

AT HOME IN
EUROPE



PROMOTING INCLUSION



OPEN SOCIETY
FOUNDATIONS



“Many people still go by appearance. Many still have not accepted that Germans can be of different origins. I would like to be seen as a member of this society, as somebody who lives here and makes an effort, and who would like the same rights and obligations.”

Male, 30-39, **Berlin**, questionnaire

MISSION

The At Home in Europe project of the Open Society Foundations works to advance the social inclusion of vulnerable communities in a changing Europe.

Through its research and advocacy activities, the project explores the political, social, cultural, and economic participation of Muslims and other marginalized groups in Western Europe. It places a high priority on local community and city level practices that mitigate discrimination and seek to ensure equal treatment for all. The project seeks to identify the barriers to full and equal treatment, better understand factors leading to marginalisation, promote effective integration policies and practices, and undertake advocacy to improve participation and opportunities through engaging residents, civil society, and policymakers.

Muslims in EU Cities

Since 2007, the At Home in Europe project has sought to improve the social inclusion of Europe's diverse Muslim communities by examining local government policies and practices in 11 EU cities to determine their effectiveness in achieving meaningful integration.

The 11 cities included in the Muslims in EU Cities reports are Antwerp (Belgium), Copenhagen (Denmark), Marseille and Paris (France), Berlin and Hamburg (Germany), Amsterdam and Rotterdam (the Netherlands), Stockholm (Sweden), and Leicester and Waltham Forest–London (United Kingdom).

Using in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, consultative

roundtables, focus groups, and a questionnaire with Muslim and non-Muslim residents in each city, the reports focus on participation, identity and citizenship, the role and impact of the media, education, employment, housing, health, and the criminal justice system, and offer recommendations for improving living conditions. Advocacy activities follow the release of each city report to push for the adoption of its recommendations on the local, national, and European levels.

The individual city reports as well as an overview and good practices guide can be found online at www.opensocietyfoundations.org/projects/home-europe

Unveiling the Truth

The relationship between European identity and public expressions of religious belief is an issue causing considerable debate and controversy. Bans on the wearing of the headscarf in public spaces, which impact on the education and employment prospects of many Muslim women and young girls, are already in place in countries and cities across Europe. On 11 April 2011, following a period of intense public debate, legislation banning the full-face veil in France went into effect. Other countries in Western Europe have implemented or are considering similar bans.

An At Home in Europe report addresses the issue of restrictions on religious dress in public places in Europe with a focus on the full-face veil. The report contrasts the experiences and perspectives of women who wear the veil with the popular myths and misperceptions spread by the media and politicians.

Unveiling the Truth: Why 32 Muslim Women Wear the Full-face Veil in France, was published in April 2011. It can be found at www.opensocietyfoundations.org/publications/unveiling-truth-why-32-muslim-women-wear-full-face-veil-france

CHALLENGES

Policies and debates on integration and immigration in Europe operate within a climate of anxiety heightened by shifting demographics brought about by immigration, the perceived erosion of ethnic, national, and cultural identities, and the visibility of diversity and religion.

Discrimination and prejudice against those of minority background is increasing with the rise of populist attacks on political and social systems. Any response advocating the protection of minorities in an open Europe must also consider the needs and concerns of the majority. This complex situation presents Europe with one of its greatest challenges: how to ensure equal rights and social cohesion in a climate of political tension, global recession, and rapidly expanding diversity.

The At Home in Europe project works to identify issues that residents in Europe's urban spaces share as common concerns and opportunities regardless of their ethnic or religious background. A key aim is to promote models of good practice in social inclusion to policymakers, civil society, and communities in European cities and beyond, including ways to understand differences and overcome challenges.



“You must value each other for who you are and what you do, and if one person goes to church and the other goes to the mosque, then that’s their own business. Apart from that, it doesn’t matter.”

Male, 20, **Amsterdam**, focus group

RESEARCH

Through qualitative and interdisciplinary research, At Home in Europe documents daily experiences and the ways neighbourhood residents interact with their city, local government, and wider society. This research, undertaken by local experts knowledgeable about the political and social contexts, includes focus groups, in-depth interviews, surveys, and closed roundtable discussions.

