



– Results and Country Profiles –

Muslims in Europe Integrated but not accepted?

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1 Database

Following studies in 2007 and 2013, the Bertelsmann Foundation published a Religion Monitor for the third time in 2017. The report is based on a representative survey of more than 10,000 people in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France, the United Kingdom and Turkey at the end of 2016. This broad database makes it possible to investigate the relationships among aspects of social integration and Muslim religiosity in a pan-European comparison. The study "Muslims in Europe—Integrated but not accepted?" is based on the survey results. It is the second in a series of publications related to the 2017 Religion Monitor. Additional brochures on specific topics will follow by 2018.

A special feature of the new Religion Monitor is that it gives members of religious minorities a stronger voice than in the past. Muslims in particular, as the largest religious minority in Germany and all of Europe, are taken into account. In Germany, more than 1,100 Muslims with roots in Turkey, Southeastern Europe, Iran, Southeast Asia, North Africa and the Middle East participated in the survey. In each of the other countries, approximately 500 Muslims from its most important countries of origin took part. Thus, the current Religion Monitor offers a unique, empirically grounded look at the diversity of Muslim voices in Europe.

For each of the five countries studied, the data set consists of a sample of the general population (approximately 1,000 to 1,500 individuals per country) and a sample of the Muslims surveyed. The latter are identified based on their description of themselves as Muslim. Refugees who arrived in Europe after 2010 were not surveyed. Survey results from Turkey were not included in this study because they were not relevant to the topic.

Prof. Dirk Halm and Dr. Martina Sauer (Center for Turkish Studies and Research on Integration) analyzed the survey findings on behalf of the Bertelsmann Stiftung. The study "Muslims in Europe—Integrated but not accepted?" was published in August 2017 (see www.religionsmonitor.de).

2 Muslim Religiosity and Integration

Even before the latest influx of refugees, the integration of Muslim migrants into European societies has been a political issue. There is public debate about actual or perceived failures to integrate—whether it be the language spoken at home, everyday religious practices—such as wearing a headscarf or fasting during Ramadan—or even the risk of religious radicalization. Right-wing populist movements even express fundamental doubts about whether Muslim religiosity is compatible with life in a western democracy and meritocracy.

This study seeks to bring an element of objectivity to the public debate and identify current challenges for interreligious coexistence. Based on data from the 2017 Religion Monitor, the authors have compared and analyzed the conditions for the social integration of Muslims in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and France. They looked at four levels of social integration: language competence and educational outcomes, gainful employment, social relationships in the mainstream society, and emotional connection with the receiving country.

Before addressing the results in detail, we wish to highlight one key finding: The immigrated Muslims and their (grand)children, like all other immigrant populations, have already made great progress toward integration—even though they encountered significant obstacles and resistance along the way. These include structural hurdles, for example, in the educational sector and in the labor market. In the case of Muslims, there is also the lack of respect for their religiosity, which, as our study shows, reduces their opportunities for participation.

A crucial factor in such an evaluation is the way integration is defined. We do not take this to mean assimilation in any kind of mainstream culture. Rather, integration in a pluralistic country is measured in terms of the extent to which opportunities for participation are realized and plurality—based on the constitution—becomes viable. In this sense, religious differences do not indicate inadequate integration, although this is sometimes viewed as a premise in public debate. Like any other faith and worldview, Muslim religiosity can enhance a country's diversity, especially when accompanied by a strong commitment to that country, as is evident in our study. Therefore, successful integration is also the responsibility of the mainstream society: It must take its own claims to plurality seriously, and its willingness to respect other religious practices must not be determined by how familiar or unfamiliar they may seem.

Therefore, the primary challenge today is to link creating equal participation with promoting the acceptance of religious and cultural diversity. On the one hand, this requires appropriate framework conditions that ensure participation. On the other hand, it requires the willingness and openness of the resident population and immigrants to maintain a flourishing life together in a pluralistic democratic community.

3 Key Findings

Linguistic integration is successful. Approximately three fourths of Muslims born in Germany have grown up with German as their first language—in some cases, along with the language of their country of origin. Among Muslim immigrants, approximately one fifth report that German is their first language. The trend that language skills improve with each successive generation is equally apparent in France, the United Kingdom, Austria and Switzerland. Differences arise from the country-specific immigration history of the Muslims. In France, for example, approximately three fourths of Muslims have learned French as children—in some cases, in their countries of origin, which as former colonies were largely francophone. In the United Kingdom, approximately 60 percent of Muslim immigrants have grown up speaking English. In countries with a relatively recent history of Muslim immigration, a lower share of respondents report that the national language is their first language (Germany, 46 percent; Austria, 37 percent; Switzerland, 34 percent).

Educational systems that sort students at a later stage promote educational attainment. In education as well, subsequent generations of Muslims make up for the gap experienced by their (grand)parents. This takes time—especially in countries such as Germany, where the early sorting of students tends to maintain existing educational disadvantages. Here, 36 percent of Muslims born in Germany complete their education before age 17.

