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Istat. 2014. ‘Percezioni dei cittadini stranieri: soddisfazione, fiducia e discriminazione. Anno 2011-12’. *Istat*, 28 October.

<sup>55</sup> Lunaria. 2014. *Cronache di ordinario razzismo. Terzo libro bianco sul razzismo in Italia*. Roma: Lunaria.

# TEMPERATURE TEST

## ISLAMOPHOBIC ATTITUDES

Since 2006, when the social scientist Monica Massari wrote that “in Italy, the phenomenon of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim prejudice has not received particular attention in the public debate”,<sup>56</sup> little has changed. Much attention, both in terms of studies and initiatives, has been devoted to racism and xenophobia, but the existing literature on attitudes to Muslim women in public discourse seems to be still limited.

Generally speaking, at the roots of the debate around the presence of Muslim communities in Italy there are, on the one hand, those who are in favour of pluralism and multiculturalism and on the other hand, those who see the two cultures as conflicting.<sup>57</sup> More specifically, Russo Spena explains that the dominant understanding embraced by society is that there exist two types of diversity. While one type is “tolerable and can be assimilated as it is easy to integrate within our country's existing economic and productive system”,<sup>58</sup> the other diversity is “described and perceived as a threat to the established social and cultural order.”

. A too diverse diversity because it is visible – and perhaps too conscious and corporatist – that is generally experienced as a “problem’ and therefore must be prevented from negotiating specific demands that might be seen as the occupation and possession of public space and common heritage. This diversity must also be judged in terms of values and leads to a mechanism of inferiority and subordination..”<sup>59</sup>

Intellectuals and politicians have been arguing for years about the compatibility of Islam with so-called Italian values – whether this refers to progress on women’s rights and the secular state or simply the local and national customs and traditions. Within this discourse, the role played by religious clothing, especially the headscarf, is crucial. Being the most characteristic and visible sign of religious belonging – and diversity – the headscarf has often been at the root of the construction of ‘the other’ by society.<sup>60</sup> Women with the headscarf “cause suspicion and fears; they are considered a threat to security, to secular values and to the rights women fought for”,<sup>61</sup> according to Renata Pepicelli, researcher and lecturer at LUISS University.

Both media and politics are believed to be responsible for the generation and spreading of prejudices, but the press alone or politics alone do not explain the pervasive Islamophobia in the public sphere. It is rather the combined effect of sensationalist media, populist politics and prejudiced people, fuelling each other in a vicious cycle. First of all, media draw attention on particularly negative events (whether terrorism or honour crimes), presenting one single narrative of Islam and suggesting the existence of an emergency (“a certain group of ‘aliens’ is threatening our own security”<sup>62</sup>). Politicians then use the news to base their campaign to defend citizens against “the other”, and the government adopt measures to limit the rights of certain groups.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Massari M. 2006. *Islamofobia. La paura e l'islam*. Roma-Bari: Laterza

<sup>57</sup> Allam, 2011. *L'Islam spiegato ai leghisti*. Milano: Edizioni Piemme.

<sup>58</sup> Russo Spena M. 2009. ‘L'uso strumentale delle differenze religiose: l'Islam nelle retoriche pubbliche’, in Naletto G. (ed). 2009. *Rapporto sul razzismo in Italia*. Roma: Manifestolibri: 39.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Massari, 2006: 104.

<sup>61</sup> Pepicelli, R. 2012. *Il velo nell'islam. Storia, politica, estetica*. Roma: Carocci: 18

<sup>62</sup> Scagliotti L. 2011. *Racist violence in Italy*. Brussels: ENAR: 4.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

While far-right groups have a relatively small role in this process, the mainstream right-wing Northern League party, in and a part of the Italian intelligentsia have been among the most outspoken opponents to Islam.

## MEDIA COVERAGE

Media are generally thought to have a significant role in fomenting fears and spreading stereotypes against Islam. Both print and broadcast media publish sensationalist articles and present a negative image of Muslims.<sup>64</sup> This is believed to be reflected in and have a tangible impact on the climate of intolerance and evident discrimination against Muslims in their everyday life.<sup>65</sup> According to Mascari, “with some rare exceptions, media have normalised intolerant dispositions rather than promoted occasions of dialogue and knowledge”.<sup>66</sup>

The prevailing narrative is strictly related to violence and extremism, and a different perspective is very rarely proposed.<sup>67</sup> Some media outlets in particular stand out for their stigmatisation of ‘the other’: it is the case of newspapers such as *La Padania*,<sup>68</sup> *Il Giornale*, *Libero*, *Il Foglio* and *Il Tempo*, which represent the voice of political parties with an anti-immigration agenda.<sup>69</sup> Some of their headlines read: “She takes off the headscarf: beaten by her Muslim husband”,<sup>70</sup> and “Burkini and the death of the West”.<sup>71</sup> News articles, including in mainstream media, present an indistinguishable blend of opinions and facts, and give prominence to negative news, presenting isolated cases of fundamentalism as endemic to Islam. This happens with the media coverage of terrorism-related issues and honour crimes. After the Paris attacks of November 2015, for example, the front page of *Libero* had the headline “Islamic bastards”. The murders of Hina Saleem and Sanaa Dafani, for example, killed by their fathers respectively in 2006 and 2009 for being too westernised, made an impression on the general public who associated violence, fundamentalism and women's submission in Islam.<sup>72</sup> Positive stories go unnoticed. Media also generally favour interviews with people with the aim of shocking and confirming prejudices about Islam. Hosts in TV programmes are people with radical views, not representative of the majority of the Muslim population in Italy, or those personalities who have a strong opinion against Islam – even better if they belong (or used to belong) to the Muslim community, such as Souad Sbai and Cristiano Magdi Allam.<sup>73</sup>

The veil plays a central role in the representation of Muslim women in the media. The image that is most commonly used when reporting Muslim-related issues is that of a woman wearing a full-face veil, usually a black niqab. According to Pepicelli, this is dangerous not only because of the negation of differences between countries and cultures, but also because not showing Muslim women without the headscarf might

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<sup>64</sup> ECRI. February 2012. *Report on Italy (4th monitoring cycle)*. Strasbourg: ECRI: 23.

<sup>65</sup> See Allievi (ed), 2009.

<sup>66</sup> Mascari, 2006: 95.

<sup>67</sup> Della Porta D., Bosi L. 2010. *Young Muslims in Italy – Parma and Verona*. Aarhus: Centre for Studies in Islamism and Radicalisation Department of Political Science, Aarhus University.

<sup>68</sup> *La Padania* was the official Northern League newspaper. It was closed in November 2014.

<sup>69</sup> Naletto, G. 2014. ‘Gli spazi plurimi e infiniti del razzismo.’ Lunaria. 2014. *Cronache di ordinario razzismo. Terzo libro bianco sul razzismo in Italia*. Roma: Lunaria: 162-180.

<sup>70</sup> Franchini, F. ‘Si toglie il velo: presa a pugni dal marito musulmano’. *Ilgiornale.it*, 10 March.

<sup>71</sup> Meotti G. 2009. ‘Il burkini e la morte dell'occidente’. *Ilfoglio.it*, 26 May.

<sup>72</sup> Interestingly, Pepicelli remarks that the verdict that sentenced Sanaa's father to life imprisonment recognised that the motive of the murder was not religion but “to keeping up the appearances” (Pepicelli, 2012).

<sup>73</sup> Mascari, 2006.

cause a “mechanism according to which the authenticity of a Muslim woman is established by the externalisation of her religious identity and therefore the headscarf”.<sup>74</sup>

According to Yahya Pallavicini, vice-president of COREIS (Italian Islamic Religious Community), the stigma of terrorism has always affected men more than women. “Muslim women are generally seen as humble and therefore exploited, but if your next door neighbour is Muslim man... that is a problem”.<sup>75</sup> More recently, however, media have focused on what they called “jihad brides”, i.e. women who joined ISIS in Syria. In a way, media drew attention to these women – some already Muslim, some who converted to Islam – who joined terrorist groups. Some conservative media rejoiced when it was discovered that Maria Giulia Sergio, renamed by the press “Lady Jihad”, was one of hundreds of Muslims who, in 2011, signed a letter asking a member of the senate not to approve the law prohibiting the full-face veil.<sup>76</sup> It was proof for them that banning the veil would be the right thing to do in order not to give in to the demands of extremists.

The way stories are selected and reported depends on the outlet's political leanings. *Il Giornale*, a newspaper owned by the Berlusconi family has recently launched a section with reports entitled “Europistan – journey across Islamic Europe”.<sup>77</sup> The home page shows fear-mongering headlines and images of women wearing black chadors, men with keffiyeh embracing shotguns and defaced victims of war, conveying the distorted information that this is what the Muslim community in Europe looks like.



Images of the section “Europistan” of *il Giornale.it*<sup>78</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Pepicelli, 2012: 23.

<sup>75</sup> Interview with Yahya Pallavicini, vice-president of COREIS (Italian Islamic Religious Community).

<sup>76</sup> Biloslavo F. 2015. ‘L’italiana che è pronta a colpirci’. *Ilgiornale.it*, 11 January.

<sup>77</sup> *Il Giornale*. ‘Europistan: viaggio nell’Europa islamica’. *Ilgiornale.it*,

[http://www.ilgiornale.it/static/reportage/europistan/europistan\\_home.htm](http://www.ilgiornale.it/static/reportage/europistan/europistan_home.htm), accessed on 15 June 2015.

<sup>78</sup> Accessed on 8 November 2015.

The diversity of the Italian Muslim population is not reflected in the composition of TV presenters and journalists. In early 2015, Izzedin Elzir, president of UCOII (Union of Islamic communities of Italy), in an interview on the YouTube programme KlausCondicio, said: “we pay the TV licence fee, but we are not represented. It would be great to have a Muslim Lilly Gruber [well-known TV journalist]”.<sup>79</sup> Following this statement, the right-wing newspaper *Il Tempo* interviewed him to clarify his position. “As integration is often at the centre of the public debate, it would be good if the second generation, Italian citizens and journalism graduates, would not be discriminated due to the headscarf. It would be good to make a brave step so that headscarved Muslim women can be hired”, said Izzedin Elzir, mentioning the difficulties of Muslim women in finding a job in the public sector. With regard to the Italian public service broadcaster RAI, he said that “the Islamic community has been asking RAI to broadcast a programme on Islam made by Muslims, but this has never been granted”.<sup>80</sup>

## POLITICAL SPACES

With the exception of some committed political campaigners against the veil, Muslim women have not been at the centre of the public and political debate in Italy since 2011, when the national parliament discussed – and never approved – a bill to forbid the full-face veil in public places. More pressing issues related to Islam, such as the threat of terrorism (especially after the Paris attacks of November 2015) and the provision of worship places, dominate the general discourse. After the approval of the law in France banning the full-face veil in public places MPs Souad Sbai and Manlio Contento submitted a similar bill proposal. The promoters believed it was necessary for two main reasons: first, to guarantee public security through identification, and second to defend Italian values (i.e. stopping Islamic extremism and protecting women's rights). With the right-wing government, the bill proposal was approved<sup>81</sup> by the Constitutional Affairs Commission of the Chamber of Deputies in August 2011. The discussion was supposed to continue in the Chamber of Deputies, and then the Senate, by the end of the year. This did not happen because of the crisis in the government: Prime Minister Berlusconi's resignation resulted in Mario Monti's technocratic government, then followed by new elections that saw the centre left win.

Daniela Santanchè, MP with Forza Italia (Forward Italy) and a regular host on political TV shows, is one of the most dedicated defenders of so-called Italian values. Her confrontational behaviour and her offensive slanders against Islam have often led to heated discussions with members of Muslim communities. Another campaigner against the veil is one of the promoters of the bill against the full-face veil, Souad Sbai, Moroccan-born founder of the Association of Moroccan Women in Italy (ACMID). Sbai, former MP with the conservative Freedom People party and now Northern League member, has spent years defending victims of domestic violence in the Moroccan immigrant community, but she is not highly regarded by many Muslims. During the interviews in the framework of this research, Muslim women representing a wide range of religious and political positions have come out against her position. Her defence of the assimilation model of integration, and her battle against Islamic extremism that restricts the rights of immigrant women, is seen as doing more harm than good to Muslims in Italy in the way she is framing her battle within the

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<sup>79</sup> KlausCondicio. 2015. 'UCOII contro Rai: discrimina conduttori musulmani'. *Youtube.com*, 14 March, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nDRCubx80jQ> accessed on 26 May 2015.

<sup>80</sup> *Il Tempo*. 2015. 'Una cronista velata anche per i tg RAI'. *Iltempo.it*, 15 March.

<sup>81</sup> Right and centre-right wing parties, PdL, Northern League, and Responsible Initiative voted in favour, the centre-left Democratic Party (PD) voted against, while centre-right Future and Freedom, the centrist Italy of Values and Union of the Centre abstained.

discourses of Islamophobic right wing parties. Recent statements include: “Western women are more tolerant with Muslim immigrants who rape them rather than with their husbands”<sup>82</sup> or “According to Islam, all women are inferior. Christian women are worth even less”.<sup>83</sup> For her stances on Islam and Muslims, Sbai has been receiving death threats and insults.

Despite strongly defending traditional Italian values and being against immigration, extreme-right movements in Italy such as *Forza Nuova* (New Force) and *Casa Pound* have not remarkably participated in fuelling anti-Muslim sentiments in the country. The most committed and visible opponents of Muslim people are the institutionalised right and centre-right wing parties whose propaganda contains Islamophobic speech and is echoed by the media, having a wide appeal among the population.

Politicians in top positions in the **government** have expressed explicit anti-Muslim stances, starting from the then Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, commending the superiority of the Western civilisation over Islam. Islamophobia has been an essential part of Northern League's ideology against globalisation as a threat to local communities long before 9/11, let alone the recent terrorist attacks in Europe.<sup>84</sup> The way the Northern League portray Muslims and their religion is perceived by Muslim women as having an impact in society, significantly raising its level of intolerance. Northern League politicians, from local councillors to national lawmakers, generally have an aggressive and provocative attitude towards Muslims. What they call “our battle for civilisation” aims at protecting Italy's Catholic traditions from the “Islamist colonisers”, “barbarians ready to invade, kill, and pollute the Padania community”.

**Northern League's** understanding of Islam is of a patriarchal and repressive culture that oppresses women, forcing them to stay at home and to wear the full-face veil when going out. An example of this interpretation can be found in a poster used by Jari Colla, a councillor for his election campaign in the Lombardy regional elections in 2010. The banner had two photos: on the left, two women wearing the light blue burqa of Afghanistan; on the right, two blond and smiling young women wearing ordinary t-shirts. The billboard read “because we like women without veil!” As researchers Testa and Armstrong explain, “to a Western eye, they portray freedom and possibly optimism; the Islamic women suggest a life of submission. The two pictures contrast the supposedly limitless potential of the Padania girls with the restrictions on freedom to which their Muslim counterparts are subject”.<sup>85</sup> Other than offering a negative image of the Muslim way of life and suggesting the incompatibility of the two cultures, the intention behind the poster is also “a warning for all women who embrace mixed marriages to be careful of the mortification of their femininity and the humiliation they will inevitably experience in the name of Islam”.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Senaldi P. 2016. ‘L'avvertimento della leghista marocchina: “Vi spiego perché le vostre figlie avranno il velo”’. *Liberoquotidiano.it*, 18 January.

<sup>83</sup> Bianchi, L. 2016. ‘Intervista a Souad Sbai. “Per l’islam tutte le donne sono inferiori. Le cristiane valgono ancora meno”’. *blog.quotidiano.net*, 8 January.

<sup>84</sup> Massari, 2006.

<sup>85</sup> Testa A., Armstrong G. 2012. “We Are Against Islam!” The Lega Nord and the Islamic Folk Devil’. *SAGE Open* 2, no. 4, October-December 2012:1–14: 9.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*



Poster for a Northern League councillor in the 2010 Lombardy region electoral campaign.

Despite a generally inclusive approach of the **Catholic Church** towards immigrants – and noteworthy initiatives to combat racism and promote liberal immigration policies – in the past 15 years, a number of influential figures, including Pope Benedict XVI, have expressed unfavourable opinions towards Islam, seen as the ‘enemy’.<sup>87</sup> Paradoxically, what they strongly denounced about Islam, especially before 9/11, was the fact that they were not secular enough or, as the sociologist of Islam Renzo Guolo puts it, “a rigorously fundamentalist vision of public life that does not distinguish between religion and politics”.<sup>88</sup>

**Feminists**, especially that generation of women who, in the 1970s, fought against the moral impositions of the Catholic Church in Italy, have usually seen religions as the strongholds of a traditional view of women’s and men’s role in society. In this sense, the headscarf is generally considered an instrument of oppression, a patriarchal imposition that denies women the right to decide about their own body.<sup>89</sup> Giuliana Sgrena, feminist and journalist at the left-wing newspaper *Il Manifesto*, is an outspoken criticopponent to the veil. In several of her books she underlines how the veil is a symbol of patriarchy - which is an understanding shared among many feminists. Still, this idea has progressively changed and despite probably being still the majority view, there are younger feminists and researchers that have been more open and have recognised that it is possible to be feminist and a veiled Muslim, and that wearing it is often the woman’s choice.