The integration of Muslim communities has been a key focus of the program. The research series, Muslims in EU Cities, presents the views of Muslims and non-Muslims and policy-oriented recommendations for improving living conditions and opportunities.

The research on Muslim communities identified the need to examine the integration of other minority groups in Europe, including new communities settled in the last decade.

Forthcoming research by the At Home in Europe project will ensure that the concerns of various populations are better understood as Europe tackles the challenges of populism, competition for scarce resources, effective public service delivery, and the perceived erosion of cultural identification. New research will examine the experiences of Somalis in a number of European countries and socially vulnerable members of majority communities.

Somalis in European Cities

People of Somali origin have lived in parts of Europe for many generations, but in the past 15 years their numbers have increased rapidly. Discussions with city officials, practitioners, policymakers, and civil society organisations during the Muslims in EU Cities research identified the lack of information about the views, experiences, and concerns of Somalis as a significant knowledge gap in policy planning.

The Somalis in European Cities project will produce city reports on Somali living conditions in seven European Cities. It will also examine the ways in which municipal authorities counter growing social, political, and economic tensions and consider the needs of Somalis in key decision making. The reports, to be published starting in 2013, will

identify good practices and offer policy recommendations at the city, national, and international levels to encourage change where needed.

The research will focus on seven European cities: Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Leicester, London, Malmö, and Oslo. All seven cities have Somali populations that have developed and expanded significantly in the past decade. Discussions with policymakers and public service providers identified a need for better understanding of these newly settled communities.

An illustrated narrative will accompany the Somalis in European Cities research series, highlighting the everyday experiences of Somalis living in Western Europe.

“Yes, I am new compared to others. But I feel that I have lived in Leicester forever. I would define myself as European, Somali, Muslim. In Leicester, whether you’re black, or white, or Asian, or Muslim, or Christian, or Sikh, people have respect for you.”

Woman, **Leicester**, interview

Engaging Marginalized Majority Populations and Communities

A growing number of people in Europe experience economic, social and political exclusion. Against the backdrop of the European economic crisis and despite commitments by the European Union to combat poverty and social marginalization, socio-economic exclusion is increasing. Exclusion is not only a problem for minorities; those who identify themselves as belonging to the “ethnic” or “religious” majority population can also suffer political, economic and social exclusion. As public spending is drastically reduced, demographics in large cities continue to change, and public trust in government weakens, disenfranchisement of majority white populations emerges as a vital area to be better understood and addressed.

Engaging Marginalized Majority Populations and Communities builds on the Muslims in EU Cities research, which revealed shared issues and concerns across Muslim and non-Muslim respondents. Muslims in EU Cities highlighted the relevance and consideration that needs to be given to the experiences and voices of marginalized white populations and communities when examining social

cohesion and participation. Engaging Marginalized Majority Populations and Communities will identify the needs and concerns of poor white communities in six cities in the European Union, and examine local level approaches to engaging with and addressing their aspirations and needs. This pan-European comparative project will produce individual city reports, to be published in 2014, which will identify the real issues of importance to these communities. Alongside the opportunity for policymakers to directly hear the voices and views of these communities, the reports offer examples of good practice in creating cohesion, and policy recommendations at city, national, and international levels to encourage change where needed.

The research will focus on six cities in EU states: Aarhus, Amsterdam, Berlin, Lyon, Manchester and Stockholm. The Open Society Foundations will implement activities and advocacy designed to further the findings with the communities, civil society organizations and all tiers of government, where appropriate.

“Not everybody is included in society. A functioning society needs all to be able to participate and be included.”

Man, **Stockholm**, focus-group

ADVOCACY

The At Home in Europe project carries out advocacy activities based on the outcomes and recommendations of its research. These efforts seek to shape and influence public policies and practices for better understanding and the improved participation of minority and marginalised communities, and to assist civil society and governments in the building of constituencies that can challenge the negative discourse on religious and ethnic pluralism in Europe.

Working with local, national, and international partners, the project contributes to strengthening grassroots initiatives and networks through small scale funding, facilitates engagement between officials and civil society groups, and supports external research that addresses the exclusion and discrimination faced by various minority communities.

CHÂNTIER INTERDIT AU PUBLIC

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AT HOME IN EUROPE

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Images from the Open Society photo booth at the COPENHAGEN EID FESTIVAL.

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