In Austria—where the school system is considered to be not very conducive to integration—this proportion is also relatively high, at 39 percent. Muslims have significantly better educational outcomes in France—a country with a particularly equitable school system. There, only about one in ten Muslim students leaves school before age 17.

Opening up the labor market is key for gainful employment. The example of Germany shows the importance of labor market conditions for successful integration. Opening the labor market to immigrants and actively promoting gainful employment has a positive effect on the participation of Muslims in working life. In this area, Germany far outranks the other countries studied.

Successful integration in the area of educational qualifications does not always transfer seamlessly to gainful employment, as is demonstrated in the case of France. In a tight labor market that also features low mobility, Muslims there face particular problems. Their unemployment rate is 14 percent, far higher than the 8 percent reported for non-Muslims. In Austria as well, Muslims are more likely to be kept out of the labor market than non-Muslims.

Regardless of the level of gainful employment, relatively large income disparities between Muslims and non-Muslims continue to be observed in all the countries studied. The extent to which income differentials level off with increasing education remains to be seen.

Devout Muslims, even the well-educated, earn less income and are less likely to be employed. Even with equal educational levels, practicing Muslims are less likely to have a job, and those who do work earn less. There can be various reasons for the negative effect of religiosity. On the one hand, it may be regarded as an indicator of discrimination, because devout Muslims often wear visible religious symbols and therefore encounter reservations that reduce their prospects for success in the labor market. Studies have variously confirmed this. On the other hand, strict observance of religious duties can make it difficult to get or hold a job; for example, it may not be possible to pray five times a day, or the wearing of religious symbols may be prohibited. The lack of any relationship between religiosity and professional activity in the United Kingdom supports this explanation. For example, Muslim policewomen in London have been allowed to wear a headscarf as part of their uniform for more than ten years. Accordingly, it can be assumed that respect for religious diversity also permits greater equitability.

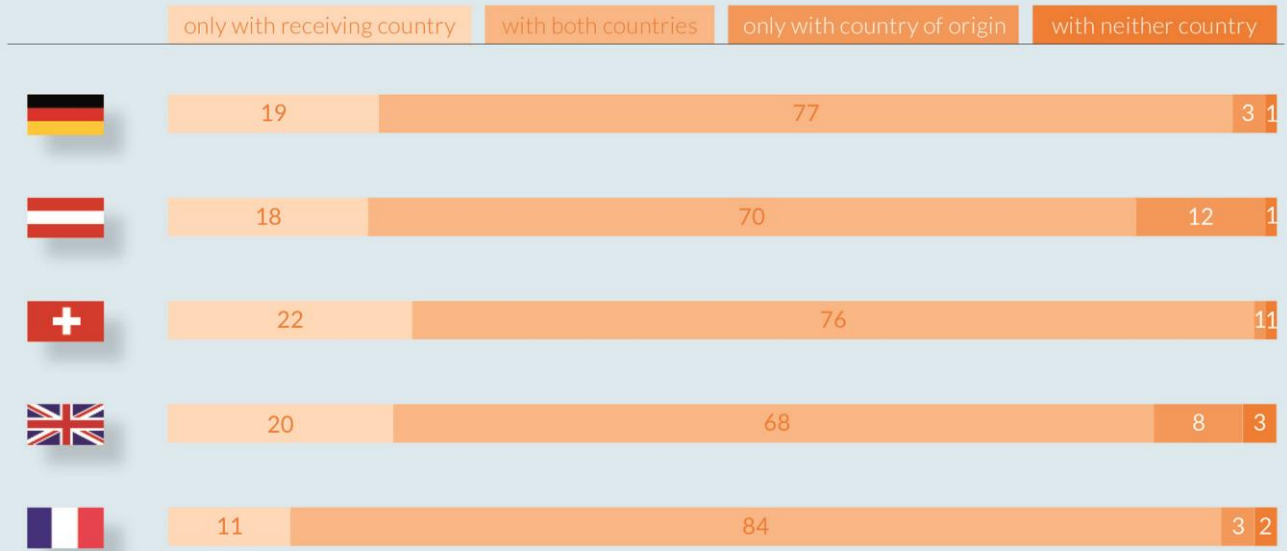
Most Muslims view interreligious relationships as the norm. A common reservation about Muslims is that they would keep to themselves and avoid contact with non-Muslims. The findings of the 2017 Religion Monitor contradict this prejudice. Quite the opposite is true; a large majority of the Muslims living in the countries studied have (very) frequent contact with non-Muslims in their leisure time. The interreligious relationships of Muslims are particularly common in Switzerland, where 87 percent of those surveyed report frequent or very frequent contact with non-Muslims in their leisure time. This percentage is also high in Germany and France, at 78 percent. Fewer Muslims reported (very) common leisure time contact with people outside their own religious community if they lived in the United Kingdom (68 percent) or in Austria (62 percent).