Still, inside the Muslims community there is a multiplicity of positions about the headscarf. The mentioned founder of ACMID, Souad Sbai – who defines herself as ‘secular’ – says that, although she defends veiled women (through her work), she is against it and it should be banned (not only the full-face veil). Sbai claims “not to know anyone who wears the veil with pride” and that “defending it does not mean respect for Islam, but rather complicity with those who oppress women”. The women of ADMI (Association of Muslim Women

<sup>87</sup>The bishop of Como (Mgr Maggiolini) in 1998 and the bishop of Bologna (Cardinal Biffi) suggested supporting the immigration of Christian populations instead of Muslim ones. A speech by Pope Benedict XVI, in Regensburg in 2006, sparked controversy after quoting a 14<sup>th</sup> century emperor saying that Muhammad brought only evil and inhuman things.

<sup>88</sup> Guolo R. 2001. “La Chiesa e l’Islam”, *il Mulino* n. 1/2001 Bologna: 93-101, as quoted in [www.chiesa.espressonline.it](http://www.chiesa.espressonline.it).

<sup>89</sup> Pepicelli, 2012.

of Italy) have a different position: the majority of them wear the headscarf and, as the president Souheir Katkhouda puts it, as an association, they do not advocate for the full-face veil. Many of the women of Life Onlus, who define themselves as feminists, wear the headscarf too and, among the other activities, actively promote a debate on Islamic feminism and women's rights.

## PUBLIC OPINION

Many scholars have extensively debated about the definition of Islamophobia and the ways it manifests itself, distinguishing different dimensions of anti-Muslim racism. In a recent article<sup>90</sup> on Islamophobia and Antisemitism, human scientists Alietti and Padovan recognise two patterns of Islamophobic Italian public discourse. One, related to so-called xeno-racism, blames the "enemy within", i.e. the Muslim communities (and their symbols) living in our towns, regardless of the fact that they might be Italian citizens; and the second, related to the idea of a clash of civilisations, considers Islam as an external threat, that is, Islam as an entire civilisation. The first is mainly represented by the aggressive invectives of the journalist Oriana Fallaci (who died 10 years ago but whose ideas have been seen as foretelling predictions on the "Islamisation of Europe") on blowing up mosques that contaminate the existing Italian landscape;<sup>91</sup> while the second is mainly voiced by the political scientist Giovanni Sartori who asserts that the "Italianisation" of Islam is a colossal self-deception.<sup>92</sup>

A spring 2014 Global Attitude survey by Pew Center<sup>93</sup> revealed that among seven EU countries, Italians are the most critical of Muslims, with 63% holding an unfavourable view of Muslims in their country. This negative opinion was most common among those who define themselves as ideologically on the 'right' (72%) but the percentage remains high under 'moderate' (59%) and 'left' (50%). Another study, by Istat, explores the reactions, and the contradictions, of Italians to the coexistence of different religious communities in the country.<sup>94</sup> To the statement "religious practices of some immigrants pose a threat to our lifestyle", 59.3% of the interviewees were partly or totally opposed. Still, 41.1% would be against the construction of a mosque near their home mainly for public order concerns and security issues (28.3%), and as a sort of revenge against "Muslims being intolerant and not allowing the construction of churches in their countries" (26.6%). As for the full-face veil, a striking majority of 80.7% believes that it should not be allowed in Italy.

There have not been further opinion polls or survey specifically focused, or having questions, on gender. However, from the interviews in the framework of this research, it emerged that Muslim women think that the prejudices against them are rife within Italian society. Muslim women are unanimous in saying that people regard them as victims, uneducated and passively subjugated to their husbands and to their religion.

The veil, once again, plays a decisive role. "Whether it is the burqa, chador, or hijab, it has precise meanings in the collective imaginary: submission to the man, backwardness, oppression, human rights abuse, and ignorance",<sup>95</sup> according to Marisa Iannucci, president of association LIFE Onlus, pointing out that the prejudices against Muslim women lie in the veil. This happened – Iannucci explains – because Western

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<sup>90</sup> Alietti A., Padovan D. 2013. 'Religious Racism. Islamophobia and Antisemitism in Italian Society'. *Religions*, n. 4, 584–602.

<sup>91</sup> Talbot, M. 2006. 'The Agitator. Oriana Fallaci directs her fury towards Islam'. *The New Yorker*, June 5.

<sup>92</sup> Sartori, G. 2009. 'L'integrazione degli islamici'. *Corriere.it*, 20 December.

<sup>93</sup> Pew Research Center, May 2014.

<sup>94</sup> Istat. 2012. 'I migranti visti dai cittadini. Anno 2011'. Istat statistiche report, 11 July.

<sup>95</sup> Iannucci M. *Hijab e pregiudizio* [reference not available]

society tends to blame Islam for human rights abuses in countries with a Muslim majority, such as Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan. People tend to generalise and attribute this belief to all Muslims, without understanding – and making any differences between – the diverse cultures, languages and history of Muslims all around the world, including European Muslims. Western society looks at the Muslim symbol with discomfort and sees Islam “as an enemy or, in the best cases, as other, different, obscure and incomprehensible”.<sup>96</sup> Muslim women are seen as women that need to be saved, unveiled and liberated, “as a body to uncover to give it back its dignity”,<sup>97</sup> regardless of what Muslim women think about it. This is particularly explicit from Italian women.<sup>98</sup> In this disapproval, however, there is not just pity towards a victim, but also hostility and superiority for her not standing up against submission: “the woman with the headscarf is considered oppressed and accomplice of her oppressors at the same time, she is a victim of the growing Islamic ideology but also its perpetrator”.<sup>99</sup>

## HISTORICAL TRENDS AND CHANGES

There are many factors that contributed to the surge of racist incidents in the last decade. Luciano Scagliotti, ENAR's National Platform Coordinator for Italy, mentions “the unforeseen transformation of Italy from an emigration to an immigration country; anti-terrorism policies focused on Muslims and more generally on “Arabian-looking” people and social insecurity due to the economic crisis”.<sup>100</sup> “However,” Scagliotti continues:

the main reasons can be found in the interaction of three factors which feed off each other in a dangerous short-circuit: a xenophobic and racist political discourse and governmental action; reproduction and dissemination of ethnic stereotypes and prejudices by media; the widespread ‘ordinary’ racism and xenophobia among the poorest social groups, whose members often vent their frustration and anger blaming immigrants for the worsening of their economic and social status.<sup>101</sup>

This perception, and the acknowledgement that politicians take advantage of the crisis to shift the blame on immigrants, also arose in the interviews with Muslim women.

With a lack of exhaustive statistics and data, it is not possible to determine whether and when there has been an increase or decrease in hate crimes against Muslim women or incidents of discrimination in employment, neither indicate any events that have specifically shaped the attitudes of employers and changed the trend. What can be claimed, however, is that some international events have influenced, and worsened, public opinion about Muslims, with particular consequences affecting Muslim women.

The terrorist attack of 9/11 is regarded as “a devastating date, a turning point, for better or for worse”.<sup>102</sup> On one hand, Italians started to see Muslims as violent and fundamentalist and to question the compatibility of their religion with Italian values. On the other hand, Muslims felt attacked by Italians and were somehow pushed to defend Islam by getting more involved within their community and more keen to show their religious identity.<sup>103</sup> From the literature dating from before 2001, the impact of 9/11 in the employment

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Assirelli, A. 2014. “Una piazza bella come un fiore” in Assirelli A. Iannucci, M. Mannucci, M. Patuelli M. P. (ed). *Femminismi Musulmani. Un incontro sul Gender Jihad*. Fernandel: 180-190

<sup>99</sup> Pepicelli, 2012.

<sup>100</sup> Scagliotti, 2011.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Della Porta, Bosi, 2010.

<sup>103</sup> Allievi (ed), 2009.

sector comes to light. A book on the Muslim presence in Italy, published in 2000, states that the attitude towards Islamic garments by authorities and citizens was tolerant, in the workplace as well, and claims that a conflict around the headscarf and the chador seemed a remote hypothesis.<sup>104</sup> The social scientist Stefano Allievi states that “regardless of the empirical observations, 9/11 has become, in the common discourse, a ritual fact, acquired as such, with turning point connotations”.<sup>105</sup> One interviewee, a Jordan-born woman who moved to Milan 30 years ago, confirmed:

“Things dramatically changed for us after 9/11. And now they got worse with ISIS. When I arrived in Italy, my neighbours were genuinely interested in me. They used to ask me what my religion entails, why I wear the headscarf, but had no prejudices against Islam”.

Several studies have highlighted the surge of Islamophobia in the public discourse, in the months following the twin towers attack, and saw them as a consequence of the general temperature of intolerance encouraged by politicians and intellectuals depicting Muslims as a threat to Italian society.<sup>106</sup>

More recently, a concurrence of events, culminating in the 13 November 2015 Paris attacks, have shaped public opinion to cause a growth of aversion towards Muslims.<sup>107</sup> On top of many international events (such as the war in Syria and the ISIS’ rampaging in the region), last year’s terrorist attacks in Europe (against Charlie Hebdo and at the Kosher supermarket in January, in Copenhagen in February, and in Paris in November) have been strategically used to place the blame on all Muslims, enhancing mistrust and stereotypes against them. In the month following the attacks against Charlie Hebdo and the Kosher supermarket, the president of Co-mai (Community of Arab World in Italy), Foad Aodi, claimed to have registered an increase of about 40%<sup>108</sup> in reports of Islamophobic incidents: “on the wave of the emotion after the shooting, many negative episodes occurred, especially in public transport and schools, with bullying against children and hostility towards mothers”. Muslim communities, particularly in the wake of the Paris terror attacks in November, did not remain quiet bystanders and reacted organising “Not in my name” marches with civil society in numerous cities across Italy.

According to Pepicelli,<sup>109</sup> these events introduced a new phase of Islamophobia with a change in the perception of Muslims in Italy and Europe. There is a growing feeling of threat among Italians, and Muslim women are those paying the heavier price. “Because of the clothes they wear, the burden of representing Islam fall all on Muslim women,” says Pepicelli, “especially on young women, who are considered foreigners in the society to which they belong.”

Evidence of this change of attitude can be found, for example, in a school in Friuli Venezia Giulia. Following a racially motivated attack, the school director introduced an official ban of the headscarf in the school complex, in an attempt to stop racism and discrimination (“the exhibition – especially if forced upon – of external symbols of their own religion will not be allowed, also because, in the end, this can be judged as a provocation, and therefore incite reactions of exclusion, despise or rejection”<sup>110</sup>) but also claiming the secularism/secularity of schools. This ruling was suddenly judged ruled unlawful by the Directorate-General

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<sup>104</sup> Carmignani Caridi V. S. 2000. ‘Libertà di abbigliamento e velo islamico’ in Ferrari S. 2000. *Musulmani in Italia*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

<sup>105</sup> Allievi (ed), 2009.

<sup>106</sup> Massari, 2006.

<sup>107</sup> Russo Spina, 2014.

<sup>108</sup> Interview with Foad Aodi, president of Co-mai (Community of Arab World in Italy), AMSI (Association of Doctors of Foreign origins in Italy), and Uniti x Unire-MITI (United 2 Unite – International Transcultural and Interprofessional Movement). This figure is based on the informal reports that Co-Mai receives. Reports are not systematically collected and archived. It was not therefore possible to verify this information.

<sup>109</sup> Speech by Renata Pepicelli, expert in Islam and Gender, at the ENAR national roundtable in Rome on 4 June 2015.

<sup>110</sup> School circular n.123/ISIS of 11 February 2015, Higher Education Institute, Cervignano del Friuli.

of the School Office and the Regional Personal Rights Authority, quoting Article 9 of the European Convention of Human Rights.

According to Marisa Iannucci, “now more than ever it is difficult to speak out, and Muslim women researchers are not considered reliable or trustworthy”.<sup>111</sup> Invited as a speaker to a conference on freedom of expression in a prestigious institute in Bologna – she recalled – her arrival caused disturbance among participants and organisers. Not expecting to see a Muslim woman, someone called the Digos (Italian police department dealing with political security) who searched her and her belongings in front of everyone.

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<sup>111</sup> Speech by Marisa Iannucci, president of Life Onlus, at the ENAR national roundtable in Rome on 4 June 2015.

# EMPLOYMENT

## LABOUR MARKET DATA

Immigration from Northern-African countries to Italy started about 40 years ago and was predominately male, especially in the first phase. In the case of Moroccans, the biggest Muslim community in Italy, the first influx, in the 1970s, saw mainly unskilled unemployed men, middle-aged and coming from rural areas who found occupation as street vendors, day labourers, or street window cleaners.<sup>112</sup> In the 1980s, the arrivals were still mainly made of men, but immigrants were generally younger, with a higher education, and from cities, who found employment in farming, building, manufacturing, commerce and cleaning sectors. Introduced in the 1990s, the right to family reunification boosted the immigration of women from the Maghreb.<sup>113</sup> Even today, the reasons for immigration are very gender-divided: considering Moroccans' arrivals in 2011, 79.8% of women and 35.1% of men migrated to Italy for family reasons, while 15.6% of women and 59.5% of men entered with a working visa.<sup>114</sup>

As information relating to an individual's religious belief, as well as ethnic origin, is categorised as sensitive personal data, there are no statistics on employment disaggregated by religion. Despite being aware that nationality does not always indicate the religious belief of an individual, the country of origin is still the closest indicator to religion and has therefore been used instead of religion to provide a general overview of the labour market regarding Muslim women in Italy.

Immigrant women coming from countries with a Muslim majority register the lowest percentage of labour participation according to Istat.<sup>115</sup> In the ranking, Pakistan falls behind everyone with 2.2% employment rate, followed by 8.9% for Egypt, 10% for Bangladesh, 16.4% for Tunisia, and 21.4% for Morocco. Italian women, in the same year, registered an employment rate of 46.5%.<sup>116</sup> The rate of inactivity (i.e. women who do not work nor are looking for a job) follows the same pattern (Pakistan 93.5%, Egypt 84.3%, Bangladesh 84.2%, Tunisia 70.5%, Morocco 65% - Italy 46.0%),<sup>117</sup> as well as the unemployment rate ranking (Pakistan 53.4%, Egypt 43.6%, Tunisia 42.9%, Bangladesh 36.9%, and Morocco 38.8% - Italy 13.2%).<sup>118</sup> A study by the Ministry of Labour and Welfare on immigrant labour reveals that the NEET rate (people under 30 who are Not in Employment, Education and Training) of foreign women is the highest among those who are from Bangladesh (56.3%), Morocco (50.5%), Tunisia (49.3%), Egypt (48.4%) and Sri Lanka (39.1%), compared with 24.7% for Italian women.<sup>119</sup> The NEET rate, which includes both job seekers and people who are not searching as well as people in-between jobs, is higher among women because of the care dimension,

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<sup>112</sup> Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS, 2013.

<sup>113</sup> Open Society Institute. 2002. *Monitoraggio della protezione delle minoranze nell'Unione Europea La situazione dei Musulmani in Italia*.

<sup>114</sup> Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS, 2013: 16. It must be noted, however, that the holders of residence permit for family reunion can work both as employee and self-employed.

<sup>115</sup> All the percentages on foreign-born women here have been taken from: Istat microdata on Labour Force Survey in 2013 extrapolated by SSRMDL of Italia Lavoro in Direzione Generale dell'Immigrazione e delle Politiche di Integrazione. 2014. *IV Rapporto annuale: Gli immigrati nel mondo del lavoro in Italia*. Roma: Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali: 62.

<sup>116</sup> Istat, Rilevazione sulle forze di lavoro, Eurostat, Labour Force Survey, in Istat. 2014 B. *Rapporto annuale 2014. La situazione nel paese*. Roma: Istat.

<sup>117</sup> Istat. Labour Force Survey data,

[http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DCCV\\_INATTIV&Lang](http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DCCV_INATTIV&Lang) accessed on 25 June 2015.

<sup>118</sup> Istat, Rilevazione sulle forze di lavoro, Eurostat, Labour Force Survey, in Istat, 2014 B.

<sup>119</sup> Direzione Generale dell'Immigrazione e delle Politiche di Integrazione, 2014.

especially pregnancy and parenting. The Ministry's study also highlights that women who arrive in Italy to join their husbands – rather than those who migrate independently – find it particularly difficult to achieve a workable balance between childcare and work. Unlike Italian mothers, immigrant women cannot count on the help of relatives, who stayed in the countries of origin, and can rely only partially on childcare, as public service is inefficient and private service is often unaffordable.