The international comparison makes it clear that a climate of openness to Muslims promotes social contacts. In particular, a large majority of Muslims in succeeding generations tend to have contact with non-Muslims, and this despite less than optimal levels of assimilation as well as difficulty finding their place in European societies.

Muslims have close connections with the country where they live. The challenges of integration are not primarily attributable to loyalty and identification; indeed, Muslims consistently report close connections with the country where they live. Ninety-six percent of Muslims living in France feel very or somewhat connected with the country; the share is equally high in Germany. In Switzerland, 98 percent feel connected with the country they have adopted as their own. Fewer Muslims report feeling close ties in the United Kingdom—despite that country's particular institutional openness to religious and cultural diversity. But even there, 89 percent feel closely connected. The share of Muslims in Austria who feel closely connected is also below the average, though still significant, at 88 percent.

At the same time, a large majority of Muslims in Europe also feel connected with the countries from which they or their (grand)parents once immigrated (see Figure 1). This shows that mixed identities—that is, dual national connectedness—have become the norm among most Muslims. Mixed identities among Muslims are particularly widespread in France, at 84 percent. In Germany and Switzerland, this proportion is approximately three fourths. The share is somewhat lower, though still very high, in Austria (70 percent) and the United Kingdom (68 percent).

FIGURE 1: Sense of connectedness* with country for Muslims in five European nations (in %)



* Questions: (1) "How connected do you feel with [name of receiving country]?" (2) How connected do you feel with [your homeland / the homeland of your (grand)parents]? Response categories: 1 "very connected"; 2 "somewhat connected"; 3 "not very connected"; 4 "not at all connected". The figure shows the combined percentages for those who chose response options 1 and 2.

Source: 2017 Religion Monitor, random sample of Muslim population in each country, valid cases

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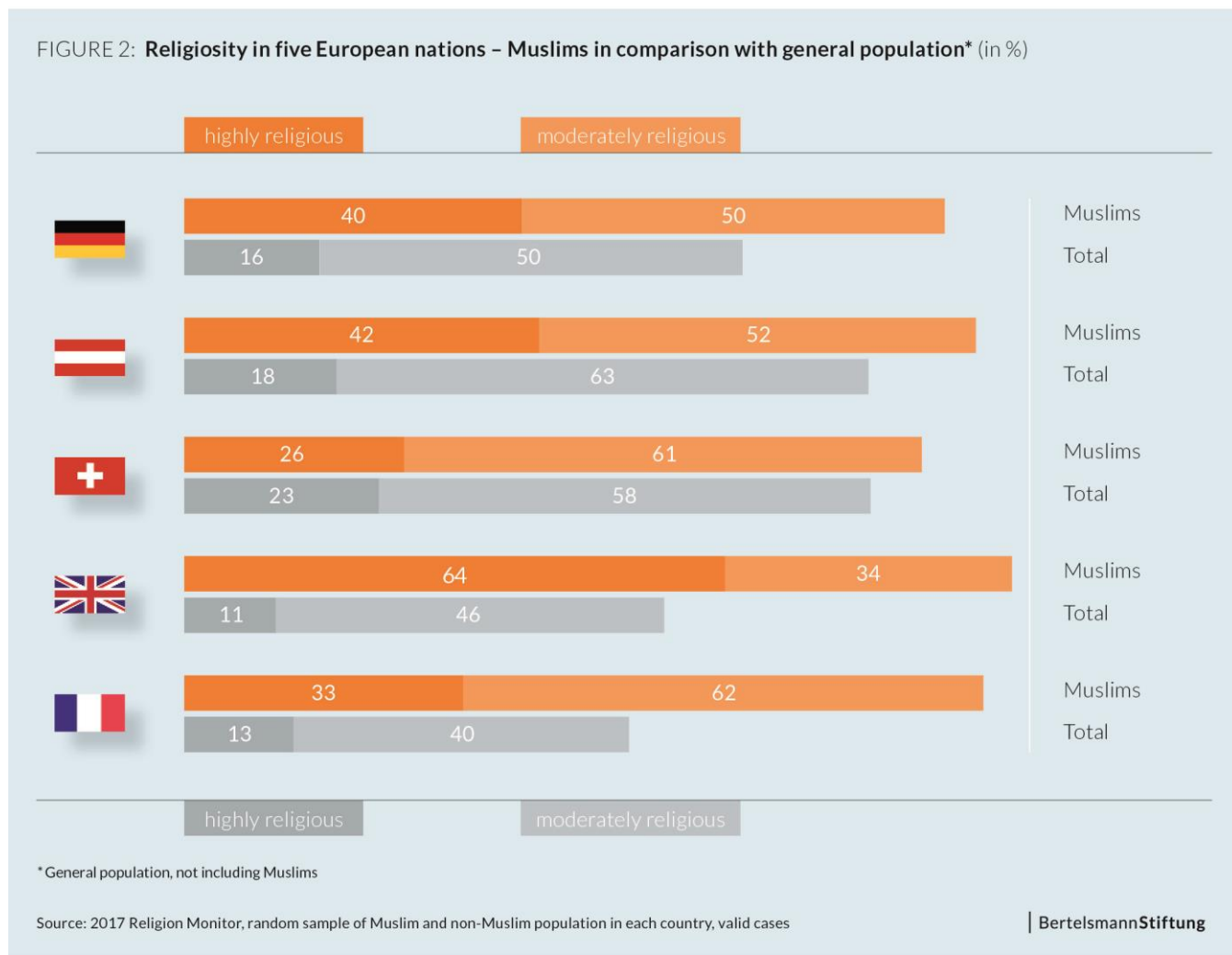
Religion is still important in the daily life of European Muslims. Successful integration need not entail detachment from Islam or the immigrant’s culture of origin. Overall, Muslims from immigrant families maintain a strong religious commitment. Unlike among many non-Muslims, this connection is likely to continue across generations. Muslims in the United Kingdom are particularly active in practicing their religion: 64 percent of Muslims there describe themselves as highly religious. They regularly perform the five obligatory prayers a day and attend Friday prayers at a mosque each week. In Austria, the share of particularly devout Muslims, at 42 percent, is likewise slightly above the average for the countries studied. In Germany, 39 percent of Muslims can be described as highly religious; in France, 33 percent. The share is particularly low in Switzerland, at 26 percent—almost parallel to the religiousness of non-Muslims in that country (23 percent highly religious).