Existing studies show that immigrants in the Italian labour market are usually employed in low-skilled and low-paid jobs despite being over-qualified. Foreign-born Muslim women are no exception in this regard. Little can be said about it, however, because there are no available statistics on type and sector of employment divided by both gender and nationality, with some exceptions for data on seasonal work, care work and entrepreneurship.

Data by the Ministry of Labour and Welfare reveal that seasonal work includes a low percentage of non-EU workers (among them 19.4% come from Albania and 10.9% from Morocco), of which the female component remains even lower (23.3% of all Albanians and 9.4% of all Moroccans).<sup>120</sup> On the opposite, the rate of non-EU workers in the domestic sector (cleaning and caring) is over half of the total, but the numbers of Muslim women are very low. This sector is predominantly taken up by Eastern European workers (58.3%), while caregivers from North Africa (5.3%) and the Middle East (1.35%) are almost an exception.<sup>121</sup>

The latest data by the national Chamber of Commerce (*Union Camere*)<sup>122</sup> show that the foreign component of entrepreneurship in Italy is healthy and more successful than the component made up of Italian entrepreneurs, even in times of economic crisis. It must be noted, however, that this is also due to labour segregation that excludes immigrants from employed jobs. In the league table of the top countries of origin of entrepreneurs, seven out of ten are from Muslim majority countries. Morocco has the highest number of businessmen (64,000) and Bangladesh registers the biggest growth (+4,900 in 2014, compared to 2013). The data, however, are inerted when considering women of the same nationalities. Pakistani, Egyptian, Bengali and Albanian women have the lowest participation rates in individual business. In absolute values, Moroccan businesswomen – which make up 12.5% of the total of Moroccan entrepreneurs – come third, followed by Nigerians and Albanians; all other countries in the top ten list have a negligible Muslim presence.<sup>123</sup> A piece of research by the University of Milan<sup>124</sup> on the comparison between male and female foreign entrepreneurship shows that within the foreign businesswomen surveyed and interviewed – of different countries of origin and including Morocco Senegal, Egypt and Albania – there is a high incidence of unmarried woman, women married with a man of different nationality, or childless women. This not only confirms that marriage and children are often a deterrent in the decision to work, including in self-employment, but also indicates that the independence and freedom of movement of those women who migrated without a partner probably affects their decision to start a business that is rarely managed together with the partner or family.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Agostini C., Longobardi E., Vitaletti G. February 2012. 'Donne migranti. Quali opportunità per il nostro paese?' Fondazione Leone Moressa. *L'economia dell'immigrazione*, year 0, number 2.

<sup>122</sup> Unioncamere, 2015.

<sup>123</sup> Unioncamere data on 2011 in De Luca D. 2011. *Intraprendere al femminile. Il coraggio di rischiare in un momento difficile*. Working Paper, Università degli Studi di Milano.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> De Luca, 2011.

### ***How to explain the data: choices, disadvantages, discrimination***

A recent OECD report considers discrimination as a fundamental obstacle to the full integration of immigrants in the Italian labour market, but it also recognises the complexity of the issue: “the presence of a discrimination [...] is very difficult to prove, as many factors, which do not constitute discrimination, can explain the disadvantages in the labour market and in the society as a whole”.<sup>126</sup> To understand the reasons behind the low percentage of labour participation for Muslim women, we have to take into consideration different factors. It would then be clear that the current situation is determined by intentional discrimination and structural discrimination – the result of systems, values and norms that don’t redress disadvantages. First of all, as explained in the first chapter, we should keep in mind the high level of gender inequality in Italy and how Muslim women have to deal with the same disparity of opportunities that any woman in the country experiences. Second, we should not forget that, despite the growing significance of descendants of immigrants (better known in Italy as “second generation”), the component of Muslim women who migrated to Italy when they were adults is still predominant. The pattern of migration is therefore very important to understand the high level of inactivity of women from Muslim countries. A minority of them, whether they are recently arrived refugees from Syria, or Bangladeshi wives who unwillingly moved to Italy to join their husbands, see their life in Italy as a temporary phase. They do not want to stay in the country and therefore are not interested in learning the language or looking for a job. The majority, however, are women from North Africa who started arriving in Italy at the end of the 1990s. The pull factor of their immigration was often not the job opportunity of the new country, but family reunification. Among the first generation immigrants there seems to be also a stronger acceptance of the traditional roles of men and women within the family, as it is for elderly Italians: if one of the two partners works, it is more likely to be the man rather than the woman.

Immigrant Muslim women might also face the same disadvantages as all foreign-born women, such as the lack of a family network that can help with childcare, as well as the problems immigrants might deal with, especially in the first years: inadequate command of the Italian language, sometimes illiteracy in their own language, weak knowledge of institutions, poor network of contacts, lack of recognition of foreign professional qualifications, difficulties in improving their non-formal competencies. All these factors, which contribute to excluding them from the job market or restricting job opportunities are the same that unaccompanied minors face, however, their situation is even more dramatic.

The Italian labour market is also particularly restrictive towards immigrants. As a ministerial report states, on the contrary to what happens in many developed economies – which seek highly-qualified workers – in Italy there has never been a demand of highly-skilled or well-educated immigrants, confirming how scarce the need for qualified workers is in an economic system that does not aim at innovation. The unqualified labour of foreign workers in Italy might be the consequence of a demand of low-skilled labour.<sup>127</sup>

Foreign-born workers are mainly recruited for low-skilled jobs, often in the underground economy, with low salaries and little career possibilities. One of the main signs of labour market inequalities between Italians and foreign-born workers is a very low correspondence between employment and competences. Only 24.1% of Moroccan women workers, for example, think their job is commensurate to their level of education and skills.<sup>128</sup> A survey within the now ended LEADER project (Labour and Employment without Ethnic and

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<sup>126</sup> OECD. 2014: 109.

<sup>127</sup> Direzione Generale dell’Immigrazione e delle Politiche di Integrazione, 2014.

<sup>128</sup> Istat. 2009. ‘L’integrazione nel lavoro degli stranieri e dei naturalizzati italiani’. *Istat Approfondimenti*, 14 December.

Religious Discrimination) highlights that those who perceive the highest contrast between skills/competencies and duties at work are women from Africa, especially Mediterranean countries, in entry level jobs, who have lived in Italy for less than five years, and are undocumented or with a staying permit of less than a year.<sup>129</sup> According to the latest ministerial report on immigrant labour, this discouraging situation, together with the growth of the reservation wage, will result in tensions and constitute the main problem for foreign workers in Italy, especially for descendants of migrants and long-term residency immigrants.<sup>130</sup>

From the personal accounts of the Muslim women interviewed in the framework of this research, it emerged that, broadly speaking and with exceptions, Muslim immigrant women are stay-at-home mums or have low-skilled jobs, while their daughters are pupils, students or graduates who look for a part-time job to earn some money and are only now entering the labour market as highly-skilled workers. Their situation, therefore, is quite different from their own mothers'. Having studied and grown up in Italy, they are not foreigners – regardless of their nationality on their passports – and therefore do not share the same difficulties as immigrants. If their mothers are more excluded from the job market and therefore have to face relatively little discrimination in employment, Muslim women with migrant backgrounds have to deal primarily with institutional discrimination on the one hand and intentional discrimination by employers and co-workers on the other. The latter consists in the inequality of treatment faced in all the stages of employment, which should always be considered in its multiple discrimination dimension, where the grounds of gender, religion, ethnicity, class, length of stay in the new country, might all be grounds for discrimination. The former takes its worst form in the current Italian citizenship legislation, which has very strict requirements and leaves hundreds of thousands minors born in Italy or who moved to Italy when they were children without citizenship.<sup>131</sup> The Italian citizenship law is mainly based on acquisition through bloodlines, rather than birth, and those who are born in Italy from non-citizen parents can therefore currently apply for citizenship only at the age of 18 if they have lived in the country continuously all their life. At the moment of writing, however, a new bill (amendments to the existing citizenship law), approved by the Chamber of Deputies in October 2015, is under discussion in the Senate.<sup>132</sup> If approved by the Senate, the new law would make it easier for the children of immigrants to acquire the Italian citizenship.<sup>133</sup>

### ***Institutional racism in the public sector***

Foreign-born residents with a valid working visa have, by law, the right to access jobs in both the private and public sectors, with the exception of those jobs involving the use of public powers or safeguarding the national interest. Still, it is not rare to find job adverts, and even civil service competition announcements issued by local councils, that include Italian (or an EU Member State) citizenship among the requirements. In 2013, for example, the Council of Florence issued a competition announcement for gardeners that required the citizenship of Italy or one of the EU Member States, but the same happened in other councils for a number of different public sector jobs such as nurses, receptionists, accountants, clerical workers, researchers and bus drivers. These competition announcements are discriminatory and unlawful. After

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<sup>129</sup> IRES, April 2007.

<sup>130</sup> Direzione Generale dell'Immigrazione e delle Politiche di Integrazione, 2014.

<sup>131</sup> In 2011, almost one million minors with foreign citizenship lived in Italy, 71% of those were born in Italy. It is estimated reveals that if Italy does not change its citizenship law, in 2029 only 7% of foreign minors will become Italian citizens. Giovannetti M., Nicotra V. (ed). 2012. *Da residenti a cittadini. Il diritto di cittadinanza alla prova delle seconde generazioni*. Cittalia-Anci.

<sup>132</sup> Bill n. S.2092, amendments to law n.21, of 5 February 1992, and other citizenship regulations.

<sup>133</sup> If accepted as it was approved by the lower chamber in October 2015, the reform will introduce the “soft jus soli” and the “jus culturae”. The former, the right of anyone born in the territory of a state to the Italian citizenship, will be recognised to those who are born in Italy from foreign parents if at least one of them holds an EU long-term residence permit. The latter states that citizenship can be gained if a minor, born in Italy or before turning 12 years old, has attended school in Italy for at least five years.

being spotted by anti-discrimination civil society organisations, they have to be removed and republished according to the anti-discrimination law. While these types of different treatment based on citizenship are certainly unlawful, there are some others that are precisely within the law. Until 2014, for example, you could work as an editor-in-chief of a registered newspaper<sup>134</sup> and a bus driver in public transport companies<sup>135</sup> only if you had the Italian citizenship.

### ***Existing reports and lack of focus on Islamophobia***

With the exception of academia, Islamophobia as a specific discrimination against Muslims is a relatively new concept in the anti-discrimination field in Italy. At the moment of writing, there is only one project monitoring of Islamophobic discrimination in Italy: “Mai+”, the national follow-up of the the Iman Project, which was an Islamophobia monitoring initiative in several countries of Europe. In Italy, however, at the moment of writing, there exists only a Facebook page and a form to report Islamophobic incidents, while there are no studies available yet. The territorial fragmentation of associations and their lack of resources, as well as a general disinterest in this specific topic by non-faith-based organisations, are some of the reasons behind this gap.

There is, however, attention towards a more general racial discrimination or rather discrimination against immigrants – which includes discrimination on the grounds of race or ethnicity, nationality, colour of the skin, but also religion. Non-faith-based organisations generally understand these types of discrimination as being strictly interconnected and difficult to distinguish. Some anti-racism associations contacted in the framework of this research, when asked about their work to combat discrimination against Muslim women and Muslim communities, replied they were secular organisations with no focus on religious discrimination. Others pointed out that they prefer not to limit the target of their beneficiaries to one form of discrimination.

The national equality body UNAR (National Office Against Racial Discrimination)<sup>136</sup> also has no focus on Islamophobia, but rather considers it and tackles it as religious discrimination together with other faiths. UNAR's mission is to protect against discrimination through the promotion of equality and the removal of discrimination. UNAR provides support to victims of discrimination (offering legal support or informal conciliation, but not legal action); reports to the parliament on the effectiveness of the principle of equality; and monitors incidents of discrimination every year. The incidents of discrimination UNAR addresses are those reported by local associations, found on social media platforms, covered by media, or submitted by individuals via a toll-free number, email, or website. The information provided by UNAR for the drafting of this report includes the data about complaints received from individuals, which can be either the victim or a witness, and classified by the gender and the religion of the person who submitted the complaint.<sup>137</sup> Religion, it must be remembered, is sensitive data and people were not obliged to put down their affiliation. Considering only complaints submitted by individuals, those who declared to be Muslim were 51 in 2012, 42 in 2013, and 48 in 2014. Of these 48, two were witnesses, while 46 were victims of the reported

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<sup>134</sup> Law n. 47 of 8 February 1948 (press law), art.3, says that editors-in-chief must have the Italian citizenship, but the resolution n. 30321 of 19 February 2014 by the Ministry of Justice to the National Association of Journalists (*Ordine nazionale dei giornalisti*) stated that this ruling results abrogated for incompatibility by article 2 of the legislative decree 286/1998 (Immigration decree).

<sup>135</sup> This changed with the legislative decree n. 40 of 4 March 2014 implementing the EU directive 2011/98/EU on a single application procedure for a single permit for third-country nationals to reside and work in the territory of a Member State and on a common set of rights for third-country workers legally residing in a Member State.

<sup>136</sup> UNAR broadened its mandate in 2011 to include the grounds of race and ethnic origin, sexual orientation and gender identity, disability, age, religion and personal opinion.

<sup>137</sup> UNAR 2015 data presented here has been all processed by IREF-ACLI.

discrimination, of which 13 women and 33 men. The cases of discrimination in employment, divided by gender and religion of the person who submitted the complaint, recorded 9 Muslim men and 2 Muslim women. These two cases of discrimination, one of which related to conditions of dismissal and the other to working conditions, were recorded in relation to ethnicity.

The extremely low number of recorded cases of discrimination against Muslim women does not remotely reflect the real extent of discrimination of Muslim women in Italy, but it does highlight a serious issue of under-reporting, which is the main reason behind the low number of complaints. Many victims of discrimination do not report incidents. This is partially due to a general disillusion, by victims, that the case will be resolved, and partially to the lack of knowledge, among the general public, of the tools available to combat discrimination, and of associations that offer legal aid and support. UNAR too, despite being the national equality body, is not well-known: many of the women interviewed in the framework of this research admitted they did not know UNAR or were not aware of the support offered. Moreover, as mentioned, the data provided by UNAR only include cases where people who reported a discriminatory behaviour agreed to state their religion and said they were Muslims. Many may have omitted to state their religious belief.

Across the country, and with better results in some areas, local and regional anti-discrimination centres have been established under a memorandum of understanding with UNAR and carry out a fundamental job in addressing incidents of discrimination within local communities, but only some regions and cities have signed this agreement so far. Still, two of the anti-discrimination centres visited in the framework of this research, one in Pistoia and one in Turin, have never recorded any episodes of religious discrimination against Muslim women in the workplace. “Muslim women who come to our offices are almost exclusively victims of domestic violence seeking help in ending an abusive relationship with their husbands,” said Barbara Beneforti, manager of the anti-discrimination centre in Pistoia.<sup>138</sup> Other episodes in this field involved a case of apostasy, a denied citizenship (which was resolved as non-discrimination), and a row at the General Register Office for an invalid passport photo of a woman wearing the headscarf covering her ears. In Turin, the centre has received reports on discrimination in the workplace against Muslims, but they involved only men. Women mainly reported cases of discrimination linked to the private sphere, such as forms of intolerance by neighbours.<sup>139</sup>

Alongside the anti-discrimination centres, every region and territorial area has a Parity Advisor (*Consigliera di Parità*) who ensures that the principle of equality and non-discrimination in the workplace is respected, with a particular focus on gender-related issues. Many women have turned to them for support and assistance when they fall victim to unequal treatment, but in the offices in Rome and Milan it seems that no plaintiff was Muslim.<sup>140</sup>

Muslim associations in Italy are generally faith-based associations whose mission is to create a space for meetings and activities for Muslims as well as promoting integration within society while keeping a Muslim identity. With the exception of Mai+ initiative, which monitors and measure islamophobic incidents through reports, monitoring Islamophobia is not generally one of the Muslim associations’ activities, but a number

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<sup>138</sup> Interview with Barbara Beneforti, manager of the anti-discrimination centre in Pistoia.

<sup>139</sup> Interview with Antonella Ferrero, public official at the anti-discrimination centre in Turin.

<sup>140</sup> Interview with Francesca Bagni Cipriani, Parity Advisor of the Metropolitan City of Rome, and with Marzia Oggiano, general secretary of the department of public administration of the trade union CGIL (Italian General Confederation of Labour) in Milan.

of them, such as Co-mai (Community of Arab World in Italy), receive reports of discrimination and anti-Muslim incidents from members of the association. Lack of resources, however, does not allow them to conduct a systematic monitoring. Currently, the only available official data are therefore those collected by UNAR.