The pronounced religiosity of Muslims in the United Kingdom is remarkable, in that the institutional setting for practicing one’s religion is especially favorable in this country as per ICRI-Index¹. High religiousness would thus reflect the freedom to live out one’s own religion in a pluralistic society.

Another notable finding is the difference between the importance of religion for Muslims and its importance for citizens who belong to other faiths. One example of particularly large discrepancies is the United Kingdom. Muslims practice their religion more devoutly there than in other countries, while a majority of citizens tend to be areligious; about one in two can be described as nonreligious, and only one in ten non-Muslim Britons is highly religious (see Figure 2). One question this raises is how these differences might influence societal cohesion. Only

¹ Indicators of Citizenship Rights for Immigrants.

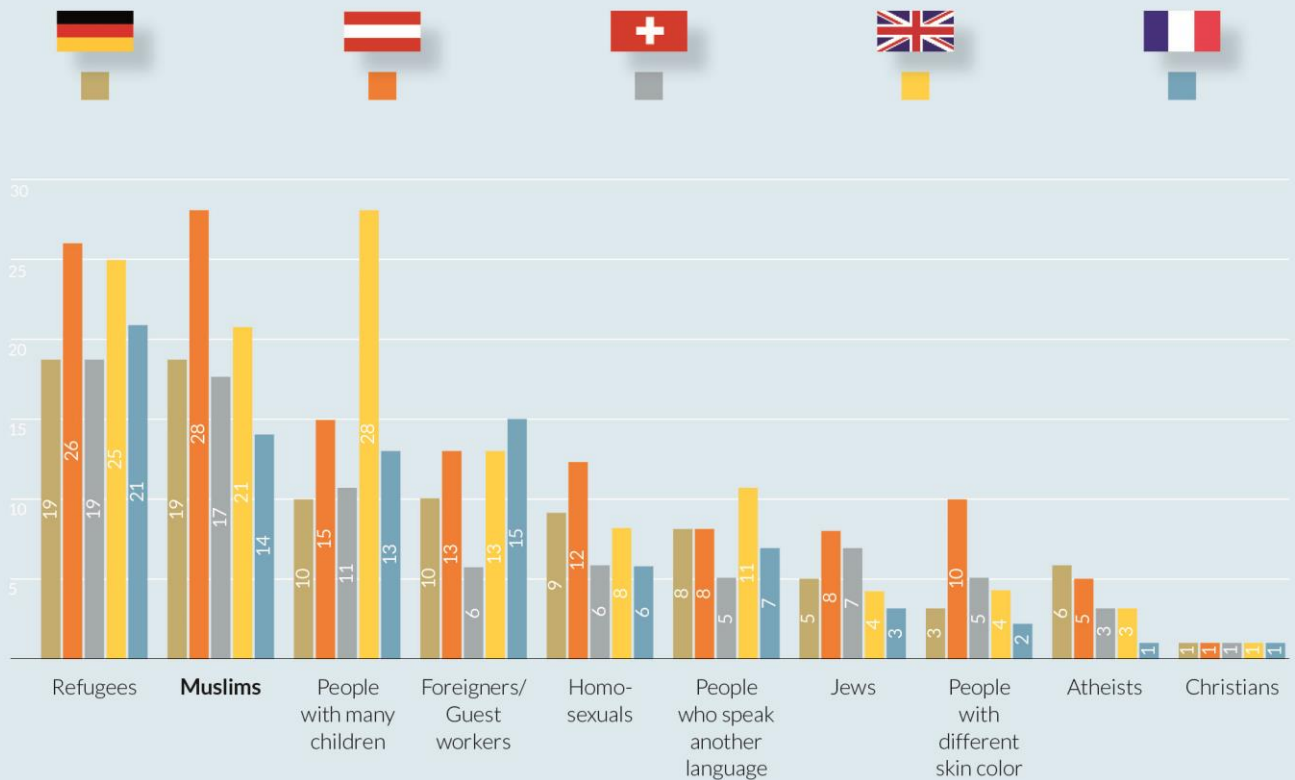
in Switzerland is there hardly any difference with regard to the role of religion between Muslims and people who practice other religions or no religion.