### ***Differences in perceptions***

A survey by the trade union CGIL (Italian General Confederation of Labour) on the perceptions of discrimination in the workplace shows that there might be different interpretations of discrimination that vary with nationality and gender.<sup>141</sup> While Italians seem to mainly perceive religion as the main factor of discrimination, immigrants appear to believe that the discrimination is rather based on their foreign origin rather than their religion. Still, while immigrant men tend to consider their foreign origin as the main cause of discrimination, most of the interviewed women seem to believe it is rather due to their religious identity. A study based on empirical research in the two Italian cities of Parma and Verona by the Centre for Studies in Islamism and Radicalisation of Aarhus University, confirmed this phenomenon.<sup>142</sup> It revealed that the young observant Muslims they interviewed “tend not to read their situation in the job market as influenced by being Muslims. Asked if they felt discriminated against on the job market, the overall majority of them say that they have not experienced any discrimination because they are Muslims, but rather as foreigners”.<sup>143</sup> Female interviewees, however, offered a different perspective of discrimination. They felt discriminated on the basis of their religion and wearing the headscarf was the main reason.

### ***The headscarf***

The visibility of the Islamic faith often plays a pivotal role in generating discriminatory behaviours. The headscarf provokes an immediate identification with Islam and therefore with the numerous prejudices directed towards Muslim women.<sup>144</sup> From the interviews, it emerged that it is generally believed that the headscarf constitutes a serious obstacle to finding employment. In absence of the headscarf, the discrimination on the ground of religion usually fails to materialise, but other grounds, such as ethnicity, might remain. “Foreign women are affected by the same discrimination that affects all foreigners. If you wear the headscarf, this adds one more reason for being discriminated against”,<sup>145</sup> explained Marisa Iannucci, president of LIFE Onlus, a Muslim women’s association in Ravenna.

Despite overlapping and contradictory regulations, explained in detail in the legislative section of chapter 4, in Italy there are no laws restricting the wearing of the veil and people are allowed to wear symbols or clothes that represent their own religious or cultural identity.

However, finding a job that involves relationships with customers – whether it is in an office, a restaurant, or a shop – is particularly difficult in Italy if you wear the headscarf. Employers generally think that having a member of staff with the headscarf might ‘annoy’ or ‘scare’ customers and therefore reduce the profit. The argument based on the relationship with customers, however, is often used to cover up an unfounded opposition to the headscarf. Rejections due to religious garments have been received for positions such as cleaners, factory workers, chefs, and dish-washers, which do not require any contact with customers. Another justification for not accepting the headscarf is that it would infringe on the dress code policy of the

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<sup>141</sup> CGIL. 2004. *Rapporto discriminazione razziale nei luoghi di lavoro*.

<sup>142</sup> Della Porta, Bosi, 2010.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid: 24.

<sup>144</sup> See Massari, 2006.

<sup>145</sup> Interview with Marisa Iannucci, president of Muslim women association Life Onlus.

company, which wishes to promote a certain image through their workers reflecting the ethos of the organisation.

Women who choose to wear the headscarf are well aware they would be very likely to encounter obstacles to finding employment or keeping their job.<sup>146</sup> During the hiring process the manager is likely to enquire about the candidate's intentions – sometimes as explicit as a direct request (“I would hire you if you take it off”), sometimes in a more disguised manner (“Would you be willing to take it off?”).<sup>147</sup> Many employers also deny having any hostility towards Islam or the headscarf and shift the blame on customers for not being open-minded.

Some Muslim women give into meeting the request of employers by taking off their headscarf in the workplace. “I know it is not ideal, but I cannot afford to lose my job”, says a young woman<sup>148</sup> who started wearing the hijab five years ago, when she was already employed in a hotel in Milan. “My bosses told me that I have to abide by the rules and look like everyone else wearing just the uniform. I offered to match my hijab with the uniform colour, but they just said no”. Other women refuse any compromise, and end up either winning or losing. On her first day at work as a dishwasher, one woman was asked if she was going to keep the hijab, to which she answered threatening him to quit and stating that “dishes do not need to see her hair”.<sup>149</sup> Challenged by such assertiveness, the boss backed down, but this is not always the case. Another woman, manager in a popular restaurant explains how she was fired in the middle of high season and with a shortage of staff.<sup>150</sup>

In a time of economic crisis, when hundreds of candidates compete for the same position, it is easy for an employer to simply discard applicants wearing the headscarf. What is more, some employers seem now to be more aware of the troubles they would go through if they refuse a candidate because of their religion. This means that it is often difficult to determine whether a rejection is due to religious-based grounds, even if it is perceived as such by the candidate.<sup>151</sup>

As the sociologist Giancarlo Dall'Ara explains, if, to a certain extent, it is true that not all the interviewees perceived the job search as particularly troublesome, it is also true that even for some of those who do not work – and decided not to work, this decision was somehow induced or motivated by difficulties that are widely predictable and taken into account, even when not experienced in first person; this is always due to the headscarf, of course.<sup>152</sup> Discouragement about the approval of the headscarf sometimes leads to self-exclusion from applying for jobs, many interviewees admitted. “If the job advert mentions 'good appearance' among the requirements, I don't even bother applying. I know they would not accept my hijab”, said Samarkanda.<sup>153</sup>

### ***In the workplace***

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<sup>146</sup> Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS, 2013.

<sup>147</sup> Interviews with Sara and Samarkanda, university students in Milan.

<sup>148</sup> Interview with Muslim young woman working as a hotel staff member in Milan.

<sup>149</sup> Dall'Ara G. 2012. *Fisabilillah. Donne in cammino, scelte e percorsi di vita islamica*, Cesena: Il Ponte Vecchio: 71.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid: 70.

<sup>151</sup> The most effective way to detect an unequal treatment is to proceed by situation testing. In Italy, situation testing is performed, among others, by SOS Razzismo association in Rome and ASGI Association Juridical Studies on Immigration.

<sup>152</sup> Dall'Ara, 2012: 71.

<sup>153</sup> Interview with Samarkanda, university student in Milan.

Although it seems that the major difficulties faced by Muslim women in employment happen in the phase of access – and most of the existing literature focus on this aspect – face-to-face interviews also revealed some cases of unequal treatment in the workplace, by managers, colleagues, or customers. One example of managerial discrimination involved a Muslim gynaecologist in Rome who started wearing the hijab when she already had a position in a private practice. As a result, her directors decided to move her from the practice to the office, downgrading her to an administrative job.

Customers might also show particular intolerance or prejudices against Muslim workers. When working at the help desk of the hospital, Siam,<sup>154</sup> cultural mediator in Pistoia, has often perceived that customers are more likely to go and speak to her colleague, who does not wear the headscarf, but there have also been cases of customers who mistrusted and underestimated her competences. “They clearly wondered why I was there and thought I did not deserve to work in a hospital”, Siam said. In Milan, Samarkanda recalls an episode of similar disbelief towards her position when working for the local council.

The lack of an *intesa*<sup>155</sup> (official agreement) between Islam and the Italian state means that there are no legal obligations for employers to guarantee employees common Islamic practices such as daily prayers, religious holidays and specific food diets. The mentioned study on young Muslims by Aarhus University brings up complaints on reduced tolerance towards religious holidays and rituals (e.g. prayer breaks during the workday and serving halal food). Yet employers in the cities used as case studies seem to be approving of Muslim believers' needs. However, the study explains, “this is done on an ad hoc basis and is not formally recognised by law. Even though the potential for conflict on these issues seems remote at this stage, the lack of legislation can be expected to have a negative effect in the future”.<sup>156</sup>

### ***Not only gender, not only religion: intersectionality of discrimination***

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, there is a complex mix of issues around the employment condition of Muslim women in Italy. First of all, there are not just ‘racist employers’: there are disadvantages that are common to any immigrant in any country, and there are also systemic inequalities that could be removed if there was the political will to do it. On top of that, however, there are also unlawful acts of discrimination that are forbidden by law. Even in these cases, however, not only is it very difficult to prove that a discriminatory behaviour actually happened, but it is also difficult to measure it and to understand the causes behind each discriminatory action. According to Ginevra De Maio, of the research centre IDOS, discrimination against Muslim women is difficult to prove and easily escapes official surveys because of the multiple possible causes of discrimination. According to De Maio, the intersectionality due to the coexistence of several factors such as gender, nationality or foreign origin, religious faith and clothing, makes it particularly difficult to measure this type of discrimination. Especially when employers do not provide any explanations, it is hard to assess whether the cause of an applicant’s rejection was in response to religion, ethnicity, age, social class, or colour of skin. In many cases, however, it is the intersection of some or all these grounds to causes the discrimination:

what exposes the foreign-born Muslim woman to forms of discrimination and racism is not religion

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<sup>154</sup> Interview with Siam, cultural mediator in Pistoia.

<sup>155</sup> The Italian Constitution (art.8) states that religious confessions (with the except of Catholic Church) have the right to organise themselves according to their statutes and that their relationships with the State are regulated by law on the basis on agreements with their representation. Though these agreements vary depending on the confession, they generally regard regulation on assistance in police centres, hospitals, nursing homes and, prisons, on religion teaching in schools, marriage, acknowledgement of associations with purpose of worship and places of worship, donations, religious holidays, and the financial repartition of the eight per thousand (taxpayers’ compulsory donation to a religion or to the Italian State).

<sup>156</sup> Della Porta, Bosi, 2010.

per se, it is not the condition of woman per se, nor the condition of foreign-born and immigrant per se, but the fact they sum up all these conditions in their bodies, behaviours, clothing, lifestyle and role in the family.<sup>157</sup>

## LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT

### *Supranational laws*

The Italian anti-discrimination legal framework concurs with international regulatory frameworks. Although Italy has signed but not ratified Protocol n.12 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), article 14, prohibits discrimination on grounds of gender, race, colour of the skin, language, religion, political or any other opinion, national or social origin, belonging to a national minority, wealth, birth or any other conditions. The European Charter of Fundamental Rights, article 21,<sup>158</sup> also includes genetic features, disability, property and sexual orientation. EU non-discrimination directives will be analysed in the following paragraph as they have been transposed into national legislation.

### *National laws*

The key acts to prevent discrimination in Italy are the transpositions of the EU directives on anti-discrimination. Before the implementation of these directives, the Italian legislation was lacking any specific anti-discrimination laws implementing the principle of equality in itself, but other sources of law prohibited discrimination, including discrimination in employment: the Constitution, the Worker's Act (*Statuto dei Lavoratori*) of 1970, and the Immigration Decree (*Testo Unico sull'Immigrazione*) of 1998.

Article 3 of the Italian **Constitution** states that every citizen, regardless of their nationality, has the right to equal dignity and equality under the law without distinction on the grounds of sex, race, language, religion, political opinion, and personal or social conditions.<sup>159</sup> Articles 7, 8, 19 also include the prohibition of religious discrimination and mention the agreement (*intesa*) between the State and the confessions' representatives. However, the Italian State has not signed any agreement with regards to Islam, and the Muslim community therefore is granted limited rights compared with other religions in the country.<sup>160</sup>

The **Workers' Act**,<sup>161</sup> in its article 15, states the invalidity of actions or pacts aiming at dismissing or discriminating, even indirectly, against a worker in the assignment of qualifications or duties, transfers, or disciplinary proceedings, or to let them suffer other harm for their political, religious, racial and linguistic reasons or because of gender or trade union affiliation.

The legislative decree n. 286/1998 on immigration (***Testo Unico sull'Immigrazione***)<sup>162</sup> regulates both the right of immigration (rules and procedures on migratory flows management) and the right of integration (tools to guarantee that foreign-born residents enjoy the same rights as citizens with Italian citizenship), and to remove all the obstacles to the effective exercise of those rights. Its articles 43 and 44 forbid any act of

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<sup>157</sup> Speech by Ginevra De Maio, Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS, at the ENAR national roundtable in Rome on 4 June 2015.

<sup>158</sup> Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, art.12, 2010 O.J. C 83/02.

<sup>159</sup> Constitution of the Italian Republic, 1 January 1948, Art. 3.

<sup>160</sup> See Cesari J. (ed). 2014. *The Oxford book of European Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>161</sup> Law n.300 of 20 May 1970, known as "Workers' Act", provisions on the protection of freedom and dignity of workers, on freedom of trade union membership and trade union activity in the workplace.

<sup>162</sup> Legislative decree n. 286 of 25 July 1998, known as "Immigration Decree", on Consolidated Act of Provisions concerning immigration and the condition of third country nationals.

discrimination on the grounds of race and colour, ethnic origin, religious beliefs and practices, and national origin, and institute a specific civil action when either a private entity or a public body has caused discrimination. Although discrimination in employment is also prohibited by the legislative decrees implementing the EU directive 2000/78/EC, this Immigration Decree is important because it refers directly to discrimination on the ground of nationality, which is not included in the directive. As stated in a report by the European Network of Legal Experts in Non-discrimination, “the vast majority of case law over recent years concerns discrimination on the ground of nationality”.<sup>163</sup>

The Racial Equality Directive 2000/43/EC was effectively transposed into national legislation in 2003, with the Legislative Decree 215/2003, protecting from discrimination in goods and services on the exclusive ground of ethnicity. The EU **Employment Equality Directive 2000/78/EC** was effectively transposed into national legislation in 2003, with the **Legislative Decree n. 216/2003**<sup>164</sup> protecting from discrimination in the workplace on several grounds of discrimination: religion, personal beliefs, disability, age, and sexual orientation. The decree distinguishes between five types of discrimination: direct discrimination (one person is treated less favourably than another is, has been or would be treated in a comparable situation because of religion, personal beliefs, disability, age, and sexual orientation); indirect discrimination (an apparently neutral provision, criterion, practice, act, pact or behaviour may place some people of a determined religion, personal belief, disability, age, and sexual orientation in a situation of a particular disadvantage with regard to other people); harassment (unwanted conduct takes place with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity other person and of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment); instructions to discriminate; and retaliation.<sup>165</sup> They are not considered as criminal offences, and they can be pursued with a civil lawsuit. The principle of equal treatment stated by the legislative decree 216/2003 applies to access to employment, self-employment or to occupation, including selection criteria and recruitment conditions; employment and working conditions, including promotions, dismissals, and pay; access to all types and levels of vocational guidance, vocational training, professional vocational training (including apprenticeships and internships); and membership and activities within labour or professional organisations. The principle also applies to every individual, regardless of nationality, both in the public and the private sectors.

Italy’s “Report on measures to combat discrimination”, by Chiara Favilli, the legal expert of the European Network of Experts in the Non-discrimination Field<sup>166</sup> severely criticises the current anti-discrimination law in Italy and recommends “a straightforward amendment and consolidation”.<sup>167</sup> First of all, the “implementation of the directives through the decrees did not abolish or consolidate pre-existing anti-discrimination rules, but just added a further legal regime, thus creating a complex legal framework” due to a very poor relevant preparatory work. Following the European directives blindly, the legislative decrees n. 215/2003 and n. 216/2003, and the legislative decrees on gender equality n. 196/2007,<sup>168</sup> n. 5/2010<sup>169</sup> reproduce “the

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<sup>163</sup> Favilli, C. 2013. *Report on measures to combat discrimination Directives 2000/43/EC and 2000/78/EC, country report 2013, Italy, State of affairs up to 1st January 2014*. European Network of Legal Experts in the Non-Discrimination Field. Utrecht-Brussels: Human European Consultancy-Migration Policy Group: 42.

<sup>164</sup> Later amended by the Legislative Decree No 256/2004 and Legislative Decree No 101/2008. These legislative decrees - national adaptation of the EU directives - were simply added to the existing national legislation, which was not replaced nor removed.

<sup>165</sup> UNAR. 2011. *Parità di trattamento e uguaglianza in Italia. Un anno di attività contro ogni forma e causa di discriminazione*. Roma: Armando Editore.

<sup>166</sup> Favilli, 2013: 19

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.6.

<sup>168</sup> Legislative decree 6 November 2007, n. 196, implementing the directive 2004/113/CE on gender equality on the access and supply of goods and services.

<sup>169</sup> Legislative decree 25 January 2010, n.5, implementing the directive 2006/54/CE on equal opportunity and equal treatment in

same hierarchy of protection as the European directives, so that discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, age, religion, and disability, are sanctioned only in employment; discrimination on the ground of gender, also in access to goods and services (but not in education), while discrimination on the grounds of race and ethnicity enjoys a wider protection (in the legislation at least...)",<sup>170</sup> explains Barbara Giovanna Bello, lawyer and researcher member of ASGI (Association for Juridical Studies on Immigration). Considering all the national anti-discrimination rulings pre-existing the directives and the antidiscrimination clauses of the directives concerning third country nationals (e.g. Directive 2003/109/EC), however, the range of grounds of discrimination is slightly wider than what was recommended by the European directives. Still the list is inevitably limited: gender, race or ethnic origin, colour of the skin, nationality, language, religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation. As mentioned, the Immigration Decree not only extends the grounds of discrimination in general, but also extends the protection against discrimination in access to goods and services to the grounds of colour of skin, national origin, language, and religious practice and belief (leaving out sexual orientation and age), which were not included in the Racial Equality Directive.

Another flaw that hinders the full implementation of anti-discrimination rulings specifically on the ground of religion is the lack of a bilateral agreement (*intesa*) between the Italian State and Islam. As mentioned, while the Catholic Church benefits from a special relationship with the Italian state, other religious confessions are guaranteed the right to keep their own statute and to regulate by law their relationship with the state through a set of agreements.<sup>171</sup> The Italian State, however, because of political and ideological reasons on the one hand, and of the lack of a representative for the whole Muslim community, has not signed any agreement on the religion of Islam yet.<sup>172</sup> "Within the scope of application of Directive 2000/78," Favilli explains, "it is therefore clear that the employer enjoys wider discretion to refuse to take into consideration specific needs relating to a religion or belief when the employee is a member of a 'religion without an agreement'".<sup>173</sup> Although freedom of religion is a fundamental principle of the Italian Constitution, its legal protection in Italy remains unsatisfactory. Freedom of religion is also guaranteed by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of The European Union, but a clause of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union states that "the Union respects and does not prejudice the status under national law of churches and religious associations or communities in the Member States"<sup>174</sup>.

There exist some partial dispensations to the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of religion. First, according to law n.108/1990<sup>175</sup> on individual dismissals, the application of the non-discrimination law can be exempted when the employer is an organisation or business "whose production of goods or supply of services is inseparably linked with the willingness to achieve specific ideological aims",<sup>176</sup> such as political, cultural, or religious organisations, trade unions, or schools. The legislative decree 216/2003<sup>177</sup> also contains some exceptions to the application of its rule of law: articles 3 and 5 of the decree state that disparities of

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employment on gender grounds.

<sup>170</sup> Bello, B.G. Maggio 2015. 'Discriminazioni multiple e intersezionalità: queste sconosciute!' *Asgi.it*.

<sup>171</sup> At the moment of writing, the confessions with whom the State has signed agreements ratified by law are 11. Among them are: Union of Jewish Communities in Italy (UCEI), Waldensian Evangelical Church, Lutheran Evangelical Church in Italy, Italian Buddhist Union (UBI), Italian Hindu Union, and Seventh-day Adventist Church.

<sup>172</sup> Angelucci, Bombardieri, Tacchini, 2014.

<sup>173</sup> Favilli, 2013: 18.

<sup>174</sup> Article 17, paragraph 1 Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, 2008 O.J. C 115/47. Later: TFEU.

<sup>175</sup> Law on individual dismissals, 11 May 1990, n. 108, Article 4, clause 1.

<sup>176</sup> Pacillo V. 2004. 'Il divieto di discriminazione religiosa nel rapporto di lavoro subordinato'. *Olii.it*: 11.

<sup>177</sup> Article 3 and article 5 of legislative decree 216/2003.

treatment cannot be considered discriminatory if they are applied within religious organisations, and if some characteristics connected to religion, personal opinion, disability, age or sexual orientation are essential requirements for the execution of the working activities.

In terms of assumed and associated discrimination assumption, no legal provision in Italy prohibits discrimination based on perception or assumption of what a person is, neither is there a relevant legal debate on this issue. However, the wording of the current legislation could include this type of discrimination.<sup>178</sup>

### **Gender**

The Italian Constitution guarantees gender equality. Besides the mentioned article 3 on equal dignity and equality before the law, the Constitution also includes two additional articles specifically on equality between men and women in employment (article 37, stating equal rights between female and male workers) and access to elective office (article 51) as well as in social, cultural and economic life (article 117).

The key legal framework on gender equality in Italy is a consolidation act called “National Code of Equal Opportunities between Women and Men” (*Codice delle Pari Opportunità*).<sup>179</sup> Implemented in 2006 and later amended in 2010 with the Legislative Decree n. 5/2010,<sup>180</sup> the Code gathered all the provisions, those issued to implement the directives and those pre-existing the directives, to prevent unequal treatment between men and women in all areas of society. The Code defines and forbids discrimination (direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment) in all aspects of employment (access to work, equal pay, social security benefits, trade union membership, legal protection and judicial procedures). Its articles 8-20 also establish a national committee to promote the removal of discriminatory behaviour on gender grounds and of any obstacles limiting the equality between men and women in access to employment, in the workplace, and in professional development.

### **Multiple discrimination**

The discriminatory behaviour is however rarely based on one single ground. In many cases, Muslim women are not discriminated against merely because of their religion or because of their gender, but on the basis of coexistence of both (and more) characteristics: “some practices, such as the imposition to leave the hair uncovered, are not indirectly discriminatory for all women, neither for all Muslims, but only for Muslim women who wear the headscarf, which falls into a gap of protection [under the current legal system]”.<sup>181</sup> In the case of first and second generation immigrants, the grounds of nationality and ethnicity can play a decisive role too, adding to gender and religion. This type of multiple discrimination is called intersectional discrimination and “happens when the discrimination is based on different grounds interacting with each other in a way that they cannot be distinguished and separated any more”.<sup>182</sup> The multiple discrimination, however, is not explicitly covered or defined by the EU and Italian legislations. The preambles of the Directives 2000/43/EC and 2000/78/EC imply the possibility of discrimination on several grounds, but have no binding effect. The corresponding Italian legislative decrees 215/2003 and 216/2003 do not explicitly

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<sup>178</sup> Favilli, 2013.

<sup>179</sup> Legislative decree on equal opportunities between women and men, 11 April 2006, n.198.

<sup>180</sup> Legislative Decree 25 January 2010, n. 5, implementing Recast Directive 2006/54/EC on equal opportunity and equal treatment in employment on gender grounds.

<sup>181</sup> Ferrero M., Perocco F. 2011 *Razzismo al lavoro. Il sistema della discriminazione sul lavoro, la cornice giuridica, gli strumenti di tutela*. Milano: Franco Angeli: 285.

<sup>182</sup> Bello. 2015: 3.

mention the term 'multiple discrimination' although they address "the different impact that the same forms of discrimination might have on women and men"<sup>183</sup> and the "existence of forms of racism of a cultural and religious character".<sup>184</sup> Not only do these statements "have little practical value",<sup>185</sup> according to Favilli, but multiple discrimination "is perceived by the legislator only as an intersection between the grounds of gender and other discriminatory factors",<sup>186</sup> explains Simonetta Renga, legal expert of the European Network in the Field of Gender Equality. Further legislative action at European or national level is strongly recommended by the experts.

At the EU level, the lack of legislation against discrimination outside employment and occupation on the grounds of age, disability, religion/belief and sexual orientation is, according to Renga, "a problem when these grounds are combined with existing grounds, because this does not allow the grounds being argued in an intersected or additive way, as is required in multiple discrimination hypotheses. Furthermore, the fact that the two anti-discrimination directives provide for an exhaustive list of discriminatory grounds rather than for an open list of prohibited factors does not promote protection against multiple discrimination".<sup>187</sup> Beyond addressing these legislative gaps, more can be done also on a different level: Barbara Giovanna Bello suggests that the equality body UNAR should promote the knowledge of multiple discrimination and cooperate with the Gender Equality Advisers or the Italian representative of GREVIO (Group of experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence).<sup>188</sup>

These legislative gaps also lead to uncertainty on the types of legal actions. "The most common practice is that the plaintiff presses charges only on one ground of discrimination, depending on what they wish to achieve and what gives more possibility of success", explains Chiara Favilli.<sup>189</sup> "Theoretically", she adds, "one could take two legal actions, one for each ground of discrimination, in order to avoid procedural 'traps', but then only one can go on to the final judgement". In 2011, with the legislative decree n.150,<sup>190</sup> the government introduced a simplification of the judicial proceedings, establishing a summary trial for some of the discrimination controversies included in the existing legislation, and therefore admitting the possibility to cover several grounds of discrimination<sup>191</sup> under the same judicial action. Article 38 of the Code of Equal Opportunities, however, was not included in the list, with the result that it seems that the law does not contemplate the possibility to take legal action against discrimination on gender and another ground with one legal proceeding. In other words,

the Muslim woman who is victim of discrimination in employment on the grounds of both gender and religion should, preposterously, make two different claims (one according to art.38 of the Code of Equal Opportunities that would be closed with a decree, and one according art.4 of the legislative decree 216/2003 that would be closed with an ordinance) even within two different territorial competencies (one where the discrimination happened, and one where the victim lives, which might be different from where she works).<sup>192</sup>

Still, despite highlighting the urgency of a reform (or at least the inclusion of art.38 of the Code of Equal

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<sup>183</sup> Art. 1 of the legislative decree 216/2003 and Art.1 of the legislative decree 215/2003.

<sup>184</sup> Art. 1 of the legislative decree 216/2003.

<sup>185</sup> Favilli. 2013: 24.

<sup>186</sup> Burri S., Schiek D. 2009. *Multiple Discrimination in EU Law. Opportunities for legal responses to intersectional gender discrimination?* European Network of Legal Experts in the Field of Gender Equality, European Commission: 77.

<sup>187</sup> Burri, Schiek, 2009: 81-82.

<sup>188</sup> Bello, May 2015.

<sup>189</sup> Interview with Chiara Favilli, legal expert in EU anti-discrimination law.

<sup>190</sup> Article 28, legislative decree 150/2011

<sup>191</sup> Art.44 of the Immigration Decree, art.4 of legislative decree 216/2003, art.3 of law n.67/2006 and art.55 of legislative decree 198/2006.

<sup>192</sup> Ferrero, Perocco, 2011: 301-302.

Opportunities legislative decree n.150/2011), Alberto Guariso,<sup>193</sup> lawyer and member of ASGI (Association of Juridical Studies on Immigration) mentions the possibility – unknown to many in the field – to refer to article 40 of the Code of Civil Procedure to start one single legal action to address multiple discrimination (that includes the ground of gender) in employment.<sup>194</sup> According to clause 4, interconnected claims falling under different special procedures must be treated and judged under one single procedure, which implies that the prevailing procedure allows dealing with interconnected claims due to different grounds of discrimination.

### **Case law**

The role of case law, especially regarding discrimination on the grounds of religion and employment, has always been very small. Only recently scholars have been progressively dealing with anti-discrimination, and associations have been increasingly involved in monitoring cases of violation of equal treatment principles.<sup>195</sup> At the moment of writing, there seem to have been only one case law, which also seems to be the only court case in this specific field, regarding litigation of a discriminatory behaviour against a Muslim woman in employment. In 2013, Sara Mahmoud, a 19 year old woman, was contacted by an agency to work as an advertising promoter distributing leaflets to possible customers. Considering that Sara's profile, including photos of her, were in the database of the agency who contacted her, it was already aware of the fact that she wears the hijab. When contacting her, one of the agents wrote to her “I would like to hire you because you're very pretty, but are you keen on taking the chador off?”<sup>196</sup> After Sara's explanation on the religious reasons for which she wears the hijab and proposing a compromise to match it with a possible uniform, the agency dismissed her saying that customers would not be very flexible. Having the written proof of a rejection, Sara contacted the solicitors “*Studio, diritti e lavoro*” and pressed charges against the agency. After an unexpectedly long trial for the summary procedure, the judge's sentence did not recognise that the employer discriminated against Sara, as one of the requirements was “fine and voluminous hair” and therefore the rejection was justified as a “business-oriented preference”. Unsatisfied by a superficial sentence that did not take into account the multiple discrimination or presented any particular interpretation of the anti-discrimination legislation, Alberto Guariso and Livio Neri, lawyers of Sara, appealed against and the case was sent back for another appeal, which has been set for May 2016.

### **Necessary Improvements**

In the latest country report by the European Network of Legal Experts on Non-Discrimination, Chiara Favilli recognises how the implementation of the non-discrimination directives has contributed to increasing litigation in the field, although it mainly concerns discrimination based on nationality. Still, a “straightforward amendment and consolidation of relevant anti-discrimination law”<sup>197</sup> was also strongly recommended. First, Favilli explained in an interview,<sup>198</sup> considering the numerous anti-discrimination acts crossing over, that the anti-discrimination legislative framework needs to be simplified, as well as the judicial proceedings. Moreover, it is crucial that the role of civil society organisation is strengthened so as to raise awareness on the one hand, and to prosecute discrimination and hate crimes on the other. Much has been done with regard to discrimination against Roma, for example, but Italy lacks associations that are resolved to fight discrimination on other grounds, especially religion.

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<sup>193</sup> Interview with Alberto Guariso, lawyer and member of ASGI.

<sup>194</sup> See Bello, B.G. 2015.

<sup>195</sup> Favilli. 2013.

<sup>196</sup> Interview with Sara Mahmoud.

<sup>197</sup> Favilli, 2013: 6.

<sup>198</sup> Interview with Chiara Favilli, legal expert in EU anti-discrimination law.

To address the lack of legislation on multiple discrimination, in addition to the introduction of a new dedicated EU directive with specific provisions to tackle multiple discrimination, Simonetta Renga, the European network legal expert in gender law, recommends that “gender policies and non-discrimination policies should not be kept separate, because this does not promote the development of coordinated action to tackle discrimination and, in particular, endangers those intersections and communication across the various grounds that are necessary to recognise the combined effect of different grounds of discrimination”.<sup>199</sup>

### ***Under-reporting***

From the interviews with Muslim women across Italy, it emerged that a very high percentage of those seeking occupation or already in employment have been rejected or had troubles with the employer because of their religious garments. As mentioned above, only one of the interviewees, Sara Mahmoud, decided to sue those who discriminated against her because of the headscarf. Cases of discrimination in employment are very rarely reported by Muslim women to any association, and even fewer are taken to court. The main factor that discourages victims to legally proceed is from initiating legal proceedings are first of all the impression that nothing will change after pressing charges – that is that they would not be hired anyway. The general perception that a lawsuit involves complex and long trials, as well as a legal cost aspect, is crucial in deterring legal action. To press charges, victims need first of all a proof that discriminatory behaviour happened – which happens rarely. Employers often have a verbal conversation with the candidate/employee instead of writing down their perplexity or opposition to the headscarf. In case of lack of evidence, there are several ways to investigate and ascertain a discriminatory behaviour: the lawyer or the association in charge of the case can, for example, submit a request to access the documents and perform a comparison of the CVs, or arrange a situation testing, that entails the monitoring, through fake applications and fake applicants of different religions or ethnic origin, of the person suspected to having committed discrimination in the hiring process.

To limit under-reporting and encourage more victims to press charges, the government, with the legislative decree 150/2011, introduced a change in the distribution of the burden of the proof: if the presumption of discrimination can be based on facts, then it is up to the defendant to prove that there has been no unequal treatment.<sup>200</sup> Moreover, the national equality body UNAR, as well as a number of associations across the country, are able to offer the advance payment to cover the legal fees, to remove one of the obstacles that prevent victims from suing.

The effectiveness of all these measures, however, appears to be heavily limited by the poor knowledge of the legal procedures (how to submit a claim) as well as the work of UNAR and other associations in support to victims of discrimination in employment.

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<sup>199</sup> Burri, Schiek, 2009: 82.

<sup>200</sup> Legislative decree 150/2011, article 28.

## RECENT CASE STUDIES

### **Media**

Mainstream media occasionally report cases of discrimination in employment against Muslim women. In this specific field, their interest seems to be towards cases, mainly abroad, which are taken to court, because they generate heated debate in the comments section and on social media.

Some people still remember the case of Fatima Mouyache, the teacher who in 2004 was excluded from a traineeship in a private kindergarten because of the headscarf.<sup>201</sup> In line with the parents' comments, the director of the school is reported saying "Fatima's headscarf might scare children: it is not racism, it's a matter of style". With the intervention of the then minister of Home Affairs and the mayor, but also thanks to the exposure received, Fatima Mouyache was offered the traineeship in a different school.

A more recent case is that of a student, 17 year old Omaima, who was denied an internship in a luxury hotel just two days before starting.<sup>202</sup> The girl said that managers rejected her when they discovered that she wears the headscarf and explicitly said that interns should "behave and dress in a certain way". Hotel managers claimed it was a misunderstanding and that Omaima was welcome anytime to do an internship in the hotel, but the girl, after being refused, had to accept her internship in a council, where she could not apply the skills learnt at school.