Rejection of Muslim neighbors is widespread. Institutional recognition, however, is not necessarily accompanied by broad societal acceptance of Muslims in daily life. Rejection of Muslims is particularly strong in Austria, where more than one in four non-Muslims would not want to have Muslim neighbors. In the United Kingdom, 21 percent share this opinion—a remarkably high figure, given the institutional equality and good assimilation level of Muslims there. In Germany, 19 percent of non-Muslim respondents would not welcome Muslim neighbors. In Switzerland, where Muslims also feel especially connected with the country, the social distance is less pronounced (17 percent rejection). The level is lowest in France, at 14 percent.

Overall, Muslims—along with the refugees who in recent years have come to Europe primarily from predominantly Muslim countries—are among the most rejected social groups (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3: Rejection as neighbors* (in %)



* Question: "I'm going to read you a list of various groups of people. For each group, please tell me whether you would not want to have them as neighbors or whether it doesn't matter to you: [each group of people]." The figure shows, for each group, the percentage of those who responded "would not want to have them as neighbors."

Source: 2017 Religion Monitor, random sample of non-Muslim population in each country, valid cases

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4 Conclusions

The key findings of the study by Dirk Halm and Martina Sauer support the following conclusions: Muslims from immigrant families are assimilating with the resident population in the areas of language competence, educational level and gainful employment in all the countries studied, though to a varying degree. However, this is not accompanied by an equal level of cultural and religious assimilation and social acceptance. On average, Muslims in Europe are more religious than other faith communities and maintain closer ties to their countries of origin. This religious and cultural difference causes uneasiness among the local population. At the same time, it has a negative effect on social participation, as seen in the discrimination against devout Muslims. On the other hand, the survey results regarding readiness to accept Muslims as neighbors demonstrate that personal contact creates trust.

It is possible that social distance is also a practical way to deal with major social diversity, as suggested by the study findings for the United Kingdom. In this "old" immigration country with a high level of plurality, there tend to be fewer contacts between the individual social groups and immigrant communities. To put it in positive terms: People live and let live. On the other hand, signs of impending crisis, such as terror attacks and the Brexit vote, give reason to fear that this approach is not sustainable in the long term.

Accordingly, it is not the strong religiousness of an immigrant group or its connection to its country of origin as such that poses a risk to social cohesion; rather, it is how these are addressed. Mainstream society also bears responsibility in this regard.

To ensure the success of integration as a task for the whole of society, we therefore consider it important to apply **three strategies**:

1. Expand equal participation at all levels. Social integration is more than an individual program; its success depends on the framework conditions. The children of Muslim immigrants are most successful in countries with late-sorting educational systems. In early-sorting educational systems, socioeconomic background has a stronger effect on educational pathways, perpetuating social and cultural inequality. If a relatively equitable educational system encounters a tight and relatively impermeable labor market, tensions are inevitable; France is an example of this scenario in our study. In contrast, the German example shows that—despite more limited educational opportunities—opening the labor market to immigrants and actively promoting gainful employment have a positive effect on social participation. Overall, it is important to monitor and promote equal opportunity at all levels, starting at preschool age.

2. Acknowledge cultural and religious diversity. Given the constitutional position of religions in Germany, the Christian churches hold a dominant position in German society. As Muslim congregations encounter these historically evolved structural conditions, their efforts to gain legal recognition often run aground. However, the institutional parity of Islam is an important step on the path to successful integration. This makes it necessary to seek ways to achieve parity without necessarily gaining the status of a corporate body. This cannot take the form of a special law for Muslims; rather, it requires in-depth negotiations among policymakers, legal experts and religious communities, rooted in their common goal of finding appropriate solutions. The German Basic Law offers a good starting point, because unlike in strictly secular states it is open to the visible participation of religions in the community.

The institutional parity of Islam provides an accepted framework for working toward the recognition of Muslim religiosity within the spectrum of religious diversity. This also includes an antidiscrimination policy that is more consistent in regard to religious needs, as well as appropriate diversity management within companies and other organizations.

3. Build an interreligious and intercultural community. Plurality in the form of merely living side by side can create societal tensions and endanger cohesion. To build trust for the long term in super-diverse societies with significant immigrant populations, personal contacts between social groups are as crucial as the willingness to talk openly about differences that could make people feel worried and insecure. However, this cannot be left solely to the inherent dynamics of social media and right-wing populist parties. There is a need for new social spheres in which inter- as well as inner-religious and cultural differences can be discussed, with Muslims included in the conversation. This is a task for policymakers as well as civil society. At the same time, schools and extra-curricular venues are called upon to strengthen the skills that make it possible to constructively address differences and a plurality of values—based on democratic ground rules.

5 Country Profiles

5.1 Germany

At the end of 2015, between 4.4 and 4.7 million Muslims were living in Germany. This represents 5.4 to 5.7 percent of the population. About one fourth of Muslims have arrived in the country since 2011, most as refugees from the Middle East. Migrant workers from Turkey now account for only about half of Muslims in Germany, though they remain the largest origin group. Of the Muslims surveyed in the German Religion Monitor, 61 percent are Sunnis and 8 percent are Alevites and Shiites. Thirteen percent do not indicate a denomination. 54 percent report that they immigrated to Germany themselves (first generation immigrants), while 41 percent are in the second generation, born in Germany. Four percent belong to later generations or are converts to Islam. With an average age of 38, Muslims are significantly younger than non-Muslims, whose average age is 51.

Participation

In the five-country comparison, Germany offers the best framework conditions for participation. This is particularly evident in regard to gainful employment: The absorptive capacity of the labor market is relatively good, and the access barriers for migrants are relatively low (MIPEX Index). This is also reflected in the findings of the 2017 Religion Monitor: There were no significant differences between Muslims and the rest of the population in regard to gainful employment. However, Muslims earn significantly less; this indicates that they are more often employed in low-wage positions.

In education and language acquisition, Muslims born and raised in Germany narrow the immigration-related gap of their (grand)parents with each successive generation. In regard to education, however, this happens more slowly than in France. Thus, 64 percent of Muslims born in Germany stay in school until age 17 or older; the figure is significantly higher in France, at 90 percent. This presumably reflects the different educational systems in the two countries: The German system, with early sorting, tends to perpetuate origin-related disadvantages. Approximately three fourths of Muslims born in Germany learn German as their first language—in some cases, along with another language; just 23 percent of immigrant Muslims do so. Overall, 46 percent of Muslims in Germany learned the national language as children.

Religion and Community Life

In terms of the institutional equality of Muslim religious communities, Germany ranks in the middle for these five countries (ICRI Index). Since the constitutional law concerning religions is historically based on the organizational structure of major Christian churches, Muslim religious communities are at a disadvantage, though clear progress toward parity is evident in recent years. At the same time, however, attitudes in the population indicate that religious differences between Muslims and non-Muslims are sometimes viewed as a source of tension.

Approximately one in five would rather not have Muslims living in their neighborhood. Nevertheless, a large majority of Muslims feel connected with Germany (96 percent), and a majority also regularly spend their free time with people who practice other religions or no religion (78 percent). In addition, 37 percent of Muslims report that they experience discrimination relatively infrequently. In France and especially Austria, this figure is distinctly higher.

5.2 Austria

Approximately 500,000 Muslims live in Austria. At 6.2 to 6.8 percent of the population, their representation is higher there than in Germany. As in Germany, the immigration landscape is largely characterized by Turkish guest workers and migrant workers. There is also a relatively large group of refugees from the Balkan Wars in the 1990s. According to the current Religion Monitor data, 74 percent of the Muslims in Austria come from Turkey and 24 percent from Southeastern Europe. Also, 64 percent are Sunnis and only 4 percent Shiites, of whom more than 18 percent are Alevites. More Muslims in Austria (67 percent) belong to the first generation of immigrants than in Germany; only 32 percent represent the second generation. Of all the countries studied, Austria is home to the youngest Muslim population, on average. At just 35 years old, they also exhibit the greatest difference from the average age of the non-Muslim population (49 years old).

Participation

Overall, Austria ranks in the middle of the five-country comparison in regard to the framework conditions for immigrant participation. According to the MIPEX Index², access barriers to the labor market for immigrants are relatively low; however, the tight employment situation seems to weigh against this. Thus, unemployment appears to be significantly more common among Muslims than among the average population at large.

As in Germany, the early sorting of students leads to a relatively slow alignment of educational qualifications between the children of immigrant Muslims and the rest of the population. Approximately four out of ten Muslims born in Austria leave school before age 17. From one generation to the next, this suggests the presence of educational mobility, though at a level below the average for these five countries.

Overall, just 37 percent of Muslims in Austria learned the national language as children. But 70 percent of Muslims born in Austria learn the national language as their first language—often along with another language.