### **Political spaces**

Muslim women have been at the centre of the political debate about issues around the headscarf and the possible ban of the full-face veil, around the practice of genital mutilation, and around a general discourse on integration and empowerment. It seems that not many politicians took particularly relevant positions as regards employment. Some have expressed their views on this issue as a comment to current news. For example, when asked to comment on Sara Mahmoud's trial, the local coordinator of the right-wing Pdl (Party of Freedom), Corrado Biondino, said: "in time of crisis, it's better to take the headscarf off if people want to work". He then added "there are the needs of the job seekers but there are also the needs of employers. Jobs that require a good appearance and relationship with customers require precise rules to which we have to abide".<sup>203</sup>

### **Court cases**

Excluding the trial of Sara Mahmoud, there are not many known court cases in this specific sector involving Muslim women. Despite not being a court case, it is worth mentioning the episode of a language interpreter who, in 2011, was asked by the judge, Giuseppe Casalbore, to take off her headscarf. Claiming that the rules state that headgears are not admitted in the courthouse, he insisted that the Islamic headscarf was no exception. The woman refused and preferred to leave the courthouse and quit her work. Considered the problematic issue, Casalbore asked the opinion of the Superior Council of Judiciary, which eventually argued that those religious practices, including clothing and symbols, which fall within the legitimate freedom of religion, must be fully respected.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> La Repubblica. 2004 'Via la maestra che porta il velo 'spaventa i bambini''. *Repubblica.it*, 22 March.

<sup>202</sup> Bandini E., Marceddu D. 2014. 'Porta il velo, hotel superlusso le nega lo stage'. *Ilfattoquotidiano.it*, 28 April.

<sup>203</sup> Zanardi A. 2013. 'Il velo? In tempo di crisi meglio levarlo'. *Ilgiorno.it*, 15 April.

<sup>204</sup> Resolution by the Superior Council of Judiciary, 22 February 2012, on the obligation to attend a judicial hearing without any headgear and the respect of religious beliefs that entails different practices.

## GOOD PRACTICES

### ***Governmental and institutional initiatives***

Co-financed by the European Fund for the Integration of third-country nationals, many municipalities and regions in Italy have implemented initiatives that facilitate the labour market integration of non-EU immigrants. There seem not to be governmental or institutional projects that focus specifically on tackling discrimination in employment against Muslim women, nor encourage the labour participation of this specific group. The existing job-oriented initiatives seem to generically address immigrants or other vulnerable groups but Muslim women are occasionally among the beneficiaries of the projects.<sup>205</sup> *Lo SapeviChe?* promotes the knowledge of rights, duties and opportunities for immigrants in the labour market, including contracts, professional development courses, and acknowledgement of diplomas taken abroad. Another initiative, *DiversitaLavoro* (Job Diversity) a national programme promoted by several foundations and bodies, aims to advocate diversity management and labour market inclusion of vulnerable groups that are often discriminated, mainly through recruiting fairs. Despite having potentials to include Muslim women within the category of foreign-born workers mentioned in their website, in its implementation this initiative ended up mainly targeting disabled and LGBT people.

### ***Trade union, anti-racism and feminist movements***

Many anti-racism associations include, among their activities, a help desk to foster the labour integration of immigrants, but no association has been founded working specifically on the Muslim community. The *MaTeMù* centre of CIES (Centre for Development Education and Information) in Rome is an association that fosters the integration of young immigrants through workshops, training classes and educational-entertainment activities. In a friendly environment MaTeMù helps teenagers understand their capacities and improve their skills in several fields, offers individual help in CV writing and interview preparation, as well as information on professional training and job opportunities. More recently, after identifying the current difficulties for young immigrants in going beyond an internship or traineeship and finding a paid job, CIES is planning to start a social micro enterprises pilot scheme in catering and dress-making. Asinitas, another association based in Rome, has one of their bases in a neighbourhood with a high immigrant presence. Despite not addressing them exclusively, many Muslim women attend their courses and workshops. Instead of just informing women of their rights, Asinitas creates a friendly women-only environment where they can express and confront themselves with women of different nationalities and cultures, with the aim of acquiring strength and desire to do other activities and engagements in wider society.

### ***Muslim-driven initiatives***

Although Muslim communities are aware of the discrimination that women face, there are relatively few initiatives aimed at addressing this specific problem, or at least to raise more awareness among non-Muslim people. After recognising the systematic discrimination Muslim women with the headscarf were experiencing in the area, the Muslim women association LIFE Onlus in Ravenna, together with the women's section of trade union CGIL (General Confederation of Italian Workers), has organised in the past several debates and meetings with local stakeholders (municipality and public offices, hospitals, cooperatives) to talk about discrimination against Muslim women in the workplace. The opening of a dialogue resulted in the acceptance of the headscarf by many public and private bodies. In 2015, on the occasion of woman's

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<sup>205</sup> Betzu M. C. 2015. 'Quando il velo non è un ostacolo'. *Lavoce del trentino.it*, 30 May.

day, the association *Palma del Sud* (Palm tree of the South) in Aprilia organised a conference to discuss prejudices against the headscarf in the workplace, with the personal accounts of Muslim women who have experienced discrimination. The conference was the first step of an awareness campaign that will include debates and round-tables with victims of discrimination as well as meetings with the local companies and offices to fight stereotypes against Muslim women with the headscarf and promote their labour integration.

### ***Personal stories***

Alongside the negative stories of women who struggle to have their headscarf accepted in the workplace, there are also the positive experiences of those women who have never experienced difficulties or have even benefited from wearing the headscarf. It is the case of self-employed women, as this professional status helps in being protected from discrimination, such as one of the interviewees,<sup>206</sup> who owns an Islamic library in Milan; or cultural and language mediators, who facilitate the understanding between two parties belonging to two different cultures and languages – that is a foreign-born Muslim person on the one side, and a public or private institution on the other (school, hospital, prison, courthouse).

Another positive story comes from Takoua Ben Mohamed, a graphic journalist who draws cartoons to promote inclusive attitudes and expose Islamophobia.<sup>207</sup> Takoua, a young woman of Tunisian origin, managed to turn her passion for drawing into a job. With irony, she debunks stereotypes on Muslim women drawing episodes of her everyday life and showing the absurdity of some prejudices or people's behaviour towards women who wear the headscarf.

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<sup>206</sup> Interview with a library owner in Milan.

<sup>207</sup> Interview with Takoua Ben Mohammed, graphic journalist.

# CANDY CRUSH

by TAKOUB BEN MOHAMED



Cartoon by Takoua Ben Mohamed

# RACIST VIOLENCE AND SPEECH

## HATE CRIME DATA

### *Lack of reliable data*

It is hardly possible to understand the real dimension of racial and religious hate in Italy, let alone Islamophobia, and this is not just due to the high level of under-reporting. Italy is one of those OSCE (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe) countries that collect hate crime data but do not make it public. Italy makes it available to the public only upon request, but this process has strong limitations. This serious lack of official and reliable data on hate crimes is scarcely compensated by international reports and small-scale unofficial recordings – which are still important to highlight the seriousness of the phenomenon.<sup>208</sup> In its latest report on Italy, the Council of Europe's European Commission on Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) has urged the country to intensify its efforts in monitoring incidents.<sup>209</sup>

On a national level, police forces (*Polizia di Stato* and *Arma dei Carabinieri*) systematically gather data on crimes and forward them to Istat (National Institute of Statistics) to be included in the statistics on criminality. Hate crimes, however, which are “crimes acts committed with a bias motive”,<sup>210</sup> fall within a special category and the Minister of Interior does not reveal statistics specifically about it, unless under specific request, nor provides any information regarding trials, solving rates and compensations to victims. The reason for not publicising is mainly due to the limits of its monitoring system.<sup>211</sup> Italian law<sup>212</sup> forbids the processing of personal sensitive data (unless under the authorisation of the Data Protection Authority and the persons' written consent), and therefore crime reports by police do not register victims' ethnicity and religion, thus preventing the possibility of gathering data on specific vulnerable groups.<sup>213</sup> Still, since Italy's Criminal Code contains general and specific penalty-enhancement provisions for racist bias (Mancino Law), hate crimes files contain the bias motivation and type.<sup>214</sup> This bias motive, however, is not classified as an indicator in the police database, making it impossible (unless you open each file to check the bias) to disaggregate data by anti-Muslim bias, and not even by the general categories of religion or ethnicity.<sup>215</sup> Moreover, considering the victim's account of facts but regardless of what the victim actually believes, the complaint sent to the public prosecutor includes the notification of the Mancino Law only if the Criminal Investigation Division (and not the victim) judges that there was a hate bias. After this, the public prosecutor carries the investigation and evaluates up to a whether to ask the competent criminal court to dismiss the case or to commit for trial in order to judge if the criminal offence had bias motive. In Italy there are three instances, the last of which is the Supreme Court of Cassation.

As said, data on hate crimes are revealed only upon request. One of the institutions that invite Italian authorities to send their data every year is ODIHR (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) of the OSCE. This data are generally obtained crossing the police database and the directories of OSCAD

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<sup>208</sup> Scagliotti, 2011.

<sup>209</sup> ECRI, February 2012..

<sup>210</sup> ODIHR. 2009. *Hate Crime Laws. A practical guide*. Warsaw: OSCE/ODIHR: 16.

<sup>211</sup> Telephone interview with the secretariat of OSCAD (Observatory for Security Against Acts of Discrimination).

<sup>212</sup> Law 675/1996, article 22.

<sup>213</sup> Human Rights Watch. 2011. *L'intolleranza quotidiana. La violenza razzista e xenofoba in Italia*.

<sup>214</sup> See ODIHR, *Country information on Italy*, archives, available at <http://hatecrime.osce.org/italy> accessed on 20 June 2015.

<sup>215</sup> Telephone interview with the secretariat of OSCAD (Observatory for Security Against Acts of Discrimination).

(Observatory for Security Against Acts of Discrimination). In 2013, ODIHR website reports<sup>216</sup> that Italian police recorded 472 hate crime incidents. Almost half of them (226) were anti-religious crimes, and included 13 physical assaults, 90 property damage crimes, four cases of vandalism, 39 of threats and 80 other crimes, including three committed online and 77 unspecified. This category, however, not only is not disaggregated by gender, but it also includes, without making any distinction, all the hate crimes with an anti-religion bias.

Operated by the National Police and *Arma dei Carabinieri* under the Minister of Interior, the Observatory for Security Against Acts of Discrimination (OSCAD) was established in 2010 to protect victims of hate crimes and any form of discrimination. Differently from the police authorities, victims can send OSCAD anonymous complaints. The Observatory also monitors the level of hate crime in the country, but replying to our request for information on hate crimes with anti-Islam bias, the secretariat replied saying “up to today, OSCAD has never received specific claims on episodes of Islamophobia against Muslim women”.<sup>217</sup> There are several reasons behind the complete lack of complaints, the secretariat suggested.<sup>218</sup> First, OSCAD started its activities only five years ago, which means that many people still are not aware of it and its services. Second, the Observatory mainly operates in partnership with NGOs and associations, which are the main sources of claims received. Associations that focus on religious discriminations, as said, are still very small in Italy, while LGBT associations, for example, are more established and more active in reporting homophobic incidents. And third, despite the possibility of remaining anonymous, undocumented people are reluctant to report incidents, especially if the body is operated by the police.

With the exclusion of the data submitted to ODIHR the Minister of Interior has disclosed some percentages, announced by the Justice Commission during the discussion on an anti-homophobia bill. On that occasion in 2013, it declared is that 11% of the 611 reports received by the police until December 2013 were motivated by religion.

On a national level, some data come from the discrimination monitoring of the equality body UNAR. These data, however, refer only to harassment as defined by the legislative decrees 215/2003 and 216/2003 and do not constitute a criminal offence. It includes mockery and insults. According to the latest data sent to ENAR in 2014, UNAR recorded a total of 21 cases of discrimination with harassment reported by Muslims, more precisely five women and 16 men. All the cases were ethnic-based discrimination. As explained above for the UNAR data on discrimination, this very low number does not reflect the reality in the country. These five claims are merely the cases in which the people who submitted the complaint decided to disclose their religion as Muslim. In general, this low number should be considered as an alarming sign of under-reporting. In its Dossier on Immigration 2014, UNAR recounts a particular incident of Islamophobia (not a criminal offence) which is also a known episode in the country. For eight years, until the day before the trial, the village of Varallo Sesia (Piedmont) displayed, at every entrance, big council posters saying “the use of burqa, burqinis and niqab is forbidden” as well as the access to “street vendors and beggars”.<sup>219</sup> In Italy, as it will be further explained in the Legislation paragraph below, there is no law prohibiting women from wearing Islamic full-face veils in public places. Still, it was not the first time that a council elevated itself above the law, imposing illegal and unconstitutional discriminatory measures within its jurisdiction.

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<sup>216</sup> ODIHR, *Country information on Italy*.

<sup>217</sup> Communication received via email on 27 April 2015

<sup>218</sup> Interview with the secretariat of OSCAD.

<sup>219</sup> Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS, 2014.

The previously mentioned Mai+ (Italian for “never again”), follow-up initiative of IMAN (Islamophobia Monitoring Action Network) which was a trans-European project instituted by CCIF (Collective against Islamophobia in France) and FEMYSO (Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations), monitors, through individual reports, the level of Islamophobia in Italy. Mai+ was launched in 2015 and no report has been published yet “We compared data of nine EU countries and realised that Islamophobia in Italy occurs in a very different way than in countries like France”,<sup>220</sup> said Miriam Amrane, the project coordinator of the former IMAN project in Italy. According to her, the way hostility against Muslims occurs in the country is mainly xenophobia, especially in political propaganda, or it is difficult to distinguish between the two. “It is true that there have been a few offences to Islamic buildings, like a pig head hanged on the door of a mosque or a Molotov cocktail thrown into a Islamic butcher shop, but physical assaults against Muslim people very rarely happen – and when they occur, ethnicity is the main ground of hatred.”

Some local anti-racism associations offer assistance to victims to report incidents, but with a very few exceptions,<sup>221</sup> this is not usually followed by the publication of a report. Other NGOs, wanting to highlight the nature and frequency of racism and violence, base their research on cases reported by the media. Lunaria, an NGO based in Rome, is one of them. While no official data on anti-Muslim crimes were reported to ODIHR by Italian authorities, in 2012 Lunaria informed ODIHR about a physical assault against two women involving an attempt to pull off their headscarf, one case of graffiti near a mosque, one case of damage to a mosque by throwing stones, and another physical assault against two Bangladeshi men by a group.<sup>222</sup> In its 2014 study on racism in Italy, Lunaria also revealed a significant rise in the number of news stories on hate crimes and discrimination against Muslims (from nine cases recorded in 2011 to 78 in 2014).<sup>223</sup> These cases are unfortunately not differentiated by gender. It is also interesting to note that, among the different grounds, faith-based discrimination and violence occurs less often than discrimination based national or ethnic origin,<sup>224</sup> at least in the way it is classified in reports.

A report by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) on minorities as victims of crimes shows that the North African community in Italy is among those specific groups with the highest prevalence rate in assault or threat, as well as in serious harassment, in Europe.<sup>225</sup> The incident rates for assault or threat in the survey reach 44 for 100 Northern Africans interviewed in Italy. Comparing the results with those for the majority population, in Italy the majority experienced a rate of victimisation of 3.2% while North Africans registered a 18.6% rate. These data, however, are not differentiated by gender.

### ***Type of incidents***

Racist violence against immigrant women mainly happens in public places such as public transport, streets, markets and shops, or in the workplace. As is the case for discriminatory practices, criminal offences with a bias are also likely to be intersectional, rather than having only one cause, although the binomial racism-

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<sup>220</sup> Interview with Miriam Amrane, local coordinator of the GMI (Young Muslims of Italy) in Milan and coordinator of the former IMAN project in Italy.

<sup>221</sup> The Milan-based NAGA association (Voluntary Association for Social and Health Care assistance and the Rights of Foreign Citizens, Roma and Sinti), for example, in 2009 published a report on daily racism based on a survey of those people who asked support to NAGA. Despite including voices of people coming from Muslim countries, this report did not expose any faith-based discrimination.

<sup>222</sup> ODIHR, 2013 ODIHR. 2013. *Hate Crimes in the OSCE region: incidents and responses. Annual report for 2012*, Warsaw: OSCE/ODIHR.

<sup>223</sup> Lunaria, 2014.

<sup>224</sup> Between 2011 and 2014, Lunaria registered 330 cases of religion motivated incidents compared with 1890 for the national and ethnic origin ground.

<sup>225</sup> FRA EU-Midis, 2012: 14.

sexism is still little discussed and little known in Italy.<sup>226</sup> The visibility of religion, caused by religious garments such as the headscarf, however, plays a central role in triggering intolerant behaviours that are based on an anti-Muslim bias. All the Muslim women wearing a headscarf that have been interviewed in the framework of this research have described negative experiences strictly connected with their choice to wear the headscarf. This manifestly emerges when the same woman starts or stops wearing the headscarf and can compare the two experiences and the attitudes of people.