Among immigrant Muslims, 21 percent do so.

Religion and Community Life

In Austria, Islam has been legally recognized as a religious community for more than 100 years. According to the ICRI index, this results in a relatively good legal situation for Muslim religious communities. For example, Austria was the first European country to introduce Islamic religious instruction in schools. Nevertheless, the social climate toward Muslims is particularly tense in Austria. Rejection of Muslims as neighbors reaches its highest level in the five-country comparison, with a share of 28 percent.

88 percent of Muslims feel closely connected with Austria. While this value is high, it is the lowest among the four countries studied. Routine leisure time contact with people of other religions, at 62 percent, is also less common than in the other countries. Also, 68 percent of Muslims report having experienced discrimination, the highest level among Muslims in the five-country comparison.

² Migrant Integration Policy Index.

5.3 Switzerland

In 2015, nearly 340,000 Muslims age 15 and older lived in Switzerland, representing 5 percent of the total population. The proportion of Muslims doubled in the 1990s with the intake of war refugees from the Balkans. Thus, the immigration landscape is characterized less by worker immigration than by former refugees. According to current Religion Monitor data, 55 percent of the Muslims in Switzerland come from Southeast Europe, and only 23 percent from Turkey. Muslims from the Maghreb region live primarily in the francophone regions. Just under 70 percent of the Muslims surveyed say they belong to a particular denomination, namely 51 percent Sunnis, 5 percent Shiites and 6 percent Alevites. As in Austria, nearly two thirds of respondents were immigrants, with just over one third born in Switzerland. In Switzerland as well, Muslims are significantly younger (37 years old) than non-Muslims (48 years old).

Participation

The legal hurdles for immigrants to enter the labor market are relatively high (MIPEX). However, this does not negatively affect the gainful employment of Muslims, presumably because of the relatively relaxed labor market in Switzerland. As in Germany as well, there is no significant correlation between gainful employment and Muslim religious affiliation. According to the Religion Monitor, however, Muslims earn significantly less than the population on average—with income differentials even greater than in Germany or the United Kingdom.

The school system—similarly to those in Germany and Austria—becomes selective early, but it allows reliable transitions to vocational training. Switzerland has by far the highest share of Muslims born in the country whose schooling is limited: 74 percent of those in the second generation of Muslim immigrants leave school before age 17.

Overall, just 34 percent of Muslims in Switzerland learned the national language as children. This figure is significantly higher among Muslims born in Switzerland (57 percent) than among immigrants themselves (22 percent). Within the five-country comparison, however, relatively few Muslim children learn the national language as their first language.

Religion and Community Life

In regard to the religious parity of Muslim communities, Switzerland ranks in last place among the five countries studied (ICRI Index). Also, the trend toward greater recognition observed in the other countries is significantly weaker in Switzerland. However, the social climate toward Muslims is more positive than in other countries studied: When asked how they feel about Muslims as neighbors, non-Muslims in Switzerland exhibit significantly more openness than respondents in Germany, the United Kingdom and Austria. Just under 17 percent are opposed to having Muslims as neighbors. This relatively positive social climate is also reflected in regard to interreligious co-existence. Compared to the other countries studied, Muslims in Switzerland have significantly more frequent regular contact with people of other religions in their leisure time, with 87 percent of the Muslims surveyed in Switzerland reporting such relationships. And 77 percent of those surveyed say that at least half of their friends are non-Muslims. Muslims in Switzerland are also less likely to experience discrimination; still, however, over one third (35 percent) report having had such experiences in the past twelve months. More than 98 percent of the Muslims in Switzerland report feeling close ties to the country.

5.4 United Kingdom

About three million Muslims live in the UK, representing 4.4 percent of the total population. Immigration patterns differ from those in Germany, Austria and Switzerland: In addition to the modern-day influx of workers and refugees, there is the nation's colonial history, during which Muslims from the Empire came to Great Britain early on. This development has resulted in a broad diversity of origin, chiefly from the Indian subcontinent, along with a range of acculturation periods and widely differentiated social strata. According to current data from the Religion Monitor, 70 percent of the Muslims in the UK come from South Asia. There are very few Muslims from Turkey, the Balkans or North Africa. Of the Muslims surveyed, 75 percent are Sunnis and just under 8 percent are Shiites. Other denominations, such as Alevites, are rare. In accordance with the long immigration history of the UK, the generational distribution—in contrast to the other countries studied—is flipped: Just over one third (36 percent) of the Muslims surveyed belong to the first generation of immigrants, while more than half (52 percent) are members of the second or a subsequent generation. Nevertheless, on average the Muslims in the UK, as elsewhere, are more than ten years younger than the non-Muslim population, namely 38 years old versus 49 years old.

Participation

Access to the British labor market is relatively difficult for migrants, and there is no sign of a tendency toward greater openness (MIPEX Index). Despite this rather unfavorable integration policy framework, the labor market situation for Muslims is relatively good. Their unemployment rate is no higher than among the population on average. The income disparities between Muslims and the non-Muslim population are also lower than in Austria or France, for example. These relatively good levels of labor market assimilation may reflect the comparatively long presence of Muslims in the United Kingdom. In all the countries studied, from one generation of immigrants to the next, Muslims from immigrant families are assimilating with the resident population in the areas of gainful employment and income.

In the educational sector as well, Muslims are doing better in the United Kingdom than in most of the other countries studied: Just 20 percent of the Muslim children in the UK leave school before age 17. Only France has a lower percentage in this regard.

The UK parallels France with the highest share of Muslims who have learned the national language as children. This in part reflects the fact English is an official language in most former British colonies. However, only 21 percent of Muslims who were immigrants themselves learned English as their first language. By contrast, 80 percent of Muslims born in the UK did so—a very high percentage.

Religion and Community Life

In part because of the colonial past, the visibility of non-Christian religions in the UK tends to be taken for granted. The British legal system is also less prone to discrimination against religious communities and facilitates the equal treatment of Islam. As a result, in this five-country comparison the UK offers the best baseline conditions for practicing one's own faith (ICRI Index). However, the findings of this Religion Monitor make it clear that this fundamental liberal attitude is just one facet of the immigration landscape in the UK. On the whole, the social distance to Muslims in this country is relatively high. Thus, 21 percent of non-Muslim Britons are opposed to having Muslims as neighbors. Only in Austria is this figure higher. Interreligious contacts are also less common—Muslims in the UK are about as reserved as Muslims in Austria. Just 68 percent have regular contact with non-Muslims in their leisure time, and only 50 percent say that at least half of their friends are of other religions. Also, 42 percent of the Muslims surveyed report having experienced discrimination in the past twelve months. And just 89 percent of Muslims say they feel connected with the country where they live, about the same share as in Austria.

5.5 France

Among the countries studied, France has the highest share of Muslims in its population, at 7 to 8 percent. This represents about 5.3 million individuals of Muslim faith. As in the United Kingdom, the immigration landscape is closely tied to the colonial past. Thus, the Muslim population is very much dominated by immigrants from the Maghreb region. According to the findings of the latest Religion Monitor, 81 percent of the Muslims surveyed in France come from North Africa. By contrast, there are few migrants from Turkey, the Balkans or South Asia. As in Switzerland, relatively few of those surveyed—approximately two thirds—say they are affiliated with a particular denomination. Just over half (52 percent) are Sunnis, 4 percent Shiites, and just 1 percent Alevites. The distribution of the immigrant generations roughly corresponds to that in Germany: 54 percent immigrated to France themselves; 40 percent were born there. The average age of Muslims in France is the highest among the countries compared, though at 40 years of age the average is still lower than that of the non-Muslim population (48 years).

Participation

Access to the labor market is more difficult for immigrants in France than in all of the other countries studied (MIPEX Index). The tight labor market aggravates this situation. On the other hand, the late sorting of students into educational paths facilitates the integration of children from immigrant families. Accordingly, only 11 percent of the Muslims born in France leave school before age 17. Muslims in France also score highest in this five-country comparison in regard to language integration: 74 percent of Muslims in France learned French as their first language in childhood, although one reason is that many immigrants (57 percent) bring some knowledge of the language from their country of origin. Also, in the second and third generation of immigrants, significantly more Muslim children (93 percent) learn the national language as their first language. However, the French labor market is not very inclusive; as a result, significantly fewer Muslims are gainfully employed, and their income is lower. Thus, France exhibits a clear divide, with good levels of integration in language and education countered by a difficult labor market.

Religion and Community Life

As in the United Kingdom, dealing with religious plurality has become a matter of course in France. But unlike in the UK, this level of normality is also reflected in a particularly low level of social distance: Only 14 percent of non-Muslim respondents in France are opposed to having Muslims as neighbors. Among the five countries studied, this is the most positive finding in regard to societal openness. France's colonial past was one contributing factor; another was a low level of institutional discrimination in the secular community. However, it is just this laicism in its strict variations, coupled with the model of the French constitutional state, that severely limits options in regard to changes in the culturally and religiously pluralistic society. According to the ICRI Index, this results in comparatively less parity for Muslim religious communities. Only in Switzerland is the legal situation of Muslims less favorably rated.

On the other hand, interreligious contacts in daily life occur much more often in France than in the UK: 78 percent of the Muslims surveyed in France often have contact with people of other religions in their leisure time, and 72 percent have a circle of friends in which at least half are non-Muslims. However, Muslims in France are more likely to report discrimination: Nearly half (48 percent) have experienced discrimination in the past twelve months. Nevertheless, 96 percent of the Muslims surveyed in France feel very connected with their country, although this connection tends to be less strong among the Muslims born in France.

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