Marisa Iannucci, president of the Muslim women association LIFE Onlus, converted to Islam 20 years ago, choosing to wear the headscarf. "Islamophobia especially women",<sup>227</sup> she said. "Italian Muslim men do not see any changes in the relationship with other people when they convert. But if a woman does, everybody can see [if she wears the headscarf], and there comes a dramatic change in your job, within your friends circle, and in your social relations" Some of those who have started wearing the hijab when they were in high school felt rejected by schoolmates, also with some attempts to pull their headscarf off. "In the queue at the post office or at the food shop is not rare to hear a couple of people behind you talk about you in a negative way, without even worrying about not being heard",<sup>228</sup> said Samarkanda, a university student in Milan.

A number of interviewees said they felt the "nasty look" of people when they walk into a shop or sit on the bus. Unpleasant comments referring specifically to the headscarf are also very frequent, such as "take that thing off your head" and "it's not Carnival!". The assumption that a woman wearing the headscarf is not Italian is also very common. This has the subsequent effect that the insult is charged with prejudices against immigrants. Individual interviews revealed that one of the most used derogatory remarks is "Go back to your country!" regardless of the fact that the person might be an Italian who converted to Islam, or a girl who was born and grew up in Italy from foreign-born parents. Suhair,<sup>229</sup> young activist and researcher, said:

If you wear the headscarf, or even if you have an Arabic name, you automatically become foreigner and therefore, according to public opinion, you have less rights because, as some people say 'you've been here for a shorter time than those who have been here for generations'.

Many interviewees agree that it is the element of diversity – the headscarf in their case, the colour of skin in other cases - that triggers a negative reaction. That is why Muslim women generally perceive they are more discriminated and exposed to racist abuse than men. "There is no violence", said Siham, cultural mediator in Pistoia.<sup>230</sup> "You feel the dirty looks of people on you in shops or buses. You see elderly women moving their bags on their other side. But I don't think it is specifically against Muslim women, it's against those who are different". The recurrence of this type of incident is very high. A Muslim woman going to public places and using public transport is very exposed to insults or derogatory remarks that can reach up to a weekly or even daily frequency. Tracing a profile of the common offender is not possible; although elderly people seem to be more prone to slander – according to the experience recalled by the Muslim women interviewed – the intolerance towards Muslim women crosses differences of age and gender.

Although it did not emerge directly from the interviews, a more serious form of racist violence is experienced by migrant women who are in a particularly vulnerable position. Reports on gender violence,

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<sup>226</sup> Ribeiro Corossacz, V. 2013. 'L'intersezione di razzismo e sessismo. Strumenti teorici per un'analisi della violenza maschile contro le donne nel discorso pubblico sulle migrazioni'. *Antropologia*. n. 15, 109-129.

<sup>227</sup> Interview with Marisa Iannucci, president of the Muslim women association LIFE Onlus.

<sup>228</sup> Interview with Samarkanda, university student in Milan.

<sup>229</sup> Interview with Suhair, young activist and researcher specialised in international affairs.

<sup>230</sup> Interview with Siham, cultural mediator in Pistoia.

such as “30 years CEDAW”,<sup>231</sup> highlight how the economic and social situation might play an important role when it concerns migrant women. Underground employment, which often coincides with exploitation, is the breeding ground of different forms of blackmailing and violence, but a very little number of those are actually reported. Identifying abuses is also more difficult when the workplace is a private house, in the case of carers.

### ***Under-reporting***

The fact that OSCAD, the Observatory for Security Against Acts of Discrimination operated by the National Police, has never received any claims regarding Muslim woman in its four years of activity, is in itself a significant fact of the seriousness of the under-reporting phenomenon in the country. The reluctance of victims to file a complaint has also been highlighted by ECRI as one of the issues that need to be tackled. The size of offences partially (too small to be worth reporting to the police) explains the reasons for under-reporting in the case of the interviewees. Incidents, however, are not reported to associations either.

The most common reaction is the acceptance of these episodes, either by answering back or by ignoring them. This certainly depends on the context, on the perpetrator, on the gravity of insults, and on the character of the victim. “They offend you and tell you that you don't understand a joke,” says a librarian in Milan.<sup>232</sup> “If you don't answer back, they keep insulting you because they think you're ignorant and don't even know how to answer.”

The high recurrence of episodes often has a deterrent effect and letting them go seems to be the easier option. Other than resignation, a poor knowledge of the tools and associations available to report, as well as mistrust in a visible change, also emerged. “We know that we would not achieve anything by reporting it. So, why should we waste our time? If there was some assistance, we all would ask for it”, said an immigrant woman of Jordanian origin.<sup>233</sup> On the one hand, offenders are generally people that cannot be easily identified and therefore reported, on the other hand there is also the firm belief that you cannot force people to accept those who are different. Interviewees are hopeful that change will happen, but it is going to take years. “I study at university, I volunteer for a charity, and I am a civic-minded citizen. Still, despite all my efforts to break the negative stereotypes, I cannot get out of the category of the 'ignorant foreigner' that people stick to me”,<sup>234</sup> said Samarkanda, of Italian mother and Egyptian father.

Asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking and abuse, and undocumented migrants are often exposed to violence and blackmailing from people who are in a dominant position such as police guards or employers. The lack of suitable and safe accommodation often leaves women particularly vulnerable to sexual violence. Most of these episodes, however, remained unreported because of isolation, worry of losing the job, or, in the case of undocumented migrants, fear of being repatriated to their country.<sup>235</sup> The fear of retaliation and of not being believed also plays an important role.

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<sup>231</sup> Italian platform “30 years CEDAW: work in progress”. June 2011. *30 years CEDAW. Shadow report*.

<sup>232</sup> Interview with a library owner in Milan.

<sup>233</sup> Interview with a woman of Jordanian origins living in Milan.

<sup>234</sup> Interview with Samarkanda, university student in Milan.

<sup>235</sup> Italian platform “30 years CEDAW: work in progress”, June 2011.

## LEGAL FRAMEWORK

### ***Definition of hate crime and hate speech***

OSCE defines hate crimes as “criminal acts where the victim is targeted because of her or his group identity (such as race, national origin, religion or another group characteristic). Hate crimes may target one or more persons or their property. Almost any crime contained in a penal code can be a hate crime”.<sup>236</sup>

There is no universally accepted definition of hate speech, but the description by the Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers’ Recommendation 97(20) is generally accepted.<sup>237</sup> It says that “the term ‘hate speech’ shall be understood as covering all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin”. This definition differs slightly from country to country according to the national legislation determining what is banned.

### ***The Constitution***

The Italian constitution is the basis of any anti-racism legislation in Italy, as it guarantees an equal public entitlement to all citizens and equality before the law. Article 3 says: “All citizens have equal social dignity and are equal before the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinion, personal and social conditions.”

### ***Criminal law provisions***

The criminal code of Italy has specific provisions for hate crimes. The cardinal provision to combat and punish hate crimes is the Law n. 205/1993,<sup>238</sup> also known as “Mancino Law” after the then minister of Interior Nicola Mancino, which amended the previous law against racial discrimination (Law n. 654 of 13 October 1975).<sup>239</sup> Its Art.1 states that anyone who “propagates ideas based on racial superiority or racial or ethnic hatred, or instigates or commits acts of discrimination for racial, ethnic, national or religious motives” can be sentenced of up to three years (amended into a maximum sentence of 18 months by Law n. 85 of 2006); and that anyone who “instigates in any way or commits violence or acts of provocation to violence for racist, ethnic, national or religious motives” is punishable with a prison sentence between six months and four years. The most important addition, however, is its Art.3, which makes racist motivation an aggravating circumstance in sentencing practice for any criminal offences (except those punishable by life imprisonment). In other words, judges can increase the sentence imposed for a crime by up to half, if it was committed “with the purpose of discrimination or hatred based on ethnicity, nationality, race, or religion, or in order to facilitate the activity of organisations, associations, movements, or groups that have this purpose among their objectives”.<sup>240</sup> For crimes committed within the meaning of Article 3, the Mancino Law also provides for ex officio investigations - even when the victim has not filed a formal complaint.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> ODIHR. 2014. *Prosecuting Hate Crimes, a practical guide*. Warsaw: OSCE/ODHIR: 15.

<sup>237</sup> Council of Europe. Recommendation n. R (97) 20 of the committee of ministers to member states on "hate speech" (Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 30 October 1997 at the 607th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies).

<sup>238</sup> Decree Law No. 122 of 26 April 1993 converted into Law No. 205 of 25 June 1993 referred to as the “Mancino Law”. For explanation in English language see Human Rights Watch, 2011.

<sup>239</sup> Law No. 654 of 13 October 1975.

<sup>240</sup> Legislative decree n. 122 of 26 April 1993 converted into Law n. 205 of 25 June 1993 referred to as the “Mancino Law”.

<sup>241</sup> Human Rights Watch.2011: 18.

In 2006, under a revision<sup>242</sup> of the penal code in terms of freedom of speech, the then minister of Justice introduced lesser penalties for criminal offences of incitement to racial hatred of article 1 comma 3 of Law n. 654/1975: the maximum penalty was diminished from three years' to 18 months' imprisonment or a fine of up to €6,000.<sup>243</sup> The definition of the offences of the same comma was also reworded to make it more restrictive ("diffusion" was replaced by "propagates" and "incite" was substituted by "instigate"),<sup>244</sup> making it a crime only if a person actually persuades – rather than just incites – another person to commit racially-motivated violence. These amendments have been harshly criticised by ECRI for being "legislative step backwards, which – as the Court of Cassation has confirmed – reduces the scope of the law".<sup>245</sup>

### **Effectiveness**

The Italian criminal law contains the important and positive provision of the aggravating circumstance for crimes with a racist bias, but this legislative device is believed not to measure up with the desired goals.<sup>246</sup> The problem seems to lie more in the application of the law than in its formulation. Its weak effectiveness is due to the reluctance of victims to report racist offences and to press charges against offenders. Further, on a second level, the police's inclination to record incidents as ordinary offences even when there is a clear racist bias,<sup>247</sup> as well as the fact that "members of the law enforcement agencies are often themselves perpetrators of racist violence and are granted substantial impunity", also play a role.<sup>248</sup> Similar reluctance to acknowledge the aggravating circumstance happens on the third level, in courts. The result is that although some public figures have been persecuted for hate speech, convictions for promoting ideas based on racial superiority and inciting racial discrimination are rare, and those cases where racial hatred was not the sole motivation of the crime are generally prosecuted as ordinary crimes without the aggravating circumstance.<sup>249</sup>

### **Case law**

There seem not to be relevant case law regarding hate crimes against Muslim women.

### **Full-face veil and headscarf in public places**

The Italian legislation does not have any statute banning religious garments in public places such as schools and workplace, nor rulings forbidding specifically the headscarf and the full-face veil.<sup>250</sup> There is, however, a provision for the protection of public order (law n. 152/1975) that prohibits the use of helmets or clothes "which aim to prevent the identification of the person without just cause, in a public place or in a place open to the public".<sup>251</sup> Given the lack of a specific legislation banning the full-face veil, many have

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<sup>242</sup> See all amendments in Altalex <http://www.altalex.com/index.php?idnot=10386>

<sup>243</sup> ECRI, February 2012: 13.

<sup>244</sup> ECRI reports that the Court of Cassation, which had had to rule on the new wording introduced in 2006, stated that "the consequences of replacing the term 'disseminates' by the term 'promotes' in the description of prohibited racist acts has been to limit the prohibition on disseminating racist ideas (only) to those cases where these ideas are spread with the aim of influencing or conditioning the behaviour or attitudes of a wide audience in order to convert them to these ideas" in ECRI, February 2012: 14.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Human Rights Watch, 2011.

<sup>247</sup> See Scagliotti, 2011 and ECRI, February 2012.

<sup>248</sup> Scagliotti, 2011: 5.

<sup>249</sup> The case of Abdoul GuiebreAbdoulGuiebre is an example. Abdoul GuiebreAbdoulGuiebre, a 19-year-old Italian citizen of Burkina Faso origins, was beaten to death by two bakers, father and son, in Milan in 2014. The two bakers accused him of stealing some biscuits from the shop with another two friends. Although the killers admitted to have said racial insults and to have beaten him with iron bar to revenge for the stealing, the public prosecutor did not notify the aggravating circumstance for racial bias.

<sup>250</sup> Loprieno D., Fiorita N. 2009. *La libertà di manifestazione del pensiero e la libertà religiosa nelle società multiculturali*. Firenze: University Press.

<sup>251</sup> Law on the Provisions for the Protection of Public Order, n.152 of 22 May 1975.

interpreted this provision as a ban of the full-face veil and still refer to this whenever they want to prohibit it. This has happened especially in Northern Italy, where several mayors (in Novara, Treviso and Drezzo, to cite a few) have emitted local ordinances to forbid the burqa and niqab. In 2008, one of these cases ended with a significant sentence: Italian courts interpreted the 152/1975 law forbidding full-face clothes or helmets to include an exception for religious garments. At the end of a court dispute<sup>252</sup> around an ordinance by the mayor of Azzano Decimo (Friuli Venezia Giulia) which reorganised the law 152/1975 with the inclusion of “the veil hiding the face”, the Council of State ruled that the art. 5 of law 152/1975 allows the use of garments such as burqas because “they do not aim at preventing the identification of the person, but are rather part of the tradition of some peoples and cultures”.<sup>253</sup> To comply with security issues, the verdict explains that it would be sufficient for “those who wear the veil [to] remove it upon request by public security authorities for security reasons, allowing personal identification of the person concerned”.<sup>254</sup> Despite this sentence, mayors of Italy (mainly, but not exclusively of the Northern League party) have kept issuing these types of administrative ordinances, which are regularly followed by an official abolishment as they overlap with law 152/1975.<sup>255</sup>

There have been several attempts to strengthen the law 152/1975. In 2009, for example, the MPs Souad Sbai and Manlio Contento (The People of Freedom party), submitted a bill that would update law 152/1975 introducing an explicit ban on “wearing clothes used by Muslim women that are called *burqa* and *niqab*”.<sup>256</sup> Two years later, in August 2011, the Constitutional Affairs Committee approved the draft law that would have imposed a fine on anyone wearing the *burqa* or *niqab* in any public place. The law, however, was never approved by the two chambers.

As for the headscarf, two circular letters by the Minister of Interior offer a clarification to existing regulation: the circular letter 4/95 of 14 March 1995<sup>257</sup> and the circular letter of 24 July 2000, which confirmed the former, stated that when the reason for covering one's own head is a religious requirement, then “the turban, chador, or veil, are integral part of the usual clothes and therefore, all together, contribute to identify the person wearing them, as long as the face is uncovered”.<sup>258</sup> Other pronouncements on religious garments include art.26 of the *Carta dei valori della cittadinanza e dell'integrazione* (Charter of citizenship values and integration)<sup>259</sup> stating that “in Italy people have no restrictions on the items of clothes they wear, provided that it is their own choice and that it does not undermine their dignity” although highlighting that “it is not acceptable to wear clothes that cover the face as this prevents the person from being recognised and creates obstacles to having relations with other people”.<sup>260</sup> This Charter, however, has no binding effect. To conclude, despite overlapping and contradictory regulations, in Italy there are no laws restricting the wearing of veils and people are allowed to wear symbols or clothes that represent their own religious or cultural identity.

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<sup>252</sup> See Briccola, S. 2009. *Libertà religiosa e “res publica”*. Milano: CEDAM: 120.

<sup>253</sup> Council of State, Judgment No. 3076 of 19 June 2008.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> Pepicelli, 2012.

<sup>256</sup> Law proposal by MPs Sbai and Contento to *Camera dei deputatideideputati* (lower chamber): Modification of the article 5 of law 22 May 1975, n.152, regarding the ban of burqa and niqab, submitted on 6 May 2009.

<sup>257</sup> Circular letter by the Minister of Interior, General Directorate of Civil Administration, n.4/95 of 14 March 1995.

<sup>258</sup> Circular letter by the Minister of Interior, Department of Public Security, n.300/2000 of 24 July 2000: “ID card issuing to citizens who profess a religion different from Catholic religion – use of headgear.”

<sup>259</sup> Charter of citizenship values and integration. Decree of the Minister of the Interior, 23 April 2007.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid: Art.26.

## RECENT CASE STUDIES

### *Media*

In the absence of any efficient hate crime monitoring, media can be used here to illustrate the type and nature of hate crimes against Muslim women that go beyond the nasty comments and looks that the interviewed women have experienced. Incidents against Muslim women range from death threats to verbal and physical assaults including attempts to pull off the headscarf, parades, and acts of vandalism.

Aicha Mesrar, a councillor in Rovereto (Trentino) who wears the headscarf, in September 2014 decided to move out of Italy, where she had lived for 23 years, because of the death threats and xenophobic insults she and her family had been receiving for the last two years. Threats also extended to the mayor of Rovereto, as the council was planning the construction of a mosque.<sup>261</sup>

In a town near Rome, in 2012, a group of young men insulted and beat two Tunisian women (one of them living in Italy for 20 years). They pulled off the headscarf of one of them telling her "In Italy this shouldn't be allowed. Take it off! Go back to your country" together with insults on terrorism such as "Kamikaze, blow yourself up!".<sup>262</sup>

In 2014, about 40 militants of the neo-fascist group *Forza Nuova* (New Force) showed up at a swimming pool in Venice during the women-only session to protest against what they considered to be a sign of the progressive Islamisation of the country. The police stopped them before they could get to the entrance, and they expressed their dissent yelling "we go to the pool, you go to Medina".<sup>263</sup>

Hate crimes also happen as acts of vandalism. In January 2015, the entrance wall of a restaurant in Sassari owned by a Moroccan woman was pick-axed and heavily damaged.<sup>264</sup> Since the Moroccan woman had never received any threats or attack in her 17 years in Italy, she refused to think that it was just a coincidence that the attack happened just a couple days after the attack to Charlie Hebdo. The offices of the Muslim feminist association Life Onlus in Ravenna also often suffer attacks of vandalism, the latest one being in February 2015, local media reported.<sup>265</sup>

Hate crimes are characterised by the intersectionality of different biases as well, as was explained for discriminatory practices. As is the case for discriminatory behaviour, in some incidents, this intersectionality is particularly patent. This is the case of the verbal and physical aggression of Suad Omar, an Italian-Somali activist and cultural mediator in Turin.<sup>266</sup> In 2011, a man on the bus verbally abused Suad with insults that ranged from the colour of her skin, to her body, to the clothes she was wearing. He then physically assaulted her in front of unresponsive passengers until two men of African origin intervened to stop him.

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<sup>261</sup> Il Fatto Quotidiano. 2014. 'Rovereto, minacce di morte: consigliera comunale musulmana lascia l'Italia.' *Ilfattoquotidiano.it*, 04 September.

<sup>262</sup> Mentuccia P. 2012. 'Giovani tirano il velo a donna musulmana. "In Italia non si porta, vai nel tuo paese"'. *Roma.repubblica.it*, 30 May.

<sup>263</sup> La Nuova di Venezia e Mestre. 2014. 'Tensione nella piscina blindata. Attivisti di Forza Nuova respinti'. *Nuovavenezia.gelocal.it*, 19 May.

<sup>264</sup> Cossu, N. 2015. 'Assalto a picconate al ristorante marocchino'. *LaNuovaSardegnaLaNuovaSardegna.it*, 11 January.

<sup>265</sup> CorriereRomagna.it, 2015. 'Vandali nella sede delle donne musulmane'. *CorriereromagnaCorriereRomagna.it*, 17 February.

<sup>266</sup> Italiano P. 2011. 'Preso a pugni sull'autobus perché sono donna e nera'. *Lastampa.it*, 4 October.

### ***Political spaces***

Xenophobic discourse in politics appears to be increasing, according to the latest ECRI report on Italy, mentioning Muslims among the target groups. There have been some rare cases when remarks by politicians turned into violent acts, but most of the offences are limited to hate speech. This happens with both local and national elected officers.

Well known for her strong opposition to the veil, especially the full-face one, is Daniela Santanchè, member of the new *Forza Italia* (Forward Italy) party. In 2009, the politician, at that time with *Movimento d'Italia* (Movement of Italy) party, went to the place where Muslims in Rome were celebrating the end of Ramadan to show her dissent against the use of the burqa and, according to her, to have a “pro-Muslim women and their rights” rally. The situation heated up and she was involved in a scuffle. The origins of the scuffle, according to the Muslim community, was her attempt to pull the headscarf off a woman, while she denied and reported a verbal and physical assault by a man.

### ***Court cases***

In 2015, the writer Silvia Layla Olivetti pressed charges against a man accused of defamation with the aggravating circumstance of religious hatred.<sup>267</sup> For two months, the man sent Silvia Layla Olivetti sexist and Islamophobic insults regarding her conversion to Islam. Newspapers also report that another complaint has been filed against unknown people for threats online and via post that the writer had been receiving.

## **GOOD PRACTICES**

### ***Governmental and institutional initiatives***

There seem not to be any significant initiatives to specifically fight discrimination against Muslim women or Islamophobia in general. The equality body UNAR and the Observatory against discriminatory actions OSCAD jointly organise training courses to raise awareness against discrimination and racism in schools and in the police. Police officers are taught how to recognise discrimination and criminal offences with a bias, as well as the current legislation on wearing a full-face veil in public places and headscarf in ID photos.

### ***Associations***

Civil society organisations seem to be paying increasing attention to the prevention of discrimination and anti-Muslim hate against women, although initiatives focusing on this group remain few and far apart. *SOS Razzismo*, an association against racism based in Rome, works largely with schools. During students' self-management, high schools often invite *SOS Razzismo* and its diverse staff to talk about the role of the woman according to Islam and to answer student's questions and curiosity. *SOS Razzismo* also promotes inclusive behaviours in primary schools where member of different religious and ethnic communities explain their culture. Within this initiative, a young Muslim woman, who does not actually wear the headscarf in her daily life, puts on the headscarf for the meeting. In this way she can take it off and show pupils how to wear it, while explaining them why some women wear it and what it means to them. Muslim organisations have also been organising initiatives to counter stereotypes through a better knowledge of 'the other'. Showing up in public places open to locals to increase the knowledge and fight stereotypes seems to be central to most of them. “The Muslim woman: beyond prejudices”, an initiative of awareness raising by the association *Le Radici dell'olivo* (The roots of the olive tree), has organised a 2-day event in

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<sup>267</sup> Mion, C. 2015. 'Offese a Silvia Olivetti, convertita all'Islam: tassisti a processo'. *Nuovavenezia.gelocal.it*, 5 February.

Varese where their young Muslim women members set up a stall where passers-by could stop and find out about religion and the role of women. Similar initiatives have been implemented by GMI (Young Muslims of Italy) and ADMI (the Association of Muslim women of Italy). Addressing especially, but not exclusively, the Muslim community is the AISHA project, by CAIM, a Muslim umbrella organisation in the Milan area. Launched in March 2016, AISHA project aims to combat violence and discrimination against women through dialogue with imams and cultural mediators.

## CONCLUSIONS

In a country where the level of public awareness of discrimination, diversity and equality is remarkably low, it is not surprising that the consciousness of Islamophobia as a specific form of prejudice and discrimination is timidly emerging only now, although anti-Muslim sentiments have been widespread in society for years. With the increasingly significant role of the descendants of immigrants (known as second and third generations) on the one hand, and the impact of world events, or rather their media coverage, such as the Isis' atrocities ISIS in the Middle East and in Europe on the other, Islamophobia seems to be changing and reaching a new stage. Yet, Muslim associations, although numerous and diversified, appear to be still mainly focused on worship or religious identity rather than working on civic engagement or fighting discrimination. Muslim associations do not focus on anti-Muslim bigotry, but nor do governmental or NGOs. Initiatives to counter racism and encourage integration in the labour market are manifold and do a very important job, but they are generally addressed to third country nationals. Greater attention towards anti-Muslim discrimination, which actively looks to engage with Muslim women, would certainly bring greater results.

This lack of interest, and sometimes lack of resources, is compounded by the limitation of the current data collection systems (religion and ethnicity are protected data). If the State's rationale behind this ruling are positive – to prevent ethnic profiling – the result is that it also prevents a full understanding of the composition of the Muslim population and real dimension of anti-Muslim hatred in the country. Unsurprisingly, the gaps found in the existing literature were many. By using proxies and interviewing a wide range of sources (Muslim women of different backgrounds, public authorities, anti-racis association staff), this research has tried to sketch an outline of the participation of Muslim women in the labour market, as well as the way in which Islamophobia affects them. The picture is not encouraging. Although the interviewees mainly referred to non-serious incidents of intolerance, hate crimes seem to be on the rise. The labour participation of women from Muslim countries – mainly first-generation women – register the lowest percentages in Europe, and finding a job when wearing the headscarf – mainly second-generation young women – is a huge challenge, if not impossible. The first step, for institutional bodies and NGOs, is certainly to acknowledge the existence of the problem – which sadly many still ignore or overlook.

Stereotypes against Muslim women are very strong and deeply rooted. Politicians, but also elected officials, routinely spout anti-Muslim tirades on TV shows or on social media statuses, with little consequences on their political position. Media outlets, even mainstream, convey the image of Muslims as a monolithic block, as intransigent with their religious habits, and eager to change so-called 'Italian values', together with Italian laws. Women with traditional clothes and headscarf are identified as Muslims and as such bear the burden of representing the whole community. Muslim women, seen as victims and accomplices of a patriarchal culture, pay the price of the high level of prejudices among society – even more so for women with foreign parents who are Italian with a different cultural background but are perceived as foreigners both by the national society and by their local community. The long-requested improvements to the strict requirements of the citizenship law would certainly put an end to some discrimination in the labour market, as well as others sectors, but it will also give a positive signal of openness to the thousands of young women and men who grew up and studied in Italy and are not yet Italian citizens.

What this research has tried to highlight is the complexity of Islamophobia in Italy which cannot be simply attributed to 'racist employers'. There are difficulties common to any immigrants, but there are also systematic disadvantages due to a system that has always relegated immigrants, regardless of their education, to the bottom of the labour market. Italian society is also affected by a high level of sexism and

gender inequality, especially in political, economic and labour participation. And finally there are also employers who have discriminatory attitudes and policies, prohibited by law, but difficult to prove, measure or prosecute. Muslim women are discriminated for being different, but there is very rarely one single cause of discrimination. It is rather a multiplicity of co-existing and interacting reasons: for their gender, for the prejudices associated with their hijab, for their religious beliefs, for their foreign origins, for their social class. Intersectionality of discrimination is the key word. Anti-discrimination law, an overlapping and often obscure plurality of rules, should be simplified, and include specific provisions on multiple discrimination. The Mancino Law should be systematically implemented, and tackling under-reporting should be an absolute priority.

In a serious and result-oriented commitment to fight discrimination, the beginning is to better understand the Muslim population with studies going beyond the academic arena, to the specific monitoring of discriminatory incidents and hate crimes with systematic data collection. This study cannot be considered an end in itself, but rather a starting point for further investigation. Employment and racist violence must be further researched, but also issues such as housing and education. Urgent action is needed from all stakeholders: from Italian institutions and law makers, to Muslim communities, NGOs and media professionals.

## ACRONYMS

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| <b>ACMID</b>  | <i>(Associazione della Comunità Marocchina in Italia delle Donne)</i> Association of the Moroccan Communities of Women in Italy             |
| <b>ADMI</b>   | <i>(Associazione Donne Musulmane d'Italia)</i> Association of Muslim Women in Italy   |
| <b>AMI</b>    | <i>(Assemblea Musulmana d'Italia)</i> Muslim Assembly of Italy  |
| <b>ASGI</b>   | <i>(Associazione Studi Giuridici per l'Immigrazione)</i> Association for Juridical Studies on Immigration                                   |
| <b>CAIM</b>   | <i>(Coordinamento Associazioni Islamiche di Milano, Monza and Brianza)</i> Coordination of Islamic Associations of Milan, Monza and Brianza |
| <b>CEDAW</b>  | Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, international treaty adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly  |
| <b>CGIL</b>   | <i>(Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro)</i> Italian General Confederation of Labour  |
| <b>CIES</b>   | <i>(Centro Informazione e Educazione allo Sviluppo ONLUS)</i> Centre for Development Education and Information                              |
| <b>COMAI</b>  | <i>(Comunità del mondo arabo in Italia)</i> Community of Arab World in Italy  |
| <b>COREIS</b> | <i>(Comunità Religiosa Islamica Italiana)</i> Italian Islamic Religious Community   |
| <b>ECHR</b>   | Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms or European Convention on Human Rights                               |
| <b>ECRI</b>   | European Commission on Racism and Intolerance   |
| <b>FRA</b>    | European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights  |
| <b>GMI</b>    | <i>(Giovani Musulmani d'Italia)</i> Young Muslims of Italy  |
| <b>GREVIO</b> | Group of experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence   |
| <b>IDOS</b>   | <i>(Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS/Immigrazione Dossier Statistico)</i> Centre of Studies and Research/Statistical Dossier on Immigration     |
| <b>IMAN</b>   | Islamophobia Monitoring and Action Network  |
| <b>IRES</b>   | <i>(Istituto di Ricerche Economiche e Sociali)</i> Institute of Economic and Social Research  |
| <b>ISTAT</b>  | <i>(Istituto Nazionale di Statistica)</i> National Institute for Statistics   |
| <b>ODIHR</b>  | Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights   |
| <b>OECD</b>   | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development  |
| <b>OSCAD</b>  | <i>(Osservatorio per la sicurezza contro gli atti discriminatori)</i> Observatory for Security Against Acts of Discrimination               |
| <b>OSCE</b>   | Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe  |
| <b>UCOII</b>  | <i>(Unione delle Comunità e Organizzazioni Islamiche in Italia)</i> Union of Islamic Communities and Organisations of Italy                 |
| <b>UNAR</b>   | <i>(Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali)</i> Italian Office against Racial Discrimination  |

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### List of interviewees

- Alberto Guariso, lawyer and member of ASGI, email interview, 3 June 2015.
- Alessandra Smerilli, staff member of Asinitas association, face-to-face interview, Rome 5 June 2015.
- Angela Scalzo, president of SOS Razzismo, face-to-face interview, Rome 25 March 2015.
- Antonella Ferrero, public official at the anti-discrimination centre in Turin, face-to-face interview, Turin 19 December 2014.
- Library owner in Milan, face-to-face interview, Milan 17 December 2014.
- Barbara Beneforti, manager of the anti-discrimination centre in Pistoia, face-to-face interview, Pistoia 12 December 2015.
- Barbara Giovanna Bello, lawyer and expert in multiple discrimination, face-to-face interview, Milan 18 December 2014.
- Chiara Favilli, European Network of Legal Expert in EU anti-discrimination law.
- Foad Aodi, president of Co-mai (Community of Arab World in Italy), face-to-face interview, Rome 25 March 2015.
- Francesca Bagni Cipriani, Parity Advisor of the Metropolitan City of Rome, Rome, 26 March 2015.

Ginevra De Maio, Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS, speech at the national roundtable in Rome, 4 June 2015.

Laura Bogetti, lawyer, Migrazioni e genere association, face-to-face interview, Turin, 18 December 2014.

Marisa Iannucci, president of Life Onlus association, face-to-face interview, 15 December 2014.

Marzia Oggiano, general secretary of the department of public administration of the trade union CGIL (Italian General Confederation of Labour) in Milan, face-to-face interview, Milan 16 December 2014.

Miriam Amrane, project coordinator of IMAN Italy, telephone interview, 3 May 2015.

Muslim woman of Jordanian origins, face-to-face interview, Milan 16 December 2014.

Muslim woman of Palestinian origins, face-to-face interview, Rome, 27 March 2015.

Muslim woman, hotel staff member in Milan, face-to-face interview, Milan 17 December 2014.

Muslim woman, student, face-to-face interview, Milan 17 December 2014.

Muslim woman, face-to-face interview, Turin, 19 December 2014.

Muslim women of Iranian origins, housewife, face-to-face interview, Rome, 28 March 2015.

OSCAD Secretariat, telephone interview, 24 June 2015.

Renata Pepicelli, expert in Islam and gender, speech at the national roundtable in Rome, 4 June 2015.

Samarkanda, university student in Milan, face-to-face interview, Milan 17 December 2014.

Samia Oursana, co-founder of *Questa è Roma* association, face-to-face interview, 23 March 2015.

Sara El Debuch, university student and actor in Rome, face-to-face interview, Rome 23 March 2015.

Sara Mahomoud, university student in Milan who took legal actions about discrimination at work, face-to-face interview, Milan 17 December 2014.

Serena Chiodo, Lunaria association, 17 March 2015.

Sihem Zrelli, director of the *La Palma del Sud* association in Aprilia, telephone interview, 24 June 2015.

Souheir Katkhouda, president of ADMI Association of Muslim Women of Italy, face-to-face interview, Milan 17 December 2014.

Suhair, young activist and researcher specialised in International affairs, face-to-face interview, Milan 16 December 2014.

Takoua Ben Mohammed, graphic journalist, face-to-face interview, Rome 4 June 2015.

Tiziana Dal Pra, president of Trama di Terre association, telephone interview, 14 May 2015.

Valentina Di Odoardo, Dina Giuseppetti, Gianluca Tomei, staff of CIES Onlus (Centro Informazione e Educazione allo Sviluppo), face-to-face interview, Rome 5 June 2015.

Yahya Pallavicini, vice-president of COREIS (Community of Islamic religion of Italy), face-to-face interview, Rome 26 June 2015.